

BLACK

WE HEAR a tenor saxophone playing "PRISONER OF LOVE".

FADE IN.

EXT. HARLEM, N.Y. STREET CORNER - EARLY EVENING - LATE 80'S

SHOEBOX ROLLINS (Black;60s) is playing the saxophone. JAMES (Black;12) is standing near the open saxophone case, listening. Shoebox finishes playing. James claps.

JAMES

Hey, Shoebox - what's the name of that song?

SHOEBOX

Ain't no damn song, boy... call it a chart, a tune. But it ain't no song.

JAMES

Well, what's the chart called?

SHOEBOX

(adjusting his mouthpiece)  
"Prisoner of Love". Ain't no better tune in the world.

JAMES

Yeah, sure is a mean jazz tune.

SHOEBOX

Ain't nothing mean 'bout a ballad. A ballad is soft and sad, boy. All the meanness come from what made you play that ballad in the first place - like the woman who left you high and dry like you had the clap.

JAMES

What's "the clap"?

SHOEBOX

(clapping hands)  
It's this, boy... never you mind.

JAMES

What kind of sax is that?

SHOEBOX

Mines.

JAMES

No, I mean is it one of those smaller ones?

SHOEBOX

What is this... a million goddamn questions? You like what you hear, money go in the case. You don't, get your sorry, sad-walkin' ass out of my face.

JAMES

You don't have to be rude about it.

SHOEBOX

This here look like an alto to you?

JAMES

Don't know - that's why I was asking.

SHOEBOX

I don't mess with no little whore. This here is a tenor saxophone, boy.

JAMES

You're a good jazz blowing man, Shoebox.

Shoebox takes a swig from his flask. ENTER MARTHA (Black;50s) looking down from an open 1st floor window.

SHOEBOX

Aha... You the resident expert, I'm sure.

JAMES

I'm serious. I want to be...

SHOEBOX

(interrupting)

You want to be good to your mama. You want to stay in school, get a good paying job so you don't lives in the streets like I do.

MARTHA

Live in the streets... you poor jazz-man. I didn't know my bed was the streets.

SHOEBOX

Woman, what is you, a bat? Yeah,  
that's it... you a vampire bat,  
cause you not only hear everything,  
but you suck the blood dry.

MARTHA

Don't be lying to the boy.

SHOEBOX

Mind your business.

MARTHA

Old man, you are my business.  
Ought to be ashamed of yourself.

SHOEBOX

Well, it might as well be the  
streets... it's just as cold and  
probably even more dangerous.

MARTHA

James, you take what he says with a  
grain of salt.

JAMES

Yes, ma'am.

MARTHA

Dinner will be done in 10 minutes.

Martha exits, leaving the window.

SHOEBOX

As I was saying - you want to be  
good...

JAMES

No, Shoebox.

SHOEBOX

Boy, you been on my wood for damn  
near two weeks now, tugging on my  
shirttail likes you was a dog.  
Tell me, what do you want?

JAMES

I want to be a jazz-man, like you.

SHOEBOX

A jazz-man...

JAMES

Yes. I want you to teach me the music.

SHOEBOX

There ain't nothing to teach.  
(patting his chest)  
It's all in here, son.

JAMES

I got it, Shoebox.

SHOEBOX

You got shit.

James pulls out a harmonica.

JAMES

I got a harmonica, here - listen,  
I'll play a couple of riffs I've  
been working on.

James plays while Shoebox takes a swig.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Well...

SHOEBOX

Well, what?

JAMES

What do you think?

SHOEBOX

What do I think? I think I can  
make more music after a plate full  
of beans and cabbage... that's what  
I think.

JAMES

Why do you have to be mean? I just  
want to learn the music.

SHOEBOX

It takes years, boy. It ain't  
something that can be learned over  
a week or two.

JAMES

I got the time.

SHOEBOX

Yeah, well... I don't. All these youngsters going to music schools, coming out thinking they know something. You know what they know, boy?

JAMES

What?

SHOEBOX

Jack Shit - and they know him real good.

Shoebox takes a swig from the flask.

SHOEBOX (CONT'D)

Playing all those notes, up and down, thinking they saying something. No heart, no soul, no experience. You got no experience, you got no answers.

JAMES

You need time for experience.

SHOEBOX

That's right, boy. Time and effort bring experience, not a bunch a deaf and dumbass notes.

JAMES

I love the music... I love the sound of it.

SHOEBOX

Don't you want to be a rapper, boy? Ain't that what you hoodlums do?

JAMES

I'm not a hoodlum.

SHOEBOX

You could be "Ice-Tray" or "Freezer-Burn" or whatever you silly sons-a-bitches call yourselves these days.

JAMES

I don't listen to that music.

SHOEBOX

Well, that's goddamn refreshing - especially since it ain't music.

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