

ROCKABILLY WRECK

Written by

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INT. MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Beer bottles litter nearly every flat surface of the mobile home and is, in general, very disorganized.

The TV is on in the corner of the living room and commercials playing at a low volume flash on the screen.

STRATTON HUCKSLEY (33) is sleeping on the sofa. He is a thin, lanky man who is wearing black slacks, a wife beater, and sports a pompadour. His limbs are sprawled out on the couch and his face is buried into a pillow as he snores quietly.

JACK (14) enters the living room and looks at Stratton. He is a thin boy who looks strikingly similar to Stratton.

Jack rolls his eyes and sighs. He puts his BACKPACK on the ground and enters the kitchen.

He shuffles through various PAPERS and JUNK on the counter until he finds a PEN and PAD. He writes on it.

He rips the STICKY NOTE off the pad and walks into the living room. He moves around the clutter and stops in front of Stratton, staring at him with knit brows.

He carefully sticks the note to Stratton's forehead. Jack looks at Stratton for a minute longer, then turns.

Jack grabs his backpack and goes to the door, slowly opening it. He exits the mobile home and closes the door behind him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Stratton jerks awake to the sound of the door latching shut. He sits up and looks around the empty living room.

He notices the sticky note and furrows his brows. He rips it off his forehead and reads it:

"DAD, I'M GOING BACK TO MOMS. I LIKE LIVING WITH HER BETTER.

-JACK"

Stratton clicks his tongue and tosses the note on the coffee table.

STRATTON

Dammit.

Stratton rubs his eyes and takes a deep breath in. He grabs the REMOTE and turns off the TV. He stands and moves around the clutter to get to his kitchen.

He stops in front of his LANDLINE and clicks a button. An automated voice starts to speak.

VOICE MESSAGE SYSTEM
You have 14 new voice mails.

The machine clicks and recordings of people's voices start to play.

VOICE MESSAGE SYSTEM (CONT'D)
Hey, Stratton. Just wondering when
you're gonna get last months rent
in, and this months. Call me.

Stratton sighs. He grabs a PACK OF CIGARETTES next to the phone and takes one. He puts the CIGARETTE in his mouth and grabs a ZIPPO, lighting it. He tosses the lighter on the counter.

He starts down the hall while the messages are still playing.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Stratton enters the bathroom and looks at himself in the mirror. He fixes his hair. He puffs on his cigarette without taking it out of his mouth.

VOICE MESSAGE SYSTEM (O.S.)
Stratton! Hey, it's Joel. Uh, sorry
you got your car impounded, but I
can't drive ya to Little Rock this
weekend. I have work. Sorry, bud,
hope you get it figured out.

Stratton does not react to the voice messages. He places his cigarette in an ASHTRAY and turns on the sink. He splashes some water on his face. He squirts a dollop of shaving cream onto his hand and lathers it on his face.

VOICE MESSAGE SYSTEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hi, Mr. Hucksley. This is Barb from
the sherifs office. We request that
you please come in soon to pay the
\$150 impound fee for your
Oldsmobile 442. Thank you.

Stratton grabs his razor and begins to shave. His brows are knit.

VOICE MESSAGE SYSTEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Stratton, it's Michelle. Jack is
stayin' with me. I don't want him
to see you 'till you get your shit
together. You're a train wreck.
It's nothing our son should
witness...please do something for
yourself.

Stratton stops shaving and clicks his tongue. He tosses the
razor on the counter and quickly exits the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Stratton, shaving cream still covering half his jaw, stomps
up to the phone and clicks it off before another message
starts playing.

STRATTON
Fuckin' Christ! I get it Michelle,
I suck!

He goes back to the bathroom and wipes the rest of the
shaving cream away with a towel. He grumbles.

Stratton chucks the towel in the corner and grabs the
smoldering cigarette from the tray. He leaves the bathroom.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Stratton enters the bedroom, cigarette hanging from his
mouth. He shuffles through a pile of clothes and grabs a
BLACK BUTTON DOWN. He throws it on and buttons it. He grabs a
TIE from the same pile and ties it around his neck.

STRATTON
(Mumbling)
Want me to do somethin for myself,
goddammit, I'll do something for
myself.

As he finishes tying his tie, he moves to the other side of
the bedroom and grabs an ACOUSTIC GUITAR that is propped
against the wall. He strums the strings. He adjusts the
guitar in his grip and starts to tune each string.

He fiddles with the tuning pegs while plucking at the
strings. He strums all the in-tune strings together.
Satisfied, he lays the guitar in a CASE and closes it shut.

