

TWENTY SEVEN CLUB

Written by

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INT. GIBSON MANDOLIN-GUITAR MANUFACTURING COMPANY

SUPER: Kalamazoo, Michigan 1937

LUTHIER, 50s, pulls a guitar body from a stack, brand new, glistening, with warm features and bright paint.

He examines the edges down through the neck.

LUTHIER 2 (O.C.)  
What is it?

LUTHIER 1  
I don't know. This one just  
seems... Different.

A second LUTHIER, 20s, walks over.

LUTHIER 2  
Different how?'

LUTHIER 1  
Look... The ribboning on the back.

LUTHIER 2  
It's interesting, but so what?

LUTHIER 1  
Lightning. The tree was struck.

LUTHIER 2  
Oh wow. Does it change the sound?

LUTHIER 1  
No. Just makes it a little...  
Unique.

Satisfied, he strings the guitar, and then he gently places the guitar in a case with a purple-lined interior.

He shuts the case.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WARNER BROTHERS EXCHANGE BUILDING - RECORDING STUDIO

ROBERT JOHNSON, 27, opens the case, cigarette dangling from his mouth, and looks down at the guitar. A bit of ash falls.

SOUND ENGINEER  
Hey man, be careful! A hundred and  
fifty bucks for that thing.

ROBERT  
How much? Damn.

Robert picks it up and strums it.

SOUND ENGINEER  
It's a new Gibson, just got it  
yesterday.

ROBERT  
(whistles)  
Electric?

SOUND ENGINEER  
Yeah.

ROBERT  
Aw, I ain't tryin' no electric  
guitar. Not today.

Robert puts it back and closes the case.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WARNER BROTHERS EXCHANGE BUILDING - EARLY 1960S

The small manicured hand of a posh DESIGNER, 30s) brushes  
away the dust on the guitar case.

DESIGNER  
Oh my goodness, we're going to have  
to get rid of all this old stuff to  
make room for the offices. Can you  
believe they kept it all these  
years?

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WARNER BROTHERS EXCHANGE BUILDING - EARLY 1980S

A MOVER, 20s, takes the guitar onto a moving truck.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MOVING TRUCK

The mover carries the guitar into a storage unit.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. STORAGE UNIT - EARLY 1990S

The door opens, casting sunlight onto the guitar case. A  
YOUNG MAN (20s) smiles and rushes over.

YOUNG MAN  
Check this out. Can I have it?

The storage facility OWNER, 60s, stares at him.

OWNER  
Yeah, whatever, just make sure  
everything else gets in the truck  
in the next two hours. Got it?!

The young man grins, picks up the guitar, and puts it in the back of his station wagon.

INT. HOME - CURRENT DAY

SAM (60s, gaunt with a scruffy beard and a missing tooth)  
rubs the layers of dirt off the guitar case.

The guitar sits on a shelf full of other unwanted things.

SAM  
Guitar still in there?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN  
Assume so. Never touched it,  
clearly.

SAM  
Too bad.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN  
Yeah, maybe. Anyway, just get it  
all cleared out as soon as  
possible.

SAM  
Will do.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - PRESENT DAY - MORNING

Sam sets the guitar up on semi-permanent stand. The case aged, but clean.

He opens it revealing the pristine guitar inside.

EXT. FLEA MARKET - SAME TIME

JJ (tall, thin and boyish with a Fuck You vibe) walks with JEREMY (dark features that match his moodiness).

JEREMY  
You see enough?

JJ  
Just chill, and look around for something interesting.

JEREMY  
It all looks like trash to me.

JJ  
Diamonds in the rough. We're looking for diamonds, man.

JEREMY  
You look for diamonds, I'll look for popcorn.

JJ  
(baby talk)  
We'll get wittle Jeremy his popcorn after we're done looking around, okay?

JEREMY  
Damn well better.

JJ starts to laugh. Jeremy broods.

JJ  
Come on, man. Just chill.

JEREMY  
The thing is, if you actually bought something when we came to these things, then I wouldn't give a shit. But we go to every one in every town and all you do is look for *diamonds* but don't find shit!

A woman with 2 small kids scowls at Jeremy as she walks by.

JJ  
Sorry about him.

JEREMY  
She can get the hell over it. I'm sure those kids hear way fucking worse on TikTok.

JJ Smirks. The woman glares back, then scampers away.

JJ  
Probably. Come on, one more stand down here on the end and then I'll get you some popcorn.

JEREMY

Real god damn popcorn, no kettle  
corn bs from like 9 years ago  
that's stale as hell.

JJ

I like kettle corn.

JEREMY

You fucking would.

They approach Sam's stand and JJ rushes to the guitar.

JJ

Holy shit, dude. Do you know what  
this is...

Sam raises his eyebrows and looks at the two.

JEREMY

No? What?

JJ

Oh, nothing. Probably a knockoff.  
(to Sam)  
What do you want for this?

Sam saunters over. Scratches his chin.

SAM

Make me an offer.

JJ

Where'd you get it from?

SAM

An estate sale. Some old timer  
passed and it was sitting in his  
basement. Never touched.

JJ

Give you a hundred bucks for it.

Sam laughs out loud.

SAM

You play?

JJ

Yeah, a little.

SAM

A little? Lead guitarist of The  
Delighted...

JJ and Jeremy look at Sam. JJ smiles, Jeremy's eyes narrow.

JJ  
You know us?

SAM  
I have a storage space and office  
by the Echo, so I always pay  
attention to who plays there. You  
guys ain't bad. Ain't good, but  
ain't bad.

JEREMY  
This guy...

JJ  
Well, I guess that's a compliment.  
(pointing to the guitar)  
May I?

Sam nods and JJ picks it up. He looks at the back and points  
to the lightning pattern.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Yeah, look here. This wood grain.  
It's gotta be a knock off. You'd  
think they'd try to hide this a  
little better.

Sam and Jeremy lean in and look.

SAM  
Sounds fine when you play it.

JJ starts to strum and he can tell its special immediately.  
He can't help but smile. He puts it back in the case.

JJ  
How about two fifty?

Sam doesn't react. And Jeremy huffs.

JEREMY  
Don't waste your time with this  
dude. It's probably from Walmart.

JJ pulls out the cash in his pocket and counts it.

JJ  
I got three hundred fifty six...

JEREMY  
Fifty two... My popcorn.

JJ  
(smirking)  
Three hundred fifty two on me.  
How's that?

Sam contemplates the offer.

SAM  
It's worth more, a lot more, but  
looking at you...

Sam looks deep into JJ's eyes. JJ gets a little uncomfortable and looks away.

Jeremy laughs and lights a cigarette.

JEREMY  
This guy. Come on JJ, let's go.

SAM  
I think you need this guitar more  
than I need the money. So take it.  
Three hundred even. And buy your  
friend something more than popcorn.

JJ looks back into Sam's eyes.

JJ  
You know it's worth more.

SAM  
Some people... Just need a little  
shove.

Jeremy snorts. Sam's gaze remains pointed.

JJ  
Whatever. Deal. Three hundred.

Sam closes the guitar case and latches it.

JJ hands him the money and picks up the guitar.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Thanks man.

SAM  
Be careful with that.

JEREMY  
Dude, let's go. This guy's freaking  
me out.

JJ  
Right. Yeah, okay, let's roll.  
Thanks again man.

They walk away, and Sam stares at JJ, who stares back.

SAM  
Come back if you ever figure it  
out. You can pay me what you owe me  
for the guitar.

JJ, confused, turns and continues on with Jeremy

INT. GUITAR SHOP - AN HOUR LATER

JJ walks in and sets the guitar on the counter. GUITAR SHOP  
OWNER looks down and starts to open the case.

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
What have we got...  
(lifts the lid)  
Holy shit. Is this real?

JJ  
You tell me. It's definitely old.

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
If this is what I think it is,  
old... Shit. This is almost ninety  
years old. One of the first  
electric guitars ever made. Want me  
to clean it and string it up?

JJ  
Yeah. Please.

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
Okay, give me an hour.

INT. GUITAR SHOP - LATER

The shop owner walks up to JJ and holds out the guitar.

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
All set my man.

JJ  
Thanks. How much?

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
No charge. Just lucky I got to hold  
something like that.

JJ  
Damn. Cool. Thanks.

JJ and the shop owner walk to the counter, and JJ puts the guitar in the case and heads to the door.

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
What's with the post cards?

JJ turns.

JJ  
Post cards?

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
Yeah. In the pocket. There were all these random post cards in there. Addressed to different initials but nothing else written on them.

JJ  
No clue. Just got this thing a few hours ago at the flea market.

GUITAR SHOP OWNER  
No shit. Diamond in the rough, huh?

JJ  
Yessir. Have a good one.

INT. THE ECHO LOUNGE & MUSIC HALL - STAGE - NIGHT

JJ, Jeremy, and two others, a singer GUY (Mick Jagger wannabe) and a drummer ALEX (looks like he could be Jeremy's brother) are on stage.

The instruments crescendo to the outro.

GUY  
Thank you Dallas! Good night!

They walk off stage and keep going.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Hell yea! Nice set! Really tight.

JEREMY  
(to JJ)  
Does he not see the fucking no one watching us?

JJ shakes his head.

INT. THE ECHO LOUNGE & MUSIC HALL - GREEN ROOM

Guy flops down on a couch as Alex takes off his shirt, soaked in sweat and towels off.

GUY  
Hell yes, excellent.

JEREMY  
Uh. What are you even talking about?

ALEX  
(huffs)  
Not now, Jeremy?

JEREMY  
What the hell is it to you?

ALEX  
It was a set and it's over, let's just enjoy it.

JEREMY  
It was trash. JJ? Complete trash, right?

They all look at JJ who just looks down.

JJ  
It was fine. Same as always.

JEREMY  
Yeah, which is... trash.

GUY  
Dude, you're a freakin' bassist. It's literally the easiest thing to replace. If you don't wanna play with us, there's the god damn door, man.

JEREMY  
Is it *literally* the easiest thing to replace?

GUY  
Fuck off. JJ, tell your boy to shut the fuck up for once.

JJ  
Can we all just chill for a minute?

No one says anything. The tension is there, but it may be dissipating.

JEREMY  
It was trash.

Guy stands violently.

GUY  
What the fuck do you know?! Maybe  
you're trash!!!

JJ  
(under his breath)  
Dammit.

Alex is shaking his head.

JEREMY  
This band... YOUR fucking band is  
complete shit. And YOU'RE complete  
shit! I'm OUT!

JJ  
Jeremy! God dammit.

JEREMY  
No, JJ. You know it. You know it.  
You're the only one in this room  
with any talent. And you fucking  
know it. There's NO WAY I'm playing  
with this guy again. Amateur.

Jeremy storms off.

GUY  
Good Fucking Riddance!

JJ  
I'll talk to him.

GUY  
No. To hell with him! He's out!

JJ  
Come on, stop it.

GUY  
No. I'm done with his shit. He's  
gone man. Let him walk. We'll find  
someone else.

JJ  
Guy, please.

GUY

No, I'm not letting him ruin  
another night of my life on tour.  
I'm not FUCKING doing it.

JJ

If he's out, I'm out. You gonna let  
me leave?

Guy stares at JJ. JJ raises his eyebrows. Guy doesn't blink.

JJ (CONT'D)

Seriously?

JJ looks at Alex who just shrugs.

JJ (CONT'D)

Maybe he's right.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - THE NEXT DAY

JJ gets out of an older Wrangler with the top down.

JJ walks around to Jeremy in the driver's seat.

JJ

Thanks for the ride.

JEREMY

Yeah. Thanks for... You know.

JJ

Yeah. Better be worth it man.

JEREMY

What are you gonna do?

JJ looks around.

JJ

I don't know. Find something new.  
Probably play around here a little  
for a while. Get some scratch. Damn  
dude. It wasn't great, but beats  
scraping by.

JEREMY

It was trash man. You're better  
than that. I am too.

JJ

Right. Holler if you catch wind of  
anything good.

JEREMY

Yeah, will do.

JJ grabs his stuff and walks towards the building.

INT. BAR - DAYS LATER

JJ is in the middle of a small stage, guitar in hand. He strums one last time and the song ends. A few people clap.

JJ

Thank you. I appreciate it. I'm JJ Graves. Good night.

JJ sets the guitar on a stand and heads to the bar.

BARTENDER

Nice set. Beer?

JJ

Yeah, I guess so. Miller?

The bartender reaches into a cooler, snaps the cap off, and slides bottle to JJ in one fluid motion. JJ takes a sip.

ANDREA

You write all those songs?

JJ looks over. ANDREA (dark hair, dark eyes, a girl that looks like she existed for all of time) stands next to him.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

(to the bartender)

Can I get two more, please?

(back to JJ)

So? Did you?

JJ

(smirking)

I did.

ANDREA

They were decent.

JJ

Decent? Hah.

ANDREA

I like your voice. Songs...

JJ

Songs what?

ANDREA  
Nothing. Sorry.

The bartender sets two glasses of beer in front of Andrea.

JJ  
Are you complimenting me or giving  
me shit? I can't tell.

ANDREA  
I don't know yet. You here by  
yourself?

JJ nods.

JJ  
You?

Andrea raises the two glasses.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Maybe one of them was for me.

ANDREA  
It's not.

Andrea walks away and JJ watches her, smiling.

INT. BAR - LATER

JJ is in the same spot. Andrea walks up next to him.

ANDREA  
(to the bartender)  
Excuse me.

She makes a "check" sign with her hand.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Still here?

