THE BRIDGE

Written by

Richard F. Russell
EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

A bridge over a wide river. Under a street light, a tony car, hood up, sits by the curb, disabled.

Next to car, phone to her ear, stands VICTORIA, 40s, tony, refined, finished to a tee. She is the epitome of money.

She pulls down the phone and frowns.

VICTORIA
Stupid phone.

She hurls the phone over the railing and into the water.

VICTORIA
(to car)
Do you have a phone?

Under the hood, lighter in hand, TAQUAN, black teen, checks out the engine and wiring. Jeans low, baseball cap turned to the side, gold chains around his neck, high school jacket, and designer sneakers, he’s directly from the hood.

TAQUAN
Phone don’t work here.

VICTORIA
What?

TAQUAN
Damn, cheap-ass, government shit ain’t worth dick outside the turf.

VICTORIA
Let me try.

TAQUAN
(handing over phone)
I don’t see nothin’ loose.

She takes the phone and tries to dial. Nope, it doesn’t work.

TAQUAN
You got gas?

VICTORIA
You’re right. It doesn’t work. I think so.

(MORE)
It’s supposed to have some kind of reserve tank or something.

She hands back the phone as he kills the lighter.

TAQUAN
Why didn’t you fill up when you drive through?

VICTORIA
Please.

TAQUAN
Ain’t nothin’ gonna happen.

VICTORIA
My neighbor got carjacked there last year. The incident landed her in therapy, and she still won’t drive.

TAQUAN
She got to get over that. Lots of shit happen, and you got to get over.

He backs from under the hood.

VICTORIA
Easier said than done.

TAQUAN
Ain’t no loose wires or shit. Try it again.

VICTORIA
Why? It’s dead.

TAQUAN
I wanna hear what it do when you crank it.

She clearly doesn’t want to try.

TAQUAN
You ain’t gonna get past the gate if you don’t try.

VICTORIA
What makes you think I live in a gated community?

TAQUAN
All you live past the gate.
VICTORIA
I don’t.

He stares a moment.

TAQUAN
That cause you got yo own gate. That right?

She frowns before she walks past him and climbs behind the wheel. He twirls his finger and leans over the engine.

She tries to start the engine which does nothing but CLICK. Taquan shakes his head.

She climbs out of the car.

VICTORIA
Anything?

TAQUAN
Nothin’. Battery dead.

VICTORIA
Great.

TAQUAN
If we had a car and jumpers, we could get it going.

VICTORIA
If wishes were horses, beggars would ride.

TAQUAN
What? You got something against who don’t have?

She rolls her eyes.

TAQUAN
You got to respect. We just as good as them on the other side of the gate.

VICTORIA
Respect is earned.

TAQUAN
That bullshit. Everyone deserve respect.
VICTORIA
Look, I don’t want to argue. I simply want to start my car and go home.

TAQUAN
That the problem. You don’t want any folk who don’t have to come over the bridge.

VICTORIA
I am not a bigot, and I won’t apologize for living well. I work. I work hard every day. I’m not ashamed of how I spend my money.

A Mercedes flashes past, not even attempting to slow down.

TAQUAN
There be more gate people.

VICTORIA
You don’t know what you’re talking about.

TAQUAN
They too scared to even stop.

VICTORIA
Last month, someone stopped to help a stranded motorist and was robbed.

TAQUAN
No one gonna think you rob them.

VICTORIA
Looks can be deceiving.

TAQUAN
What?

VICTORIA
People sometimes look different from what they are.

TAQUAN
You got that right.

In the distance, a lowrider, car body hugging the ground, rolls slowly toward them.

TAQUAN
Shit.
VICTORIA
What?

TAQUAN
Ain’t family.

VICTORIA
Bad?

TAQUAN
Death.

They look at each other.

VICTORIA
Hide.

TAQUAN
Where?

VICTORIA
Under the car.

He stares at her.

VICTORIA
It’s not going anywhere. You’ll be safe. Give me your phone.

He hesitates and then hands over his phone.

He slides under the car. She leans against the car, phone to her ear as the lowrider stops and a teenage BANGER, tattoos and attitude leans out the window.

BANGER
Yo, need help?

VICTORIA
(killing connection)
No, I got it. Thanks.

BANGER
I mean it, chica. We help.

VICTORIA
I’m sure you mean it, but I just called 911. They’ll be here in a couple of minutes.

The Banger stares, trying to tell if she’s lying.

BANGER
Why you do that? We happy to help.
VICTORIA
Maybe next time.

BANGER
Come back manana. Over the bridge.
We give you a good time.

With a leer and a wave, the lowrider rolls away.

From under the car comes Taquan. He holds out his hand, and she hands him the phone.

TAQUAN
That cool. Thanks.

VICTORIA
It doesn’t get my car fixed.

TAQUAN
Yeah, well, that not my problem.

VICTORIA
You have a job?

TAQUAN
What that got to do with dick?

VICTORIA
I didn’t think so. Want to make some money?

TAQUAN
What I look like, step-fuck-fetchit?

She goes to the car, pulls out a notebook, and writes.

VICTORIA
Run to the end of the bridge and call this number. Tell them Victoria needs help.

TAQUAN
Why I do that?

VICTORIA
For money, why else? I’ve got fifty dollars in my purse. It’s yours when you get back.

TAQUAN
Give me now.
VICTORIA
That’s not how it works on my side of the bridge. You get paid after you do the work.

TAQUAN
You on wrong side. If I want yo money, I take your money.

VICTORIA
You owe me.

He laughs.

VICTORIA
I protected you.

TAQUAN
Don’t bull me. You protect youself.

It’s a stare-off, and neither one blinks. She breaks first and looks toward her side of the bridge.

VICTORIA
Too late. If I’m not mistaken, there’s a police car coming.

Taquan looks and pulls a knife from his jeans.

TAQUAN
Gimmee your purse.

VICTORIA
What?

TAQUAN
That the way it be.

VICTORIA
If I were you--

He steps forward and holds the knife to her face.

VICTORIA
OK, OK.

She reaches into the car and pulls out her purse. He snatches it, tucks it under his arm, and runs.

As she watches, a police cruiser stops. The window rolls down.
COP
You all right?

VICTORIA
Just fine.

COP
Want me to run him down?

VICTORIA
Don’t bother. The purse is fake.

COP
Fake?

VICTORIA
In case I get robbed. A few dollars and phony plastic. The real one is in the trunk.

COP
Need a ride?

VICTORIA
And a tow truck.

She goes to the trunk, opens it, and removes her purse. She climbs into the cruiser which makes a U-turn and rolls away.

FADE OUT.