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# Wheeler

By Stephen Dorff

Hm.  
That's all I got so far.  
Damn, man.  
When are you gonna go down  
to Austin and start playin'?  
Oh, man, we've been  
to Austin many times.  
I wanna save the music  
for Nashville, Bobby.  
I'm Jill, and Wheeler had, uh...  
Come on to break horses  
for my daddy,  
workin' at the ranch.  
And I was helpin' out some  
that summer.  
Whew.  
He walked in...  
He was the handsomest man  
I'd ever seen.  
Wheeler is a guy  
we'd let work with our animals  
and do anything  
around this ranch.  
The animals trust him.  
He has a soft touch,  
a soft hand with them.  
That tells you a whole lot  
about a human being,  
their character  
and their nature,  
is how they react with animals.  
My name is speedy master.  
I've known Wheeler  
since he was a little kid  
and in elementary school.  
Wheeler is the boy  
of my older sister.  
And, you know, he was just a boy  
when she passed,  
and Wheeler took it real hard.  
He clung to his daddy.  
Wheeler's dad just passed away.  
He's had a pretty rough life.  
Wheeler came to this school

and, uh, he was a smart kid.  
He knew a lot about history.  
He... asked me out in algebra,  
right after class ended,  
and I barely even knew him.  
Well, I guess we first met  
in high school,  
when we hung out,  
got into all kinds of trouble.  
There's nobody like Wheeler.  
We did all the usual  
high-school stuff:  
Drivin' around  
and lookin' for friends,  
and of course  
we'd go to the rodeo.  
He was 11 years older than me  
and, uh, he kissed me,  
out behind one  
of the stables one night  
when we were cleanin' up.  
We had the greatest summer...  
And my daddy found out.  
He was none too happy.  
He came down to the office  
for the teacher,  
for talkin' back and, uh...  
So I said, "Wheeler,  
"you have your choice.  
"You can call your mama to come  
get you or take it like a man.  
"You bend over a chair  
and give you one good lick.  
"It's gonna sting now.  
Now, you want your mama...  
Or you want the board?  
Which one?"  
So he took the board.  
Took it like a man.  
Went back to class and never  
came back for that again.  
Hey, Wheeler.  
Hey, Bobby.  
- Jimmy, can you hold her for me?

- I sure will.  
You know Bobby, don't you?  
Yeah! Hi, Bobby!  
Hey, good to see you, Jimmy!  
You got some fancy  
camera gear over there, huh?  
I told you. I'm here  
to make you look good, man.  
I know, but what  
are you doin', Bobby?  
I don't wanna be famous.  
I don't wanna be on TV, man.  
Your music  
deserves the pictures.  
You've been talkin' about that  
for years.  
Trust me, you won't even know  
we're there.  
Well, I'm leavin'  
at sunrise, man.  
All right. We'll be there.  
Bobby... bring your toys,  
whatever you wanna do.  
I'll see you back at the house  
in a little bit.  
I'm almost done here.  
He didn't share his music  
with a whole lot of people.  
But he'd play for me, at nights.  
He said, "I got this one song  
I want you to hear."  
And he got through  
with it and...  
I was just smilin'  
from ear to ear.  
"She's only 20." Heh.  
That's about me.  
I am so excited that Wheeler  
is gettin' outta Kaufman  
and going to Nashville,  
because he has that passion,  
he has that heart  
for country music.  
Jimmy and I both hate

to see him leave,  
but we know  
that he needs to do this.  
We'd be out summers,  
out at the lake,  
Wheeler'd always have  
his guitar there.  
Everybody said, "you gotta go.  
You gotta go for it!  
You're good.  
You're better than Garth."  
He should've done that  
20 years ago.  
He will do well,  
I guarantee you.  
He will do really well  
in Nashville.  
He's as good  
as anybody who'll be there.  
I never heard any of his songs.  
I don't know  
if he's really all that good  
or if it's just  
kind of a pipe dream, but...  
Seems to me like  
it's kind of late in life  
to be doing somethin' like that.  
I don't know how he did it,  
goin' through all that.  
I can't imagine and it...  
It breaks my heart for him.  
But I guess if he goes on  
out there and makes it big,  
then more power to him,  
and I'll be so proud.  
You know, today, sugar,  
that country music  
just isn't country.  
It's just cheesy.  
What happened to the cowboys  
singin' about real life?  
Wheeler's...  
Got a life and a story to tell.  
He's so full of heart.

Country music needs that.  
Nashville doesn't even know  
what's comin' to 'em.  
Don't you find it  
pretty damn hilarious  
when people go bitchin'  
and complainin'  
and goin' on  
about illegal immigrants?  
What do you mean?  
Hell, my ancestors actually  
came from Tennessee.  
They came down to Texas  
in the 1830s.  
At that time,  
Texas was part of Mexico.  
Basically, the Mexican  
government couldn't get  
any of its own people  
to settle up there,  
so they offered Americans  
free land and low taxes.  
They had people showin' up from  
Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee.  
Most of 'em didn't register.  
They were growin' their cotton,  
raisin' their cattle...  
And gettin' stinkin' rich  
livin' off the free resources.  
Santa Anna found out about it,  
and home boy  
got pretty pissed off.  
He sent the troops up there  
to control all these illegals.  
Started taxin' 'em  
out their ass.  
Now, the Americans,  
they didn't take too kindly  
to that,  
so they started to revolt.  
And what did that lead to?  
What's that?  
The battle of the Alamo, man.  
Texas became its own country

for nine years.  
Then joined up  
with ol' America in 1845.  
So basically,  
at the end of the day...  
We're all illegal immigrants.  
I was surprised to see  
a Japanese pickup  
sittin' in the drive.  
Yeah...  
I was too,  
when daddy came home with it.  
I gave him some shit.  
You know where they make  
this pickup?  
I would think Japan.  
No, man. San Antonio.  
Really?  
Swear to god, man.  
San Antonio.  
So...  
It's not a bad truck too,  
you know.  
It gets good mileage,  
good power on here.  
Yeah, it drives smooth.  
Yep.  
Wheeler, we never got  
a chance to talk about...  
What you went through  
a few years back.  
Yeah, I don't wanna  
go there, Bobby.  
Look, I'm sorry.  
I care about you.  
I just... wanna get an idea  
of how you dealt with it.  
I mean, years went by and...  
You didn't talk to anyone.  
I was runnin', man,  
like you hear about everybody.  
When you're in pain, you run.  
You wanna forget who you are,  
forget where you come from.

