

INVITATION TO THE BLUES

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FADE IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS

from one homeless situation to another in New York city. It's autumn with a brisk wind.

Throughout the opening scene a clean cut business executive type, WALLSTREET, will be followed. Wallstreet takes the story from one homeless scene to another.

Throughout the opening scene, the SINGING OF A SUBWAY PERFORMER IS HEARD(O.S.).

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - STREET - MORNING

HOMELESS PEOPLE of various ages scatter the sidewalks. Many sleep under newspapers or in large cardboard boxes.

Others scavenge through trash cans to fill shopping carts.

It's a somewhat busy sidewalk. Hurried executives quickly walk to their destinations, stepping over the scattered bums.

WALLSTREET, wearing a very expensive overcoat, reads the NY TIMES as he walks. Without looking where he's going, he gracefully maneuver through the obstacles scattered about the sidewalk. He is oblivious to the BUMS BEGGING FOR CHANGE as he steps over and around them.

An OLD LADY wearing rags with a shopping cart full of aluminum cans in tow approaches Wallstreet's path. It seems imminent they will collide.

An OLD, TOOTHLESS MAN kicking back beneath a newspaper smiles, anticipating the collision. He taps the box of his SLEEPING FRIEND to wake him and watch the entertainment. The friend, groggy from the wakening, GRUMBLES and looks to where his friend's finger points.

Wallstreet, studying the newspaper, stops just shy of walking into the cart. The old lady remains oblivious to what almost happened. After she passes, Wallstreet continues his walk.

The toothless smile disappears, disappointed. The once sleeping friend swats at the toothless man and pulls his body back into the box as far as he can to go back to sleep.

Wallstreet approaches an intersection along with a crowd.

EXT. NYC - TRAFFIC LIGHT

TURNS RED and the 'DON'T WALK' SIGN LIGHTS.

EXT. NYC - STREET

Cars in front proceed through the light, the ones to the right come to a stop. Wallstreet reads his paper.

A WINDOW WASHER BUM with a bad leg limps out to the first car stopped to the right. The crippled bum sprays the windshield.

The DRIVER of the car, without lowering his window, protests MOS about the bum spraying his windshield. Before the bum cleans the windshield with a filthy rag, a COP approaches.

COP

Hey, you!

The bum looks up from the windshield and sees a very angry cop hurrying through the crowd toward him.

The crippled bum hurries backward and stumbles down at the feet of Wallstreet who never seems to give notice.

EXT. NYC - TRAFFIC LIGHT

TURNS GREEN and the WALK SIGN LIGHTS.

EXT. NYC - STREET

Wallstreet, still reading his paper, steps over the crippled bum. The crowd moves with him.

The bum stumbles to his feet and limps away as fast as he can in the same direction Wallstreet walks. The bum hobbles passed Wallstreet down the sidewalk.

The cop passes the bum's customer's car. The customer lowers his window.

DRIVER
(angry)
Hey, who's gonna clean this crap
off my windshield?

EXT. NYC - COP

stops in his tracks, angry. He slowly turns to the driver.

EXT. NYC - STREET

The cop taps at his badge as he approaches the driver.

The driver's mood doesn't change.

COP
Do you know what this means?

The driver smirks.

DRIVER
Yeah, they keep lowering the
standards for the academy.

The driver hits the gas and SQUEALS away. The cop jumps back to not get his feet run over. Regaining his balance, the cop looks to the crippled bum and sees him hobbling down the sidewalk through the crowd.

The cop CHUCKLES.

COP
Goddamn gimp.

The cop makes his way through the crowded sidewalk BLOWING HIS WHISTLE.

Up a ways ANOTHER HOMELESS MAN WITH A CRAZED LOOK IN HIS EYE pushes a shopping cart in the street next to the parked cars. The cart is full of bottles.

EXT. NYC - CRAZY BUM

pushes the shopping cart along the parked cars. He hears the WHISTLE BLOWING, looks, and studies the situation. His eyes shoot maniacally from side to side, as though looking for Martians. He focuses on the situation;

to the right the crippled bum limps his way down the sidewalk. To the left the cop approaches, BLOWING THE WHISTLE.

EXT. NYC - STREET

The cop runs passed Wallstreet.

Still up ahead a bit the crazy bum, eyes wild, pushes the cart between the parked cars and waits as the cop approaches.

Just before the cop passes, the crazy bum pushes the shopping cart out in front of the cop.