JJ  
No where else to be I guess. So are  
you.

ANDREA  
Yeah, my friend is ditching me, so  
it's time. Unless you're buying me  
a drink.

JJ looks at her as the bartender drops off her check. The hair falls just over her face, concealing a smirk. She finishes signing and turns to him.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
So? What am I telling her?

JJ pauses for a moment.

JJ  
Tell her there's a *decent* chance I  
buy you a drink.

ANDREA  
I ain't staying for decent.

Andrea walks away. JJ's mouth is agape. Finally he just starts to chuckle as Andrea and her friend walk out.

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT EVENING

JJ opens the guitar case and takes out the Gibson. He sits on his sofa and plugs the guitar into a small amp.

After a moment, he looks in the case; pulling out the contents including a thick envelope.

He sets the guitar down opens the envelope. Inside are eight post cards. Some old, some older. He shuffles through them.

He sets them on the table and picks the guitar back up.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - THE NEXT DAY

JJ is in the corner of a courtyard playing the Gibson to a small crowd of latte drinkers, completely disinterested in the music. He finishes a song and a few people clap.

JJ  
Thank you. Okay, maybe I can do  
something a little more interesting  
for y'all. Anyone have a request?

No one says anything. A few heads look up.

JJ (CONT'D)  
No one? Well damn...

ANDREA  
(from the crowd)  
Play something decent.

JJ holds his hand up, shielding his eyes as he looks out. Finally he sees Andrea, big smile on her face.

JJ

Something decent, huh? I wrote this one a few nights ago for a girl I never thought I'd see again...

ANDREA

She sounds nice. Make sure it's decent!

JJ

Hah. Well I'll let y'all be the judge of that.

JJ starts to strum.

JJ (CONT'D)

(singing)

*She came in my life, stood next to me. Lookin' for something, somethin' I can't see.*

*She was there and gone in a blink of an eye. As fast as she came she was ready to fly.*

*Butterfly, you're a butterfly. You're pretty and free the way you're meant to be. Butterfly, you're a butterfly. You couldn't help your effect on me.*

*Still thinking about her since the moment she left. A smile, a look, and the prettiest dress.*

*And I ain't sad at the fact that she's gone. A beautiful moment I can always dwell on.*

*Butterfly, you're a butterfly. You're pretty and free the way you're meant to be. Butterfly, you're a butterfly. You couldn't help your effect on me.*

*Butterfly, you're a butterfly. You're pretty and free the way you're meant to be. Butterfly, you're a butterfly. You couldn't help your effect on me.*

JJ stops singing and gets a few more claps than before. The clapping fades and the crowd's murmurs build.

ANDREA

Decent!

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

JJ is packing up.

ANDREA

You wrote a song for me.

JJ smiles. Replies without looking.

JJ

Why do you think it was for you?

ANDREA

You meet another butterfly this week?

JJ stands and looks at her.

JJ

You did flutter off quickly...

ANDREA

Butterflies only live three days.

JJ

Yeah? And?

ANDREA

So a *decent* chance at a free drink isn't worth it.

Andrea walks away.

JJ

Wait!

Andrea turns, her smirk not covered by her hair this time.

ANDREA

Yeah?

JJ

What are you doing?

ANDREA

At the moment?

JJ

I was thinking forever, but at the moment is okay too.

Andrea looks at him. JJ smiles, hesitant. She draws it out.

ANDREA  
I'm free. Only got a couple more  
days left though.

JJ  
Oh. Don't think that's gonna work  
for me then.

JJ picks up his gear and walks away. Andrea smiles.

ANDREA  
Never know, maybe it's longer! I'm  
a fighter.

JJ turns.

JJ  
Good. Still a decent chance I buy  
you that drink.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

JJ walks up to the entrance and opens the door when he looks  
back at Andrea standing on the sidewalk.

ANDREA  
Umm.. A little presumptuous don't  
you think?

JJ  
What?

ANDREA  
Bringing me to your apartment... I  
don't think...

JJ  
Oh, hah. I'm just dropping off my  
stuff, unless you want to carry an  
amp the whole night. The bar is a  
block over. You can stay down here  
if you want. Or I can meet you at  
the bar. I promise this wasn't a  
set up.

Andrea considers this.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Promise.

ANDREA  
Yeah, okay. You rock stars aren't exactly trustworthy.

JJ  
True. I guess you'll have to find out the hard way.

Andrea shakes her head and starts towards the door.

ANDREA  
Creepy.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

JJ walks in and Andrea follows.

JJ  
I'm gonna change real quick. I don't drink much, but there might be a beer or something in the fridge.

ANDREA  
I can wait.

JJ walks out and Andrea sits down. She looks around at the apartment and settles on the post cards on the table.

She looks through them.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Where are these post cards from?

JJ (O.C.)  
Postcards?  
(leans out and looks)  
Oh, those? I bought my guitar at a flea market, and those were in the case.

ANDREA  
They're all addressed to different people. RJ. BJ. JH. JJ. Who are they?

JJ (O.C.)  
No clue.

ANDREA  
You should write to them. See if they reply.

JJ  
Hah. I should? Why's that?

JJ walks back out.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Ready?

ANDREA  
As a butterfly.

JJ  
I don't think that's a thing...

SERIES OF SHOTS

- JJ and Andrea walk down the street holding hands.
- JJ and Andrea eat dinner in his apartment.
- JJ and Andrea sit on the beach.
- JJ and Andrea fall into his apartment, kissing.
- JJ and Andrea making love on the bed.

FADE OUT.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

JJ and Andrea are in bed.

JJ  
What do you have today?

ANDREA  
Work. Like everyone else on a  
Thursday.

JJ  
Not everyone. Do you like it?

ANDREA  
Work?

JJ  
Yeah.

ANDREA  
I guess as much as anyone.

JJ  
Is it what you always wanted to do?

ANDREA  
Marketing? Hah. No.

JJ  
What *did* you want to do?

Andrea doesn't respond. She starts to say something and stops. Finally...

ANDREA  
You ever watch the show Parenthood?

JJ  
The one with Dax Shepard?

ANDREA  
Yeah. That one.

JJ  
Maybe an episode or two...

ANDREA  
Well Dax's character is a sound engineer. And he and his older brother bought a recording studio. And, I just always thought it would be cool to work somewhere like that. Surrounded by musicians and the chaos and beauty of it.

JJ  
Am I chaos or beauty?

Andrea rolls her eyes.

JJ (CONT'D)  
So why don't you?

ANDREA  
Work at a recording studio? I look into it every once in a while, but it's not really easy to get a paying job at one.

JJ  
Fine... I'll buy you a recording studio. Some day.

ANDREA  
Well I don't have much time left, remember. So it's gotta be soon.

JJ  
Those three days have lasted a  
month so far...

Andrea smiles and shrugs.

JJ (CONT'D)  
I'm playing at the Continental  
tonight if you wanna come.

ANDREA  
Hmmm... Decent chance I make that.

Andrea smirks and JJ smiles.

JJ  
I'll take that as a yes.

ANDREA  
You can take that as a definite  
maybe.

Andrea picks up her phone and sees that it's 8:19.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Oh shoot. I gotta go!

Andrea gets dressed in clothes crumpled on the floor. She  
runs to the bathroom and gargles mouthwash.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
What time tonight?

JJ  
Seven.

ANDREA  
Can I bring some people?

JJ  
Trying to show me off to your  
friends?

Andrea wipes her mouth. She looks at herself in the mirror  
and brushes her hair with her hand.

ANDREA  
I just want to have options. You  
know, in case.

JJ  
(smiling)  
In case what?

ANDREA  
In case my song wears off.

JJ  
Like a spell?

ANDREA  
Yeah. In case the magic runs out.

JJ  
Probably a good idea to bring  
friends to everything then. Decent  
chance of that happening.

Andrea walks out of the bathroom and kisses JJ.

ANDREA  
I'll see you tonight.

JJ grabs her arm and pulls her in. They kiss again.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Okay, for real though. I need to  
go. Some of us work for a living.

JJ  
I work. Just not during the  
daytime. Like a vampire.

ANDREA  
Vampires and Butterflies, what a  
combo.

INT. CONTINENTAL BAR

JJ is on stage. He belts out the last chorus of *Butterfly*.  
Andrea and her friends clap, and no one else does.

JJ  
Thank you. Should I play another  
one?

Andrea yells "yes". She's the only voice heard.

JJ sits there, taking in the rejection, real-time.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Right. Well, I'm going to take a  
break then, and if something  
changes your mind, come let me  
know.

JJ walks to the bar. The manager, JOHN, rushes over. Andrea  
gets up and walks over to him as well.

JOHN

Hey man, you have another thirty minutes up there.

JJ

No one wants to hear me play for another god damn thirty minutes.

JOHN

The set was fine. Good. This is what this crowd is like. Relax and go play.

JJ

Respectfully, John. You don't know what the hell you're talking about.

John's face changes from empathetic to angry.

JOHN

(sternly)

Yeah? Maybe I don't. But I know this kind of shit ain't gonna get you heard by more people. Let me know when you grow up and maybe you can play here again.

John storms off and Andrea replaces him. Having seen the whole interaction she puts her hand on his back, gently.

ANDREA

Hey, you okay? Why don't you come sit with me and my friends.

JJ

This is fucked.

ANDREA

What?

JJ

This. No one likes my music. No one cares. I'm 27 years old and what do I have to show for it?

ANDREA

I like your music.

JJ

You're the only one.

ANDREA

(smirking)

What's wrong with that?

JJ  
I'm serious.

Andrea kisses him on the cheek.

ANDREA  
I'm serious too, I love your songs.

JJ  
Yeah, maybe that's not enough.

ANDREA  
Hey. You don't mean that.

JJ  
Maybe there's a reason you're in  
marketing and not at a recording  
studio. If you think I'm good, then  
there's probably no hope for your  
studio either.

Andrea takes a step back.

ANDREA  
JJ, don't be an asshole.

JJ  
My songs are shit.  
(hanging his head)  
Like honestly. I just don't know.

ANDREA  
They're not. Or they are. But  
you'll write new ones, better ones.  
Don't worry about it right now.  
Come on. Come meet my friends.  
Please?

JJ  
Yeah, okay. I'll be over in a  
minute.

ANDREA  
JJ, seriously. They came to see  
you. Don't...

JJ  
I said I just need a damn minute.  
Jesus.

ANDREA  
Really?

JJ doesn't respond, he nods at the bartender.

ANDREA (CONT'D)

You know what? Don't bother. I don't want them meeting this guy anyway... Whoever this is. You don't even drink!

Andrea storms off to her friends.

JJ

(to the bartender)

Shot of whiskey.

JJ glances back at Andrea. She and her friends are standing up to leave. They all walk to the front, Andrea comes back over to JJ, teary-eyed.

ANDREA

JJ, I'm sorry tonight isn't going the way you want. When you're feeling better, we're going to Chauncey's. Meet us there.

The bartender sets the shot in front of JJ. JJ takes the shot. Coughs slightly.

JJ

Yeah, probably not. But thanks.

ANDREA

(deep breath)

Ya know what? Don't. Give me a call when you're done feeling sorry for yourself. If that's even possible.

Andrea leaves and JJ taps the shot glass.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

JJ stumbles into his apartment and beelines to the fridge. He takes out a beer; then slumps down on the couch.

He picks up his guitar, strums it and then immediately tosses it to the side, distracted by the post cards.

Slowly, JJ picks up the stack and looks through them. He starts to laugh.

Abruptly he gets up and searches his apartment frantically. After a few moments, he finds it, a pen.

JJ sits on the couch, swaying ever so slightly. He pauses, then writes like a madman, scribbling word after word.

He writes on the sides. Then the front. Fills each card.

FADE OUT.

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

JJ is on the sofa. He opens his eyes and looks around, confused, then sees the postcards.

JJ

Shit.

He stands unsteadily. JJ takes a deep breath and then gets a glass of water from the kitchen.

He takes a few long draws. When he's finished he pulls his phone out of his pocket.

No messages. No missed calls.

He types a message to Andrea:

*Hey... Sorry about last night. What are you doing today?*

JJ waits for a reply, and a moment later he gets one.

*I'm not interested in your shit. Call me when you grow up.*

JJ starts to type and then deletes it.

JJ (CONT'D)

Shit.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

JJ opens the door and Jeremy is standing there.

JEREMY

Fuck dude, you look like shit.

JJ

You should see the other guy...

JEREMY

Hah, who Jack Daniels or Jim Beam?

JJ

Yeah. Them. Give me a minute.

Jeremy walks in and sits down as JJ goes to his room. He sees the postcards sitting on the table and picks them up.

JEREMY

What are these??

Jeremy sifts through them.

JJ (O.C.)  
What?

JEREMY  
These postcards.

JJ  
(looks out)  
Oh... Those...

JEREMY  
Who's JM? And what's at 546 San Pedro?

JJ (O.C.)  
I dunno. Nothing. It's stupid.

JEREMY  
It's clearly not nothing.

JJ  
They were in that guitar case.

JEREMY  
The Gibson?

JJ  
Yeah. They were all addressed already. And last night, in my stupor, I... Wrote, um, replies?

Jeremy inspect them and starts to read one.

JEREMY  
Damn man. This is kind of... poetic. Like some of it is drunken rambling. And that's garbage. But some of it... Isn't. What are you gonna do with them?

JJ walks out, a little better looking, but not really.

JJ  
Nothing. Leave them. I need coffee. Let's go.

Jeremy sets them down and JJ goes to the door. Jeremy casually picks them back up and puts them in his pocket.

