

Mused
by
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NOTE: The piece of music used for the One Week Challenge is referred to here as THE MUSIC.

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - ENTRANCE/PARKING LOT - DAY

The modest building seems morose on this grey, drizzly day. A dozen cars pepper the mostly empty lot.

A piece of classical music - being earnestly butchered - grows louder.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - BAND HALL

Teenage students play musical instruments with varying degrees of ineptitude. Sour notes prevail.

A balding troll of a man, MR. FREET, perches on a stool in the front of the class. At a crescendo he lurches forward, waving his hands above him as if to shoo the noise away.

MR. FREET

Alright, okay, stop.

(softly)

Good Lord, please stop it.

As the cacophony fades one instrument persists: an acoustic guitar playing a version of THE MUSIC.

It belongs to DEVON GRELL, 16, a skinny kid with a bad goatee. Eyes closed, lost in his music, he warbles a high-pitched note. Pops his eyes open in painful self-awareness and stops. The class laughs.

MR. FREET (CONT'D)

(sarcastically, to Devon)

Excuse me Devon, sorry. I don't mean to interrupt your solo, but I would sure appreciate if you'd play along with everyone else and, y'know, ruin the *same* piece of music. I couldn't even recognize what you were playing.

DEVON

Good.

The chubby Asian kid on piano plays a dramatic DUH DUH DUHHH. Devon responds with a wry glance in his direction.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

Devon, carrying a guitar case, strolls down the hall with the same Asian kid, BON, 16, as classmates rush past them. They are caught in mid-conversation.

BON

...and that's why they are zombies,
it really doesn't matter if...

DEVON

(cutting him off)

But it does matter! A zombie is a
reanimated corpse - period! I don't
give a shit about "it's in the same
spirit". Living, dead, living dead -
in that order. No dead, no undead.

Devon, a bit amped up, awaits a response. Instead, Bon surveys the halls - they are alone - pats the side of his backpack and nods toward an exit.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER

In a secluded area behind the building, Devon leans against a brick wall as Bon kneels and reaches into his open bag.

BON

...okay, but, as he was eating your
brains, you wouldn't really care if
the dude had died or not - right?

DEVON

Granted.

BON

What?

DEVON

Yes.

Bon pulls out a fat joint and a lighter, stands and sparks it. He inhales deeply and coughs out his response.

BON

Well -
(cough cough)
- that's -
(cough)
- my point.

DEVON
You never had a point.
(looking at the joint)
Well?

BON
Oh, you want some? My bad.

He passes it to Devon, who eagerly tokes. He winces as the smoke takes a very short trip and is quickly coughed up. He passed it back to Bon.

BON (CONT'D)
So what was that song you were playing?

Bon takes a drag.

DEVON
Eh, it's not a song, really, just some music. And y'know, only the guitar parts, but it seems so much bigger in my head.

Bon passes it back and Devon partakes.

BON
Right, there are a buncha things that seem so much bigger in my head too.

Devon coughs out a laugh as he exhales.

DEVON
Bon, man, I don't think this is weed.

BON
Didn't say it was.

DEVON
Then why did you roll it yourself?

BON
It's way cheaper, you can get a whole big bag...

A girl's yell halts the conversation.

GIRL (O.S.)
Devon!

DEVON

Balls.

Devon throws the cigarette onto the wet grass.

BON

Hey!

EXT. SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Devon and Bon round a corner to find a deadpanned DARCY GRELL, 18. Preppy and precise, the only resemblance between her and Devon is bone structure.

DARCY

(to Devon)

So, you're going to let me wait in the pouring rain for how long?

Devon and Bon look up: not a drop falls.

BON

We just got out. Ease up Darcy, c'mon. It's me. Bon.

Darcy is displeased, but moves on.

DARCY

What were you two doing back there anyway? Were you -

(overly dramatic)

- smoking?

Bon smirks as he imagines - and it is heard - the same DUH DUH DUHHH as before.