The cop CRASHES into the cart and knocks it over. The cop tumbles to the ground. Bottles CRASH and BREAK.

At first, the crazy bum makes a hand motion as though he just scored a strike in bowling. Then he quickly follows the cart.

CRAZY BUM

(upset)

Look wha you done to my bottles!

The cop tries to get to his feet but keeps tripping on the bottles.

CRAZY BUM

(very upset)

This is my bidness!

Wallstreet approaches.

The bum picks up an empty wine bottle.

The cop finally gets to his feet.

Wallstreet is a few yards away yet.

The cop looks up the sidewalk and sees the crippled bum sill hobbling away heading down to the subway.

The cop pushes the cart aside and is about to continue the chase. The crazy bum SMASHES the cop's head with the bottle.

Wallstreet, right behind the cop, pauses a moment to let the cop drop to the sidewalk and out of his way.

Once the cop drops, Wallstreet steps over him and continues on his way toward the subway.

INT. NYC - SUBWAY STOP

It's a typical crowded subway with people waiting for their trains. The SUBWAY PERFORMER(O.S.) gets louder as Wallstreet gets closer.

Wallstreet makes his way down the subway steps. Once he reaches the platform he starts to walk with a little rhythm and bobbing his head to the music. Wallstreet makes his way through the people and heads toward the music.

Wallstreet finally comes to a small circle of people listening to the singer. He puts his paper down and squeezes his way into the circle to get a look at TOM, a gruff street musician.

Tom is a man who loves playing the system and contemplates everything about life. He always wears an old suit and an old crumpled porkpie hat. He PLAYS a homemade one string wash pail bass and SINGS with tremendous feeling. Next to the homemade instrument is a huge tip jar stuffed with money.

All in the circle are very into the music. Others outside the circle try to get a look at the musician.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - WAITING AREA

Very crowded subway with most people anxiously awaiting the train. Some lean forward, trying to get a look down the tunnel.

The tunnel lights a bit as the TRAIN APPROACHES.

Many in the circle disperse. Most put money in the jar before they walk away. A few of them remain a while longer. Wallstreet is almost trancelike as he listens to the music.

Most of the people who were waiting loaded onto the train.

Tom FINISHES THE SONG.

Wallstreet, stares, half amused, half in awe of the musician.

Tom looks up at Wallstreet, then over to the train.

TOM

You're gonna miss your train,
Wallstreet.

Wallstreet looks at the train for a moment then back to Tom as though an internal battle is being fought.

TOM
Gotta make those millions.

Wallstreet smirks with a slight shake of his head.

WALLSTREET
And they call you people crazy.

Tom shrugs as he starts FINGERING HIS ONE STRING BASS.

Wallstreet digs into his pocket, removes a money clip, and stuffs a bill into the jar.

Wallstreet hurries to catch the train.

Tom SINGS.

Wallstreet jumps on the train just in time before the doors close. The TRAIN PULLS AWAY.

People come down the stairs into the subway. A few start to gather around Tom again.

Tom SINGS while the typical subway activities take place.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - STAIRS

leading down are empty. Slowly, two ragged shoes appear. The footsteps are hesitant not knowing whether to continue down or not. The footsteps continue reluctantly.

Eventually, it becomes obvious the legs belong to a bum; GEORGE, a homeless man in his mid fifties with a scruffy beard and soiled clothes looks over his shoulders as though expecting to be followed. George is in failing health and has a bit of a paranoia complex.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - WAITING AREA

Tom sees George and stoically watches George.

GEORGE

looks over his shoulder. Suddenly he leaps back and presses his body against one of the pillars. He closes his eyes tightly, fearful.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - WAITING AREA

Tom, STILL SINGING, cocks one eye as he studies George.

A few who listen to the music turn to look to George. Some do a double take.

Tom, between verses, WHISTLES LOUD.

GEORGE

presses against the pillar. Hearing the WHISTLE, his eyes spring open. He smiles as though nothing is wrong and pushes himself from the pillar and casually walks toward Tom.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - WAITING AREA

Tom continues the SONG. People listen. The few who gave notice to George return their attention to Tom.

George, smiling, pushes his way through the people waiting for trains and between a couple who are listening to Tom.

George, obviously offensive smelling and people react accordingly.

The small crowd listening to Tom start to look at each other, then to George. Noses start to cringe. It only takes a minute for the crowd to disperse.