He picks up the case by the handle and takes his cigarette from his mouth. He smothers the butt in an ASHTRAY on the nightstand.

INT. MOBILE HOME - MORNING

Stratton walks to the front door and opens it. He exits the mobile home without looking behind him and slams the door shut.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Stratton starts towards the road with determination. He takes long strides as his guitar swings at his side. His brow is furrowed.

EXT. BAR - AFTERNOON

Stratton stops in front of a bar. It is a small place that has posters of band lists pasted to the windows. A sign above the posters reads:

LIVE MUSIC DAILY! COME IN AND HAVE SOME FUN!

Stratton takes a deep breath and opens the door.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Stratton sits in a small, neat office. His guitar is propped against the wall. His hands are in his lap.

A WOMAN with horn rimmed glasses reviews a CALENDAR. She looks up at Stratton, adjusting her glasses.

WOMAN

Do you have a criminal record?

Stratton adjusts the collar of his shirt. He chuckles.

STRATTON

(weak)

Well, who doesn't?

The woman purses her lips and sighs.

WOMAN

I'm sorry, Mr. Hucksley, but I don't think we will be able to have you at our venue.

Stratton frowns.

STRATTON

Thank you for your time.

He stands and turns, collecting his guitar. He leaves the office.

CUE MONTAGE - VARIOUS

INT. BAR - AFTERNOON - A bar EMPLOYEE shakes his head as Stratton pleads. The employee walks away. Stratton sighs.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON - A MAN urges Stratton out of his office. Stratton tries to persuade him, motioning to his guitar case. The man shakes his head, getting increasingly angrier. He slams the door on Stratton.

EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON - Stratton follows a MAN as he walks from his car to a venue. Stratton hastily explains himself, guitar at his side. Timidly, the man expresses disinterest and hurries into the venue.

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON - Stratton stands in an office, playing his guitar and singing. His foot is propped on a chair. WOMAN 2 watches him, startled. She tries to make him stop, but he is not paying attention.

INT. STAGE - AFTERNOON - A MAN sits in a chair, a baffled look on his face. Stratton is on stage. He is on his knees, digging through his guitar case in a frenzy. He pulls SHEET MUSIC and SONG LYRICS from the case, grasping the pages in both hands as he begs to the man.

END MONTAGE

INT. BAR BATHROOM - EVENING

The vacant bathroom is dim and dirty. A blue tint comes from the flickering light.

Stratton stares at himself in the mirror. An unlit CIGARETTE hangs from his mouth. He has bags under his eyes and his pompadour is frayed. He sighs. He slicks back his hair.

His guitar is hastily propped against the wall. It starts to slide against the tile and the case crashes on the ground.

The crash echos through the bathroom. Stratton does not react.

The case opens and a few PAGES slide out.

He sighs and looks down at the guitar case. Faded stickers are displayed on the front.

He notices the loose pages and bends down to pick them up. He studies the lyrics scribbled across the pages.

He fingers through the pages. He finds a POLAROID paper-clipped to one of the pages. He stops, his face softens.

INSERT: Black and white polaroid of Stratton (24) and Jack (5). Jack sits on Stratton's lap and Stratton holds him. Both are smiling.

Stratton smiles softly as he looks at the picture.

He takes his cigarette from his mouth and puts it behind his ear. He organizes the loose pages and shoves them back into his case.

Stratton picks up his guitar. He looks at himself in the mirror with confidence before exiting the bathroom.

INT. BAR - EVENING

A few CUSTOMERS sit around the venue. EMPLOYEES are making drinks and cleaning up while a BAND on stage is setting up speakers and sound equipment. Stratton glances at the band on stage, then beelines to the bar.

Customers stare at him.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Stratton walks up to the BARTENDER. He pulls a TEN DOLLAR BILL from his pocket and slams it on the counter.

STRATTON
Hey, man. Whiskey. What ever ya
got.

Without speaking, the bartender takes the bill and turns. They return a minute later with a GLASS OF WHISKEY and set it in front of Stratton.

Stratton takes it and downs it in one gulp. He slams the glass back on the bar top.

STRATTON (CONT'D)
Thanks, man.

Stratton starts to walk away. The bartender stares at him as Stratton disappears down a hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Stratton looks around the dimly lit hallway. He finds a door that says OFFICE: PRIVATE. He takes a deep breath in and knocks. A voice speaks on the other side.

BOSS (O.S.)
Yeah, who is it?

Stratton clears his throat.

STRATTON
(Collected)
It's Stratton Hucksley, sir. I'm a musician...and a regular here at the bar...sir.

Silence. Stratton looks down at his feet, then back at the closed door.