INT. DINER

JJ and Jeremy sit in a booth across from each other.

A WAITER walks up to them.

WAITER  
Coffee?

JJ  
Yeah, and keep it coming.

JEREMY  
Clearly my friend needs some water  
too. And maybe an orange juice.

The waiter looks at JJ and makes a face.

WAITER  
I'll be back in a sec.

Jeremy laughs.

JEREMY  
Damn dude, even the waiter's  
calling you a bum. So what did you  
get into last night other than  
ramblings on some old postcards.  
Did you see Andrea?

JJ  
No... Kinda... I think that's over.  
I kinda blew her off and well...

Jeremy shakes his head.

JEREMY  
You need to get your shit together,  
man. I'm supposed to be the cynic,  
you're the happy one.

JJ  
I'm happy sometimes.

Jeremy just stares at him.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Fine, not at the moment, but I  
prefer moody, not unhappy.

JEREMY  
Moody?

The waiter brings the drinks over and looks at Jeremy.

JEREMY (CONT'D)  
I'll take the hungry man with wheat  
toast.

The waiter nods and looks at JJ.

JJ  
 This is fine...  
 (pointing at the coffee)  
 Thanks.

The waiter looks at Jeremy who rolls his eyes and they both hand over their menus. The waiter walks away.

JEREMY  
 I got a few gigs lined up with a band that may be something. I mentioned you and they were interested. You wanna play?

JJ  
 Thanks. No. I think I'm done.

JEREMY  
 Done what?

JJ  
 Playing. Like actually done.

JEREMY  
 Oh, we're doing this today?

JJ  
 I'm serious this time. It's over man. Time I actually admitted it to myself.

The waiter approaches with Jeremy's food.

WAITER  
 Hey, I brought you a small stack. It's on me. You look like you could use some pancakes.

He sets the pancakes in front of JJ.

JJ  
 I look that bad huh? Thanks.

WAITER  
 More coffee?

JJ looks in his cup and shakes his head "no".

WAITER (CONT'D)  
 Okay, just holler if you need anything.

The waiter walks away.

JEREMY

Maybe I need to start looking like  
shit and being all... *wahhh, I'm  
pathetic.*

JJ

You do look like that.

JEREMY

Damn. True, but damn.

They're quiet for a moment.

Jeremy starts on his meal.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

(mouth full)

So what are you doing with those  
post cards?

JJ

Nothing.

JJ takes a bite of his pancakes.

JJ (CONT'D)

Oh god. He was right. I did need  
these. They're really f-ing good.

JEREMY

Yeah. This place is the shit.  
Nothing? Why not just mail them?

JJ

Mail them? Why?

JEREMY

Why not? Maybe they're magic.

Jeremy's grinning.

JJ

I hate that you even saw them.  
You're not gonna let this go, are  
you?

JEREMY

Nope. Definitely need to send  
them... That address, 566...

JJ

546.

JEREMY

Whatever, 546 San Pedro, which is probably in the middle of Skid fucking Row by the way... Could be the doorway to the universe.

JJ

Go to hell.

Jeremy starts to laugh.

JEREMY

What's the worst that could happen?

EXT. STREET

JJ and Jeremy are walking.

JEREMY

Look.

(pointing up the street)

A mailbox, you can send your post cards.

JJ

Fuck off.

JEREMY

Just drop them in, let the magic do it's thing.

JJ

Leave it. I don't even have them.

Jeremy pulls them out of his pocket.

JJ (CONT'D)

What the fuck dude?

JEREMY

I don't think I've bought a stamp in my life. But Magic doesn't need stamps, right? That shit's going to Skid Row. They laugh at stamps.

Jeremy goes to the mailbox.

JJ

Don't. Please.

JEREMY

(smiling)

You wrote them for a reason. This is your reason.

Jeremy makes a big spectacle about putting all the post cards in and then hesitates.

JJ nods. Jeremy drops them in and closes to door, grinning.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

So?

JJ

So what?

JEREMY

Do you feel differently? Has the magic started working yet? You look taller.

JJ

Ya know. I feel like... Wait. Hold on... Something with my hand is happening.

JJ starts shaking and raising his hand only to give Jeremy the middle finger.

JEREMY

Wow, I'm number one. Thanks. Hey, I gotta pick up my bass and get down town to that show. You sure you don't want to play?

JJ

Yeah.

JEREMY

Alright.

JJ and Jeremy bro-embrace and JJ continues down the street.

INT. CAFE - 3 WEEKS LATER

Jeremy is sitting at a table with a laptop and a coffee. He picks up his phone and begins typing a message to Andrea.

*Hey, been a minute. Just seeing what you're up to.*

The message shows **delivered**. Then... Nothing. Ignored like his last five messages.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

JJ opens the mailbox in the entryway and takes out a stack. He closes the door.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

JJ closes the door and sets down his things and the stack of mail save for one envelope. He looks at it, front and back.

The front is address to Jonathan James Graves. The back has RJ 546 San Pedro.

JJ picks up his phone and calls.

JEREMY (O.S.)  
Hey man, what's up?

JJ  
Yeah, yeah, fuck you. Funny.

JEREMY  
What the hell? Did you just call me to tell me to fuck off? I'm honestly not really in the mood, man.

JJ  
I got your letter... I thought you never bought a stamp in your life.

JEREMY  
My letter? What the actual hell are you talking about?

JJ  
The reply. To the postcard. RJ. 546 San Pedro?

JEREMY  
Uh, first of all, that would have been a hilarious joke and I really wish I did that. Second of all, when did you get friends who are funnier than me.

JJ  
It wasn't you?

JEREMY  
Nope. Wasn't me. Who else did you tell?

JJ  
No one. I gotta go.

JJ hangs up and opens the letter. He takes out a couple small sheets of paper and examines them. Then sits down.

ROBERT JOHNSON (V.O.)

*Mr. Graves, thank you very much for the post card. Readin' it was very special to me, you clearly have a passion and I feel a kinship with your words. Mr. Graves, may I call you Jonathan? Given the heart with which you wrote to me, I'm gonna assume that you good wit it. I want to respond to that last question first.*

*I'm a guitar player, that's what I do. I play 'cause I can't do nothin' else. Hah! Truth is, I love the sound. I love it all, I do. Love hearin' songs and playin' and singin'. I love unravelin' a song I hear on the radio as much as I love makin' somethin' new.*

*I don't play to be rich of course - money is always nice. I play 'cause I don't know what my day would be without it. Can you feel that?*

*Answerin' your first question got me thinkin'. I don't know much about much, but I do know passion. I get up in the mornin' and think about sounds. In the shower, I think about words. Makin' love, I'm writin' a new song. I can't do anything in my life without music. If that's you, looks like we got somethin' in common.*

INT. BAR - LATER

JJ and Jeremy are sitting on bar stools. A beer in front of Jeremy, a soda in front of JJ.

JJ

*Thanks for the letter, like I said, it was nice to read, and if you ever want to get better, like real good, I know someone you can make a deal with. Hah!*

*Sincerely,  
Robert*

JEREMY

*That's it?*

JJ  
That's it.

JEREMY  
Who do you think sent it?

JJ  
Hell if I know. Just feels like...

JEREMY  
Like what?

JJ  
Nothing. Nevermind.

JEREMY  
You found random post cards pre-addressed in a 90-year-old guitar case that you found at a flea market. You got drunk for the first time, maybe ever? Wrote letters to these random people, and then MAILED them.

JJ  
You mailed them.

JEREMY  
Fine. But they were mailed. But now you're gonna be shy about your thoughts?

JJ  
Well when you put it that way... I think maybe it's like... I don't know, actually magic?

JEREMY  
Dude!

Jeremy starts to laugh loud enough for others to look over.

JEREMY (CONT'D)  
Shit, man. You need to get a grip. It's probably just like a marketing thing or something. Did you ever check out that address?

JJ  
On google maps. Looks abandoned. Anyway... Whatever. Still cool, even if it is fake.

JEREMY

What's the last line mean? I know someone you can make a deal with?

JJ

No idea. Maybe that's the marketing part. Like make a deal with Gibson. Or a record company? I don't know.

Jeremy finishes his drink.

JEREMY

Alright, I got a gig. I gotta go.

JJ

No shit, another one? Where?

JEREMY

Same band. Uptown. You sure you don't want in? It's not great, but getting better. They could use you.

JJ

I'm good. Thanks though.

JEREMY

Right on. Well let me know if there's any more magical moments.

Jeremy grins as JJ gives him the middle finger.

JJ

Later.

JEREMY

Later man.

Jeremy walks out leaving JJ by himself.

JJ opens his message app and taps on Andrea's name. There's at least a dozen messages that she hasn't responded to.

INT. APARTMENT - A FEW DAYS LATER

JJ is sitting on the sofa, with the Gibson plugged in. He's plucking randomly and then breaths out audibly.

JJ

Shit.

He picks up the letter from Robert and reads some of it.

JJ (CONT'D)

Hmm.

JJ pulls out his phone and types in **Popular Piano Pop Songs**. The first one is "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys.

He starts to play it and then pauses it and replays the same part. He does this twice more and then starts to strum.

INT. CONTINENTAL BAR

JJ is on stage singing, and smiling. He finishes his song and starts to laugh as the crowd claps loudly.

JJ

Thank you! That was a lot of fun.

JJ gets down and heads to the bar. John walks up to him.

JOHN

Covers? Different than usual.

JJ

Yeah, I just wanted to do something I enjoyed, ya know?

JOHN

Well it was... everyone enjoyed it. This a one time thing or can we make it something regular?

JJ

I don't know yet. Let's do it again next week and then go from there. Maybe it was a one time thing. Maybe not.

JOHN

Alright. Next week. Looking forward to it.

(to the bartender)

Whatever he wants tonight, on me.

JJ

Woahhh...

JOHN

You get them to buy.

(pointing to the crowd)

Then you get to drink for free.

Simple. Okay, I've gotta go check on the kitchen. Next week?

JJ

Yeah, next week.

John walks off. The bartender looks at him.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Just a coke.

BARTENDER  
You sure?

JJ  
Yeah.

JJ turns to face out. Just out of the corner of his eye he sees someone that looks like Andrea walking out the door.

He rushes to the entrance and then outside and looks up and down the street for Andrea, but sees no one.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - A FEW DAYS LATER

JJ walks into the lobby, whistling a song and smiling. He has his guitar and sets it down to check the mailbox.

He pulls out a stack and stops when he finds another letter address similarly to the one from Robert.

The front is address to Jonathan James Graves. The back has BJ 546 San Pedro.

He immediately opens it.

BRIAN JONES (V.O.)  
*Mate. Your words really spoke to me. I really appreciated your vibe, and I fuckin' loved the line "Anyone can write a soulful song, but what I want to write is a song to save your soul". Bloody deep man, but damn if you're not trying too hard.*

JJ picks up his things and heads to his apartment.

INT. APARTMENT

JJ walks in.

BRIAN JONES (V.O.)  
*You know what I love about making music, bein' a rock n' roller? Fucking everything. I love the women. I love the drugs. The drink. The parties. The clothes. Everything.*

(MORE)

BRIAN JONES (CONT'D)

*I love music, don't get me twisted,  
but if you want to make something  
that saves a soul, make something  
that makes people smile, and dance,  
and jump around. Something that  
jives, and bounces. Something  
that's fun.*

*Look the part. Feel the part. And  
the rest will follow.*

*Anyway, just a penny for my  
thoughts, right? What do I know?*

*Brian*

JJ puts the letter down and walks to his bedroom. He catches a glance of himself in his bathroom mirror and pauses.

He slides in front of the mirror and stares at himself.

JJ

Shit.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP

JJ is playing in the courtyard, but looks different. Not different, but cleaner, sharper. His hair is styled. His beard is tight. His clothes are thoughtful.

JJ

This one was popular at my last show, so I'll do it for you, see what you think. Anyway, this is Alicia Keys.

JJ starts to play and then sing. He gets more of the crowd's attention, which makes him smile.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

JJ is grooving and the crowd loves it. He's feeling himself.

JJ

Ok, thank you. Last one for today, and I'm gonna get out of here.

The crowd groans. JJ plays it up.

JJ (CONT'D)

Aw, don't be like that. I'm like Frosty... I'll be back again some day. Anyway.

(MORE)

JJ (CONT'D)

This is one of my originals. I hope you like it.

JJ starts singing. He's smiling and playing and closes his eyes. He continues, content with his performance, opens his eyes to see the crowd dispersing.

JJ's voice cracks just the slightest, but he keeps going. He hears laughter and looks, but he can't tell if they're laughing at him or something else.

He slows his playing, slows his singing. And stops without anyone really noticing. His face scowls.

JJ (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Nothing.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

JJ is packing up his stuff, frustrated and clearly upset when a YOUNG KID comes up to him.

YOUNG KID

Uh, Mr. Graves?

JJ

(back to him)

Yeah?

The kid doesn't respond so JJ turns.

JJ (CONT'D)

Hey. What can I do for you?

YOUNG KID

I just wanted to say I really liked the Alicia Keys cover...

JJ snarls.

JJ

Yeah, it's a great song.

YOUNG KID

Do you mind giving me some pointers? I think I'm gonna try to do it at my talent show like you do.

JJ looks at him and shakes his head.

JJ

Listen kid. You wanna be a nobody musician playing at a coffee house in the middle of a Sunday afternoon, then do that song like I did it. But if you want to be better, then find something else. Cause' I ain't it.

The young kid is completely dejected. JJ softens slightly.