DEVON

What? No. That's absurd.

BON

No, right, no. We were just, uh, back there - blowing each other.

DEVON

Yep.

(to Bon)

Were you done? 'Cause I wasn't.

Refusing to react, Darcy turns, points to a car in the lot and walks quickly toward it.

BON
 Huh? Oh yeah, we can finish up in
 your car. Good idea.

Devon and Bon share a laugh as they follow Darcy.

I/E. DARCY'S CAR/NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Darcy drives a late 90s two door sedan. In the passenger seat Devon, lost in thought, silently strums the guitar case in his lap. Bon, in the backseat, looks out the window, then at Darcy. The window, Darcy, the window, then fixes on Darcy.

Bon sits up and addresses Darcy from between the two front seats.

BON
 (serious)
 So, listen. I know you're going to college soon, and you're gonna meet a buncha new friends. And I'm sure some of 'em will be of the Asian persuasion like myself - maybe you've noticed. So, y'know I'll be down there in, like, two years - you're gonna hook a brother up, right?

DARCY
 You will never, ever...

Devon, eyes closed and deep in thought, warbles that same note as before, but louder. Loud enough to catch the attention of Darcy and Bon.

Hearing his own voice, Devon snaps back to lucidity.

DEVON
 (to Darcy)
 Huh?

DARCY
 Tell Chunky Chan back there to stay away from my friends.

BON
 Chunky Chan?

Devon and Bon trade perplexed glances.

DEVON
 Oh, like Jackie Chan.

BON
But fat. Got it.

DEVON
Hey, that's almost clever. Way to
go, sis!

They both pat her on the back, too hard and for far too long.
Bon's patting turns to caressing.

DARCY
Stop it. Stop! I'm driving! Stop
it!!

She pulls hard to the right and SCREECHES to a halt beside a
curb. She stops but doesn't turn off the vehicle.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - MOMENTS LATER

Devon and Bon exit Darcy's car, Devon first, through the same
door. Bon slams the door behind him and they both walk away
from the vehicle.

DARCY (O.C.)
Devon!

Devon takes a few steps back and bends down to see a stern
visaged Darcy staring back.

DARCY (CONT'D)
Do not bring him home. Not tonight.
Mom said you can't...

DEVON
Yeah, I'm aware of Mom, and your
new "college girlfriend" coming
over.

BON (O.C.)
Whuh?

She points at him menacingly.

DARCY
She's not - shut up! Be normal or
be quiet - and be home in an hour.

DEVON
Or you could just drive me home
right now.

A moment of thought.

Her response: the proverbial "eat my dust" as she slams the gas and zooms off down the quiet suburban street.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - EVENING - LATER

Devon and Bon walk silently up the wet sidewalk. Bon stares intently at the cellphone in his hand as Devon is once again lost in thought. Without losing focus on the phone, Bon speaks.

BON

You know that song, or whatever?
You should write some lyrics to it,
make it a song.

DEVON

I can't write. I mean, I've tried,
but - I don't know.

Bon looks up and puts his phone away. They both stop walking.

BON

C'mon, we both wrote poetry in Lit.

Devon shrugs a "so what?".

DEVON

Yeah, we both wrote really shitty
poetry.

BON

That's what lyrics are! Shitty
poetry with music on top - to make
it not so shitty. And, well, your
music is actually pretty good.

DEVON

Thanks.

A brief moment of silent awkwardness and Bon nods a "you're welcome". Bon points down the street.

BON

So if I'm not welcome at La Casa de
Grell tonight.

Bon points in a different direction, down a side street.
Devon waves.

DEVON

Later.

EXT. GRELL HOME FRONT YARD - EVENING

A standard suburban lot, nothing special. Devon walks up through the grass toward the front door.

INT. GRELL HOME - CONTINUOUS

Devon steps into the small foyer adjacent the neat and tidy living room. Devon's GRANDPA, 60+, sits alone watching TV, dressed in his Sunday best. Devon is but a few steps in the house when -

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Shoes off!

