

YOUNG ADULT (NO TITLE): BY GLOBIANA

Summary: Jonathan, a rock musician, encounters a woman who challenges his notions about what it means to be a man. As a result, both experience insights that change their lives.

Jonathan meets Vendetta

Right away, he didn't like her. In the first place, she looked all wrong. She was way too small, and she didn't have any shape at all, hardly. Her hair was brown and thin, too long. He wondered why she didn't do something with it -- cut it, maybe, or at least fluff it up a little.

And she had this annoying left-of-center smile. Like she knew something he didn't. Or like she knew some secret about him.

Where had Sledge dug her up, anyway?

Jonathan slung his guitar strap over his shoulder and across his back, twisted to catch it, and fastened the free end to the bottom of his guitar. He carefully stepped among the mike stands, speakers, monitors, and cables, and plugged into the amp. The others had finished checking their instruments and equipment. Wrex fiddled with his keyboards; Sledge arranged his sticks and settled into position among his drums. The girl Sledge had brought to audition looked around the cramped rehearsal space. Her guitar, already tethered to the amp, hung free against her chest.

"Wait'll you hear this girl. She's got something special." Sledge was talking faster than usual.

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“Ok.” Jonathan scowled. “Let’s play ‘Your Eyes.’ Do you know it?”

Yeah. She knew it.

She moved right in, just the way Teddie used to. She must have memorized the CD. It was so easy, just like having Teddie there (as long as he didn’t look at her and her stringy hair). The old energy was coming back. Surprising. He hit hard on the melody, she was right there. The pulse was back. Yes. And then she was pulling him.... off beat.... he tugged back. Why couldn’t she hold the beat? She had the attention span of something with a small attention span. They started to stumble over each other in an undignified mess.

“Cut!” Jonathan made an angry distortion on his guitar.

Wrex’s keyboard went silent. “What’s wrong, man?”

“We were moving. Why’d you stop?” Sledge shot a short tantrum on his drums.

“What do you mean, ‘why?’” Jonathan was mad. “The bitch was messing us all up!” The bitch just stood there, looking at Wrex, at Sledge, looking at him.

“Jonnie,” whined Sledge, “I told you she could add something interesting. Give it a chance, will you?”

“I don’t think so.”

“What’s the matter? Afraid to try something new?”

“I just don’t want to have to fight my musicians, that’s all. It’s about playing together.”

Vendetta was listening to the whole thing, with that awful little grin, like she knew she was going to be Jonathan’s new bass.

Jonathan turned to her, trying to feign patience. His lower jaw jutted forward, then back. “We need to build slowly. We gotta get the tension to sneak up. To pull it off, we have to move

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together like one brain so the listener doesn't know something's happening until it's happened.

You have to stay right with me." He paused. "Can you do that?"

"Yeah. I can do that. Can you do this?" And she fingered the theme, then struck a skipping little riff that brought her back to the beat, only off -- off not even half a beat, like a hiccup. Like a stupid hiccup.

"Yeah. That'll drive you right in a circle. It goes nowhere. We're wasting each other's time here." As he turned away, he thought, "And wipe that smirk off your face. And get a haircut."

This was one damned irritating woman.

"Come on, man." It was Sledge's voice. "She really can get the sound we've been looking for. Where are you gonna find somebody that can play like her?"

"We'll find somebody."

"By Friday?"

"Sure, by Friday." Jonathan was determined to do what it took to find somebody, anybody else, by Friday.

"Let's just give it one more shot," Sledge suggested. "It'll only take a few minutes. Maybe we can work this thing out."

Vendetta just stood there, looking like she didn't care if they played again or not. But she didn't put down her guitar, either.

"All right." Jonathan glanced at her. "You want to?"

She shrugged her shoulders and moved her left hand along the frets, noiselessly.

"Ok. Same song. Now follow me."

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And again they were into it. The piece throbbed along. She stayed with them. As they reached the end of the song, Jonathan was sweating, his heart was pounding, and he was panting to the beat. She was good, dammit. He tried to act casual. He slid his right hand into the front pocket of his jeans, shifted his weight to his left foot, and thrust his left hip out. His left hand was strangling the neck of his guitar.

“If we let you play Friday, can we count on you to stay with us?”

“Yes.”

“You won’t mess around?”

“No.”

“Ok.”

She walked away. He called after her: “Nine-thirty sharp. The Cantab. Be familiar with what Sledge gives you.”

She didn’t turn around. She raised her hand. She kept walking, snapping her fingers to some beat Jonathan couldn’t hear.

“Impertinent bitch,” he muttered.