There's humming. Faint, a bit theatrical. Someone's singing to themselves under their breath.

Gemma follows the sound around and spots a girl sitting alone on a bench, half in shadow. She's tall, relaxed but intentional — like she's used to being watched, even when no one's around. The girl is BRENDA HALL (18), an outgoing and loud theatre student. Gemma clears her throat.

GEMMA
Not to intrude, but... what are you doing singing alone in the corner of a party?

Brenda looks up, smiling faintly.

BRENDA
Didn't think anyone could hear me.

GEMMA
You were projecting. It's kind of hard to miss.

She takes a sip of tea, steps a little closer but doesn't sit.

GEMMA (CONT'D)
Are you hiding or just auditioning for the moon?

BRENDA
(smiling, dry)
Little of both.

Gemma stretches out her hand.

GEMMA
Gemma Isaacs. Broadway star in training.

BRENDA
Brenda. Theatre major.

They shake hands briefly. Cool. Polite. A flicker of something under the surface.

BRENDA
I guess we'll probably end up in the same building a lot.

GEMMA
Probably. Auditions, rehearsals, all that fun stuff.

Brenda nods, then glances away like she's watching for someone. Or avoiding someone.

BRENDA
You planning to audition for the production?

GEMMA
Definitely. You?

BRENDA
Of course.

They smile — polite, even pleasant. But it lingers half a second too long. That subtle sizing-up moment neither of them will admit to.

GEMMA
Well... may the best voice win, I guess.

BRENDA
(traces a smirk)
You sound like someone who enjoys having the lead.

GEMMA
Only when I've earned it.

Brenda stands slowly — tall, graceful.

BRENDA
Same.

They share a beat of quiet tension. Nothing hostile — yet.

GEMMA
Guess we'll see then.

BRENDA
Looking forward to it.

Gemma turns around and walks away. Brenda watches her go, then leans back against the bench. She hums again — quieter now, but just as deliberate.

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It is now close to midnight, people are dancing closely, singing loudly, some are playing drinking games, others are just sitting in groups chatting. Daynah is standing alone, sipping at a drink, bopping along to the music, watching everything around her. Two guys, the two with Natasha before, approach Daynah.

GUY #1
Hey, why are you all alone?