Devon's mother, LINDA GRELL, early 40s, steps out from a nearby upstairs hallway to the top of the stairs.

DEVON

Sure, sorry.

LINDA

So Darcy's friend, Gina, should be here in about 45 minutes. Please go change into something - less comfortable - and be down by then, 'kay? Oh, and shave -
 (grimaces and points at her own chin)
 - that.

Not waiting for a response, she darts back to where she came from.

Devon removes his shoes and shares a look with the old man, who quickly returns his attention to the TV and guffaws at whatever it is he's watching.

DEVON

(to himself)

Whatev.

INT. DEVON'S ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Clean shaven and dressed nicely, Devon sits on his bed playing a simpler version of THE MUSIC, a note pad by his side. He plays, pauses to think, and repeats this several times. He stops, picks up the pad and pen and -

A BLANK PAGE

A muffled BANG, a car door perhaps? Devon steps to the window, still holding his guitar.

WINDOW POV

It's darker outside now, all that can be seen is the top of a head full of vaguely brunette hair exiting a vehicle and walking toward the house.

Devon sighs, puts on his best fake smile and shakes an imaginary hand.

DEVON
 (dripping with sarcasm)
 Oh, hello Gina, it's so terribly
 nice to meet you, how was the drive
 - oh really? I don't give a shit.

He grunts and tosses his guitar on the bed on his way to the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Devon reaches the top of the stairs. DING DONG, the door bell chimes.

Darcy flies to the front door, which is in clear view from where Devon stands. She turns and looks up at him, staring daggers. Devon looks down at himself.

DEVON
 What?

Darcy cracks a sincere smile and returns her attention to the door.

INT. STAIRWAY/FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Devon descends the stairs as Darcy opens the door and darts out. As Linda enters the room and approaches the open door, the girls SQUEAL their greetings outside. Devon cringes.

DEVON
 Uh, no.

He spins and takes a step up in the opposite direction.

LINDA
 (to Devon, sternly)
 Devon Martin Grell.

Devon turns and takes a few more steps down just as Darcy and Gina cross the threshold.

DEVON
She better be ho...

The sight he sees steals the words from his lips. She is:

GINA

a 19 year old auburn haired goddess - or so Devon seems to think by the look of stupor glued to his face.

He takes the last few steps, THE MUSIC growing louder with each one. Upon the final step the full version of THE MUSIC cancels out all other sound.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Devon inches forward as Linda greets Gina, it's clear they are speaking but THE MUSIC is still all that is heard.

Now within a few feet of the trio, he stops and stares with - Anticipation? Fear? Constipation? Who knows. Linda turns to him and mouths a few words, still silently, the last clearly being "Devon". Their silence breaks and THE MUSIC ceases.

LINDA
Devon?

Devon snaps back to reality and approaches Gina. She offers her hand, he accepts with embarrassing speed.

DEVON
(to Gina)
Hot - er, Hi. Devon. I am.

Before she responds the old man's boisterous LAUGH in the distance breaks the awkwardness, slightly. They all turn to look at him, but he is still fixed on the tube.

DARCY
(to Gina)
That's my Grandpa.
(to the old man)
Grandpa, this is my friend, Gina!

Still chuckling, he looks their way for a moment and waves, and returns to the TV. Darcy pulls Gina away from the door, breaking the lingering handshake between Devon and Gina.

Linda and the girls, chattering inanely, head into the living room. Devon stands alone in the foyer gazing in Gina's direction.

DEVON
 (quietly to himself)
 How was the drive?

He looks at the hand that touched Gina's, smells it, and smiles.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A table brimming with an impressive feast. Plates are half eaten save Devon's - it's virtually untouched. He picks at his green beans as his eyes jump back and forth between his plate and Gina, who sits opposite him.

