

DEAR GRAVITY

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

A car whizzes by to reveal BRENDON YORK (late 20s), a confident man in a well-fitting suit. BRENDON looks both ways before crossing the street and walking up to a ritzy piano bar.

INT. PIANO BAR - EVENING

TYLER, the bar owner, stands just inside the doorway, scanning the streets. As BRENDON enters, he strategically brushes by TYLER, discreetly pickpocketing him and pocketing his find.

At the bar, GABRIEL ESCUDERO (early 40s) takes notice. He is a well-dressed, rugged Hispanic man with a scar that cuts through his left eye. He watches BRENDON, even as a WOMAN in a red dress drags him toward the restrooms.

Feigning fluster from the collision, BRENDON turns to TYLER to apologize, shaking his hand.

TYLER

Brendon?

BRENDON

Uh...Tyler, yes?

TYLER

Yeah! You look good, just what I was looking for.

TYLER pulls a wad of cash out of his pocket and does a double-take, checking his pockets again.

TYLER(CONT'D)

(Preoccupied)

Here's your upfront. The piano's just over there in that back corner.

BRENDON

What brand is it, if you don't mind me asking?

TYLER walks toward a hallway by the bathrooms. BRENDON follows.

TYLER

You know, I'm not quite sure. This over here is your breakroom.

TYLER indicates a door.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You're welcome to a fifteen between forty-five minute sets. Let me know if you need anything, I'll be in the back for the next hour or so then you're on your own. Catch ya next week with the rest of your pay.

BRENDON

Now, am I getting paid on quality?  
'Cause if so you should just pay me all of it up front.

TYLER doesn't know if BRENDON is joking or not.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

I'm messing with you. I appreciate it, Tyler.

TYLER heads back to his office and BRENDON walks toward the bar, counting the cash in his hand. Glancing at TYLER's retreating figure, BRENDON pulls the other wad of cash out of his pocket and counts that too.

BRENDON

Got any Chianti?

BARTENDER

A wine man, huh?

BRENDON

Just till 9 pm.

The BARTENDER pours him a glass and BRENDON sets a few bills on the counter, taking his drink to the piano. Opening the keys, he looks at the instrument and takes a swig of wine.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

Ah. The quality "no brand." Figures.

As BRENDON begins to play, GABRIEL ESCUDERO walks out of the bathroom, buttoning his suit jacket. Out of the door behind him scurries the WOMAN in a red dress.

GABRIEL scans the bar, and spotting BRENDON, walks over to sit on the bench beside him.

GABRIEL

Don't hear much good original jazz nowadays.

BRENDON  
You must know a lot of jazz.

GABRIEL  
A bit. Try this.

GABRIEL begins to play left hand and his sleeve pulls up to show a gold watch on a leather band. He watches BRENDON's reaction.

BRENDON  
An IWC?

The man lifts his wrist to show off the watch.

GABRIEL  
Good eye. I got it off a friend.

GABRIEL's smile is less than friendly, but BRENDON is too busy admiring his suit.

BRENDON  
An expensive friend.

Going for stealth, BRENDON's hand moves from the bench toward GABRIEL's coat pocket, hesitating slightly.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)  
I don't think you'll like what you find in there.

BRENDON returns to playing as if nothing happened.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)  
You're observant, but seriously. Did mommy never teach you her poker face? Your eyes were as big as UFOs.

BRENDON  
No, we didn't quite make it to that age. Don't you have somewhere to be?

GABRIEL  
Not until my date vamooses. I've been back and forth to the bathroom for the past half hour.

BRENDON  
Food not agreeing with you?

GABRIEL  
No, I just found another lady who did.

BRENDON  
Half an hour?

GABRIEL  
It's not my first time on a horse.

BRENDON  
Oh, you're into that?

GABRIEL smiles.

GABRIEL  
You look like you could use a break.  
Slim blonde, 4 o'clock.

BRENDON follows his gaze and sees RIANE GRAY (late 20s) in a conservative dress at a small booth for two. She's focused on her meal but her eyes flicker to BRENDON.

BRENDON  
I don't think so. My relief is a man named Jack Daniels and he's showing up in less than an hour.

GABRIEL watches Brendon for a moment.

GABRIEL  
You wanna make more than the shitty pocket change your nimble fingers can catch? C'mon. See how much she's worth.

GABRIEL takes the keys, and a creative rendition of "Creep" by Radiohead can be heard over the clamor of background conversations from nearby tables.

Standing up, BRENDON smoothes out his suit. He walks over to RIANE's table and hesitates only a moment before taking a seat. Unbuttoning his suit jacket, BRENDON gestures to the woman's glass of wine.

BRENDON  
You don't look like a white-on-a-Wednesday-night kind of girl.

RIANE  
And you don't look like my date.

BRENDON

He left.

RIANE

Yeah, sure looks like it. How much did he offer you to entertain me?

BRENDON

I don't think "entertain" was the exact word he used.

BRENDON reaches for her glass, taking a sip.

RIANE

Is that confidence a façade? Or are you that big in your britches on a literal level?

BRENDON coughs and spills wine on his lapel.