What changed, man?  
Moved back in with my daddy,  
was on my farm,  
started writin' songs again.  
Bad things happen  
to good people, man.  
The way of the world.  
The mavericks are lookin'  
pretty good this season.  
You gotta come down  
for some games, man.  
Went to a couple with daddy  
last year.  
They got these chicken fingers.  
Me and daddy, we'd go through  
three orders Durin' the game.  
I know he's proud of you  
for takin' this journey.  
Yeah... I'm just happy  
he's somewhere else now.  
He had a good, long life.  
He was a good man.  
Yeah, he was.  
Even though he drove  
a Japanese truck in the end.  
Hold on. Hold on, boys.  
Hell yeah!  
I can't believe...  
We're comin' into town, man.  
We finally made it.  
I do need  
to find a toilet, though.  
All right, I'm gettin' off, man.  
I just wanna drive down Broadway  
before we find  
a place to stay, all right?  
Let's do it.  
Cool.  
Hold on.  
We made it to Nashville.  
Hold on. I'm gonna  
make a left here, I think.  
That's the Ryman!  
That's Ryman right there!



Bobby, shoot the Ryman!  
I'll be damned, man.  
I think we're comin' up  
on the alley.  
That's the backstage, man.  
I think that's  
the backstage entrance.  
I gotta find me a place to park.  
Oh, man...  
Who's playin' tonight?  
I have no idea.  
Oh.  
It must be further down.  
'Cause that's tootsie's, man.  
This is the backstage entrance.  
- Hi there.  
- Can we help you?  
Are y'all open tonight or...?  
We are,  
but go around to the front  
and buy a ticket, man.  
Oh, okay.  
There's a show tonight?  
Yeah.  
Who's playin'?  
Umphrey's McGee.  
Oh, okay, cool.  
Have a good night, pal.  
Nice to see ya.  
Who's playin'?  
Humphreys MCG...  
I don't know him.  
Who's Humphreys McGee?  
He's playin' tonight.  
We just got in, but...  
They wouldn't let us through.  
He said, "have a good night."  
Basically,  
"get the hell outta here."  
Well... Man, we got  
that close, you know. Whew.  
You know how many artists  
come down here, man?  
Come down these stairs

and walk right across the street  
and go to tootsie's  
for their beer after.  
I mean, Hank Williams,  
Kristofferson, you name it, man.  
Standin' outside the mother  
church of country music.  
You know how many times  
I listened to the grand ole Opry  
from here, man?  
They also did every episode  
of the Johnny cash show in here.  
I mean...  
I can't believe this.  
Hot damn.  
Gee whiz. I mean, heh...  
Holy mackerel.  
This is unbelievable.  
Let's find a place to stay.  
This place look all right  
to y'all?  
- Sure.  
- Yeah, it's fine.  
Will you hand me  
my coat back there, Mike?  
Here you go.  
Get us a couple rooms, huh?  
All right, I'll start unloading.  
Yeah, let's grab the gear first,  
then we'll come back  
for the bags.  
Howdy.  
You got two rooms available?  
I'm gonna do two eggs  
over-medium, if I can,  
and some well-done bacon  
and a side of well-done sausage.  
It comes with home fries  
and toast, okay?  
Sure. Yeah.  
White toast?  
You got any biscuits or no?  
Sold out for the day.  
Okay, no problem.

Crispy bacon, sausage,  
over-medium breakfast.  
Oh, if you've got  
maple syrup on the side,  
that'd be great.  
Well, my name's Sherri,  
so if you need anything,  
let me know, okay?  
Hey, Sherri, I'm Wheeler.  
Bobby, you want anything?  
I'm good, man.  
We grabbed somethin' earlier.  
All right.  
I have to ask,  
what's up with the camera?  
Oh, it's just my buddy Bobby  
and his friend Mike,  
they love  
shootin' things. Mm!  
Your toast is on its way.  
Thank you, Sherri.  
Looks good.  
So what's up with the syrup?  
Oh, uh...  
My daddy ate this way  
since I was young,  
so he got me started on this.  
Pork and syrup, nothin' like it.  
Pork goes good  
with about anything.  
Mm.  
You a musician, or...?  
I'm a singer-songwriter.  
I'm gonna try to play a few  
open mics while I'm down here.  
Why not?  
You're in the right spot.  
Yeah.  
We just took a drive.  
Needed to get out of town  
for a little bit.  
That's always fun.  
Mm.  
I like taking a map, hitting it,

decide where to go from there.  
Yeah. Done a few  
of those trips back in the day.  
That was incredible. Thank you.  
I'm glad you liked it.  
Thanks, Sherri.  
I'll see you next time.  
All right.  
Have a good day.  
Welcome to music row.  
Music row is to music  
what wall street is to finance,  
what Madison Avenue  
is to advertising  
and what Hollywood is to film.  
And it's not just  
about country music either.  
All types of music  
are represented here.  
At the center of the circle  
is a very famous sculpture.  
The sculpture's called musica.  
It's caused  
a lot of controversy.  
We're considered the buckle  
of the Bible belt here.  
We have over 800 churches.  
A lot of our church leaders  
didn't want that to be put up.  
Some of them are still tryin'  
to get it to be taken down.  
I've taken a different approach.  
I think it's great.  
It's right here at the entrance  
to music row.  
I think it serves  
as a great reminder.  
A reminder to all of us  
that you might only  
lose your shirt in music,  
you might lose your pants,  
as well.  
That's my take on it.  
On the left is a very famous