STRATTON (CONT'D)
Sir--?

The door opens quickly and the BOSS, a short, stout man with glasses too big for his face, looms in the doorway. He has a combover and wears gaudy jewelry. Stratton looks down at him, surprised.

BOSS
I know who you are, Hucksley.

Stratton's eyes are wide.

STRATTON
Y-you do?

The boss narrows his eyes.

BOSS
Yeah. If you are looking for work,
I got nothin' for ya.

The boss starts to close the door. Stratton perks up.

STRATTON
Wait!

Stratton jams his foot in the door as the boss is closing it. The door hits Stratton's foot and the boss pauses.

The boss looks up at Stratton through the crack in the door.

Stratton looks worried.

STRATTON (CONT'D)

Sorry, it's just...I can play real well. I'd like to have a chance at least.

The boss stares at him contemplative. He opens the door again. He steps out of the way.

BOSS

Come in.

INT. OFFICE - EVENING

Stratton lets out a sigh of relief. He readjusts his guitar in his grip and walks through the door. Stratton is standing in the middle of the office in front of the boss's desk. The boss closes the door behind him and walks around him.

BOSS

Take a seat.

Stratton looks behind him and sits down on a chair by the wall. He places his guitar on the ground next to him.

BOSS (CONT'D)

So what exactly do you want from me?

The boss goes to his desk and sits down in the chair. He rests his arms on the desk and stares at Stratton.

STRATTON

I'd like to perform on stage in your bar. Play my music...prove myself as a musician.

The boss sits back in his chair, still looking at Stratton.

BOSS

And why'd you come to me? There are other venues in Arkansas, y'know.

Stratton hesitates. He straightens and scoots forward in his chair.

STRATTON

Because...I've always come to this bar. I know it best.

The boss snorts.

BOSS

(Blunt)

Look, Stratton. I can't put you on the list. You've got a reputation here that I can't look past.

Stratton looks defeated but he quickly regains his composure. He stands from his seat and takes a couple steps towards the desk.

STRATTON

Look, sir, I know theres been a few times I've gotten a little out of control here...but I'm really tryin' to change. Get myself out of the shit hole I'm in right now.

The boss grabs a PACK OF CIGARETTES from his desk and puts one in his mouth. He tosses the pack back on the desk top.

BOSS

(Tense)

Stratton, the cops arrested you in MY establishment. That don't make me look good.

The boss grabs a LIGHTER and lights the cigarette. He crosses his arms and looks at Stratton. Stratton sighs.

Stratton takes a breath in and slicks back his hair. He moves his hands expressively as he speaks.

STRATTON

Look. I understand. I've fucked up in the past, but that doesn't mean it will keep happening.

BOSS

And how can I take that seriously when I smell liquor on your breath?

Stratton hesitates and his hands drop to his sides. He looks at the ground.

STRATTON

(Quietly)

It was one drink...I...listen, I need this. Just give me a chance and I can show you. Let me play something for you!

Stratton moves for his case, crouching as he opens it. The boss bats the air.

BOSS
Nah, nah, nah.

Stratton knits his brow and looks back up at the boss. He straightens again.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Listen, I'm a busy man. I don't have time for this so if you're done, please.

The boss motions to the door. Stratton glances at the door, then looks at the ground. He contemplates.

STRATTON
Sir...

Stratton looks at the boss and takes a step towards the desk.

STRATTON (CONT'D)
I have fucked up so many things in my life, I need to do something for myself. If you don't want me then I won't push it. But I promise you, I won't let you down! Not like I have with others--with my son. I can't keep lettin' people down, man.

Stratton slams his hands on the desk.

STRATTON (CONT'D)
Give me a chance, and I will be the best goddamn musician you've ever had.

The boss looks at him in surprise. He takes the cigarette from his mouth. Stratton takes his hands from the desk and straightens.

The boss does not speak.

Beat.

The boss puts his cigarette in an ASHTRAY on the desk and then shuffles through various PAPERS. He finds a PLANNER, opens it, and skims through it. He takes a PEN and scribbles something on it.

He glances up at Stratton.

BOSS
You've gotta set list?

Stratton nods.

The boss continues to contemplate.

Stratton watches intently. The boss looks at the planner for a moment, then looks up to Stratton. He places his hands on the desk.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Fine then. You're on the list, you
play tonight after Punching Guns.
But, I ain't doin this out of
sympathy. Give me a solid show and
if I like what I hear, we can talk.

Stratton gasps. A smile forms across his face.

He extends his hand and the boss takes it. Stratton shakes his hand passionately.

STRATTON

I'll give you a good show alright!

THE END