RIANE (CONT'D)

And that's why it's white on a Wednesday night.

RIANE hands BRENDON her napkin, and wiping himself off, he drops the façade, attempting to level with her.

BRENDON

Okay, look. I just need to go back to this guy with something of value. Can you work with me? How much is your necklace worth?

RIANE

Work with you? You were sent over here by my date whose profile read "alternative businessman." You have a wad of twenties hanging out of your pocket like you're trying to catch a gold digger. No, I'm not too keen to work with you.

BRENDON sheepishly presses the bills further into his suit pocket and tosses the napkin on the table, looking for a way out with a scrap of dignity. RIANE watches him for a moment as she thinks.

RIANE (CONT'D)

There's sixty in my purse, and this bracelet, worth forty.

You take it, you owe me.

She takes a sip of her wine.

BRENDON

Really? "Alternative businessman"?

RIANE

Online dating is overrated. Don't do it.

BRENDON

But "alternative businessman?"

RIANE

(re: GABRIEL)

He did it. Ask him.

BRENDON

And why haven't you left yet? He doesn't seem like the best of dates.

RIANE picks up a piece of shrimp with her fingers and brings it to her mouth.

RIANE

Do I look like one to pass up free, quality food?

BRENDON

You think he's paying?

RIANE

You think I am?

A smile slips across BRENDON's face.

BRENDON

Lemme see this bracelet.

RIANE lifts her wrist and leans toward him.

RIANE

You take it, you owe me.

BRENDON holds her wrist and their eyes meet.

BRENDON

How about another glass of pinot grigio?

RIANE

How about you stop being cheap.

RIANE smiles to show she's teasing.

RIANE (CONT'D)

I'm thinking dinner. There's a nice place on South Cicero I've been meaning to try. But for now, I'm out of here.

The two stand up and RIANE walks around the table to hug BRENDON, putting on a show.

RIANE (CONT'D)

Riane.

BRENDON

No, my name's Brendon.

RIANE

My name's Riane. You taking that bracelet or not?

BRENDON fumbles with her wrist as she slips money into his coat pocket.

RIANE (CONT'D)

I won't make you walk me to the door.

BRENDON walks back to the piano where GABRIEL is still playing. BRENDON takes over the keys.

GABRIEL

How'd we make out?

BRENDON

Really? 'Cause I was really hoping it wouldn't come to that.

BRENDON holds out the cash and bracelet. Taking them, GABRIEL unrolls the cash and pulls out a strip of paper from a fortune cookie with a number scrawled across it.

GABRIEL

Looks like the only making out you'll be doing is with her.

GABRIEL reaches across BRENDON and drops the money, the bracelet, and the number into Brendon's breast pocket.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

With her taste, you'll need it. Name's Gabriel. I'm gonna dip before they pin the tab on me, but if you're looking to make more in an evening than whatever Ty probably gave you, all you gotta do is look.

GABRIEL stands to exit as BRENDON watches him, slowly bringing the song to a close. On the final chord, one of the keys sticks and looking down, BRENDON finds a business card with the name "Escudero" and an address.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - LATE MORNING

BRENDON is asleep on a couch. His suit from the previous night is hung up in the bathroom doorway and a backpack of his belongings sits on the floor by his head, open and spilling its contents: a book, a cardigan, an old iPod and large headphones.

SAM (20s) enters the room from the hall and starts to move around in the kitchen. The banging of cabinets wakes BRENDON, who is snoring with his mouth open, and he rubs his face, stretching.

SAM

How much'd you make last night?

BRENDON

Few hundred.

In the kitchen, SAM unrolls the wad of cash Brendon left on the counter.

SAM

Nice! Maybe you'll be one of those rare people who can make a living living your dreams.

BRENDON

Tell that to the ten-thousand-dollar loan on the car I totaled.

SAM pulls out the fortune cookie paper.

SAM

Hold up. Did you order Chinese without me? Ooh, a phone number! Bucks annnd

(MORE)

bitches.

(reading the fortune)

"A chance meeting opens new doors to success and friendship." ...You know you wanna say it.

BRENDON

Say what?

BRENDON smiles reluctantly and sits up.

SAM

"Success and friendship—"

BRENDON

—in bed.

SAM

Aw yeah.

BRENDON

Well, until I find that success, you mind if I crash here a few more nights?

SAM

Yeah, no worries, brah. You're the one sleeping on the couch. Is your loan payment coming up?

BRENDON

Which one?

SAM pulls out his phone.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

Don't worry about it, dude.

SAM

Op, oh, look at that. Five hundred dollars just appeared in your account.

BRENDON

I hate you and love you at the same time.

SAM

What else am I supposed to do with daddy's money? I gotta keep up my spend-thrift rep, otherwise I might become his favorite child.

But just a heads-up, you will need to make yourself scarce at some point. I think my tenant's getting wise.

BRENDON

"Spend-thrift"? "Getting wise"? What are you, a criminal in an 80s drama? Did you want me to dry clean your suit or anything?

SAM

Nah, you'll need it next week anyways.

BRENDON starts to put on his shoes.