recording studio.  
It is called RCA studio b.  
Studio b is where Elvis Presley  
did most of his recordings.  
And some of the other artists  
who recorded here at studio b:  
Pat Boone, the Louvin brothers,  
Jean Shepard, Jan Howard,  
Bob wills, bill Monroe,  
Carl Perkins, red Foley  
and kitty Wells.  
Ferlin Husky, Jimmy Dean.  
Grandpa Jones recorded  
t for Texas here.  
Porter Wagner, Dolly Parton,  
the Everly brothers,  
Mel Tillis, Roy Orbison,  
Willie Nelson recorded here.  
It just goes on and on.  
Right now,  
in front of us is curb records.  
And we have a curb songwriter on  
the tour today, Bobby Tomberlin.  
Bobby's written great songs.  
Songs recorded by artists like  
Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson,  
a great song by diamond Rio...  
One more day,  
a number-one hit.  
It crossed over to the adult  
contemporary and pop charts.  
One of the great songs  
I just heard you sing  
was at little Jimmy dickens'  
funeral.  
You wrote that for little Jimmy  
and his wife, Mona, correct?  
Yeah, I did.  
Yeah.  
And such a great performance  
on that song  
that you did  
at the funeral service.  
Bobby, so great to have you with

your friends on the tour today.  
Hey, thank you, buddy.  
Coming up on your right is the  
Quonset hut recording studio.  
The Quonset hut is where artists  
like Johnny cash recorded.  
Bob Dylan recorded Nashville,  
skyline and blond on blond.  
Brenda Lee recorded here.  
Loretta Lynn.  
And this is the building where  
Kris Kristofferson was a janitor  
when he first worked  
on music row.  
And coming up on your left,  
where Elvis Presley stayed...  
I just wanted to introduce  
myself. Wheeler Bryson.  
Hey, I'm Bobby.  
Never met a real time  
songwriter before.  
Good to meet ya.  
You too, man.  
I grew up, my daddy taught me  
all about Jimmy dickens.  
We used to listen to him a lot  
on the grand ole Opry.  
Yeah.  
What's a big-time songwriter  
doin' on a tour bus with us,  
you know, in Nashville?  
My buddy, Josh,  
he's visiting from out of town.  
Oh, all right.  
How you doin', man?  
Yeah, good to meet you.  
Yeah, we were just out  
takin' the tour.  
Man, it's a pleasure.  
Yeah. What do you do?  
I'm a singer-songwriter,  
but not professional like you.  
I... I've never been  
to Nashville and came

with some buddies of mine and  
took the tour, a little tourism.  
But I'm also gonna hopefully  
play some open mics  
and see what I can get done.  
I'd like to hear your stuff.  
Oh, yeah?  
I'll give you my number, man.  
You can come down  
to one of these open mics.  
Sure!  
Hello there!  
Howdy.  
What can I get you?  
I'll take a bud light, please.  
Bud light, that's a good one.  
Thank you.  
See that piano, Bobby?  
Sure do.  
What's goin' on  
with all the bobbies?  
I just met a guy named Bobby.  
Bobby. Bobby's idle hour.  
It's like Bobby day.  
Bobby day.  
Hey, sweetie, can I  
get you somethin' to drink?  
I'm all right right now.  
I'm about to go on.  
Good luck. Let me know  
if you need anything.  
Thank you.  
Whoo!  
Yeah!  
You sounded good.  
That was a hell of a song.  
That your song?  
Yes, sir. Thank you.  
You looked a little nervous.  
Yeah. I played like shit.  
I don't know what I'm thinkin'.  
You sounded good, man.  
You got a good voice.  
You'd be surprised how many

people in this town make money  
can't sing half that good.  
You did good.  
My name's Wheeler.  
Wheeler Bryson.  
Travis meadows.  
Good to see you, man.  
I was comin' here and I was  
expecting to find a keyboard,  
'cause we went to one bar  
and they had a piano...  
Man, it's a guitar town.  
Ain't many pianos around.  
So if you wanna play keys,  
you gotta bring your own.  
Yeah, pretty much.  
Or at least be prepared.  
Where can I find a good...  
Like, a used keyboard?  
Uh...  
Somethin' that won't...  
Probably...  
Corner music's a good place.  
Howdy.  
How you doin'?  
Hey, man.  
How you guys doin' today?  
Oh, hey, man. How are you?  
It's goin'. All right.  
Look at that hair.  
Rock'n'roll.  
Nice guitar, man.  
\$3,200, that's pricey.  
Yeah, they're proud of 'em.  
Yep.  
You lookin' for a guitar today?  
Actually,  
I'm lookin' for a keyboard.  
You got any good used keys  
around?  
We do, we do. Absolutely.  
Different part of the store.  
Yeah?  
Yeah. What's your name?



I'm Wheeler, man.  
Wheeler. Toddzilla.  
Nice to see you, man.  
Nice to meet ya.  
It's a big shop.  
Well, yeah,  
it's been here a long time.  
So what kind of keyboard  
you lookin' for?  
I mean, somethin' used, uh...  
You know, weighted keys,  
just a great piano sound.  
Okay.  
I don't really need any  
of the fancy synthesizer stuff.  
Okay. All right.  
I think I might have  
somethin' over here.  
Uh... a guy traded  
this in last week.  
Oh, it's a Yamaha, huh?  
Yamaha, p-155.  
Weighted keys.  
Mostly piano sounds.  
It's in great shape to be used.  
It doesn't have a scratch on it.  
Really has a great sound.  
That'll work for you.  
What's this one run?  
Oh, there you go.  
Well, we got it for 699.  
Normally, these things are  
about 1,200 bucks new, so...  
Yeah.  
You think if I pay cash...  
Talk to somebody  
get me a deal on this?  
We can usually negotiate  
if you're talkin' green stuff.  
Friendly folk from Texas, man.  
My first time in Nashville.  
Let me go run the numbers,  
let me see what I can come with.  
All right, man.