YOUNG KID

Sorry for bothering you.

JJ

What's your name?

YOUNG KID

Robby.

JJ

Okay Robby. You heard me play it right?

YOUNG KID

Yeah.

JJ

Then figure it out, kid. You don't need tips from a guy playing covers for a few bucks.

YOUNG KID

Okay.

JJ looks up and sees Andrea. Her face is somewhere between disappointed and disgusted. As soon as he makes eye contact, she turns and walks away.

JJ

Andrea! Wait!

He rushes past the kid and runs up to her.

JJ (CONT'D)

Andrea. Please.

She stops and slowly turns to him.

JJ (CONT'D)

Andrea. Uh... What are you doing here?

ANDREA  
I'm here with my friends.

She points over to a group staring at them.

JJ  
Of course. How have you been?

ANDREA  
I'm fine. Listen, JJ. I just wanted to come up and say I liked your covers, but honestly, that was a mistake. So, let's just...

JJ  
Come on. Please. I miss you.

ANDREA  
Of course you do.  
(lowers her voice)  
JJ. Get some help. Or some perspective. Or both?

JJ looks at her and his face contorts.

JJ  
Whatever. Go be with your shitty friends.

JJ walks back to his guitar, picks it up and leaves, head down, leaving Andrea standing there.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

JJ opens the mailbox and takes out a few letters. He sees two letters, addressed like the others. This time with JH and JJ on the back.

JJ  
Fuck this.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

JJ walks out to the sidewalk and lights a cigarette. A couple walks past him and one of them waves at the smoke.

JJ  
What the hell is your problem???

They don't respond.

JJ picks up his phone and texts Andrea: "I'm sorry".

JJ watches as Andrea is typing, and then after a few moments the typing stops and there's no reply.

JJ (CONT'D)  
 Seriously. Fuck this.

JJ starts to walk.

EXT. STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

JJ is walking. Smoking, in himself.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

JJ looks worn and deflated.

INT. BAR - LATER

JJ walks in, it's almost completely empty. He walks up to the bar and an OLD BARTENDER stares at him.

OLD BARTENDER  
 Can I get you somethin'?

JJ  
 Just a water, thanks.

OLD BARTENDER  
 This ain't no free stop, you want something you gotta order.

JJ  
 I don't really drink.

OLD BARTENDER  
 Why bother comin' in a bar, then?

JJ  
 Jesus, this day. Whiskey? Shot? And a water. Please.

OLD BARTENDER  
 Well go on, sit down then.

JJ obliges. The bartender sets down two shot glasses.

OLD BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
 You can buy me one too.

JJ shakes his head and the old bartender laughs a smoker's laugh revealing missing teeth. He pours and slides one over.

OLD BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
 Cheers.

JJ picks it up, nods to the bartender and they both drink them down. JJ coughs slightly and the old bartender smirks.

OLD BARTENDER (CONT'D)  
Now about that water...

INT. BAR - LATER

JJ is smiling, talking with the old bartender.

OLD BARTENDER  
Aw, hell. You ain't the first musician who bought me a shot. You won't be the last.

JJ  
How'd you know I played?

OLD BARTENDER  
Maybe it's just your look? Maybe the calluses on your fingertips?

JJ looks at his fingertips.

JJ  
You play?

OLD BARTENDER  
Long time ago. Arthritis stopped that.

JJ  
You miss it?

OLD BARTENDER  
Course. What kinda musician are you? My money's on guitar.

JJ  
Musician... Hah.

The old bartender looks at him. He smiles.

OLD BARTENDER  
What am I?

JJ  
What do you mean?

OLD BARTENDER  
I mean what am I?

JJ  
Like, a bartender?

OLD BARTENDER

Yeah, I'm a bartender. And so far I've poured you a shot and a few waters. Don't make me a good one. But I get paid to do it, so I must not be that bad. You ever get paid to play music?

JJ

Yeah, of course.

OLD BARTENDER

Then you a musician. Might be a shitty one, but you is what you is.

JJ

Not for long.

OLD BARTENDER

Hell. Tonight's not the night for that.

JJ

For what?

OLD BARTENDER

For quittin'. People quit on Thursdays. They quit on Fridays. Hell they quit on Mondays. Ain't no one quittin' on a Sunday night, and certainly not in my bar. Now look over there.

JJ looks over to a small stage, barely big enough for a person, a stool, a guitar, and a microphone sit there.

OLD BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Go play something.

JJ

Nah. Maybe it's time for another shot?

OLD BARTENDER

Listen young man. There ain't but four of us in this place. Least you could do is entertain us with a song or two.

JJ takes a breath and looks at the old bartender who stares him down. Finally he smiles and shakes his head.

INT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

JJ is on the tiny stage, adjusting the guitar and mic.

JJ

What do you want to hear?

The DRUNK GUY in the corner shouts at him.

DRUNK GUY

Freebird!

JJ smiles and shakes his head.

OLD BARTENDER

Don't matter son, just none of that  
coffee house shit.

JJ laughs.

JJ

Right. Of course. Uh... How about  
this one?

JJ starts to play a song and after a few seconds, the  
bartender walks to a sound system and turns off the mic.

OLD BARTENDER

I said none of that coffee house  
shit.

JJ

(quietly without the mic)  
What do you want me...  
(shouts)  
What do you want to hear?

OLD BARTENDER

I wanna hear something good. Play  
something good.

The old bartender turns the mic back up.

JJ

Fine!

JJ's voice echoes with the mic back on and he winces and  
covers it with his hand.

JJ (CONT'D)

Sorry. Okay. Something good.  
Something good.

JJ starts working out some chords and fingerings. Finally he settles in.

JJ (CONT'D)

(singing)

*It's what you get paid for, it's  
what you can be. It's what you are  
made for, but it ain't all me.*

*A tender, a bookie, a banker, a  
nun. Some work hard, some do less,  
some make it all fun.*

*But listen here, remember this.  
Word hard and get paid. Don't  
matter how bad the work is no one  
quits on Sunday...*

The old bartender hoots and smiles and even JJ smirks.

OLD BARTENDER

There we go, son! You a musician  
after all!

FADE OUT.

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

JJ is cleaning up his apartment and keeps glancing at the letters sitting on top of a stack of mail.

JJ

Shit.

He walks over and picks up the top letter from JH.

JIMI HENDRIX (V.O.)

*Dear Jonathan, I'm afraid I don't  
understand what you mean by wanting  
success. I've never wanted success  
in my life. I see successful people  
and they're all fat and satisfied  
and content with themselves.*

*I never wanted to be that. I can't  
stand still long enough to eat, and  
I couldn't be bothered with  
satiation. Ask me who I make music  
for, I'll tell you right now.*

*I've always made music for my  
future self. The one listening in a  
day or a year, or a lifetime from  
now.*

(MORE)

## JIMI HENDRIX (CONT'D)

What is he going to think? What is he going to say?

*I've never created sounds for other people, because no one will have to hear that sound as much as I'll have to hear it. Or play it. Love it. Feel the rattle in your bones. No one.*

*So that's what I would say. Make music for the future you, and if it's success you're interested in, wait until he tells you you're successful. He'll know. You, well you can't. But he'll know.*

All love, Jimi

JJ sets it down and picks up the next one, signed JJ.

## JANIS JOPLIN (V.O.)

*Oh Jonny. I'm gonna call you Jonny, haha! Jonny. I think your problem isn't that you can't write a song. It's that you don't want to. No, hah. That's not right.*

*Your problem is that you don't NEED to. I mean, need need. Like everything in you is telling you to write this line and add this chord and let it out so that it's no longer lingering inside you, tearing your organs and your muscles and bones apart, but instead it's out there with all of us, taking little pieces of it and holding them with you.*

*For you.*

*It's not magic. It's not art. It's a beast, a monster, a shriek, a siren, an angel. Whatever you want it to be, but it's in there rattlin' it's cage, and you need to let it out. Share it with the world.*

*THAT's what music is. That's what a song is, baby. It's the release of your soul. Good. Or bad. Hah!*

(MORE)

## JANIS JOPLIN (CONT'D)

*Kiss, Janis*

JJ holds the letter and wipes at his eyes. He breathes in deeply and closes them.

JJ goes to his guitar and tries to play something, but it's like his fingers won't work. He starts over, and tries to sing, but his voice is shaky.

He sits back, rubs his face. He stares at the ceiling and lets out a loud, frustrated sigh.

JJ

Dammit!

JJ sits up again and tries to play and struggles again.

JJ (CONT'D)

Ahhh!!!

He tosses the guitar next to him and stands. He paces, muttering to himself.

The room darkens as a storm rolls through. JJ looks up. Stops talking to himself.

A flash of lightning and a crack of thunder makes JJ stop altogether. He waits for the rain, but there's just silence.

JANIS JOPLIN (V.O.)

(whispering)

This is what it should feel like,  
baby.

JJ looks around, frantically. Finally, he sits back down and stares at the guitar.

JJ

WHY?!

The rain comes.

JIMI HENDRIX (V.O.)

(whispering)

If you ain't pushing yourself,  
what's the point?

Another flash, another crack.

JJ

I can't! I just can't do it!!!

Another flash, another crack.

JANIS JOPLIN (V.O.)  
Yeah. That's it. Scream! Use it,  
baby. Use it.

Another flash, and then another. A thunderous roar, and then the rain stops. It's quiet.

JIMI HENDRIX (V.O.)  
Push through.

JJ  
(whispering)  
Let it out. Let it out. For me. For  
my future me. Just let it out. Use  
it. Use it. Use it!!

JJ takes a deep breath in and then out. He slowly, hesitantly picks up the guitar and tries to play something.

Nothing. He huffs. And plays. And huffs. And plays.

He picks at it. And then strums.

JJ (CONT'D)  
God dammit!!

JJ stands. The rain starts again. Building.

JANIS JOPLIN (V.O.)  
You're trying too hard, baby, just  
use it. Let it out. Let it all out.

The rain is louder. JJ paces.

JJ  
Let it out. Let it out. Let what  
out!?!?

A flash and a crash.

JIMI HENDRIX (V.O.)  
Just play for your future self. For  
future Jonathan. Play man. Just  
play.

More lightning, more thunder. More rain. More. More. More. Then...

Silence.

JJ sits down again and starts to play a percussive beat on his guitar, an ode to the storm. He closes his eyes.

JJ  
 (singing)  
*Woahhohhohhh. Let it out.  
 Woahhohhohhh. Let it go. Get on the  
 move don't take it slow. Don't try  
 so hard, use whatchu got. Go faster  
 now, don't you ever stop.*

His eyes bolt open and he lunges for a notepad and immediately starts to scribble words down. Page after page. He scratches out words and continues. Frantic. Excited.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

- JJ plays a small venue and there's a small crowd
- JJ plays the same venue and the crowd is larger.
- JJ plays a bigger venue with a bigger crowd.
- JJ is back at the Continental, the crowd is significant.

INT. APARTMENT

JJ is in the bathroom, towel around his waste, staring at himself in the mirror. He picks up his phone and calls.

Andrea's voicemail message plays.

JJ  
 Andrea. Hey. Uh, yeah, I just. I'm sorry about the last time we saw each other. Um. You were right, I wasn't in a good place. I got some, um, help. Kind of.

Anyway, music has been getting better and things are going well. I'm playing at the Continental tonight. Got kind of a new sound. I'd like you to hear it.

But if you're busy, I get it, I just want you to be there. And, um, thanks. I needed to hear that. You know, last time. What you said. Okay, see you tonight, hopefully. Bye.

INT. CONTINENTAL BAR - EVENING

JJ is on stage with the Gibson. He has a different look, and a different vibe. He looks content with himself. Relaxed.

The crowd is enraptured.

JJ

Okay, thank you everyone, you've been a really great crowd tonight. Really great. But last one.

The crowd boos and Jake laughs.

JJ (CONT'D)

Sorry... Before I start. If someone would have told me a month ago that I'd be playing a set and I was booed. Well. Honestly, I wouldn't have been surprised. But if you told me I was being booed because it was my last song. Damn. Funny how life is sometimes. Sorry for that, okay. Here we go.

JJ starts to play a southern, bluesy riff with a poppy beat and then he just starts to wail.

JJ (CONT'D)

(singing)

*If I met you in my dreams, I  
wouldn't wake up 'til you go. And  
if I saw you 'cross the seas,  
there'd be no way to keep me home.*

*I've tried to find you my whole  
life, but you keep runnin' runnin'  
wild. There's no one else to hold  
my gaze, for you I'll do anything  
required.*

*'Cause my days, because my nights,  
they're filled with you, can't let  
it go. I want you here I want you  
now, please pretty baby, tell me  
how. Please pretty baby, tell me  
how.*

INT. CONTINENTAL BAR - LATER

JJ is at the bar, a group of people, mostly women are surrounding him. He's eating it up.

JJ  
I appreciate the kind words, but if  
you excuse me, I need to go to the  
little boys' room.

YOUNG WOMAN  
Want some company?

JJ smirks and looks at her.

JJ  
Uh, no, I think I can manage.

JJ walks through the group that parts as he moves forward.

INT. CONTINENTAL BAR - MOMENTS LATER

JJ is walking from the bathroom back to the bar when DANIEL  
(40's, well dressed) approaches him.

DANIEL  
JJ, right?

JJ  
(hesitantly)  
Yeah...

Daniel holds out his hand.

DANIEL  
Daniel Miller, Debatable Records. I  
loved your set.

JJ shakes his hand and stands a little straighter.

