

THE RIGHT TRACK

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FADE IN:

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - N,Q,R LINE TUNNEL - DAY**

A busy subway labyrinth runs beneath an empire of dreams buzzing with restless energy. City-dwellers on their daily commutes, tourists trying not to look lost. It's a rat race.

But in one corner...a pocket of stillness. A gathering CROWD.

From the middle: MUSIC.

The bright trill of a man's voice mixes with the twang of minor chords as they echo off tiled walls. The rat race stops to listen.

EMMETT

(singing)

Too late, suitcase. Guess you don't  
like me too much. Won't be long  
till you forget.

EMMETT, Disney-prince hair and healthy scruff, strums a beat up old guitar. An empty case rests at his feet.

As deft fingers make light work of the strings, Emmett eyes his audience. He offers a curt nod to a SUIT-CLAD MAN kind enough to toss him a few crumbled bills. A more gracious smile for a YOUNG GIRL swaying alongside her MOTHER.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

(singing)

Better run and move along, once  
again. Have you had enough or not  
yet?

The crowd shifts with the chorus. Busy lifers continue about their day making room for new faces. Among them, an AUBURN-HAIRED BEAUTY taps her foot to the beat.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

(singing)

We both know you only want it rough  
'cause you don't believe in love.  
No, you don't believe in love.

Emmett draws out the final chord, long and lovely. Auburn-hair smiles. The crowd wanes.

Slinging his guitar behind his back, Emmett crouches to ruffle through his meager earnings: a few crumbled bills, one "FREE LARGE COFFEE!" coupon, some lint.

He straightens out the bills and tucks them in his back pocket alongside the coupon. Leaves the lint. With a quick glance at the clock, another at his CRACKED WRISTWATCH, Emmett unslings his guitar.

As he makes to stash the old acoustic, a fiver drifts down to settle in the barren case. Emmett looks up.

He's met with auburn hair.

AUBURN-HAIR

Song's a little pessimistic, don't you think?

EMMETT

Sorry?

AUBURN-HAIR

The song. It's a little pessimistic.

Emmett grabs the five and packs his guitar. He stands, taking in her faded mom jeans and graphic tee. It's a band logo he vaguely recognizes. Some sort of underground indie rock type stuff. She wears it well.

EMMETT

Seemed like you enjoyed it.

AUBURN-HAIR

I never said I didn't like it. It's just...cynical.

EMMETT

You could say that. Or you could say it's the truth.

Auburn-hair knits her brow. Eyes him a moment.

AUBURN-HAIR

I don't understand guys like you. This big, beautiful world and all you see is the negative. I mean seriously, what do you have against love?

She gestures liberally, her whole body involving itself in the impassioned spew of words.

AUBURN-HAIR (CONT'D)

You make music for Christ-sake. That's cupid's arrow right there.

EMMETT

You tell that to all the buskers?

AUBURN-HAIR

Come on, you're telling me you've never laid eyes on someone special and wanted to sing about it. To get out there and let loose for the whole world.

EMMETT

Are we talking love at first sight? Soul-mates? I don't believe in that stuff.

AUBURN-HAIR

Not even a little?

EMMETT

I can't name one time love treated me nice. And pretty stories don't make good songs.

Auburn-hair shakes her head and reaches out to take Emmett's hand, pressing something into his palm.

AUBURN-HAIR

You're music's great, but maybe leave a little room for pretty things.

She gives his hand one more squeeze and walks off into the tunnel with a small salute. Emmett looks down at the folded paper in his palm: A ONE-HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL.

He snaps his head up--

EMMETT

Wait!

--But Auburn-hair is already lost in the bustling crowd. He stands alone staring down the tunnel. Bodies rush past.

Emmett turns, takes a few steps in the opposite direction, and stops. He checks his wristwatch. Taps his foot. Glances at a subway sign.

Another glance at his watch and then--

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Screw it.

He takes off after her.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - R LINE PLATFORM**

Moments later, Emmett barges onto a subway platform. He weaves his way through a flood of passengers disembarking from a newly arrived train. They push back against the boarders.

Emmett fights against the current.

He slips past a MOTHER, overfull diaper bag on her shoulder, struggling with a stroller. A BABY wails, a YOUNG CHILD clings to her coat.

As he passes, he hears a shout.

YOUNG CHILD

Mama!

Emmett turns to see the Child swept up in the bustle. Eyes on his watch, he rushes over scooping them into his arms.