I'll just give her a test-out.  
Sounds nice.  
Sounds good, Wheeler.  
Thanks, man.  
Well, I ran the numbers.  
We can do the keyboard  
and the bag with the pedal  
for \$600 even.  
That's a deal.  
Cool. Let me help ya.  
Get her up in there.  
Yeah.  
It's safer in the bag.  
Cool, Todd.  
Wheeler, thank you very much  
for your business.  
Thanks for helpin' me out, man.  
Good luck to you.  
Thank you, man. Take care.  
Yeah!  
What I've been workin' on  
back home. I was tryin' to...  
I haven't had keys, man.  
Now I can make this song happen.  
Hi, this is Jill.  
Sorry I missed you.  
Please leave me a message.  
Hey, Jill, it's Wheeler.  
Just checkin' in, sayin' hi.  
We made it to Nashville.  
Been here a few days.  
Yeah, I played an open-mic  
last night. Didn't go so hot.  
I'm gonna give it another try  
tonight, though.  
Anyway, I'll let you know  
how it goes.  
Give my best to Craig  
and the girls, will ya?  
All right.  
That ain't no Texas sky, but...  
It sure is pretty.  
Thank you very much.  
Great to be here

at Douglas corner.  
Thank y'all.  
Hey, Wheeler!  
Hey!  
Hey, man.  
You made it, man.  
You sounded great.  
Yeah? 'Cause I don't know.  
I haven't done this  
that many times.  
Oh, no, it sounded great.  
This is a great room.  
I can't remember the last time  
I've been to a writer's night.  
I'm so glad I came out tonight.  
Thanks, man.  
What's the deal?  
Piano and guitar? Wow.  
You like the songs?  
Loved the songs.  
I liked her songs.  
Is this your friend, or...?  
Yeah, we've written  
a couple songs together.  
I'm Wheeler.  
I'm Audrey. Nice to meet you.  
You were awesome.  
Love the songs.  
Thank you so much.  
I loved your song.  
We were about to go  
to another bar and get a drink,  
get outta here. It's kinda  
noisy. You wanna come with us?  
Yeah.  
I'm ready to get out now.  
I'm gonna run to the head.  
I'll meet you out front.  
I'll meet you out front?  
You comin'?  
All right, yeah, I'm comin'.  
Cool.  
I'll give you more  
of the history

when we get in here,  
but it's old dives.  
- Looks cool.  
- Here, let me get this.  
Thank you.  
All right.  
First concert, Hank Williams Jr.  
In the middle of a cow pasture  
in the south of Alabama.  
Wow!  
How about you?  
Willie Nelson, 1981,  
reunion arena, Dallas.  
That's a good one.  
I met Willie last year.  
Come on!  
Oh, I did.  
I actually was on Willie's bus.  
Get the hell outta here!  
And I have to say,  
it was the highlight  
of my career.  
One of the highlights.  
Of course it was.  
Okay, favorite album.  
Ooh. That's hard, man.  
It is hard.  
That's a tie. That's a tie:  
Kristofferson,  
silver tongued devil;  
Merle haggard, down every road.  
God, those are great.  
Mine is blue by Joni Mitchell.  
I love... I love Joni Mitchell.  
It's a good one.  
There's some great songs  
on that record.  
Some great songs.  
My mom, actually,  
she worked at pizza hut...  
True story...  
When she was pregnant with me,  
and so when she would drive  
on her way to work,

as a waitress,  
she would sing to me.  
She would sing circle game,  
which is, you know,  
on ladies of the canyon.  
But anyways,  
so I remember those melodies,  
so, you know,  
she's very influential to me.  
You were in her tummy  
and you remember those.  
I'm serious!  
I know it sounds crazy!  
I know it sounds crazy,  
but for some reason, later on,  
when I heard those melodies,  
I just... I know it sounds nuts,  
y'all, but seriously.  
No...  
I believe in that.  
I think it soaked into my bones.  
You got a sound like her too.  
That Southern cross song  
you sang,  
when you go  
to those high notes, I mean...  
That's a great song.  
You're a great...  
It's a great song and you have  
an amazing singing voice.  
Thank you, yeah.  
Buddy, you really were  
great tonight too.  
Yeah, you were.  
I couldn't believe it  
when you walked in, a piano...  
On your shoulder and...  
Oh, man, I walked in  
with that heavy piano.  
Guitar?  
And then my guitar.  
Maybe I got greedy,  
but I wanted to get on the keys,  
and then I heard her song

**and I was, like:**

"I'm glad I brought my keys."

"'Cause I ain't that good  
on the guitar."

You really need to be heard.

You know who would  
really like this guy?

Who?

Bart Herbison.

That's perfect.

Who's that?

Bart Herbison at the NSAI.

Yes.

What's NSAI?

Nashville songwriter's  
association,  
and they just help songwriters  
and artists just comin' to town.  
What do you mean, like an agent?

No, they're not an agent.

They just... what would you say?

This is a great person  
for you to meet  
that would help you  
to maybe meet other publishers,  
or maybe just connect you  
with other writers.

What, I just play for him?

Yeah, you play him a song.

Yeah, I want him to hear you.

I really do, man.

And he knows  
a lot of people, or...?

He knows everybody.

He's very connected.

It's gonna be good.

I'm excited.

Hope so. Allow me.

Hi. How y'all doin' today?

Good. How are you?

Doin' well.

Audrey Spillman and Wheeler  
for Bart Herbison.

Okay.

Hey, you've got Audrey  
and Wheeler. Okay.

Y'all can go on up.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Come on this way.

I'm followin' you.

- You nervous?

- I'll be all right.

You're gonna be great.

- Hey, Audrey.

- How you doin', girl?

Hey, Bart. How are you? Good!

Good to see you!

You too. This is Wheeler.

Hey, man.

That's a pretty good  
music name. Wheeler.

Thank you, man.

Come on here and sit down.

Get your guitar out.

Thanks for havin' us, Bart.

I'm glad to take this time  
with you,

'cause they don't call me often,  
and I'm figurin' you've got  
somethin' pretty special to say  
in these songs, man.

You know, I just always  
wanted to come here,  
and I didn't know  
what was gonna happen.

We got here,

I played a few things,

- a few open-mics and I met...

- Loved it!

Met Bobby and then Audrey,  
and everybody kept tellin' me  
I gotta meet you,  
and I love that thing

**on the outside:**

"It all begins with a song."