JJ  
Yeah? Thanks. I just... It's been a  
journey, but I feel like I'm  
finally getting somewhere with it.

ANDREA  
They're decent.

They both look over at Andrea. JJ smirks, Daniel is unsure.

JJ  
Yeah. That's what I've always been  
shooting for.

DANIEL  
Well I think decent is an  
understatement.

JJ  
Thanks, sorry, it's an inside joke.

ANDREA  
Your sound, it's better.

JJ  
I am, better. Thanks for coming.

DANIEL  
Hey, I don't mean to intervene here, but I was hoping to chat with you about recording some of those songs. And I kinda gotta be somewhere in an hour.

JJ  
Oh. Umm...

ANDREA  
Go. We'll talk later.

JJ  
Okay.

Andrea smiles and walks away. JJ watches her.

DANIEL  
So like I said. I'm interested, WE'RE interested. Let's sit down for a minute and talk.

Daniel starts to walk to the other side of the bar and JJ still kind of watching Andrea reluctantly follows.

At the table are two others sitting, TED (50s, looks like it, but cool) and JENN (young, sexy, and uninterested).

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
JJ. This is Ted, he's our sound engineer and this is Jenn, she's our stylist slash pr person slash marketing executive.

JJ  
Woah, that's a lot of slashes, I don't know if I know what any of them are.

Jenn doesn't respond, and then reluctantly replies.

JENN  
I make you look cool and make sure you stay that way.

JJ  
Am I not? Cool?

DANIEL  
You definitely are.

JENN  
You could be.

JJ  
Damn. Cold. I like it.

TED  
(smoker's voice)  
And I make sure you *sound* like you  
fuckin' look.

Ted starts laughing a guttural laugh.

JJ  
Alright alright alright.

Not cool.

DANIEL  
Sit. Let's talk.

JJ sits and Daniel follows.

INT. CONTINENTAL BAR - AN HOUR LATER

JJ, Daniel, and Ted are chatting and having a great time.  
Jenn is mostly on her phone and judging others. All of them  
have drinks except JJ.

Daniel looks at his watch.

DANIEL  
Shit. We need to go. We were  
supposed to be at the Alibi Room  
twenty minutes ago.

JJ  
What's at the Alibi Room?

DANIEL  
You know the singer Redfield?

JJ  
I think everyone knows Redfield.

DANIEL  
He's doing a closed door show for  
his new album. You wanna go?

JJ  
 Fuck yeah I wanna go! Are you  
 kidding?! Sorry. Yeah, that would  
 be great.

TED  
 Let's fuckin' go my friend.

They all stand.

DANIEL  
 Your, uh, friend.

Daniel gestures towards Andrea who's looking at them.

JJ  
 Oh, shit, can I have five minutes?

DANIEL  
 I'll be honest. We really do need  
 to leave now.

JJ  
 Yeah. Um. Okay, yeah. Let's go.

As they go to walk away JJ mouths to Andrea "Sorry, I'll  
 call you" and she just watches him go, expressionless.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATE THAT NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

JJ stumbles into his apartment, giddy, exhausted. He walks  
 past the mailbox toward his apartment and then stops.

He slides to the mailbox and opens the small door. He sorts  
 through the mail until he finds one of the letters.

JJ  
 Ah ha!

He shoves the rest of the mail back in and closes the door.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

JJ lumbers in. He rips open the letter.

JIM MORRISON (V.O.)  
*Jon, I think you know. I do, I  
 think you know. This world. It's,  
 it can be a cage. It can be a  
 straight jacket, man.*

(MORE)

JIM MORRISON (CONT'D)

*You need to break out of it if you're in, but you also need to stay out as well once you've, gotten to that enlightened stage.*

*Man, the art IS the music. The music IS the art. Words, lyrics, voices, sounds. It's not there to make money, or to be stifled. It's meant to be free and spiritual. Let your mind go, let it wander and let it come back and do it again and again and again.*

*I could keep this up. I could gush about art, my art, until it sounds more like rambling than coherency, but that's the thing, man. It needs room to breath, to drift. I think you know. This art of ours. It has to remain open, always.*

*Don't take from it, don't let others take from it. Keep it wild, man. They can change you all they want, make you a puppet. But never. I mean never fucking let them change the art.*

*Jim*

JJ tosses the letter on the table and smiles, sinking into the couch and closing his eyes.

JJ

(half asleep)

Not my music, Jim. It's free.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - BOOTH

JJ finishes singing one of his songs and opens his eyes. He takes off his headphones. Ted and Daniel are behind the mixer with looks of frustration on their faces.

JJ

What?

TED

(over the speak)

JJ, let's take five. Come in here.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

JJ walks in. Ted and Daniel are whispering to each other.

JJ  
Is there something wrong?

DANIEL  
No, of course not.

JJ  
What is it then?

Daniel looks at Ted who clears his throat.

TED  
Listen. Don't take this the wrong way, but it's coming back, flat.

JJ  
I'm flat?

TED  
No, the songs. They don't have enough energy. Would you be open to some ideas?

JJ  
Notes?

DANIEL  
No, of course not. Not notes. Ideas.

JJ looks at them skeptically.

JJ  
Okay?

TED  
Listen. We want to try to add a little more to it. Maybe back up vocals. Or another instrument. Not sure.

JJ  
I don't know. I think it's better the way it is. Raw, ya know? It's more... Emotional.

TED  
Of course it is. We just want to pop a few tracks. Not everything.

JJ  
Right. Okay. What's a few?

TED  
We don't know yet. Not many. Just trust me. Us. We just want the album to shine.

Ted and Daniel are both smiling too widely.

JJ  
Yeah. Of course. You've done this before. I can, I mean, I trust you. Just don't trash my songs, right?

JJ laughs and the others breath out a sigh of relief.

INT. DEBATABLE RECORDS - CONFERENCE ROOM - A WEEK LATER

JJ is sitting there with Daniel, Ted, Jenn, and a half dozen other younger people.

JJ has a new hairstyle, posh clothes, and he's wearing sunglasses. He looks good, different, but not comfortable.

JJ  
Okay. So, record is done. Now what?

They all look at Ted.

JJ (CONT'D)  
What?

TED  
It's just about there. A few retakes of the rhythm guitar and...

JJ  
What rhythm guitar?

TED  
We added one. Last week.

JJ  
To what song?

Ted looks around uncomfortably.

TED  
To tracks two, four, uh five, seven, and nine, ten... and eleven.

JJ

Wait. That's practically the whole album, Ted.

Ted looks around smiling.

TED

Pretty sure we told you a few times. Anyway, it's really not a big change. Just adds some depth. But once that's re-recorded, then we're set.

JJ

I want to hear the songs.

TED

Of course. Yea, when it's finished, I'll bring you in and you can listen to the whole thing.

JJ

No. Now, god dammit!

DANIEL

Woah. JJ, please, it's not a big deal. Just calm down a little.

JJ

You think you can change my songs without my permission and then not even play them for me? What the hell is this Daniel?

DANIEL

You're on edge. Can we get you a matcha? Hey, get Jake a matcha.

JJ

Just play the songs.

TED

Haha, I don't think... I mean it's not ready, JJ. You'll hear them. I promise.

JJ

I don't care what's recorded and what's not. I want to hear it as is. Right now, or I'm out.

DANIEL

Out? JJ, please. This is coming out of no where. We're just improving things.

JJ

Fine. I'm overreacting. Let me hear the songs.

Daniel takes a beat and nods to Ted who looks at an INTERN.

TED

Play it.

The intern plugs in his laptop to the conference room sound system and plays the first song.

JJ

Go to the next one.

The intern complies and the song starts to play. It sounds like a Barenaked Ladies cover of Hozier. Everyone but JJ are nodding their heads and smiling as they listen.

JJ (CONT'D)

What the hell is this?

DANIEL

It's your song. *Change Your Voice*.

JJ

Put through an easy-bake fucking oven. Are they all like this? Go to the next one.

The intern changes the song.

JJ (CONT'D)

The next one.

The intern changes the song again.

JJ (CONT'D)

You gotta be kidding me. Turn it off. We need to change them back.

DANIEL

JJ, they're great like this. Believe us. They're more... Sellable. Something for the radio. Commercials. Things we can put out there to increase your popularity.

JJ  
Commercials? I didn't write these  
songs for commercials. It's  
garbage.

JJ stands.

DANIEL  
Sit.

JJ  
Why the hell should I?

DANIEL  
JJ. Sit. Those songs. They're ours.  
According to the contract you  
signed. So, please. Sit.

JJ  
(under his breath)  
Just like he said would happen.

They all look at JJ, concerned.

JJ (CONT'D)  
You can't cage me, my songs. I'll  
write new ones.

There's silence in the room.

DANIEL  
JJ, please.

JJ doesn't move.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Why would you go through all the  
trouble of writing new songs just  
to do this same dance with someone  
else?

JJ stares at him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
I love the songs. We all do...

Daniel starts nodding to everyone and they follow suit.

JENN  
Listen, JJ. You got the look. Now.

JJ  
Yeah, thanks.

JENN

This is what *popular* sounds like. It's *Watermelon Sugar*. It's *Circles*. It's hot. You wanna sell out stadiums? You wanna be hot.

JJ

Hot? A joke, that's what this is. God, I knew it was gonna happen and I convinced myself it would be different, like a real idiot. I'm not doing it.

DANIEL

JJ. I'm telling you right now, you don't want to say no. You wanted to be in the room. This is the room. Say no, and it's never coming back again.

JJ looks at him. There's no emotion on his face. Everyone looks uncomfortable.

JJ

You think you got me in a bind, huh Danny?

DANIEL

It's not a bind. It's how this works. First one's for us, the next one's for you. But there ain't a next one without this. I promise you. I can sit here and list a dozen artists you never heard of and never will who walked away. This is as good as it gets. So what's it gonna be?

Daniel smiles calmly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Keep going? Or give it all up? For a rhythm guitar and some back up vocals? They're still your words. Still your songs.

JJ doesn't respond. It's a pissing contest and he just lost. He looks at Daniel. Then Ted. Then Jenn.

JJ sits down.

JJ

Trash. So release this garbage and then I go on tour?

DANIEL  
 Exactly. Release online. Big push  
 on Spotify, the socials, all that.  
 And then we announce the tour.

JJ  
 By myself?

DANIEL  
 We have to look at it. Probably a  
 few shows to start and then get on  
 as a guest or headline. Depending  
 on who's around.

JJ  
 How many shows?

The mood shifts. Relief.

DANIEL  
 Five, then a few more once we have  
 the sets and sound locked in. Then?

Daniel shrugs.

JJ  
 Sounds like there isn't a plan.

DANIEL  
 Let's just get through the first  
 few shows and we'll see. Never know  
 how fast it'll go.

JJ  
 Sure these songs aren't trash?

Everyone shakes their heads "no".

JJ (CONT'D)  
 What happens if they are? Trash.  
 Hypothetically.

DANIEL  
 Hypothetically... If they are.  
 Which they aren't. But if they're  
 bad and no one likes them, and we  
 do the big release, it's, well, a  
 hard road to come back from. BUT.  
 They're really great songs.  
 Especially with the changes. You  
 need to believe that, believe us.

JJ  
 I don't have much of a choice.

Everyone looks away. JJ chuckles.

DANIEL  
Trust us. This time next month,  
everyone in the US will know your  
name.

JJ  
Yeah yeah. Whatever.

JJ pauses.

JJ (CONT'D)  
But you gotta give me something.

DANIEL  
What?

JJ  
Not what... Who.

DANIEL  
Who?

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - WEEKS LATER

JJ is packing

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Youtuber breaking down JJ's album.
- Reels of JJ performing.
- TikTok vid of JJ and Jeremy out in the street with a mass of people behind them.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE

The band (including Jeremy) is waiting for JJ to arrive. He rushes in with Jenn and a few others behind him. He's wearing a flamboyant outfit that looks comical.

JJ  
Sorry we were just... Are you guys  
ready?

JEREMY  
(in a low voice)  
Dude, what the fuck are you  
wearing?

JJ  
Nothing. Shut up Jeremy.

The other band members give each other a look and smirk.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Are we here to rehearse or what?

JEREMY  
Looks like America's Next Top Model  
to me.

The band members laugh.

JJ  
Fuck off. Let's go.

JJ picks up his guitar.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Let's do *Count Down* first. Derek,  
ready on you.

DEREK, the drummer, starts to hit his drumsticks together,  
one, two, three, four, and they all start to play.

INT. STAGE

The band is on a large stage, a sizable crowd watching as  
they finish their outro to the song.

JJ  
Thank you everyone! Goodnight!

JJ and the band move off stage. JJ and Jeremy stand just to  
the side and listen as the crowd chants.

JEREMY  
They want an encore, dude!

JJ  
We don't have any more songs!

JEREMY  
You need to go out there!

JJ  
And play what?!

JEREMY  
Anything man! Just go! Just you!

JJ grins. Finally, he goes, and the crowd erupts. He gets  
his guitar and stands at the mic as a spot falls on him.

JJ  
Thank you! Really, I appreciate it.  
Honestly, we don't have any other  
songs to play... FOR NOW. But I'll  
give you one more. Now it's a  
cover. But I always love to play  
this one. Do y'all know Alicia  
Keys?

The crowd erupts and JJ laughs.

INT. GREEN ROOM

JJ walks in, a broad smile on his face and slows as he sees  
the room filled, mostly with attractive females and some  
people in suits.

JEREMY  
Dude!

JJ goes directly to Jeremy.

JJ  
Who are all these people?

