

THE HUNCH

Written by

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INT./EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Whereas, two expressways meet on the edge of town, a dim lit parking lot and a sign reading "Archie's Bar" stand. An old Dodge truck sits, idle, with a man named JIM inside.

Jim could be confused as the lead singer of rock group Blues' Traveler, looking like a typical, country boy: tall, young face but actually in his late 40's, plus overweight.

Jim sits motionless, staring off in the distance in deep thought till a certain sound breaks the silence...

RING, RING, RING, RING, RING, RING

Unheard - the call goes right to voicemail; Jim's stare remains unbroken Jim's

RING, RING, Ring - Jim snaps to, looks at his cell phone sitting on the dash mount, sees the caller ID and accepts

JIM

(Speaker)

STAN, what'd you find out?

STAN (V.O.)

She just clocked out, had my contact pull her automated timecard. Apparently, your wife is taking a full hour for dinner for this shift from 10:55-11:55pm; but, she's gone, not eating at the work cafeteria; and, I don't know what fast food she's going to be able to get at this hour. Plus, it's Halloween! So, if she's not going to your guys' home, then you must have been right - something's up.

No response from Jim, hand covering his mouth, head starting to shake

JIM

Maybe, maybe, she doesn't like the food there at that place. Maybe I was wrong and she just has something else tonight or packed a lunch and is sitting in her own car eating or something.

STAN (V.O.)

Wake up man! You two have been on the outs now for over 3 months.

(MORE)

STAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She's stopped taking her lunch to work, if you recall, is not sitting in the parking lot, as I had my contact check the security cameras. She no longer contacts you or comes home to eat and you both haven't been having sex for months.

JIM

I know. I know. But, that's my fault I think, and not actual proof that she's cheating or something

STAN (V.O.)

What are we doing here man? You're the one that asked to make this happen by tonight, on Halloween night! Why? What's so special about tonight? Why did you ask me to affirm your own suspicions, if you don't then ever believe them?

JIM

Don't worry about it;
it was just a hunch.

STAN (V.O.)

A hunch? Are you literally crazy or just blind! ANNIE might be cheating on you and you coerced me to put my job on the line to find that out! But, once I do, now you can't see it. Fuck you dude, and just so you know, my contact saw your wife leave in costume, yea, in a white, naughty nurse or something outfit. Way I figure it, that only gives you 57 more minutes to prove what's she's doing in that thing - LATER!

CLICK - call disconnects

Stan remains sitting, lost in thought...

QUICK FLASHES - JIM'S WIFE - MEMORIES

-- Jim meeting his wife, smiling, dating, first kiss

-- Jim down on one knee proposing and her accepting, tears

-- Jim and Annie walking down the aisle to be wed and kiss

BACK TO SCENE

Heavy metal music BLASTS from within the truck cab,
outweighed by Jim's sudden screams

JIM

Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!
Whyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy Annie? Why?

BOOM - Jim pounds the dash with both hands, ripping his shirt from one side to the other as he swings about in his seat in all directions, yelling at the top of his lungs...

JIM (CONT'D)

Annie! ...my Annie, nooooo!

BAM - Jim takes a nosedive, laying hunched over the front steering wheel, now sullen, sweaty and sobbing audibly to self.

Seconds pass, soon becoming minutes; Jim finally stops shaking, slowly wipes his brow and starts whispering aloud

JIM (CONT'D)

(Rhetorically to self)
Maybe, it's not too late (?). Maybe she'll snap out of it, not do anything after all and come to her senses. Maybe we can still do counseling and she'll just wake up.

RING, RING, RING - incoming call

Jim's head snaps up - caller ID reads - AA Sponsor David.

JIM (CONT'D)

(saddened, head dropping)
...nooooo, not now

DAVID (V.O.)

JIM? Jim? It's David; you OK?

Head down, not answering, Jim blindly reaches across the cab to the glovebox (leaving it open, internal contents-unseen). A bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey emerges & quickly is opened

GULP, GULP, GULP, Jim downs the whiskey as his body starts to shake, his face wincing. He finally stops for a breath, wipes his chin and sits back amongst the head rush, tears stream.

JIM

I can't believe I lost her David. I
have nothing left without Annie;
(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)

I have to work all the time just to get us by, and by the time I get home I am exhausted, not wanting anything but sleep or a drink

DAVID (V.O.)