'Cause I feel like my songs  
have helped me  
get through some things and...  
If I can make some people  
feel somethin',  
I'd love to do it.  
Let's see if they do, man.  
Let's hear somethin'.  
All right, then.  
Man!  
Wheeler.  
Wheeler!  
I don't know what to say.  
That moved me, man.  
You know, the biggest compliment  
I can give any songwriter...  
By the way, what a voice...  
And artist...  
Ah, thank you, sir.  
Is that was personal, wasn't it?  
Yeah, it was.  
I felt it, man.  
I'm just so happy to be here,  
so happy  
to meet people like you.  
I mean, I'm not lookin' to be  
a star, I'm just lookin' to...  
Well, you may have  
to change that wish.  
I just want people to feel  
somethin' from the songs and...  
I'm so glad  
they got this on film.  
That was  
an important moment to me,  
even with these trucks  
beepin' out here.  
I'm so glad  
they got that. Uh...  
I didn't mind that at all.  
Oh, Wheeler. You got me, man.  
I don't normally do this  
after hearin' one song,  
and I wanna...



I know from Bobby  
and from Audrey  
what you're all about,  
but I think I need  
to call Jim ed, man.  
It's...  
Jim ed is...?  
The eagles, Hank Jr.  
He runs curb records.  
Oh, shit.  
I ran into him  
a couple days ago and he said,  
"Bart, we want somethin' real.  
We want somethin' different.  
We want somebody  
different."  
I think he's talkin' about you.  
I know he's talkin' about you.  
Ah, man, I mean...  
Audrey told me the people  
that've come in here  
and played for you, man.  
Just the fact of meetin' you,  
I'm honored, whatever you think.  
Forget all that.  
Hold on a minute, man.  
There's somethin' I wanna do.  
I never do this.  
One of our founders was a lady  
named Marijohn Wilkin.  
You know that story,  
Kristofferson came to town,  
slept on this lady's couch  
for seven years?  
Okay, yeah.  
She wrote one day at a time.  
Oh, and long black veil?  
Yeah, Marijohn Wilkin.  
I know who you're talkin' about.  
This was the first  
songwriter of the year award  
we gave out  
in 1969-70 for Kris.  
This is Kris' award?

Kris' award.  
Sunday morning coming down,  
to beat the devil,  
help me make it  
through the night,  
for the good times.  
And let me tell you  
why I got it out.  
'Cause you know what was true  
about all those songs?  
They were real.  
Ah, yeah, they were.  
And so is that, man.  
I'm gonna call Jim ed,  
and... I'm gonna  
help you out.  
You got more like that?  
Oh, man, I got songs.  
I got a bunch, man.  
I just haven't gotten a chance  
to get in the studio  
professionally.  
I've got a demo tape  
I can get ya.  
Look, I love Nashville  
and I love country music,  
and we honor it and respect it.  
But I think it's good  
that you haven't been here.  
Wherever Kaufman, Texas,  
is from, whatever you felt...  
Wheeler...  
Thank you, sir.  
Thank you so much, Bart.  
I wanna get out of your hair,  
but you tell me  
where I need to be.  
If somebody tells me,  
I'll go to any meetin'.  
I'll be happy to play  
for Jim ed.  
Well, get ready.  
I've been seeing  
that name a lot around town.

You got a little more coffee?

Yeah, no problem.

Yeah, well,

the hermitage was the name  
of Andrew Jackson's plantation.

You know he was the first  
president to ever have  
an assassination attempt  
on his life?

Oh, really?

Yeah.

He was comin' out  
of the capitol in D.C.,  
he was leavin' a funeral  
or somethin' and...

This crazy Englishman  
comes out of nowhere,  
claimin' to be king Richard III.

Took two pistols  
and fired 'em right at him.

Luckily for Jackson,  
they both misfired.

I mean...

King Richard III had been dead  
for a few hundred years,  
you know.

The guy was crazy.

So they disarmed the man,  
they pinned him down.

Guess who pinned him down?

Davy Crockett.

Jackson proceeded to kick the  
shit outta him with his cane.  
So they test-fired these guns.  
Bullets fired  
every single damn time.

Wow.

Yep.

That's crazy.

True story.

My breakfast is  
always \$13.05. Amazin'.

Well, I get the same thing,  
don't I?

- Yeah, true.  
- You had the Wheeler special.  
I still gotta tune my guitar  
before this meetin'.  
What do you say we get movin'?  
All right.  
Yeah?  
Let's do it.  
All right.  
Ah...  
You know, Bart Herbison  
doesn't call me every day,  
and there's no surprise  
that you're a real, true talent.  
Oh, man, thank you.  
Thank you, sir.  
You know, Wheeler,  
I really liked fever.  
I'd like to know more about ya.  
Do you write a lot of songs,  
and how about do you play live?  
Yeah. I mean... songs,  
I got for days.  
Live... haven't had  
as much experience with that,  
but that was one  
of the reasons to come here,  
was to not only  
see Nashville, but...  
To play some open-mics,  
see where that took me.  
Uh... but it's somethin'  
I think I could get good at  
if I had the practice.  
But, uh... yeah, I got songs.  
I like your sense of commitment.  
How does this sound to you?  
We do a development deal,  
you cut three sides  
in our studio across the street,  
uh, with musicians.  
You get a chance to experience  
the creative process  
and what it means

to work with other people  
and to make a record.

Damn.

So I would get to play  
with real Nashville players  
and record a few songs for you?

Yes, you would.

Pfft.

Damn, yeah!

I'd be into that.

Where are you stayin'  
while you're here?

Uh... we're stayin'  
over at the deluxe inn,  
which is a... a little place  
right off Trinity Lane.

Hold on just a sec here.

Uh, Rebecca?

Yes, sir?

Is the lodge empty?

Did Moe leave and it's open now?

Yeah. He moved out  
last week.

So we've got a place  
south of town.

It's over there by Franklin  
and, uh... great cabin.

It's a place where you could  
write more songs, play music,  
you just clear your head,  
you could hang out...

How's that sound to ya?

Mr. Norman,

I wouldn't want to, uh...

I wouldn't wanna impose.

I'm goin' into the studio.

I don't need a place to stay.

We're all right there.

No, no, no,

it's not an imposition.

I'll have Rebecca call  
and get it set up

with William out there.

