

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN VOICE

Written by

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Based on, "A Golden Voice: How Faith, Hard Work, and Humility
Brought Me from the Streets to Salvation" by Ted Williams with
Bret Witter

FADE IN:

EXT. COLUMBUS, OHIO - ESTABLISHING SHOT - MORNING

Midwinter. Thick, gray and gloomy clouds smother the skyline, hiding the sunrise. Light snow falls as brisk winds put the midwestern city under an all too familiar freeze.

INT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - SAME

SUPERIMPOSE:

"JANUARY 3, 2011"

Several HOMELESS PEOPLE seek shelter inside this condemned factory. Tents pitched. Fires in trash cans with men, women and children of varying ages huddled around to keep warm.

TED WILLIAMS (50's) camps here too. Despite his dirty, worn-out camouflage jacket, ripped jeans, disheveled salt and pepper hair - but more salt - and his brownish, rotten chipped teeth, he has a certain peace and cheerfulness unusual for someone with these circumstances. However, the wrinkles on his face tell the story of a hard life.

Ted's down on his knees. Head bowed.

TED

(praying)

Lord, thank you for allowing me to see another day. Please lead me to make the right decisions. Help me to lean on and trust you with all my heart as I go through this day. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen!

He leaps up. Determined.

He walks through the camp carrying all his material possessions in a black plastic trash bag.

He greets several of his fellow homeless with a warm smile and head nod. He doesn't know them and they don't know him, but he's an extrovert, and a real people pleaser.

TED (CONT'D)

Good morning.

A few of them return his greeting with a "HELLO" and nods. Others look at him with annoyance, not understanding what could possibly be good about this morning or this lifestyle.

TED (CONT'D)
God bless you all. Today is going
to be a great day.

Ted keeps it moving. He's got things to do.

INT. WENDY'S RESTAURANT - MORNING

Ted pulls a couple crumpled dollar bills and several coins
out of his pocket. He counts it.

He stares at the menu as he decides what he wants to eat.

Several customers shoot him apathetic and disparaging looks.
But, he's oblivious to it. He's too focused on what could
very well be his only fresh meal of the day.

EXT. WENDY'S RESTAURANT - MINUTES LATER

Ted sits on the sidewalk and eats his breakfast sandwich and
drinks his coffee.

A MAN exiting the restaurant smugly looks down on Ted.

MAN
(condescending)
Get a job instead of begging. Those
people you're hoping will give you
a handout, work hard for their
money, not to just give it away.

Ted sizes up the man. He peers into his eyes, into his soul.

TED
(with a smile)
God bless you, sir. Enjoy your day.

The man, baffled at his response, quickly gets into his car.

Ted continues to smile at him. He waves to him as the car
drives away.

EXT. COLUMBUS STREET - LATER

Ted walks the street, satisfied, as he drinks what is left of
his cup of coffee.

He says "HELLO" and "HAPPY NEW YEAR" to everyone he passes on
the sidewalks and at bus stops. They return the sentiment.

EXT. HUDSON AVENUE - MORNING

Ted stands at the corner of the Interstate exit ramp with his belongings. With an up-beat smile, he holds up a CARDBOARD SIGN, taped together with clear scotch tape down the middle where it was once torn.

INSERT SIGN

"I HAVE A GOD GIVEN GIFT OF VOICE. I'M AN EX-RADIO ANNOUNCER WHO HAS FALLEN ON HARD TIMES. PLEASE! ANY HELP WILL BE GRATEFULLY APPRECIATED. THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

BACK TO SCENE

A car with a couple of TEENAGE BOYS drive up to the stoplight. The car comes to a stop near Ted.

The DRIVER rolls his window down. Ted smiles, hopeful that they'll give him some money. Any little bit will help.

TEEN DRIVER
Get a job, Nigger!

The Driver throws a can of soda at his chest. The other TEENS in the car LAUGH and mockingly point at Ted.

The stoplight turns green and the driver speeds off, tires SCREECHING in the morning air. Ted drops his head, dejected.

EXT. HUDSON AVENUE - LATER

Hours later... Ted's still on the street corner holding up his sign. A small smile has returned to his face.

Several cars speed pass him. Some drivers don't even look in his direction.

The STOPLIGHT turns red and the cars exiting the freeway stop near him.

One of the Drivers rolls down his window and waves him over.

Ted's hopeful once again. As he walks to the car he's already expressing thanks.

TED
God Bless you, Sir.

DRIVER

(re: sign)

I'm going to make you work for your dollar... I want to hear that "talent" God gave you.

Ted takes a moment to gather himself.

Then in a split second he CLEARS HIS THROAT and performs like a pro he once was...

TED

(powerful - assured)

When you're listening to nothing but the best of oldies, you're listening to Magic 89 point 9.