George, oblivious to his scent, smiles as he listens.

Tom shortens the song to finish quickly.

George APPLAUDS.

TOM

You need to talk, George?

George looks around and sees no music listeners. George has a problem with his dentures and will talk with an impediment.

Tom looks at the small group retreating from the smell of George.

GEORGE

Thure, Thom, ifth you're thaking a break I'd liketh ta thug on your coat about something.

Tom cocks his brow as he returns his attention to George.

Tom looks at his watchless wrist as though checking time.

TOM
Yeah, George, I'm due for a break,
what's up?

George hikes his head toward the bench.

Tom follows him to the bench and they sit.

An old woman sitting there holds her nose and quickly leaves.

Tom tips his hat to her as she stomps off.

George looks around, suspecting eavesdroppers.

Tom looks around trying to see what George may see. Not seeing anything, Tom leans forward, elbows on his knees, as he waits for George to clear the coast.

As George turns back to Tom, Tom takes a closer look at George.

TOM
George.

George smiles.

GEORGE
Yesth, Thom?

TOM
For chrissakes, buddy, what
happened to your teeth?

George looks over his back again. Seeing no one, he returns his attention to Tom.

GEORGE
Thath what I wanted tho thalk stho
you abouth.

Tom leans his elbows back on his knees and looks to the floor.

TOM
Yeah, what about 'em?

George takes in a deep breath and lets out a HEAVY SIGH.

GEORGE
Well, Thom, you know I'sth staying
with Herb and hith mother,

Tom, still staring at the floor, nods his head.

GEORGE
 well, you know sthee's goth
 Althimerth's ditheaseth?

Tom continues to nod.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Well, thee found my denturth and
 wath convinthed that they were her
 teeth.

Tom, still nodding, listening, then stops suddenly. He
 squints a bit, thinking.

TOM
 Wait a minute, Herb's mom?

George nods.

TOM
 She's still got the teeth God give
 her.

GEORGE
 I know sthat.

Tom quickly shakes his head, trying to understand.

TOM
 (hesitantly)
 So, . . . what happened to your
 teeth?

George holds up his hands in surrender.

GEORGE
 Thee couldn'th geth them to fith.

Tom pulls back a bit as though he heard wrong.

TOM
 Fit where?

George quickly points to his mouth.

GEORGE
 (excitedly)
 In her mousth!

Tom sits up and turns to George.

TOM
Of course she couldn't! She's still
got her own teeth.

George shrugs and slaps both hands on his knees.

GEORGE
I know sthat.

Tom scowls, thinking maybe he missed something. A moment passes. Tom shakes his head quickly conceding any hope to understand.

George reaches into his pocket and pulls out a crumpled handkerchief.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Thee thought thee could make sthem
fith if thee,

George opens up the handkerchief. Inside are his teeth broken into pieces.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
broke them into lithle piethes.

Tom looks at the handkerchief and just stares.

TOM
That's just not right.

GEORGE
Whath am I gonna do about thith?

Tom turns his head toward George.

TOM
How 'bout the Salvation Army?

George looks at him like he's nuts.

Tom rethinks what he just said.

TOM
No, I guess not.

Tom sits up and takes a closer look at the teeth.

TOM
And it looks like gluing them back
together is out of the question.

George scowls at him and slowly nods.

Tom sits up and scratches the back of his neck.

TOM
I don't know, . . .how much you
think you need?

George sits straight up and protests,

GEORGE
Oh, no! I couldn't thake the money
you work tho hard for, Thom.

While George and Tom talk, unseen by either, HOWARD, a huge, delusional, homeless man descends the stairs. Howard always recites parts of movies.

Tom looks back down at the teeth and shrugs.

Howard walks to the edge of the subway platform and takes a deep breath.

TOM
Well, I don't . . .

Howard angrily looks up to the ceiling.

HOWARD
(screaming)
So, what now, huh? What do you want
from me?

Tom and George look in the direction of Howard. A few subway patrons give notice but most just mind their own business.

TOM
(unemotional)
Oh, for chrissakes. Who you think
he is today?

George looks to Tom for only a moment, then back to Howard.

GEORGE
You asthking me? I haven'th theen a
movie in yearths.

HOWARD

leans over the edge just a bit and looks down onto the tracks.

HOWARD
(screaming)
Yeah, I could do it. Both know you
wouldn't stop me. So answer me
please. Tell me what you're doing.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - WAITING AREA

Tom leans to George.