It'll be fine.

Really?

Yes.

It was a pleasure.

Thank you so much, Mr. Norman.

Wow! Bobby,

look at this joint.

Hello?

We got two bedrooms here,  
some sleepin' area up here.

Wow.

Then a king bed back here.

My phone number and everything's  
on this piece of paper here.

Great.

If you need anything,  
you can just give me a call.

So you're on the property?

Yes.

Great. It's nice  
to meet you, William.

It's nice meetin' you.

Thank you, man.

If there's anything,  
let me know, or I'll call,  
we'll have a beer sometime.

Sounds good.

If you need anything,  
let me know.

Okay, man, thank you.

You're welcome.

I hear it kind of like:

Dum-dum-dum-do-dum.

I like that.

And I don't have...

Should we write...

Do we have to rhyme with crime?

Down to the ground, or poor me.

Do it again.

Do it again.

Man, it's tough. You know?

No...

Ground, town... town?

Pour...

**How about:**

"Pour me out of this town"?  
Pretty crazy, this town.  
You never know  
where you're gonna meet  
the next great talent and, uh,  
not too long ago,  
I had some friends visiting,  
and went on this tour  
of music row in Nashville  
and met this guy from Texas.  
He was just a cool guy and then,  
the more I learned about him,  
he had quite a story.  
He's had some hard times  
and he didn't get to come  
to Nashville right after  
high school like I did.  
But anyway, we got together,  
he played me some of his songs  
and we got together,  
and actually wrote a song  
just a few days ago.  
And I asked him to come on out  
to the blue bird and play.  
And I'd like for you  
to meet my friend Wheeler,  
from Kaufman, Texas.  
Yeah.  
Yeah.  
Yeah, buddy.  
It's a pretty magical place.  
It's pretty crazy the first time  
on this stage and, uh...  
It's good to have you here, man.  
Thank you. I can't believe  
I'm at the blue bird.  
This is nuts.  
Well, let's just go for it.  
Thank you. Thank you.  
Wheeler, ladies and gentlemen.  
Took him a long time  
to get here,  
but by gosh, he did a great job.

Wow.  
Kaufman, Texas.  
It was one of those magical  
blue bird moments. It was.  
I've always loved that place.  
It was always kinda like  
the Ryman to me.  
The blue bird was the pinnacle  
for me, you know.  
No doubt.  
Used to make a lot of trips  
up here and...  
Stop in on the 9:00 shows  
and it was like goin' to church.  
- You know what I mean?  
- Oh, yeah.  
I'm gettin' a little cold, man.  
It is cool.  
I'm proud of you, buddy.  
We gotta write  
another one, Bobby t.  
I can't thank y'all enough  
for comin'.  
Hell of a night.  
What's that?  
I don't know,  
I've never heard that before.  
He writes all the time.  
We're at curb studios  
right here.  
'Cause Mr. Jim ed Norman  
gave me a day or two  
to cut these three songs.  
I had to pinch myself earlier.  
I mean, this is just...  
I can't believe  
all this is happenin'.  
When it rains, it pours, man.  
I want you to meet a guy  
from Kaufman, Texas.  
- Hey, guys.  
- Hey, Wheeler!  
This is Wheeler Bryson.  
Nice to meet ya.



Nice to meet ya.  
It's a pleasure.  
Nice to meet ya. Pleasure.  
Hey, Wheeler.  
Basically, the numbers  
correlate to the scale of the...  
The beat? Oh, right.  
So if you were to just say,  
"no, I wanna do it in f,"  
these numbers still are relevant  
to the key of f.  
Wow.  
Let's go play it.  
Yeah, man.  
Okay, buddy, you're gonna  
sing a scratch vocal.  
Okay.  
Where do you need me?  
Good luck, Wheeler.  
All right, guys.  
Thank you, guys.  
Have fun, man.  
Here we go!  
And one, two, three.  
I'm eddy Bayers.  
I'm kinda like the elder  
of the group,  
I've been goin' on since '74.  
And, uh...  
Today, was... a surprise,  
because it was so refreshing.  
And Wheeler,  
as a songwriter-storyteller,  
great voice,  
and the verse on every song  
that is just unusual.  
And someone like him  
doesn't come around very often.  
Wow.  
Rockin', baby!  
That took it to another level.  
Yeah!  
I like that guitar kickin' in.  
Guess what I just recorded

in the studio?  
She's only 20.  
Yeah!  
Oh, Jill, you have no idea,  
it sounded so incredible.  
Wheeler's awesome, man.  
Like eddy was sayin' earlier,  
it's just a privilege.  
The dude's got a killer voice,  
he's awesome,  
he's more country than a lot of  
new artists we're working with.  
It's just refreshing.  
He's kinda...  
It seems like he's blending  
a lot of the cool stuff  
that's new  
with some of...  
Where he comes from.  
My name's Bif Watson.  
Hitchhiked to Nashville in 1971,  
the day after high school.  
Workin' with Wheeler today,  
uh, really authentic.  
Authentic country singer  
bringin' back Lyric and melody,  
which is a wonderful thing.  
Just a real joy to work with.  
Great guy too.  
Sounded really good in there.  
Thanks. Thank you.  
I should get back in there too.  
I don't wanna waste their time.  
Well, can I listen for a second?  
Yeah, you can sit in there.  
I'm just standin' out  
in that big room,  
feelin' lonely  
and tryin' to sing good.  
You know, I wrote move on...  
Tryin' to heal myself.  
A lot of the lines in that song,  
"forgettin' your past"  
and "learn to forgive"...

I don't think  
I'll ever forget the past...  
Forget the pain, but...  
Yeah, maybe it was just the...  
the magic  
of how the track sounded  
with the lines that I'm singin'.  
I had Wheeler's vocal cranked.  
He's like a cross  
between cougar, John cougar,  
a little bit of Springsteen,  
but Waylon,  
you know, back in the day.  
I think  
he's a great storyteller,  
he's gonna do great stuff.  
I'm just thrilled to be  
on the ground floor of this,  
'cause it's great.  
Wow, there's great energy  
on that. Holy cow.  
The whole band followed you,  
so that was... brilliant.  
That was a track.  
I think Wheeler's got  
a great shot, you know,  
so can't wait to see  
what happens with this.  
Ah, man. Okay...  
You wanna see how it's done?  
Yeah.  
You wanna see how it's done?  
Yeah.  
All right.  
Good lord!  
How lucky can a man get?  
You hit dirt.  
Close.  
All right, here's the shot.  
Okay.  
Here's the one.  
Who's winnin'?  
Uh... Travis.  
'Cause he's not playing.