JEREMY  
No clue man. They were in here,  
waiting for us.

Jenn walks up to JJ and just pulls him to a couch.

JENN  
Sit. Here. Stay. You want  
something? Beer? Jack? Joint?

JJ  
No, I'm fine.

JENN  
Stars aren't fine. Stars enjoy  
themselves. Enjoy yourself.

JJ  
Okay, beer I guess?

Jenn turns and snaps at someone.

JENN  
Beer. Anything else?

JJ  
Why am I sitting here?

JENN

Don't worry about it. Just don't  
move.

Jenn walks away and JJ watches her like a little boy  
watching his mother leave.

She walks up to a group of THREE GIRLS and whispers  
something to them. They laugh and look over at JJ who starts  
to blush slightly.

After a moment all four of them walk over to JJ.

GIRL 1

Oh my god, I loved that Alicia Keys  
cover.

Jenn sits down on the couch leaving space between she and  
JJ. JJ slides over to her naturally.

JJ

Yeah. Thanks. It's a fun one to  
sing. You an Alicia Keys fan?

GIRL 2

Of course. But I think we're bigger  
JJ Graves fans. Can we sit?

JJ doesn't respond immediately.

JENN

JJ? You gonna let your fans sit  
with you?

He looks at her. She nods, so he nods. They all giggle. JJ  
slides closer to Jenn.

His arm brushes against Jenn's and he looks at her. She  
mouths "smile" and touches his arm.

The girls sit around him. One sits on his lap.

GIRL 1

Can I get a drink?

JJ

Yeah of course, let me get you one.

JENN

JJ, stay.

Jenn motions to an INTERN 2 and she comes over.

INTERN 2  
Need something?

JENN  
Can you get some drinks over here?

The intern looks at the group who all smile at her.

INTERN 2  
Yeah. Of course.

The intern walks away and a camera flashes. Immediately the girls play to the camera.

JJ grabs Jenn's hand almost automatically and then looks at her. She squeezes it and plays it up with the other girls.

INT. GREEN ROOM - DAYS LATER

JJ walks into the room with a swagger. Different room, but the same scene.

Jeremy is standing with a drink and a girl in each arm.

JJ grabs a beer out of a bin and casually meanders through the room until he gets to Jenn.

JJ  
How was the set?

JENN  
Good. Of course.

JJ  
How long we here?

JENN  
Until you wanna leave.

JJ  
Then where?

JENN  
Hotel.

JJ  
Nice. I could use a night off traveling.

JENN  
Just one.

JJ  
Alright alright alright.

It's cooler this time.

A tall BLONDE casually walks up to them.

BLONDE

JJ?

They both turn and and look at her.

JJ

Hey.

BLONDE

You were pretty amazing tonight.

JJ

Oh yeah?

Jenn stares daggers. The blonde notices and grins.

JJ (CONT'D)

You want a drink or something?

BLONDE

Yeah. Sure. A drink. Or something.

Jenn smiles.

JENN

Excuse me, I gotta go mingle with those stiffs in the suits.

JJ

Is it someone I need to meet?

JENN

No, you're good, boo. Enjoy yourself JJ.

Jenn walks away and JJ tracks her.

BLONDE

So did you write all those songs yourself?

Jenn looks back and sees JJ watching her. She smiles and turns to the group of suits. JJ turns back to the blonde.

JJ

I did. Write the songs.

The blonde moves closer.

BLONDE

Will you write one for me?

She laughs and JJ laughs.

Jenn looks over at them, glaring. She marches over.

JENN

Sorry, can I steal him for a moment? Music biz stuff, ya know?

BLONDE

Oh. Umm.

JENN

Thanks. JJ, come.

Jenn pulls JJ over to the other side of the room.

JJ

What is it? Something with the album?

JENN

Ugghh, god. I don't want to talk to anymore stiffs tonight. Maybe ever again.

JJ

Then don't.

Jenn smiles. JJ smiles, but looks confused.

JENN

Wanna do something fun?

JJ

Jenn. What's going on?

JENN

JJ. Don't make this a thing. Just enjoy it. Whatever it is. So. Wanna do something fun?

JJ

What kind of fun?

Jenn holds up a bottle of beer.

JJ (CONT'D)

You just wanna have a drink? I'm confused.

Jenn leans into JJ and whispers in his ear.

JENN

I just put some molly in this bottle. And I think we should drink it and see where it takes us.

JJ pulls back and looks at her. She pours beer into her mouth, and then holds the bottle up to JJ who hesitantly opens his mouth and lets her pour some in.

INT. GREEN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jenn is sitting on JJ's lap.

JJ

(whispering)

How long does it take?

JENN

Shhhh... Just watch what you've created.

JJ looks at her and she nods to the room. JJ looks out at the crowd of people. Muffled voices, laughter, smiles, looks. It's mesmerizing.

JJ

Jeremy!

Half the room looks over at JJ.

JJ (CONT'D)

Jeremy!

JJ waves him over and he reluctantly walks over.

JEREMY

What man?

JJ

Tunes.

JEREMY

Tunes?

JJ

Listen. This party needs to turn up. And I need you to be the music savant we all know you to be, and get it turning, faster.

Jeremy grins. He walks over to a stereo system and connects his phone. After a moment *Around the World* by Daft Punk starts to play.

JJ (CONT'D)

Fuck yeah!

The room starts to move in unison with the beat. JJ melts.

OVER BLACK

A phone rings loudly.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATE MORNING

JJ opens his eyes and looks at the phone. He picks it up.

JJ

Hello?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Hello, Mr. Graves?

JJ

Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST

Hello. Mr. Graves, I'm afraid I have an urgent call for you? May I connect you?

JJ

Yeah, sure.

RECEPTIONIST

Just a moment.

CALLER (O.S.)

Hello is this Mr. JJ Graves?

JJ

Yeah? Who's this?

CALLER

Mr. Graves, this is Seymour from Rolling Stone Magazine.

JJ perks up.

JJ

Uh, yeah. Wow. Hello.

JJ sits up on the edge of the bed.

JJ (CONT'D)

Um, is this an interview?

CALLER

Yeah, do you have time now?

JJ

Sure.

CALLER

Great. Okay, my first question is about your current album.

JJ

Yeah?

CALLER

Is Jeremy's bass work the highlight of the whole thing?

JJ

Fuck you Jeremy. Why are you calling me?

JEREMY

Hahah! It's time to go man. In the lobby in 10.

JJ

A god damn wake up call?

JEREMY

Could've been worse.

JJ

Not likely.

JJ hangs up and stands, instantly grabbing his head.

JJ (CONT'D)

Fuck me.

EXT. HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

JJ walks up to a group including Jenn, Jeremy, the rest of the band and a few others. Jeremy starts to clap.

JJ

Grow up. We going?

JENN

Yeah. Let's go.

Everyone starts to file out. Before she gets too far, JJ grabs Jenn's hand. She smiles and turns to him.

JJ  
What happened to you last night?

JENN  
I wandered. I do that sometimes.

JJ  
Wander?

JENNY  
Yep.

JJ  
Right. How are you not hung over?

Jenn shakes her head.

JENN  
I remember my first time. Get in  
the car.

JJ drops his head and moves to the doors.

INT. SUV

Jenn hands JJ a small pill and JJ takes it immediately.  
Jeremy looks at him and he shrugs.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - A WEEK LATER

There's a ton of people all around an opulent suite. In the  
center is JJ, Jenn, and a few others.

JJ leans down and snorts a line of white powder.

JJ  
Shit. What was that?

JENN  
CK1.

JJ  
CK1? What the... Wait, what city  
are we in right now?

JENN  
Fresno? Why?

JJ  
What's Fresno known for?

Jenn snorts a line.

JENN  
Grapes I think?

JJ  
That's it? Shit. Let's get into  
trouble in Fresno.

Jenn smiles.

JENN  
Okay.

JJ does another line and then stands on a chair.

JJ  
We're going to fuck up Fresno!

Everyone cheers. JJ jumps down and walks to the door.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Let's go!

Jenn walks over to a person in the corner and whispers something to him.

INT. DEBATABLE RECORDS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAYS LATER

JJ and most of the same people from before are staring at a TV on the wall with a picture of JJ standing on top of a food truck spraying a crowd with condiment bottles.

JJ snickers.

JJ  
It's a good angle at least.

DANIEL  
Except you're a pop star, not a  
rock star. Moms don't take their  
kids to shows like these.

JJ  
Why the fuck do I want a Mom and  
some kids at my show anyway?

DANIEL  
Because they spend a lot of money.  
That's why we're all here. To make  
money off your music.

JJ  
I'm not here for the money, man.

DANIEL  
No? Then why are you here?

JJ laughs and looks around.

JJ  
Typical suit. Fine. No more lunch  
trucks. Anything else?

Daniel turns off the TV.

DANIEL  
Yeah. We need to get you back in  
the studio to record the next one.

JJ perks up.

JJ  
Hell yes. I have a bunch of ideas.  
Not a whole album yet, but close.

Daniel, Ted, and Jenn look at each other.

JJ (CONT'D)  
What?

DANIEL  
Listen, JJ. We thought since the  
last one was going so well. And  
even with the whole Food Truck  
stunt. We have a bunch of songs  
lined up that are similar to your  
sound. A little more commercial.  
Just to take advantage of the  
momentum, ya know?

JJ stares them down.

JJ  
What was that first one's for us,  
second one's for you bullshit?  
Should've known you were lying.

DANIEL  
Just listen to the songs first.  
Then decide. There's a lot, so you  
can pick, most of them.

JJ  
Most of them?

DANIEL  
 There's a few we feel pretty  
 strongly about. But the rest. Up to  
 you.

JJ  
 Do I have a choice?

No one responds. JJ snorts.

JJ (CONT'D)  
 Whatever. When?

DANIEL  
 Studio's reserved next Monday.

JJ  
 Anything else?

DANIEL  
 Nope, not right now.

JJ stands up and everyone follows his lead. He walks to the  
 door and Jenn trails him.

JJ  
 (to her)  
 Could've fuckin' warned me.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - EVENING

JJ and Jeremy get out of a black SUV and walk toward the  
 club with a long line down the street.

JEREMY  
 You gotta be joking.

JJ  
 What?

Jeremy points at Guy and Alex walking toward them.

JJ (CONT'D)  
 Shit.

GUY  
 (grinning)  
 Ahhh, hahah! Oy!

Guy and Alex walk up to JJ and Jeremy.

GUY (CONT'D)  
 Boys.

JJ  
Hey Alex. Guy.

Alex nods.

GUY  
Heard your album, JJ... And to  
think Jeremy called my music trash.

Jeremy lunges at Guy who backs up quickly. Still smiling.

GUY (CONT'D)  
Glad to see I can still fuck with  
you Jeremy!

Guy walks into the club and Alex shrugs before following.

JEREMY  
That fucking dude.

JJ  
Come on, let's go.

JEREMY  
I'm not going in there now.

JJ  
Dude. Let it go.

JEREMY  
Hell no. He's in there? I'm not.  
Let's go somewhere else.

JJ  
We have to go in, this is a paid  
event.

Jeremy stares at him.

JEREMY  
How much is your pride worth?  
Because mine isn't for sale for the  
same price as that bitch, Guy.

JJ  
Dude.

JEREMY  
Let's go, man. He called our music  
trash and now you want to be seen  
with him? Hell no.

JJ looks at Jeremy and then at the nightclub.

Jenn walks up to them and takes JJ's arm.

JENN  
What's the problem?

JEREMY  
The problem is the biggest loser musician on the planet is inside and we're not going in.

JENN  
JJ, I don't care if Ted Bundy and Charles Manson are having drinks inside together... You're going in. This is THE place to be seen. And you're gonna be seen.

JJ looks at the two of them like the angel and devil on his shoulders. Finally, he slumps slightly and walks toward to the front door.

JEREMY  
Dude! What the hell?!

JENN  
Jeremy, if you don't want to be on this train, you can get off at the next stop.

JJ and Jenn walk in leaving Jeremy standing on the sidewalk.

JEREMY  
This is fucked, man!

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

JJ walks into his apartment with Jenn. She looks around, disgust on her face.

JENN  
We need to get you a new place.

JJ  
What's wrong with this place?

JENN  
Mostly everything.

JJ  
This is the first time I've been in it in a month. Who cares?

JENN  
Everyone. Can I use the bathroom?

JJ points and she walks in that direction. JJ looks around and sees a stack of mail on the table. He quickly sifts through and stops at a letter from "RM". He rips it open.

RON MCKERNAN (V.O.)

*JJ - I think the thing you gotta remember is everyone has their music, man. Everyone has their choice. It can change. It can.*

*But until it does, you gotta know what it is and stick with it. Don't let anyone change that. Fuckin' no one. You hear me? And the lifestyle man. The lifestyle is... Well it's great. Parties, drinks.*

*I was never a psychadelics guy. You know. They weren't for me. I liked my whiskey and whatnot, but it can't take the songs from you. If it does, man. That's the end. It's all you have. Don't let the party take the music. Just... Don't.*

*The only other thing I'd say is to make sure that the sound isn't someone else's sound. It's your sound. Ya know, my experience...*

JENN

What's that?

JJ's holding the letter and looks up at her.

JJ

This? Nothing. A letter.

Jenn walks over and takes it out of his hands. She skims it.

JENN

Who's Pigpen?

JJ

Not sure.

JENN

Then why are you reading it?

JJ

I dunno. I just was... What do you want to do today?

Jenn tosses the letter aside and smiles.

JJ (CONT'D)

What?