You've been sober for 149 days straight. Don't ruin it. I'm sure whatever you thought was going to happen tonight with Annie was just some kind of misunderstanding. You guys have been married for year.

JIM

How'd you know, about...tonight?

DAVID (V.O.)

(Hesitating)

Stan called me

Jim shakes his head as if not surprised, nor responding

DAVID (V.O.)

Jim, let's just meet up, get some coffee and I'm sure all will be back to normal tomorrow. It doesn't sound like you had any real proof that Annie was going to do something crazy tonight or see some other guy. So, what are you doing? Why are you acting like this all sudden on Halloween of all days?

JIM

Just a hunch, David,...I guess

Jim, sinks back, taking now slower drinks. David's words start to turn to murmurs and echos amongst Jim's sorrow

DAVID (V.O.)

Jim, just look how far you've come, with or without Annie. You're doing it, well on the way to sobriety. Please don't ruin it, please.

Jim turns, his face reveals something else this time...

DAVID (V.O.)

Jim, please

Suddenly, slowly, ...a bottle is lowered. A back - straightened, a shirt - unraveled. Final tears are lastly wiped away as Jim takes a deep breath in and hard gulp.

DAVID (V.O.)
Can you do it? Can you just keep it
together - for you?

JIM
(Nodding to self)
...Yes, I committed to this, right?

DAVID (V.O.)
Correct

JIM
It's not about Annie. It's up to
me, not her, to be responsible.

DAVID (V.O.)
Indeed

JIM
Right,...right, and, now I know
what I need to do

DAVID
Right, good, ...wait, what?

DING, DING, DING - incoming text message

DAVID (V.O.)
Jim? Jim? You still there? Hello?

CLICK - Jim opens the received text message immediately, a
look of sudden curiosity though quickly turns to horror

DAVID (V.O.)
JIM? JIM?! What was that? Was that
a text? What's happening?

JIM
(Head cocks, eyes bulge)
Have to go David...

DAVID (V.O.)
What? Jim? Answer me, what was
that? Are you OK?

Non-responsive - Jim appears in shock, still staring down at
the text message as he calculatingly reaches over to the
glove box once more, still open. This time, something else
though is extracted from within the darkness; it's a gun.

DAVID (V.O.)
Jim? Do you need me to come over
and meet you? Where are you?

No response - Jim appears entranced with the pistol now in hand, raising it up just high enough to stare down the barrel

DAVID (V.O.)
Jim? What's going on?

Jim's eyes suddenly light up...

COCK - the gun's been loaded.

DAVID (V.O.)
(Horrorified)
WHAT WAS THAT? JIM? What was that?

JIM
Nothing David, have to go, thanks for everything, you've been a great sponsor; thanks for all your help.

DAVID (V.O.)
Jim, wait, wait a moment, can you just hold on a second?

Jim looks down at his watch, then outside the truck for the first time, seeing a sign that reads overhead - Archie's Bar - "Happy Halloween party tonight - everyone come in costume!"

JIM
Something I have to do David...

DAVID (V.O.)
(Screaming)
JIM! JIM! Wait! Wait!

CLICK - line goes dead

Jim disconnects the call, looks around the parking lot, slowly opens the door to get out, gun in hand, but then stops, looks at his watch once more, then back at something behind his seat, unseen, sits back down and waits, instead.

INT. ARCHIE'S BAR - NIGHT

ANNIE'S TABLE

A woman - Annie, sits at a table on the far side of the bar. She is dressed like a nurse that got lost at a strip club. The woman is very attractive, mid 20's, exotic looking.

Annie sits facing the front door, which is a good 35-50 feet from her. She appears nervous, trying not to fidget in her seat, as she taps her feet and takes a drink of a wine cooler

RING, RING, RING - Annie jumps as her cell phone startles her

ANNIE
Hello? Hello?

DAWN (V.O.)
(Slurring)
ANNIE! Happy Halloween! Leave work
and come have a drink with us! WOO!

ANNIE
(Whispering)
Shhhhhhh, I can't Dawn, I'm busy; I
told you, tonight's the big night

Annie again scours the bar in both directions

DAWN (V.O.)
Oh yea! So, you're going through
with it to finally meet up with the
mystery man then? Where you at?