I'm gonna go take a walk.  
Audrey, you wanna come?  
Yes.  
Be back in a minute.  
Good luck, Bobby.  
This isn't happening.  
You wanna take a wander with me?  
Yes. I do.  
What's goin' on with you?  
Just a lot on my mind.  
I can tell that, but,  
I mean, you can tell me.  
Yeah, I think  
it's everything this week.  
The studio...  
Just been, uh, movin' so fast.  
It's brought up  
some feelings and...  
What is it?  
Uh...  
I had a, uh...  
I had a little girl.  
I lost her when she was 5.  
Her name was Sadie.  
She was everything to me,  
you know...  
I am so sorry.  
I just miss her, you know.  
I miss her every day.  
And bein' here,  
all these nice things  
happenin'...  
it just makes me think of her.  
She was at a party,  
playing with some friends,  
they were swimming in the pool.  
My missus was supposed  
to be watching her.  
And I don't know, the adults,  
they started talking  
or somethin'...  
My baby drowned.  
Ah, hell.  
I deal with this pain

every day of my life  
if I think about her, but...  
I'm happy now, you know.  
I know she'd be...  
She'd be proud of me and, uh...  
I just can't believe  
she could...  
Be taken away that young.  
I can show you somethin'.  
I got two here.  
Here she is.  
She looks a lot like you.  
She's gorgeous.  
Yeah.  
Whew.  
I can't even imagine.  
Can't even imagine.  
So, uh...  
there was a gap of time there,  
after that happened...  
I mean...  
I understand why  
this means so much to you.  
Yeah, well, I just figured  
it's my last shot, you know.  
I lost some time there  
and, uh...  
I mean, that kind of torture,  
I wouldn't wish that  
upon anyone.  
So...  
one day,  
I'll be with her up there.  
I'll play her some songs and...  
You will.  
It sure is nice  
to meet you, Audrey, and...  
I really consider you a friend.  
And, uh...  
I don't tell people...  
About this stuff,  
but, uh... I trust ya.  
You've been a good friend to me.  
Well, good friends

don't go away, they...  
We got that to look  
forward to, don't we?  
That's right. You know,  
I got your back.  
Why don't we head back  
to the lodge, light a fire.  
Yeah.  
After you,  
Ms. Spillman.  
Wheeler,  
it's Bart Herbison here.  
A couple things, man.  
I love giving good news.  
First, I checked those cuts out  
you recorded,  
I'm telling you, bro,  
I've still got my skirt up  
over my head, man.  
They are awesome!  
And after that song you  
and Bobby Tomberlin played  
the other night  
at the blue bird,  
they want you back  
to play your own set.  
Congrats, pal.  
Give me a call.  
That was great. Thanks.  
It's been a lot of fun.  
Thank you.  
Hold on. You wanna hear  
another song from Wheeler?  
Wasn't that great?  
Play us another one.  
Thank you.  
All right, I'll give you  
one more, yeah.  
Thank you, guys.  
You guys are awesome.  
Uh...  
This is a song I've  
been writin' for the last...  
About a month now.

Uh... it's a song  
I wrote for my...  
My father,  
who's no longer with us.  
Um...  
He'd just be over the moon,  
I think, to know  
that I'm playing this song  
at the blue bird caf  
in Nashville, so, uh...  
This song is called  
show me the way.  
Thank you.  
Thank you.  
- Where we headed again?  
- Bart's out of town,  
and he wanted me  
to introduce you to a writer.  
Oh, yeah?  
Yeah.  
In there?  
Yeah. Come on.  
Audrey.  
Yeah.  
Hi. I'm Johnny. How are you?  
Nice to meet you.  
Wheeler.  
Good to meet you.  
Nice to meet you.  
Welcome.  
You guys good?  
You need anything?  
Nope.  
Good.  
- I'll show you back.  
- All right.  
Oh, my god... you have  
got to be shittin' me.  
This is crazy.  
Come on.  
Kris, Audrey and Wheeler  
are here, man.  
Hey! Come on in, man!  
Hey.

Wow.  
Hi. I'm Audrey.  
Hi, Audrey.  
It's nice to meet you.  
You must be Wheeler.  
Ah, yes, sir.  
Heard a couple of your tracks  
over there at Bart's office.  
And, man, you knocked me out.  
Thank you so much, sir.  
Coming from you,  
are you kiddin' me?  
Is this happenin'?  
Sorry. Ah... wow.  
You're my hero,  
Mr. Kristofferson.  
I grew up  
listenin' to your music,  
readin' about you,  
uh... your story,  
and that William Blake quote  
you love so much.  
I read all about that,  
and that got me through  
some really tough times.  
It's one of the main reasons  
I'm in Nashville.  
Well, I'm glad you made it.  
I'm doin' a charity gig,  
comin' up at the Ryman.  
How 'bout gettin' up  
and doin' one of your songs?  
Are you serious?  
The Ryman?!  
Yeah.  
Well, yes, sir! I'll be...  
I'm at a loss for words,  
but I will be there.  
I will be on time.  
I'll be early.  
Ha! Ha! Well, you'll be early  
and you'll be great.  
That'd be incredible.  
Well, great, man.