THE MUSIC is faint, interspersed with bits of the women's conversation.

Grandpa leans forward and pokes his fork into one of Devon's beans, grabbing his attention and nixing THE MUSIC.

GRANDPA
 (quietly to Devon)
 You okay, boy?

Devon smiles, nods and takes a bite, as does Grandpa from Devon's plate.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
 (to all, too loud)
 Pass the potatoes, if you please.

Linda passes a bowl to Grandpa.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
 Thank you.
 (to Darcy)
 You should invite friends over every night, we haven't eaten this good in years!

LINDA
 (mock mad)
 C'mon now, you know that's not true!

They all laugh except Devon, though his smile widens watching Gina laugh.

GINA
(to Linda)
I hope not, you really didn't have
to do all this for me.

GRANDPA
Oh yes we did!

This time they all laugh except Darcy, who cracks an embarrassed smile. Noticing Darcy's discomfort, Linda quickly changes the subject.

LINDA
(to Gina)
Gina, so have you settled on a
major or?

GINA
Not yet. Y'know, I'm still just a
freshman, so I feel like I have
loads of time to figure all that
out.

LINDA
Oh sure.

GINA
But right now I'm leaning toward,
like, business or...

GRANDPA
(cutting her off)
Ah, smart girl. That's where the
money is. Darcy wants to be a
flippin' philosopher or some
nonsense!

DARCY
Well not for a job!

GRANDPA
(to Gina, ignoring Darcy)
So what kind of business do you
want to own then?

GINA
Well, I don't know about owning a
business exactly, I'm thinking more
like management - I have a little
experience with that.

GRANDPA
 Managing what, a lemonade stand?
 (laughs)
 I'm kidding ya.

Gina smiles politely but Darcy is not amused. Devon, still uninvolved with what is going on around him, eats his meal.

GINA
 No, well see, I have four brothers,
 and they had a band -

Hearing the word "band", Devon perks up.

GINA (CONT'D)
 - still do actually, and I used to
 sorta decide where they would play
 and, if they got paid, I would deal
 with that. I got pretty good at it.

Devon forces himself to speak, with a mouth full of food.

DEVON
 (meekly)
 Were you in it? The band?

All at the table pause and look at Devon, who hasn't engaged in conversation until this moment.

GINA
 (to Devon)
 I tried at first, but those jerks
 didn't want a girl in it.
 (laughs)
 That's how I started with managing
 them, our mom forced them.

LINDA
 Good for her! That's what moms are
 for.

They all laugh, Devon moreso than before.

GINA
 Definitely! But my brother, my
 older one, taught me to play the
 drums at least.

Devon coughs out a bit of food.

DEVON
 You, you play drums?

GRANDPA
Now you got the boy's attention!

LINDA
Devon is quite a musician himself.

DEVON
(sheepishly)
I play guitar a little.

GRANDPA
(to Devon)
A little? Every night for 5, 6
years ain't a little!

Devon shrugs an apology.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Naw, he's gotten pretty good.

He slaps Devon on the shoulder.

DEVON
Thanks.

GINA
(to Devon)
That's cool. But yeah, I still play
sometimes. My brother is way
better, like professional, but I
still have fun with it - it helps
to relieve stress.

DEVON
Yeah.

Devon's grin is a mile wide as he stares at Gina. THE MUSIC
fades in.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(softly to himself)
Yeah.

LINDA
If not a business major then what?

Gina turns her attention to Linda as THE MUSIC grows louder.
Devon is fixed on Gina.

GINA
Oh, I love history, so something
with that - maybe teaching -

THE MUSIC is even louder now.

GINA (CONT'D)
 - but that takes so many more years
 of -

THE MUSIC is almost too loud to hear Gina.

GINA (CONT'D)
 - school, but it's probably...

THE MUSIC overtakes all sound, Gina finishes her response silently. Devon shakes his head and rubs his eyes, attempting to force the music out. THE MUSIC fades out a little and bits of conversation are heard.