Jenn walks up to JJ.

JENN

Stick out your tongue.

JJ smiles. Jenn taps his lips and he slowly sticks his tongue out and she puts a tiny sticker on it. She places one on her tongue and then pulls him in for a kiss.

A moment later JJ pulls back.

JJ

(flushed)

Woah. That was...

JENN

Shhh...

Jenn walks around

JENN (CONT'D)

You got any music in this dump?

JJ

Depends... Stop calling my place a dump and I'll tell you.

Jenn shrugs.

JJ (CONT'D)

What was that, by the way?

JENN

Don't worry about it.

JJ

Acid?

Jenn rolls her eyes and then nods.

JJ (CONT'D)

How long does it take to kick in?

JENN

Don't kill the vibe. Music?

JJ considers her and then clears off a record player.

JENN (CONT'D)

Records? How hipster of you.

JJ  
I don't really have many, I mostly  
just use the bluetooth.

He turns it on and pulls out his phone.

JJ (CONT'D)  
What do you want to listen to?

JENN  
Something decent...

JJ  
What did you say?

JENN  
Something positive. Nothing dark.

JJ  
Right. Okay.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

JJ and Jenn are sitting on his couch next to each other. Music is playing loudly and they're holding hands. Jenn leans over and whispers in JJ's ear.

JENN  
Acid makes me horny.

JJ giggles and Jenn straddles him and they start to kiss. After a few moments, she starts to kiss his neck and JJ closes his eyes.

The music changes and so does the mood in the room.

JJ slowly opens his eyes. Jenn takes off her shirt. When she peels it off her head a demonic figure flashes in her place.

JJ shakes his head.

JENN (CONT'D)  
(voice reverberating)  
Are you okay?

JJ nods and the figure flashes again. JJ rubs his eyes and stares at her, frightened. She smiles, and the smile turns into an evil grin.

Abruptly, JJ moves Jenn off of him and stands.

JENN (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

JJ  
 Sorry. I just. I need some water.

JJ walks wearily to the kitchen and gets a glass of water. He looks back and the evil Jenn is right behind him.

JJ (CONT'D)  
 Shit! Jesus. I think you need to go. I don't think I'm okay.

He turns and looks at her and it's no longer flashing between regular Jenn and evil Jenn, it's just evil Jenn. And she's getting angrier.

JJ (CONT'D)  
 Get out, dammit!

JENN  
 (deep voice)  
 You're bad at this. What a waste.

Jenn puts her shirt back on and slams the door behind her.

JJ  
 Shit shit shit shit shit shit.

JJ goes to his phone.

JJ (CONT'D)  
 Dammit. Shit. Damn.

JEREMY (O.S.)  
 JJ?

JJ  
 (frantically)  
 Jeremy? Where are you?

JEREMY  
 Dude, you called me. What's going on?

JJ  
 Jeremy. Please. Help me.

JEREMY  
 You're kinda freaking me out. Where are you?

JJ  
 I'm here. I think. Jeremy? Are you here too?

JEREMY

Where's here?

JJ

Jeremy, we started in my apartment, but now? I dunno. Jeremy. I think Jenn is a devil. She was kissing me and she turned evil.

JEREMY

Fuck man. You're freaking me out.

JJ

How do you think I feel...

JJ starts to panic.

JJ (CONT'D)

Am I okay Jeremy? Am I good? Pigpen said don't let the party take the music. They're taking it, man. They're taking it. I don't want them to, but they're taking it! I need your help! We need to get it back! Can you come help me?

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

JJ wakes up on the couch and looks over to see Andrea staring at him.

ANDREA

Good. You're awake, I'm leaving.

JJ

Andrea?

Andrea stands and gets her jacket.

JJ (CONT'D)

What happened?

JJ tries to sit up and immediately grabs his head.

JJ (CONT'D)

Shit. Why...

ANDREA

Why am I here? Or why does your head feel like that?

JJ

Both?

ANDREA

I'm here because you called me at three last night talking to me like I was Jeremy and acting completely incoherently, scaring the shit out of me. And your head feels like that because you fell trying to open the door when I got here. There's some advil and a glass of water there on the table.

JJ looks at it, immediately picks up the glass and pills.

JJ

Thanks. And... Thanks.

Andrea stands.

JJ (CONT'D)

No, wait.

ANDREA

Wait for what? For you? For this?

JJ

No. Just. Wait, give me a minute.

ANDREA

I'm leaving. But JJ, you're not okay. Again. I have plenty of my own shit to deal with, I don't need yours too.

JJ

Your shit?

ANDREA

Yes, JJ. The entire world does not revolve around you and your music.

JJ

What's... your shit?

ANDREA

I don't know, JJ. Maybe I'm closer to thirty than not, I'm in a job and career that I hate. My only recent relationship is with a drugged up musician that calls me in the middle of the night on an acid trip? Maybe I'm thinking about moving home and moving on with my life and no one seemingly knows or cares...

JJ  
Home? Where's home?

ANDREA  
Jesus JJ. Don't you think it's a little pathetic that you don't even know where I'm from? You have a problem. And I'm not coming here to save you again.

JJ  
Jesus. It was just one night. I'm fuckin' fine.

ANDREA  
Yeah. You seem it.

Andrea gets up and goes to the door.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
Seriously, JJ. I... Nevermind.

Andrea walks out of the apartment. JJ looks down and sees the envelope with the Pigpen letter, but the letter's gone.

JJ  
Shit.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

JJ walks in and it's empty except for Daniel, Ted, and Jenn.

JJ  
What's going on?

Daniel holds up the letter from Pigpen.

DANIEL  
You tell us? You thinking about making some big move?

JJ  
What? What the hell are you talking about? Where's the band.

DANIEL  
We sent them home. We want to know what this is.

Daniel shakes the letter at him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Are you and your friend Pigpen trying to go out on your own???  
(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Revive an old studio? Start your  
own label??

JJ  
Seriously Daniel. I don't know what  
the hell you're talking about.

DANIEL  
Cut the shit. 546 San Pedro? The  
old studio for Rampant Records?

JJ looks at him wide-eyed and then looks to Ted and Jenn for  
more information. They give him disdain in return.

JJ  
That letter was sent to me after I  
mailed some old post cards I found.  
I don't know anything about what  
you're talking about at that  
address and I don't know anyone  
named Pigpen.

DANIEL  
Well. All that better be true. Or  
you'll be in breach of contract.  
Big time.

Daniel rushes off and Ted follows. Jenn is slow to gather  
her things.

JJ  
Jenn, what the hell?

JENN  
It's business man. And right now?  
You're not good business.

JJ  
What do you know?!

Jenn strolls up to him and softly kisses him on the cheek.

JENN  
A lot. And it's a little too late  
for you.

Jenn walks out. JJ stands there, alone.

JJ  
(under his breath)  
What the hell does that mean?

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

The band is playing and JJ starts to sing. Ted and Daniel are behind the mixer.

JJ  
Cut. Cut.

The band stops.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Listen, I think the singers are a little much. The keys too. Let's just do guitar, bass, and the kit on this one.

TED  
(over the speaker)  
JJ, do it my way the whole way through and then we can try it your way.

JJ  
No, let's do it my god damn way and that's the only way.

Ted can be seen barking at Daniel. Daniel seems to calm him down while JJ waits impatiently.

TED  
Let's take five.

JJ  
It's your time.

TED  
JJ, can you come up here?

JJ  
Sure thing mas'sa.

DANIEL  
Please control yourself, JJ.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

JJ saunters in and sits on a couch.

JJ  
(quietly to a server)  
Can I get a Jack and Coke? Double.

She nods and smiles.

JJ (CONT'D)  
So, Teddy bear, what's up.

TED  
(through gritted teeth)  
JJ, I'm trying to make sure we get everything in these sessions as quickly as possible. It would be helpful if you weren't trying to change everything all the time.

JJ  
Listen, man. I just don't want another overproduced shit show like the last album.

TED  
Well that last album had three number ones on it. So I wouldn't call it a shit show.

DANIEL  
JJ. Taking things out is easy. Everything is recorded on separate mics. Adding it back in is the pain in the ass. So let's be smart about this. We can record everything and then have a listen and take out what you don't like.

The server hands JJ his drink.

JJ  
Whatever. On the rest, we can do that. But not on the one we were just doing. It needs to be my way. Not changing my mind.

Ted tries to say something, but Daniel holds up a hand and talks over him.

DANIEL  
Sure. That track - as you want. The rest, we record everything and strip it out later. Okay?

JJ  
Fine. Anything else?

DANIEL  
No, I don't think so. I'm gonna get a coffee, Ted, a word?

Ted stands and the two leave. Just before, Daniel gestures towards Jenn who's sitting in the far corner.

JENN  
JJ?

JJ  
Yes Jenn?

JENN  
You seem a little stressed, want something to take the edge off?

JJ  
God yeah... What do you have?

JENN  
I think zannies.

JJ  
Okay, not too much that I'm a zombie.

Jenn walks over to JJ and he holds out his hand.

JENN  
Uh uh uhhhh...

She places a pill on her tongue and leans down and kisses him. When she pulls away, he leans towards her and then opens his eyes.

JJ  
You're not a good person are you?

JENN  
I've never tried to be.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LATER

The band finishes a song, and start to smile.

TED  
(over the speaker)  
Hell yes, that's a wrap. Great work.

JJ  
(smiling)  
Yeah, that was pretty great. Thanks everyone. What are we doing now?

Jeremy goes up to JJ.

JEREMY

Dude, what did you take?

JJ

Take? Nothing. You can tell?

JEREMY

Everyone can fucking tell. You're like the happiest person alive at the moment.

JJ

I am? I am. It's true. I just really love everyone here. Don't you? Hey lets go out. Right now.

JEREMY

I think you should go home.

JJ

Not happening.

(to everyone)

Who wants to go to the bar???

Anyone?

Everyone stares at JJ, some worried, some sad. JEFF shrugs.

JEFF

I'll go.

JJ

Great! And just remind me who the fuck you are again?

JEFF

Uh, I play the keyboard? Jeff? I've been here for like two months.

JJ

Yeah, of course. Slipped my mind. Anyone else??

No one responds.

JJ (CONT'D)

Okay, then it's me and Jack...

JEFF

Jeff.

JJ

Me and Jeff, who we're calling Jack tonight!

EXT. CLUB

JJ and Jeff walk out of the side entrance and a throng of people are shouting at JJ.

JJ  
Fuck, man. This way.

They skirt along a side street and get into JJ's car.

JEFF  
Are you okay to drive?

JJ  
Yeah, of course. Where to?

JEFF  
I dunno.

JJ  
(points)  
That way!

JJ pulls out of the parking spot and immediately runs into another car. He just starts to laugh.

INT. POLICE STATION

A camera flashes. JJ turns to the side and the camera flashes again.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - A FEW DAYS LATER

JJ walks in wearing sunglasses and looking like complete garbage. The band is staring at him.

JEREMY  
Nice of you to show up.

JJ  
Fuck off. I'm a few minutes late.

JEREMY  
Uh, hours.

JJ  
Are you all ready? Let's go.  
(quietly to intern)  
Can you get me a Jack and Coke,  
light on the Coke? And ask Jenn for  
something from her stash.

The intern nods and walks away as the rest just stare at him. He looks at them.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Well let's fucking go.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

JJ is standing at the microphone. He takes a sip of his Jack and Coke. He's worse. Way worse.

JJ  
Already, come on, do it again.

The drummer counts it off and they start to play. JJ comes in late and off beat.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Shit. Sorry. Dammit. Start it again.

The band stops. The drummer counts it off again and JJ is more exaggerated and off and the band just stops.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Dammit! Why are you stopping??

JEREMY  
(quietly)  
Dude. You're off.

JJ  
I'm not fucking off. You're all playing it too fast. Slow it down. Let's go!

JJ finishes his drink.

JJ (CONT'D)  
Count it off.

The drummer counts it off and JJ misses it again.

JJ (CONT'D)  
What the hell are you people doing? This is complete shit!

JEREMY  
(softly)  
Dude. Let's just take a break or something.

JJ  
No! Hell no! We're getting this. Now. Hey someone get me another Jack and Coke?? Count if off, let's go!

No one moves or says anything, they all just stare at JJ.

JEREMY

Dude.

JJ

What?! What Jeremy?? What opinion do you have now? Huh? What's your clever line?

JEREMY

Hey man, I just think you need a break, that's all. No lines.

JJ looks at him, concern on Jeremy's face that's completely unnoticed. He looks at the others. Same look.

JJ

Fucking amateurs.

JJ walks towards the door. The intern comes with his drink and he takes it from her as he leaves.

JJ (O.C.) (CONT'D)

FUCKING AMATEURS!

INT. APARTMENT - THE NEXT DAY

JJ walks in wearing the same clothes from the day before.

He's stumbling around and knocks into the table sending a pile of mail onto the floor. A letter shoots out with the initials KC on it. JJ starts to laugh.

JJ

Fuck me.

Slowly, JJ leans over and picks up the letter. He lets out a breath and then opens it.

KURT COBAIN (V.O.)