Johnny'll get you all the  
details. We'll have some fun.  
Okay. Thank you so much!  
Pleasure meetin' you.  
Yeah. I'll be proud  
to say I know ya.  
I hope so!  
I hope I make you proud!  
Thank you, man, for bringin' us  
in to meet the man.  
See ya!  
Thank you.  
Whoo!  
Yes, indeed.  
Absolutely beautiful.  
He's a country-music  
troubadour, a gypsy spirit,  
and a country song in his heart.  
Wheeler Bryson, welcome,  
my friend!  
Ah, thank you so much  
for havin' me.  
This is my first radio show.  
Oh, we're makin'  
your debut radio  
right here in music city, USA.  
You have definitely  
kicked up some dust.  
Quite a buzz goin' around  
music city about you.  
Nashville is a place  
where dreams can come true.  
So what do you wanna do  
with all of this?  
You know, Marcia, I don't know,  
I just wanted to see if my songs  
were just good in my hometown  
or if they actually, uh...  
Would translate.  
And, you know,  
the overwhelmin' feelin'  
that I've had here,  
just the experience of this,  
I'd be fine if everybody

took it all away now and  
I went home back to the farm.  
So can we talk about the show  
that's coming up?  
You mean the one  
I was invited to play at? Yeah.  
Yes, so can I mention that?  
It's kinda in here...  
I mean, yeah, as long  
as I won't get in any trouble.  
I don't know  
if that's acceptable,  
but, yeah, I mean, basically,  
I had the great fortune  
of meetin' my favorite...  
Poet out there,  
Kris Kristofferson.  
And he invited me to play  
at the Ryman with him,  
to come up and do a song,  
and I think it's next week.  
I'm very excited to see  
what your future holds,  
and you seem so connected  
and honest to who you truly are.  
Folks, again, be sure  
and check out Kris Kristofferson  
with Wheeler Bryson  
at the Ryman, comin' up.  
My friend,  
you're welcome back anytime.  
Come and see me.  
It's an open-door policy.  
I'll come back, Marcia,  
for sure.  
Yeah!  
Hey, mornin', stranger.  
Good morning.  
Someone movin' a little slow  
this mornin'?  
A little bit.  
Where's Dorothy?  
Dorothy's upstairs.  
She's sleepin' off

the same feeling, so...

Hm.

That was good harmonies  
last night. I had fun.

Thank you.

She had a really good time.

I'm glad she came.

But today is your day,  
it's a big day for you, so...

Anyways, I'm proud of you,  
and I wanted to give you  
a little somethin'.

What's this?

Just open it up!

Yes, ma'am!

Wow! Look at these, Bobby!

Damn, man.

Are you kiddin' me?

You like 'em?

I love 'em.

Gorgeous pair of boots.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

Let me try.

Let's see how

we're doin' here. Ah, yeah!

Look at those bad boys! Whoo!

I mean, they are slippery,

I could moonwalk back to you.

I can moonwalk back to you.

Oh, my god! Oh, man.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

So, Bobby,

we should get goin' here.

What else do I need?

I got my jacket,

I got my guitar.

I think we're good.

Yeah?

We'll see you down there

at sound check,

and you'll call Bobby t.

And tell him to come?

I will. He'll be there.  
Okay, great.  
Let's do it! Thank you, darlin'.  
You're welcome.  
You made my day.  
Made my day! Whoo!  
We'll see you down there, Mike!  
All right, good luck, Wheeler!  
Thanks.  
That was so sweet of Audrey.  
These boots,  
they fit like a glove, man.  
They look sharp.  
Finally gettin'  
into the Ryman, baby.  
Can you believe it?  
I'm excited to hear  
what he plays.  
- Who, Kris?  
- Yeah.  
Yeah, man.  
I just can't believe it.  
Just got the chills, man.  
I got the chills  
runnin' through my spine.  
Tsk. Couldn't even  
sleep last night.  
You know, your dad's  
gonna be listening tonight.  
Yeah, he is.  
He sure is.  
What a day, man. What a day.  
Can't imagine what  
that stained glass is gonna  
look like from the stage.  
And now a sad piece of news.  
Wheeler Bryson,  
a recent guest of the show,  
was involved in a tragic  
automobile accident  
earlier today in Franklin  
that claimed his life,  
as well as the life  
of his childhood friend,

Bobby Ross.  
His talent was true.  
His words were honest.  
His voice a beautiful mix  
of traditional and modern.  
And at his core,  
an infectious spirit  
that touched the hearts  
and souls of everyone he met.  
Our friend, Wheeler Lynn Bryson,  
dead at the age of 41.  
This is an interview  
you don't wanna do.  
He was special.  
Uh... I needed his songs  
and I needed him in my life.  
When I met Wheeler,  
he kinda filled a void.  
And... I found something  
in Wheeler that I had lost,  
just the joy of writing songs  
and playing music  
for the fun of it.  
I really wanted  
to come to Kaufman  
and I wanted to see the place  
and meet the people  
who made him who he was.  
As long as I sing,  
as long as I play guitar  
and do shows,  
I'm gonna sing our song  
and I'm gonna say,  
"here's a song...  
"I wrote with an old boy  
from Kaufman, Texas.  
His name  
was Wheeler Bryson."  
We became friends,  
and I don't make friends easily,  
because he was so real  
and genuine...  
And open about...  
His flaws and emotions.

He was just honest.  
It's hard for me  
to talk about it. Uh...  
He had no rules,  
he was not in any sort of box.  
He is... he was just him.  
And he had this story to tell.  
It was incredible.  
I feel like he made it.  
He won.  
There's just not a day  
that goes by  
I don't think about him.  
Hearin' his music's  
almost... bittersweet.  
Anyway...  
I-I'm glad that the world  
gets to have his music now.  
You know...  
At least everybody  
gets a little piece of him.  
Kristofferson became  
part of Wheeler's story.  
And there's this great Lyric,  
the greatest  
songwriter's song ever  
is a song called  
to beat the devil.  
I was born a lonely singer  
in a world turned deaf and blind  
who was crucified  
for what I tried to show  
but if I never have a nickel  
won't ever die of shame  
'cause the truth remains  
if no one wants to know.  
Wheeler told the truth  
and he broke a lot of rules  
in how quickly people  
did want to know.  
And it matters,  
and it's gonna  
live on and on and on.  
You know that line in the song,

when I say,  
"nobody's here forever"?  
It sounds good in a song, but...  
I think people are here forever.  
They're just not here  
in the flesh.  
It's a crazy thing... death.  
It's the one certainty  
that nobody's certain about.