TOM
(whispering)
Pretty good, whoever it is.

George quickly nods in agreement.

George and Tom watch, Howard performs,

HOWARD
(screaming)
Okay, lets look at the logic. You
create man. Man suffers enormous
amounts of pain. Man dies...Heh,
maybe you should've had just a few
more brain storming sessions prior
to creation. You rested on the
seventh day, maybe you should have
spent it on compassion.

A few more people take notice.

Tom and George nod their heads with a rhythm.

HOWARD

looks down onto the tracks again, then looks up.

HOWARD
(screaming)
You know what? You're not worth it!

TOM AND GEORGE

stand and APPLAUD LOUDLY.

INT. SUBWAY STOP - WAITING AREA

Howard turns to them, bows, and walks up the steps out of the
subway, head held high.

Tom takes the teeth from George and studies them for just a moment as he sits.

The TRAIN ARRIVES.

George takes a seat and takes the handkerchief back. He disbelievingly studies it for a moment.

SUBWAY DOORS OPEN and people exit the train. Among them are a mother and daughter. The MOTHER is obviously a junkie. Her DAUGHTER, ANNIE, a cute little 11 year old CRIES almost to the point of screaming. The mother, jonesing for a fix, literally drags the little girl. ANNIE falls a couple times as her mother drags her out of the subway. No one really gives notice.

Tom doesn't pay any attention to the commotion.

George studies the situation as he slowly folds the handkerchief and stuffs it in his pocket. He doesn't take his eyes off them.

GEORGE

I catchth u slater, Thom.

Tom heads toward his instrument with a half wave to George.

TOM

Awright, Buddy, good luck with the teeth.

Tom picks up the broom handle and starts to pluck the string.

George stealthily follows the mother and daughter.

Tom starts ANOTHER SONG.

INT. NYC - MAX'S DINER - AFTERNOON

It's a typical, crummy, little diner with a few booths and spinning stools at the counter. Behind the counter is a waitress, IRENE, who looks like someone right out of the 1950s. She's attractive, hair up in a bun and she wears rhinestone studded glasses. Irene always chewing gum.

The owner, MAX, is an old marine type. He is also the cook. Max doesn't say a lot but when he does, he talks a mile a minute. He seems to always have a bug up his ass.

Tom has the hots for Irene and is somewhat bashful and very courteous toward her.

In one of the booths is a hooker, CHERRY DELITE. She's a young, very cute girl who could pass for a farmer's daughter if she didn't dressed to make it obvious she's a hooker.

A few customers occupy a few booths. One couple sit at the counter.

EXT./INT. NYC - MAX'S DINER

Tom walks up the sidewalk heading to the diner. A good wind blows against him. His hands are thrust deep in his pockets keeping warm.

Cherry TAPS on the window as Tom walks past.

Tom looks up at the window, slows his pace, and tips his hat. He enters the diner.

INT. NYC - MAX'S DINER

Max cooks in the back. Irene wipes down the counter.

The DOOR OPENS and Tom enters, blowing into his hands.

TOM
Chrissakes, it's cold out there.
Feels like winter already.

Irene doesn't pay any attention.

Cherry Delite leans out of her booth.

CHERRY
Hey, Thomas, how's the music
business?

Tom waves a disgusted hand.

TOM
Don't get me started, Cherry.

Irene looks up at Tom, then shoots a wry glance at Cherry.

IRENE
(under her breath)
Cherry, my . . .

Tom thinks he hears Irene and turns to her.

TOM
Hi, Irene.

Irene studies him for just a moment, then looks to Cherry.

Cherry smiles.

Irene ignores her.

Cherry slides back in her seat.

IRENE

You sitting at the counter or over
in the booth.

Tom looks to Cherry then quickly turns back and sits at the counter.

TOM

Sitting right here, Irene.

Tom straddles the stool and spins back and forth for a second.

TOM

Sitting right here. Seems good a
place as any.

Irene pours Tom a cup of coffee as he opens a menu.

Cherry leans out of her booth again.

CHERRY

Where you playing now, Thomas?

Tom continues to scan the menu.

TOM

Down toward the Village.

CHERRY

You should be playing the big time.

Tom shrugs as he closes the menu.

TOM

You win some, you lose some.

(to Irene)

How's the chicken salad, Irene?

Max leans through the window that separates the kitchen from the diner.

MAX

(mimicking)

You win some, you lose some.