LINDA
 ...when I...
 ...we didn't have...

Devon concentrates on his plate, THE MUSIC dies down. He shuts his eyes and takes a deep breath, THE MUSIC fades out and the conversation at the table can be fully heard again.

DARCY
 ...when we met on campus, I was a
 total spaz.

GINA
 No you weren't. But I remember
 feeling that way -

Devon looks back up at Gina as she is speaking and THE MUSIC floods back in. He grimaces as he looks at her, he's fighting the music in his head and losing. Gina glances at Devon and notices his odd, painful stare in her direction.

GINA (CONT'D)
 - too.
 (to Devon)
 Are you okay?

THE MUSIC stops dead.

DARCY
 (to Devon)
 What the hell is wrong with you?

LINDA
 Darcy!

DARCY

Mom, look at him! I bet he's high,
you know he does that stuff!

GRANDPA

(playfully to Devon)
Are you boy? Didya have a jazz
cigarette before dinner?
(to all)
Y'know the shit they smoke these
days is way more potent than what
we did in my day.

LINDA

Dad! No.

Grandpa nods and continues eating.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(to Devon)
Devon...

DEVON

I'm not high.

LINDA

Okay, we'll discuss that later. But
you're obviously not feeling well,
and we're almost done, so I think
you should excuse yourself early -
(to Gina)
- if our guest doesn't mind?

GINA

Uh, no. That's fine.

DARCY

Yeah, like she's really going miss
him.

Devon takes a drink and stands.

LINDA

Take your plate to the kitchen
please.

DEVON

'kay.

Devon picks up his silverware, the CLANKING as he places it
on his plate seems especially loud in the silent room. He
shuffles out, carefully avoiding eye contact.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Devon shakes his head in self-disgust.

DARCY (O.S.)
I'm so sorry, my brother is a huge
crack head sometimes.

He looks back and scowls.

GINA (O.S.)
Aw, c'mon. He seems alright to me.

Devon smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Devon stares at his plate in the sink, fighting a smile. It falls and he shakes his head.

DEVON
(quietly to himself)
Gina. Gina. What the hell - what is
she doing to me?

He turns on the tap and splashes water in his face. Takes a deep breath and composes himself.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Okay.

Devon turns off the water just as Gina's LAUGH echoes in from the dining room. Devon cringes and runs his hands through his hair, pulling on it.

He turns toward the kitchen entrance way and then to the back door. He chooses the back door and exits.

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

Devon sits on the steps leading to the back door, staring down at the ground. Takes a deep sigh, stands and walks out into the yard. He gazes up into the clear night sky and THE MUSIC trickles in.

DEVON
Shit, here it comes. No.

He shakes it away again and THE MUSIC fades out.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The family and Gina enter, plates in hand.

GINA
 (to Linda)
 ...oh I don't mind helping. I come
 from a big family, we all had to do
 our part.

Devon can be seen through the window, though they don't take notice of him yet.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Devon stands with his back to the house, he hasn't seen anyone enter the kitchen.

He rubs his face in exasperation and takes a series of deep breaths.

DEVON
 Why am I fighting this?

He allows himself to laugh. As he closes his eyes THE MUSIC rises to full volume.

He opens his eyes and at the 12 second mark in THE MUSIC he begins SINGING.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Gina I found you

*Searching for just the right words
 to
 Show my heart but words just won't
 do*

*Gotta try it anyway
 Find that simple, perfect thing to
 say*

*A moment of pure epiphany
 Reveals all that I need to see*

*Only four words would ever do
 They are Gina I love
 yooooooooooooooooooooou!*

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Gina and the family watch in bemusement through the row of windows as Devons sings - with far more emotion than skill - that final lingering note. The music accompanying it can not be heard.

DARCY
Is that freak singing?

LINDA
Darcy, don't call your brother a freak. But yeah, he is definitely singing.