BRENDON

Thanks, man. That was probably the key to my success last night. That thing fit me like a glove.

SAM

A glove, huh? That's funny. If you keep picking up ladies, know what you're gonna need a glove for?

BRENDON

(sighs)

My-

SAM

-your penis!

INT. COFFEESHOP - AFTERNOON

BRENDON sits at a corner table, sipping from a mug and reading a tattered crime novel. As he turns the page he moves his bookmark: Gabriel's business card. He takes a look at it, running his finger over the name and reading the address. He is lost in thought when RIANE walks up in an apron.

RIANE

Can I get you anything, sir?

BRENDON

No. I'm still working on my drink, tha-

BRENDON looks up and recognizes Riane.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

Oh. White-on-a-Wednesday.

RIANE

No, today I'm chai-on-a-Thursday.  
Fancy seeing you out of your suit.

BRENDON

You didn't stick around long enough last night.

RIANE

(Suddenly distracted)

Do you smell that? It's not...coffee...no,  
it's...trouble.

BRENDON

Ooh, a latte and wit. I'd say my  
afternoon's complete. You know when they  
said dark roast, I thought they were  
referring to the coffee, not the  
customers.

RIANE

Don't let my boss catch you saying that.  
But thanks. I'm here till Thursday. Oh,  
wait.

BRENDON

Yeah, yeah. You're cute.

RIANE

I'm cute? If you hadn't robbed me, I'd  
think you were trying to take me  
somewhere.

BRENDON

Only out to dinner.

RIANE

Well, at least we know your memory's  
good, even if your judgment isn't.

RIANE begins to walk away.

BRENDON

Hey wait!

RIANE turns around. BRENDON pulls Riane's bracelet from his  
front pocket.

RIANE

Mr. Vito Corleone let you keep it, huh?  
He didn't want it as a souvenir of our  
successful evening?

BRENDON

You know now that I think of it...

RIANE takes the bracelet from him.

RIANE

Nice try. Lord knows I'm not swiping  
right for any more alternative  
businessmen. You're lucky I'm letting  
you take me out at all.

BRENDON

The highest of privileges.

RIANE fans herself, pretending to swoon.

RIANE

Now, I'm gonna walk away before you  
manage to talk me into bed at two in the  
afternoon.

BRENDON

You'll be back.

Smiling, BRENDON opens the book back up and tucks the  
business card into the back.

INT. TYLER'S OFFICE - EVENING

TYLER and BRENDON sit behind a desk. BRENDON is dressed in  
Sam's suit and both men look distressed. A SECURITY OFFICER  
in uniform stands in the corner by the door.

On the computer in front of them is a still shot from black  
and white security footage of Brendon and Riane hugging on  
the night they met.

BRENDON

Fired? That was one incident.

TYLER

You couldn't provide us with a character  
reference so, baby, that was it.

BRENDON

(raising his voice)

But I know her. She's a friend of mine.

TYLER

That may be so, but we have you, on-camera, stealing her bracelet.

BRENDON

This is a complete misunderstanding. Seriously. Give me one more shot. I promise I'm not a thief.

TYLER

Brendon, seriously. Regardless of the theft. Not ten minutes in, this man took over the piano so you could go talk to your friend. That's not the kind of employees we're looking for.

BRENDON starts to stand up and the security officer takes a step forward. The two men make eye contact and BRENDON shifts in his chair.

BRENDON

I don't—I don't even know that man. He walked up to me and asked me to speak to his date. So I did. I was following a request from a patron.

TYLER

So you *don't* know that woman.

BRENDON

No! I—I can't explain.

TYLER

Then that's all there is to it.

BRENDON

No, please!

BRENDON shifts angrily in his chair and the security officer moves his hand to the Taser on his hip.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

Literally, I am exercising my right to get comfortable. Tyler, I really, really want, and really need this job. I'm sleeping on my buddy's sofa and I can't even afford groceries.

Piano is something I'm good at, and something I love. I can't even explain that man, but it was a one-time thing and it will not happen again.

TYLER breathes in deep and presses play on the footage. The camera follows Brendon as he walks back to the piano, showing his exchange with Gabriel.

The reel ends and skips to the top of the night, and TYLER can be seen from above, standing by the door of the Lounge.

TYLER

I'm willing to give you one more chance, Brendon. But really, anymore schemes like that and the gig is up. Literally. Keep it clean, okay?

Brendon nods vigorously and the two turn to watch the film silently. On the screen, Brendon walks through the doors and bumps into TYLER, and the camera catches Brendon's hand move from TYLER's pocket to his own. As the footage continues, BRENDON side-eyes his boss, mortified, watching as TYLER's face turns to incredulity.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You have *got* to be kidding me.

EXT. PIANO BAR - NIGHT

The SECURITY OFFICER escorts BRENDON outside and leaves him. BRENDON contemplates his options as he runs the mill of emotions: angry, disappointed, panicked.

In a tizzy, he takes off the suit jacket and throws it on the ground before hurriedly picking it back up and searching the pockets.

He pulls out the business card from Gabriel and reads the address.