*JJ, let me put things into perspective for you. The label will try to take your music. They will try to turn it into their music, and they will try, and probably succeed in turning you into some big rock star or pop star, or whatever the fuck they think you should be.*

*And you will give up your art for the fame. Because the fame feels good. It tastes good.*

(MORE)

KURT COBAIN (CONT'D)

*But listen to me. Listen to this.  
Fame, fortune. All that shit a  
label can offer you. NONE of it  
will be fulfilling.*

*It leaves you feeling empty,  
artless, soulless. If you want to  
be famous, go fucking be famous. Be  
an actor. Or a fucking comedian.  
Play covers on Friday nights at  
some downtown bar.*

*Anyone can be famous doing things a  
lot easier than making music. But  
if you care about the sound, want  
it to be pure. To be yours? Then  
you need to leave the fame alone  
and find that inner spark to create  
and just keep feeding it.*

*I hope you can see it before it's  
too late. -Kurt*

JJ crumples onto his couch. Then he screams. And then he stands and starts destroying the place.

He pushes over tables and throws a lamp throws glasses and bottles and everything he can see.

And then. He sees the Gibson resting in the corner and he rushes to it and grabs it by the neck. He hesitates for a moment, but gives in and smashes it down on the ground.

He takes a step back and slips, falls, and then just sits there grimacing - flushed and somewhere else with the old guitar in pieces in his arms.

He lays back and closes his eyes. Slowly he starts to breath and opens them. Out of the corner of his eye he sees the envelope with 546 San Pedro.

FADE OUT.

INT. VENUE

JJ and his band are on stage finishing a song. JJ is phoning it in, watching the crowd more than anything.

He says something to the band and walks to the mic.

JJ  
 Hey y'all. I'm gonna change it up  
 for a moment and do something a  
 little different. Gonna give the  
 band a break for a minute and play  
 by myself.

The crowd cheers and the band walks off.

INT. VENUE - SIDE STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy walks past Daniel and Daniel grabs his arm.

DANIEL  
 What's he doing?

Jeremy just shrugs and keeps walking.

INT. VENUE - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

JJ starts to play one of his songs stripped down.

The crowd takes it in. They're singing along. JJ, his  
 guitar, and the crowd.

INT. VENUE - SIDE STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

JJ is walking off to roaring applause. He stares at Daniel.

JJ  
 I'm done.

DANIEL  
 What??

JJ just walks past.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
 You need to finish the set! You're  
 not done until we say it!

JJ  
 (without looking back)  
 Hear that? Sounds like an ending to  
 me.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE

JJ is on a couch. He looks healthy. Light. But sad. DR.  
 STACK looks at JJ from behind a desk.

DR. STACK  
You feel ready to leave?

JJ  
That feels like a loaded question.

DR. STACK  
Rehab isn't the end, ya know.  
You know most people who go to  
rehab have been drinking or doing  
drugs for years. A long time. Not  
you.

JJ  
Yeah, I guess I didn't need that  
long to know it was a problem.

DR. STACK  
Good. Can I ask you something?

JJ  
Isn't that your job, Doc?

Dr. Stack smiles.

DR. STACK  
My job is mostly to listen. But  
yeah, that's part of it too...  
You never talked about your  
parents, while you were here.

JJ  
My parents?

DR. STACK  
Yeah. You talked about friends,  
exes, bosses, bandmates. But never  
family.

JJ  
I mean, there isn't a lot to say  
really.

DR. STACK  
You were seventeen when they died?

JJ  
Yep.

DR. STACK  
Car accident?

JJ  
Yep.

DR. STACK  
Did you have a good relationship  
with them?

JJ  
I did.

DR. STACK  
So why not talk about them?

JJ looks out the window.

DR. STACK (CONT'D)  
Is it hard to talk about?

JJ wipes at his eye. And then looks back at Dr. Stack.

JJ  
No, it isn't. They were great. I'm  
glad... they never had to see me  
like this.

DR. STACK  
Like what?

JJ  
Addicted, struggling. Everything.

DR. STACK  
Why's that?

JJ  
I dunno. I just like the idea of  
who they thought I was when they  
died.

DR. STACK  
That's a nice thought.

JJ  
Yeah, maybe. Why are you asking  
now?

DR. STACK  
You are more capable, emotionally,  
than you realize. And it's good to  
remember that, if things slip.

JJ  
You're a good doc, Doc.

Dr. Stack bows his head.

DR. STACK

That's why they pay me the big bucks, right? So what's next?

JJ looks back out the window.

JJ

I need to go catch a butterfly.

EXT. 546 SAN PEDRO

JJ stands in front of the abandoned building. He looks up and down the street. A soup kitchen is next door. It is in Skid fucking Row and JJ grins.

JJ goes to the door and pushes on it and it opens slightly.

He slides inside.

INT. 546 SAN PEDRO

JJ uses his phone flashlight to look around. There's a big "Rampant" on the wall and evidence of the studio all over the place - whatever wasn't picked over by addicts.

JJ walks deeper into the building until he gets to the recording booth. There are a few music stands and stools, but nothing of any value.

JJ starts to walk the other way when the light from his phone catches something bright and shiny.

JJ walks towards it. A sheet is draped over what looks like something resting on a metal folding chair, just barely exposing one corner.

Quickly JJ pulls the sheet off revealing a guitar sitting in a case with a purple lining, identical to the one JJ smashed in his apartment.

JJ

What the hell?

He looks at it closer, plucks a string - it sounds the same.

He walks over to a wall display that says "27 Club".

Pictures of all the greats adorn the wall, a mural to all the art finished and never made. He looks closely and sees the Gibson in the hands of each of them.

JJ (CONT'D)

(whispers)

That's who you are...

BACK TO:

INT. GIBSON MANDOLIN - 1937

The younger luthier pulls another guitar body from the rack.

LUTHIER 2

This one has the same pattern as  
the other!

The older luthier walks over and looks at the guitar body.

LUTHIER 1

Well I'll be. My grandpappy used to  
tell me that when two boards came  
from a tree that was struck by  
lightning, they are connected  
forever.

LUTHIER 2

Connected how?

LUTHIER 1

Hah, maybe with the spirits? Maybe  
not, my grandpappy was a  
storyteller.

LUTHIER 2

Yeah, but wouldn't that be  
something. If they were...  
Connected.

INT. DEBATABLE RECORDS

JJ is sitting at the table with Daniel, Ted, and Jenn.

JJ

So... I can re-record anything you  
want for the album. And if it's  
local, I can do some events or  
something to support it. But I'm  
not going on tour. And I'm not  
doing anymore shows.

DANIEL

Yeah, that's the thing, the tour is  
the money. And no money, no album.

JJ

I'm really sorry. I just... Can't.  
That's not a lifestyle for me. Too  
many...

(looking at Jenn)

Temptations.

(MORE)

JJ (CONT'D)  
(looking at Ted)  
And it's not my music.

DANIEL  
You know you're not original. I  
mean this story. Artist vs. Label?  
It's not new.

If you change your mind, we have a  
little time we can wait.

JJ  
I doubt it, but thanks.

JJ gets up and the others do as well.

DANIEL  
What's next?

JJ  
I did have a thought... Actually it  
was your thought.

DANIEL  
Mine?

JJ smiles.

EXT. 546 SAN PEDRO

JJ and Jeremy are standing in front of the abandoned studio.

JEREMY  
You bought this piece of shit?

JJ  
I did. You'd be surprised how cheap  
it was.

JEREMY  
No I wouldn't.

JJ  
Want to see inside?

JEREMY  
Do I have to?

JJ opens the door that is no longer chained shut.

INT. 546 SAN PEDRO

The two stand in the restored recording studio lobby.

JEREMY  
Holy shit, man.

JJ  
I know.

Jeremy rushes over to a display case.

JEREMY  
Dude, the Gibson. Can't believe  
this was at a flea market.

JJ  
That one wasn't. That was here.

JEREMY  
Where's the other one.

JJ  
I, uh, smashed it.

JEREMY  
What?!

JJ  
Yeah. Hence the rehab. That one  
looks exactly the same, though.  
Even has the weird pattern on the  
back.

JEREMY  
Damn. What are the chances?

JJ  
This is gonna sound stupid, but...

JEREMY  
But what?

JJ  
I feel like it has something to do  
with those letters.

JEREMY  
Drugs again?

JJ holds up his hands.

JJ  
Just caffeine. A LOT of caffeine  
though.

JEREMY  
Mmhhh... So what's the place  
called?

JJ  
Vampire Butterfly Records.

JEREMY  
Vampire Butterfly? Weird combo.

JJ  
Maybe. Or maybe not.

JEREMY  
So what's left?

JJ  
Just the girl.

JEREMY  
Andrea?

JJ nods.

JEREMY (CONT'D)  
How you gonna pull that off?  
Another hit of acid and pray it  
goes better?

JJ  
You're a really terrible friend,  
you know that?

Jeremy grins.

JEREMY  
But seriously.

JJ  
Yeah, seriously, I have no idea.

JEREMY  
I mean maybe just call her and say  
hey, Andrea, since you saved me  
from a bad trip, I've gotten  
arrested, quit my band and record  
deal, and then bought a recording  
studio hoping you'd love me again.

JJ  
Maybe, something less forward.

JEREMY

You already wrote her a love song,  
so you're kind of out of romantic  
options. Never know, maybe she  
needs a new job...

JJ smirks.

JEREMY (CONT'D)

What?

JJ

That's actually a great idea.

INT. OFFICE

Andrea is in her cubicle when her boss ALI comes up to her.

ALI

Andrea, hey, you set for the  
meeting tomorrow?

ANDREA

Yeah, of course. You have the  
address?

ALI

Yes, 546 San Pedro St.

ANDREA

546 San Pedro St.? Why does that  
sound familiar?

ALI

No idea. It just looks like an  
abandoned building in Skid Row on  
Google Maps.

ANDREA

Oh great. Do I get a bonus for  
escaping a near-death experience?

ALI

Probably not. Anyway. You good to  
take this on?

ANDREA

Yeah, of course.

ALI

Okay, thanks.

Ali leaves and Andrea searches the address on her computer.  
She looks at the street view showing the abandoned building.

EXT. 546 SAN PEDRO - THE NEXT DAY

The building looks the same as the picture. Andrea approaches and knocks on the door, but there's no answer. She tries to open it and it pushes easily.

She steps in, amazed at how the inside looks. She walks up to the twenty seven club mural. Now, the post cards are displayed with the pictures.

ANDREA  
Holy shit.

JJ  
Yeah, holy shit.

Andrea turns and gives JJ a dirty look.

ANDREA  
JJ, what are you doing here? What is this?

JJ  
Well. I kinda own... this. You didn't move home. To Minneapolis.

ANDREA  
JJ, I'm not interested in more of your shit. I'm supposed to meet a client here.

JJ shrugs.

ANDREA (CONT'D)  
God JJ! Like, why can't you just...

Andrea looks up at the name on the wall. It's small, but clearly legible.

JJ  
Vampires and butterflies. You said it was a good combo.

ANDREA  
JJ...

JJ  
Listen. Jeremy was right. He said I already wrote you a love song. So, now you have a song, and a dream.

Andrea tries to say something, but can't.

JJ (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I really am. I mean I'm no Dax Shepard... And I actually do need a marketing plan because I have no idea what the hell...

Andrea rushes over to him and jumps in his arms. She kisses him, and then abruptly pulls back.

JJ (CONT'D)

What is it?

ANDREA

What do I get if I dump you again?

JJ

Well... I spent more than all the money I have for this place. So if you dump me I might be able to get you a milkshake. We'll have to split it though, I can't afford two.

ANDREA

Butterflies like milkshakes.

INT. APARTMENT

There are moving boxes all over the apartment. JJ walks into the living room and stacks a few more boxes near the door.

He moves the table over to the boxes. Lying there, where the table had just been is an unopened letter from AW.

JJ sees it and picks it up, opening it carefully.

ANDREA

What's that?

JJ

Another letter. The last one.

Andrea and JJ both sit on the sofa. He unfolds the letter.

AMY WINEHOUSE (V.O.)

*JJ, brover. I don't really have advice. Or somefing interesting to say to you. No, wait, that's not true. The answer to ev'ry question you have about songs, and music, and art.*

(MORE)

AMY WINEHOUSE (CONT'D)  
*Every fucking answer... is love. Go  
find yours and hold her and don't  
ever let her fly away.*

-Amy

Andrea looks at JJ and smiles. She kisses him on the cheek.

ANDREA  
(whispers)  
I won't fly away... Again.

JJ looks at her and then softly kisses her on the lips.

Jeremy barges in the front door. Sweaty and huffing.

JEREMY  
Seriously, I'm carrying your entire  
apartment downstairs into a moving  
van and you two are up here making  
out? Shit man.

JJ and Andrea look at him and laugh.

JJ  
Could be worse...

JEREMY  
Yeah? How's that?

JJ  
Could've been a third floor  
apartment.

EXT. FLEA MARKET

JJ and Andrea are walking through the market.

ANDREA  
This is where you found the guitar?

JJ  
Yup.

ANDREA  
Where?

JJ slows down.

JJ  
It was here.

JJ leans over to a OLDER WOMAN selling soap and other fragrance items.

JJ (CONT'D)

Excuse me? Do you know of an older guy who had a stand here, two years ago?

OLDER WOMAN

An older man? Here?

JJ

Yeah, had a stand right where yours is now.

The older woman looks from JJ to Andrea.

OLDER WOMAN

I'm sorry, but I think you may be confused. I've been at this stand every Saturday morning for ten years.

ANDREA

Thank you.

Andrea starts pulling JJ away.

JJ

I don't understand...

ANDREA

Probably just remember it differently. Come on. Let's get some popcorn.

JJ

Yeah...

JJ looks back at the woman. Sam walks past the couple and winks at Andrea. JJ looks forward again, never seeing him.

Andrea shakes her head, and then lays it on JJ's shoulder as they walk away, slowly, together.

THE END