**AT THE TRAIN DOORS:**

The Mother continues to fight with the stroller. Its wheel catches in the gap. Impatient passengers grumble insults.

Someone jostles the diaper bag and a sippy cups tumbles onto-

**THE PLATFORM**

It rolls to-and-fro beneath a barrage of footfall, coming to rest at a pair of scuffed work boots.

Emmett reaches down and snatches up the cup before it can be knocked back into motion. He flies to the Mother's rescue.

**AT THE TRAIN DOORS:**

With one big heft, Emmett lifts the stroller, cramming it in the overfull train car, and deposits the Child at their mother's side. A breath of relief.

MOTHER

God I'm such a mess today. Thank you.

EMMETT

Two kids in a big city? You put the rest of us to shame.

MOTHER

Oh, please, you flatter me.

She readjusts the diaper bag and smooths her hair.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Forget what people say about this city. You're the second person to help me today, believe it or not.

As Emmett steps back from the doors, she points at a faded, peeling sticker on his guitar case.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Or maybe its just you artist types. Tell your band mate I say thanks.

EMMETT

Band mate?

MOTHER

Auburn hair, t-shirt with that same logo. Such a sweetheart.

Emmett look at the sticker.

EMMETT

That's not my logo...

His eyes go wide. He thrusts his arms between the closing doors, muscling them open to a swirl of insults from other passengers.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

(urgent)

Wait, you saw her? Do you know which way she was headed?

She peers left to right and back again.

MOTHER

Oh, I guess I'm not too sure. I think I came from that way.

She gestures down the platform.

EMMETT

Thank you.

He shakes her hand with enthusiasm and rushes off the train, calling back once more as the doors close.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Thank you!

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - 7 LINE TUNNEL**

There is respite from the chaos here. A stray few people meander. Some sit ideally.

Emmett consults his wristwatch. He slows to a brisk walk.

Against one wall, an OLD MAN, drums a rhythm on a polished Steelpan. It reflects scraggly white hair peaking out from a VIETNAM VETERANS CAP, a dirt-stained face. He calls out:

OLD MAN

Emmett! Where you off to in such a rush, man?

Emmett pulls up beside him, gripping his hand and drawing in for a quick pat on the back.

EMMETT

Get this, I met a woman-

OLD MAN

It's about time!

EMMETT

Yeah, yeah, whatever. Listen to this. She caught up with me after my set, right, going on this whole rant about my music being "pessimistic." Well, right before she leaves, she gives me this.

He pulls out the folded hundred dollar bill. The Old Man grabs it. He unfolds the bill and brings it close to his face, inspecting.

OLD MAN

Well I'll be. That's the real deal.

He gives the bill back.

EMMETT

I wanted to track her down, thank her, but I have my own train to catch and not the first clue where she's going.

DESMOND

Tell me what she looks like. I've been sitting here all day. Might've seen her.

Emmett closes his eyes. The Old Man does too.

EMMETT

She had this deep auburn hair...mom jeans...and a t-shirt from this band I used to like. Hang on, I got a sticker right here.

He presents the guitar case. Taps the mans shoulder when he doesn't immediately open eyes.

OLD MAN

Golden pipes!

EMMETT

I don't follow.

OLD MAN

I saw her, alright. Heard her too. I was trying something new on the pan and she started right on sinning along. Voice enough to make angels cry.

EMMETT

Did she mention where she was headed?

OLD MAN

No. Kept on towards the 7-line though.

He nudges a can with his foot.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Filled my can up good before she left. No hundred dollar bills, but I'll be eating good tonight.

Emmett looks at the hundred.

EMMETT

You should take it. Really.

OLD MAN

Hell no! You got something special there.

EMMETT

At least take this.

He tosses his own meager wad of bills and the Free Coffee Coupon in the Old Man's can.

OLD MAN  
I appreciate you, Emmett. Now get  
out of here and find that girl.

He shoos him away.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
And don't come back 'till you do!

Emmett takes off down the tunnel.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - 7 LINE PLATFORM**

Emmett races onto the platform just as a westbound train  
departs. The rumble of a recently departed eastbound train  
echoes.

EMMETT  
Damn it!

He leans against the wall, slumping his head. He sighs and  
checks his watch.

EMMETT (CONT'D)  
I guess I have time for a coffee.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - CAFE**

An unembellished coffee shop. A few tables, fewer menu items.