GRANDPA
(to all)
Who the hell is Gina?

Gina raises her hand.

GRANDPA (CONT'D)
Oh right. Then he's singing about you.

Darcy mouths "I'm sorry" to Gina.

DARCY
Mom, can you do something? Please?

LINDA
Do what, dear?

GRANDPA
I think he's done, doesn't matter much now.

DARCY
Mom!

GINA
It's okay. I mean, I'll talk to him, he singing about me - right? I think I get what's going on. Yeah, I'll talk to him.

Grandpa steps over to the door and opens it for Gina.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Caught totally unaware, Devon spins around in shock as the door opens and he sees Gina. A visual kick in the balls.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Grandpa closes the door behind Gina and they all watch as she approaches the horrified Devon.

 GRANDPA
High, love sick, pretty much the
same thing.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

Gina walks up to Devon, who takes a few steps backward.

 DEVON
Hey.

 GINA
Hi.

 DEVON
Um, did you hear any of that?

 GINA
All of it, I think.

Devon emits a guttural sigh and does a slow 360 turn. Gina restrains a laugh.

 GINA (CONT'D)
Listen, I know that was
embarrassing, but - it was really
sweet. You shouldn't feel...

 DEVON
(cutting her off)
Okay, okay, I have to say, to ask -
I know you're older and probably,
definitely, way outta my league,
but is there any chance, in a few
years...?

 GINA
(cutting him off)
No. But it's not personal.

Devon nods.

GINA (CONT'D)
Really it's not. Um, I'm -

She looks over her shoulder toward the kitchen windows. The family flees once noticed.

GINA (CONT'D)
(hushed)
- not into guys.

A pause then Devon realizes.

DEVON
Oh. So you like...

GINA
Girls, right.

Devon chuckles a bit before a quizzical look overtakes him.

DEVON
Wait, does that mean Darcy is a
...?

GINA
No. At least I don't think so.

DEVON
(laughing)
Not yet anyway. I hear in college a
lot of girls...

He stops himself.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Sorry.

She smiles knowingly.

GINA
It's okay, you're right. It
happens. A lot.

They share an awkward laugh.

GINA (CONT'D)
Anyway, like I said, that was
really sweet.
(MORE)

GINA (CONT'D)

And if I was a few years younger,
and, y'know, straight, that song
would have totally worked on me.
Nobody's ever written me a song
before.

DEVON

I've never done before either.

Gina places her hand on Devon's shoulder.

GINA

You should - for another girl.
Trust me, I should know, women love
musicians - too much, really. So
stick to it - 'kay?

Devon nods wistfully.

DEVON

Yeah, I will.

GINA

Cool. And I don't care what Darcy
says, you're not a freak.

Devon scowls for a moment then lets it go and smiles.

DEVON

Thanks.

Gina turns and walks back to the steps. Upon the first step
she turns back to Devon.

GINA

Hey, you met me like an hour ago -
how did you write that so fast?

DEVON

Uh, well, I don't know. I guess you
just inspired me.

She smiles very warmly. Turns, takes the few remaining steps
and opens the door.

Devon's face goes blank as he realizes:

DEVON (CONT'D)

(quietly to himself)

You inspired me.

With energy not yet seen from him, Devon hurries through the
yard toward the wooden gate beside the house.

He opens it and he's gone - too quick for Gina to realize it. She turns back as she's in the doorway.

GINA

Y'know, I have a little sister who would really like...

She speaks to an empty yard. She looks around puzzled and goes inside.

EXT. SIDE/FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Devon scrambles around the house, making his way to the front door.

INT. FOYER/STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Devon bolts through the door and bounds up the stairs, taking three steps at a time.

INT. DEVON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Devon dashes in and finds the blank note pad. He furiously scribbles in it, tosses it aside and grabs his guitar. He smiles, takes a deep breath and -

FADE TO BLACK.

The first few notes of THE MUSIC begin.

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