The Driver is impressed. He gives Ted a couple of dollars.

DRIVER

WOW! I was going to give you the money regardless. But, you do have an amazing voice.

TED

(overjoyed)

Thank you! Thank you! My name is Ted Williams. I used to be a morning D-J at W-V-K-O and a few others stations around town.

The Driver extends his hand to Ted. They shake.

DRIVER

Nice to meet you. I'm Doral Chenoweth. I work for the Columbus Dispatch as a Videographer.

(then)

I'm going to pull my car over and get my camera out. Mind doing that again so I can record you?

TED

No, I don't mind...

(beat)

Is this going to get me a job?

DORAL

Maybe. You never know who will see it when I post it to YouTube.

TED

(befuddled)

What's YouTube?

DORAL

The internet video sharing site.

Ted's still confused. He has no idea what he's talking about.

Doral is stunned. He can't believe that he's never heard of YouTube. Then it registers with him Ted has likely been on the streets for many, many years.

INT. GAS STATION - 5 P.M.

Ted wanders the isles contemplating what to buy with his panhandling earnings of the day. He eyes the sandwiches, chips and other various candy and food items.

The CASHIER watches him closely.

Ted makes his way to the isle with basic necessities like toothpaste, mouthwash, toilet paper, etc. The look on his face suggest he should buy some of these items. But on the streets, the greatest need is to satisfy your hunger.

Instead he grabs a prepaid cellphone card, because this is important as well, to stay connected to the world.

A CUSTOMER runs in from the cold and straight to the cash register to pay for gas and purchase some cigarettes.

The Cashier is distracted long enough for Ted to quickly stuff some of the food he was eyeing into the many pockets of his camouflage jacket.

TED

(looks to the Heavens)

Forgive me, Lord.

Ted makes his way to the cash register and pays for the prepaid cellphone card.

INT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Several HOMELESS have sought shelter on this cold night.

Ted sits in the corner and eats his sandwich and chips he stole from the convenience store.

Out the corner of his eye he sees a starving FIVE-YEAR-OLD BOY staring at his food. Ted smiles at him and rips off a piece of his sandwich and hands it to the little Boy.

The Boy flashes a gracious smile at him. Ted then gives him some of the candy he stole. The Boy's smile is even bigger.

MONTAGE

Real archive news clips of local and national News Anchors from ABC NEWS, CNN, FOX NEWS, CBS NEWS introducing Ted Williams' story in their newscast before showing the YouTube video. "The Homeless Man with the Golden Voice".

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)
We end tonight's newscast with an
awesome story of a homeless man
with an amazing gift of voice.

END MONTAGE.

INT. ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING - DAWN

SUPERIMPOSE:

"A COUPLE DAYS LATER"

Ted sleeps sitting up with his back against the wall. His belongings safely tucked under his legs. He's bundled up in his camouflage jacket and several tattered blankets.

Ted's pre-paid cellphone starts VIBRATING.

He slowly wakes up and answers it.

TED
(groggy)
Hello.

On the other end of the call is his friend, ERIC, we'll learn more about him later.

ERIC (V.O.)
Yo, Radio! Where you at?
Everybody's looking for you.

TED
Who's looking for me?

ERIC (V.O.)
The world is buzzing about "The Man
With the Golden Voice."

Ted's more alert now.

TED
You joking me?

ERIC (V.O.)
 Nah, it's true. W-N-C-I 97 point 9
 wants to hear from you.

TED
 They talking about giving me a job?

ERIC (V.O.)
 I don't know. But, you need to get
 down there A-S-A-P.

A beat. Ted turns somber.

TED
 Yo, E. I'm sorry about what
 happened with the---

ERIC (V.O.)
 I know it wasn't you, bro.

TED
 Still, man, I brought her around. I
 promise, as soon as I get back on
 my feet I'm going to pay you back.

ERIC (V.O.)
 Hey, right now we need to get you
 down to that radio station.

Ted smiles big as he contemplates his next move.

INT. AL'S TRUCK - MOVING - MORNING

Ted rides shotgun in a SUV with AL BATTLE, one of his
 longtime friends he met on the streets. Al (50's) is loyal,
 laid back, and well put together.

TED
 Thanks for doing this, Al. You've
 always looked out for me, man.

AL BATTLE
 I always got your back, Radio. I
 just wish you'd keep in touch more.

Ted nods, he knows Al is right.

As Al's truck pulls into the parking lot, they're greeted by
 several REPORTERS, CAMERA CREWS and TELEVISION LIVE TRUCKS.

AL BATTLE (CONT'D)

(re: media)

There must be someone really famous
down here.

TED

Whoever it is I'm going to try to
impress them enough to get me a
job. I'll be fine with just two
hundred dollars for some V-O work.