On the wall behind the counter is a collage of Polaroids.  
Smiling customers lunching, laughing, holding up drinks. The  
setting might be sparse, but the atmosphere is friendly.

Emmett enters.

At the counter, an overworked BARISTA argues with an angry  
CUSTOMER.

BARISTA  
--well no one said you had to eat  
here.

CUSTOMER  
It is a health code violation!

Emmett feels something cold and wet press into his hand. He  
looks down. A big YELLOW LAB nudges his hand. It's tail wags  
a million miles a minute.

Crouching down, Emmett loves up on the furry beast. Hair  
sticks to his clothes everywhere the dog touches.

BARISTA

Call the damn FDA then! Maybe  
someone over there will give a crap  
what you have to say!

CUSTOMER

Screw you! Tell your boss you just  
lost yourself a customer!

BARISTA

I am the boss!

The Customer storms off. As he passes, he kicks the dog. It  
yelps.

CUSTOMER

Stupid mutt.

EMMETT

Hey! Watch it!

Emmett grabs the Customer by their shirt.

CUSTOMER

Let go, dude!

EMMETT

Look, I don't know what your damage  
is, but don't you dare take it out  
on the dog. Or the barista for that  
matter.

He lets go, shoving the Customer back toward the counter.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

How about you take yourself back  
over there and apologize.

CUSTOMER

I didn't do anything wrong.

EMMETT

Ok. In that case I'll just call the  
police and tell them about the  
animal abuse I just witnessed.

CUSTOMER

Jesus, fine.  
(to the barista)  
I'm sorry.

Emmett stares them down.

CUSTOMER (CONT'D)  
I really am sorry. It won't happen again.

EMMETT  
Alright, get out of here.

The Customer leaves. Emmett gives the dog another pat and heads to the counter.

BARISTA  
Thank you. That dude is always in here causing problems.

EMMETT  
Don't mention it.

BARISTA  
What can I get for you?

EMMETT  
I'll take a dirty chai latte, please. Extra shot of espresso.

BARISTA  
You got it.

The barista gets to work on the coffee. Emmett reaches for some change.

BARISTA (CONT'D)  
This one's on the house. Anyone who sticks up for Toby deserves a prize. You'll have to settle for a latte.

Emmett slides his hand from his pocket, empty apart from the hundred dollar bill.

EMMETT  
That's kind of you.

The Barista slaps a lid on the coffee and hands it over.

BARISTA  
We should get a picture of you and Toby for the wall! He sits so well for the camera. Take a look.

She holds out a Polaroid.

BARISTA (CONT'D)  
Took this one a little while ago.

In the photo: Toby sits, tongue flopped out, next to a woman holding a dirty chai latte. She sports a graphic tee, mom jeans, and familiar deep auburn hair.

Emmett smiles.

EMMETT  
Would you look at that.

BARISTA  
So cute right.

She turns and pins the photo on the wall. As she does, Emmett glimpses the clock.

EMMETT  
Hang on...

He looks at his wristwatch then back to the clock.

EMMETT (CONT'D)  
Is your clock a couple minutes fast?

BARISTA  
I don't think so. We just set it a couple days ago.

EMMETT  
Crap!

Without another word, Emmett runs from the shop nearly colliding with a startled customer as he pushes through the door.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - 7 LINE TUNNEL**

Emmett runs down the tunnel. He passes the Old Man.

DESMOND  
Any luck?

Emmett does not stop.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - R LINE PLATFORM**

He shoves his way through the busy platform. Insults are hurled.

Emmett still does not stop.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - N,Q,R LINE TUNNEL**

He rushes past a busker set up in his usual spot.

He smiles, but does not stop.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - Q LINE PLATFORM**

Finally, Emmett bursts onto the Q-line platform. He spots his train.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
The Coney Island bound Q train to  
Stillwater Avenue is departing  
momentarily.

He jogs on board.

**INT. SUBWAY CAR - CONTINUOUS**

There is a handful of passengers on this car. Emmett takes an aisle seat a few rows back. He picks at the frayed sticker on his guitar case as he waits for the train to depart.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Stand clear of the closing doors,  
please.

Just as the doors start to close, a hand juts through spilling a single drop of dirty chai. A PAIR OF SNEAKERS slip on board.

Out of breath, the passenger takes a moment to collect herself. She runs a hand through her hair, re-tucks her t-shirt into a pair of jeans.

She heads towards the back of the car.

Emmett stares absently at his feet. As the passenger passes, she bumps Emmett's shoulder.