ANNIE
Yes, at Archie's, and he should be
here any minute, told him I would
meet him here in this naughty
little nurse outfit, by 11:05pm

DAWN (V.O.)
Can't believe you made that stud
wait 3 months just to meet in
person! My gosh, what kind of a
chat room handle is
@ReverseCowboy69 anyway? Even
better, how do you even know it's
going to be him, if all you've been
doing is Messenger, email and text?

ANNIE
That's why I'm here Dawn, to see
for myself, and if everything is
how he described then someone's
getting lucky tonight!

Both girls start laughing as Annie again scours the bar once
more and then finally back down to her watch, reading 11:04pm

ANNIE (CONT'D)
Oh, shute! Have to go Dawn; he
should be here any second!

DAWN (V.O.)
Wait! How do you even know it's
going to even be him?

ANNIE

I sent him a picture of my outfit for tonight and then he described his as being a long black, cowboy trench coat, matching hat, boots and even a black mask, my cowboy fantasy, mmmmmmmmmmmmm Mmmmmmmmm!

DAWN (V.O.)

You go girl!

ANNIE

I WILL! See you!

CLICK - Annie hangs up, puts her phone away, tugs on her skirt, shifts nervously, looks back at her watch, then at the door and freezes: the time shown is 11:05pm.

In slow motion - a tall male enters the bar, nods to the doorman, then directly towards Annie. The man is dressed in all black, including cowboy hat, boots, long trench coat, pants and mask. His costume looks like out of a western movie

The mystery man sashays his way across the bar towards Annie; spurs KNOCK across the hard wood floor as he does. The man smiles devilishly at Annie as he also starts to slowly undress, one article at a time, going from head to toe.

Halfway - the cowboy hat is off. Annie takes a deep breath

Closer - and the long, black trench coat is opened, one button at a time. Annie's stare is unbreakable...

ANNIE'S TABLE

The mystery man reaches Annie, as she starts to blush and give a teasing wave. The mystery man reaches down to pull out a chair before sitting down. As he does, Annie's face shifts quickly from excitement to surprise as the man also de-masks

ANNIE (CONT'D)

(Horrorified whisper)

...Jim

JIM

...No, you can just call me
@ReverseCowboy69;

BANG - Annie's drink drops, along with her jaw

JIM (CONT'D)

I thought you might like that. I just never thought that you'd ever take it to this level though Annie

Time stops; music is muffled, and Jim and Annie are unmoving at their table in front of one another. Neither move, blink, shift or speak, appearing as if locked in a stare down till Jim finally reaches down to his right, hip holster to grab the gun and place it upon the table.

ANNIE

(GASP...)

Annie stops breathing; her lips twitch, a bead of sweat rolls down her forehead as her knees start to unconsciously knock

A moment passes - still no movement, both Annie and Jim appear in utter dismay and disbelief still finally something breaks the silence from behind.

WAITER

Hey! Mr. and Mrs. Gunderson, happy Halloween! I didn't expect to see you all. Can I get you all something to drink?

ANNIE

Double shot of Jack

WAITER

OOOOOK! A double shot of Jack Daniels for the lady, and Mr. Gunderson? The same then for you?

JIM

(Hesitatingly)
...no, thank you, I
don't... drink anymore.

Jim's humbled, slowly giving an awkward grin up to the waiter as he stands, gives Annie a final glance and turns to depart.

As Jim starts to walk away, Annie remains motionless, as does the WAITER, but after the first step, a sudden thought overcomes Jim. He stops, grabs for his cell, scrolls through it, grimaces, turns, and sets his cell down next to Annie.

WAITER

Oh, ok, no problem, that's fine Mr. Gunderson, maybe next time then.
WOH, that gun looks real!

JIM

(Over shoulder, departing)
Yea, it is...

The waiter's face slowly goes pal, along with Annie's, as Jim is seen slowly making his way back to the front door, step by step, amongst the music starting to BLARE overhead

INT. ARCHIE'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jim reaches the front door, Annie finally looks down at Jim's cell phone that he left. The screen reveals the following two messages, dated from this day, October 31, 2019.

ANNIE TO @ReverseCowboy69:

2:07pm - "Can't WAIT to finally meet tonight! Hope you can get us a hotel so that I don't have to go home to my husband after! I'll text you upon arrival at Archies tonight, chao!

11:00pm - OK, here! I was lucky to get off for lunch as planned, and are ready for you Cowboy! Archies, back table, naughty nurse awaits! Let's make this a night to remember!

@ReverseCowboy69 to Annie:

...agreed

END