Al parks the truck.

The MEDIA rushes to the passenger side door to get to Ted.

AL BATTLE

I think you're the important person
they're here for, my man.

Ted, with a huge smile on his face like a child on Christmas,
jumps out of the passenger side and revels in the attention.

EXT. WNCI RADIO STATION - CONTINUOUS

Photographers snap pictures like Paparazzi. Reporters SHOUT
questions (AD-LIB)... Videographers jock for position to get
the best shot.

Al swiftly, in a protective manner, leads Ted into the radio
station.

INT. WNCI RADIO STATION - LOBBY

A college INTERN greets Ted and Al.

INTERN

(gleefully)

Good morning, Mister Williams. How
are you? Do you need anything?

TED

Not thanks, I'm good, sweetheart.
And you can just call me Ted.

She smiles warmly at him. She quickly leads them down the
hallway to a staging room.

INTERN

If you change your mind, the green
room is stocked with fruit, donuts,
bagels and coffee. Help yourself.

Ted looks at the spread. He's overwhelmed.

INTERN (CONT'D)

I'll be back to get you when it's
time for you to go on the air.

She leaves in a rush. She has other duties to handle.

TED

(baffled - emotional)

A few days ago I was getting dirty
looks and racial slurs yelled at
me. Now people are calling me
"Mister" and "Sir" and interested
in me.

INT. WNCI RADIO - STUDIO - LATER

Ted is awestruck at the studio setup. It's a lot different
from the way they were when he was a top morning-drive radio
DJ. He sits in front of a microphone, headphones on.

A young RADIO DJ that reminds him of himself sits across from
him. A LOCAL NEWS TEAM in the corner records everything.

RADIO DJ

Welcome back to 97 point 9 F-M. We
have a special guest in the house
this morning. The newest YouTube
sensation... Ted Williams, "The Man
with the Golden Voice."

The Radio DJ presses a button on his SOUND BOARD that
simulates a studio audience giving a ROUSING OVATION.

Ted's very impressed.

TED

Thank you! Thank you!
(re: the sound board)
That's nice. I didn't have anything
like that when I was in the biz.

RADIO DJ

With a name like Ted Williams I
wonder if you could also toss a
baseball or blast a home-run.

Ted laughs at the idea of that.

TED

My father wished I could've. He dreamed of having a ballplayer for a son. But, I had no appetite to play sports. That's just one of the many ways I disappointed him... However, my dream was always to have millions hear my voice.

RADIO DJ

Your voice is one-of-a-kind, how did you develop it?

TED

Once when I was ten years old, I stayed home sick for several days. So, my mother surprised me with a Panasonic radio with the plug in microphone... You guys are probably too young to remember those.

(then)

I loved entertainers. I'd record myself impersonating Jackie Gleason, Red Skelton and Soupy Sales. I actually thought I was going to be a comedian. Some of my friends on the streets would say I am one.

Everyone shares a light chuckle.

TED (CONT'D)

I'd walk around my parents house using my radio voice to describe what was going on.

(radio voice - powerful)

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, this is Ted Williams on W-W-R-L, nothing but the best in soul, and it's gonna be a hot one in the Kingsborough houses baby, especially with Momma cooking green beans in the kitchen.

Everyone LAUGHS and CLAPS. Ted has the room in his palm.

RADIO DJ

You're about to take my job.

Then in a beat, the Radio DJ turns serious.

RADIO DJ (CONT'D)

I'm still trying to figure out how someone with your talent isn't on the airwaves.

TED

I used to be the top rated morning-drive DJ in Columbus. I had it all. My "American dream"...

(starts crying)

I was a husband. A father. But, I wasn't humble enough to keep it. You all know about my gift, but not my curse. I struggled with alcohol. Then on August 20th 19-88 I smoked crack cocaine for the first time...

Stunned silence. Everyone is in shock, except Al.

TED (CONT'D)

Forgive me for the story I'm about to tell. But, I've got to be honest about what happened and what I have done. My recovery demands it, and my faith as well.

Ted hangs his head and takes a deep breath as he prepares to bare his soul.

INT. WVKO RADIO STUDIO - MORNING

SUPERIMPOSE:

"AUGUST 20TH, 1988"

Ted (mid 30's), dressed sharp in the most fashionable attire for the times. He confidently sits in front of the microphone in total control. This is his comfort zone.

"TAKE YOUR TIME DO IT RIGHT" by the S.O.S. BAND plays. The song fades to its conclusion. Ted opens his microphone.

TED

That was the S-O-S Band telling you to take your time on those roads this morning... The request line is open. Call 6-1-4-4-7-5-W-V-K-O to put yours in.

The phones lines light up on the board in front of him. He presses one of the buttons to answer.