EMMETT  
Hey--

He looks up, once again met with deep auburn hair.

EMMETT (CONT'D)  
It's you!

Auburn hair stops. She grins big. It makes her eyes squint.

AUBURN-HAIR

It's you!

EMMETT

Please, sit.

Emmett makes to scooch over, but--

AUBURN-HAIR

No, no, stay.

She gracelessly climbs over him and flops into the window seat. Emmett is speechless, then...he laughs. So does she.

EMMETT

You know I never got the name of the woman who crapped on my music.

AUBURN-HAIR

Yeah, sorry about that.

She offers her hand.

CARLA

I'm Carla.

Emmett bypasses the handshake for a light kiss to her knuckles.

EMMETT

Emmett.

CARLA

And he's a gentleman.

She leans back and takes a sip of her latte.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I want you to know, I didn't mean to come off so... harsh, earlier.

EMMETT

Hey, I appreciate the honesty. You're clearly passionate.

He points to her shirt.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

It must be the artist in you. I hear you have a killer set of pipes. "Golden."

CARLA

Secrets out.

EMMETT

Then tell me, Carla, do you only sing songs with happy endings?

CARLA

Of course not, but the world is so much bigger and brighter than we give it credit for. Things can be tough, sure, but they have a way of working themselves out.

EMMETT

My old man used to say the same thing. Then again, he died working minimum wage at a dead-end job.

CARLA

I'm sorry.

EMMETT

It's fine. I mean it's not fine. It just...is.

Carla frowns. There's a silence.

EMMETT (CONT'D)

Since he passed, I've been chasing my music, trying my hardest not to end up like he was at the end. Unhappy.

CARLA

Is it working?

Emmett looks from her soft eyes to the logo on her t-shirt, the matching one on his guitar case. Twin dirty chai latte stains mark their shoes.

EMMETT

Earlier today I wasn't too sure, but right now, I think it might be.

CARLA

Well look at that, it must be fate.

EMMETT

Does fate usually come in the form of one-hundred dollars, miss starving artist?

He pulls out the folded bill.

EMMETT (CONT'D)  
I want to thank you, truly, but I  
can't take this.

CARLA  
Keep it, please. I insist.

She tries to push away the return offer, but Emmett doesn't  
budge.

EMMETT  
No, I mean it. I won't take this  
much money. There's people who need  
it more than me.

Frowning, Carla takes the money back.

CARLA  
Fine. Did you at least keep the  
five?

EMMETT  
Gave it to your pal in the tunnel.

CARLA  
That was sweet. I always did like a  
selfless man.

She nudges him playfully. Then, an announcement comes over  
the loudspeaker:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
This is a Coney Island Stillwater  
Avenue bound train. Next stop,  
Fourteenth Street Union Square.

EMMETT  
This is me.

Emmett gathers his case and stands. As he heads for the door,  
Carla shuffles out of her seat and grabs his arm.

CARLA  
Would it be crazy if I asked to  
kiss you?

EMMETT  
Would it be crazy if I said yes?

Emmett holds his breath. Carla pulls him in.

The kiss is bold for a couple of strangers. One of Carla's  
hands cups Emmett's face, the other goes to his waist.  
Without missing a beat, she slips something in his pocket.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is Fourteenth Street Union Square. As you exit, mind the gap between the platform and the train.

They pull away. Emmett is flushed. Carla is grinning ear to ear.

EMMETT

You know, I was thinking...I mean only if you want, maybe we could, uh, do this again sometime. The kiss, I mean. Or the talking! That was great too! Oh god, I am so bad at this. Can I have your number?

CARLA

You got a pen?

Emmett palms his pockets. No pen.

CARLA (CONT'D)

I guess we'll have to leave that one up to fate.

She winks and takes her seat.

For just a moment, Emmett stands lost. Bruised heart (and ego) out on his sleeve. He heads off the train.

**INT. FOURTEENTH STREET STATION - CONTINUOUS**

Emmett watches the doors close. As he goes to tuck his hands in his hopelessly empty pockets, he feels something. Not a pen. Something thin, small. A piece of paper. He pulls it out.

A one-hundred dollar bill.

Emmett unfolds the money. Scrawled in perfect script is a phone number, beneath it a single word:

"FATE?"

Emmett looks up as the train pulls away. Through the window, Carla smiles down at him, framed by a halo of auburn-hair.

FADE OUT:

**THE END**