

Rid Of Guilt (Alternative)

By

Howard Jensen

fatdeich8@hotmail.com

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Empty beer cans stand on the small coffee table. Remnants of a fast food dinner and a full ashtray accompany them.

A cramped, untidy living space; Dated, bland wallpaper, frayed curtains. Clothes, wrappers and other rubbish lie all over the floor.

A portable TV flickers in the corner.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Not much better. Tea bag stains blotch the wall over the exposed, bulging bin. Dishes pile up in the sink, some there longer than others.

PATRICK (early 50s), scraggly beard, shabby, unwashed, sits at one end of the table, a can of beer beside him. He stares gravely ahead.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

SUPER: EARLY NEXT MORNING

LINDA (early 30s) petite, attractive, gets her son, JOSEPH (6) ready for school. She fixes his tie, straightens the creases on his uniform.

TRAINS are the theme of the room, adorning the bed sheets and wallpaper.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick brings the can to his lips, drinks long and slow.

PATRICK  
What would you want to hear me  
say?

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

SUPER: LATER NEXT MORNING

The sun shines in a clear blue sky.

DANIEL (mid 20s), expensive suit, briefcase, neatly styled hair, waits for his train.

Patrick approaches him, shaven.

He wears a worn but clean jacket and jeans, stands a few feet from Daniel, eyes the other people waiting...peers down the platform.

He focuses his attention on Daniel momentarily before staring straight ahead, inhales deeply.

PATRICK

God, I love these mornings...don't you?

Daniel takes a second to realise Patrick is talking to him.

DANIEL

Yep...looks like it's gonna be a good one.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EARLIER

Linda pours cereal for Joseph at the table.

PATRICK (V.O.)

Yes, it is...I was up at half six, rose with the sun...Kinda gives you the feeling it's going be a nice day...

The morning sun penetrates the window above the sink, illuminates the kitchen in its glow.

PATRICK (V.O.)

It's the tranquillity of early morning, you know. Ideal opportunity to take a walk...out in the country of course, away from all this...Where you can really appreciate it.

Linda sits down across from Joseph. She reads the paper while he watches cartoons on the TV perched on the counter.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

Daniel, bemused, can only smile awkwardly in response.

DANIEL

I rolled out of bed about forty minutes ago...but I can imagine what you're talking about.

PATRICK  
(cheerful)  
Patrick Taylor, nice to meet you.

Daniel nods along politely though still caught off guard.

DANIEL  
Um, Daniel...nice to meet you too.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick shifts in his seat, gaze unflinching.

PATRICK  
I'm not doing too good. Just can't  
seem to get my head right...I  
thought I could slip back in  
unnoticed. Try to pick things up  
where I'd left them...rebuild.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

Both men peer down the platform.

PATRICK  
Public transport, huh? Fuckin'  
despise it. I used to drive  
myself...till the car gave out.

Daniel affords him a phony, humouring smile. He looks away,  
smile fades, eyebrows rise.

Patrick scans him up and down as if only noticing his  
formal, well-prepped attire for the first time.

PATRICK (CONT'D)  
What do you do? Wait! Don't tell  
me, let me guess...In town  
somewhere...? A bank, or solicitor  
or something?

DANIEL  
I'm an actuary. It's like risk  
assessment, you know, based on  
stat--

PATRICK  
I know what it is.  
(wry smile)  
That's funny.

DANIEL

Funny?

Patrick's cheery demeanour returns.

PATRICK

Pays well I bet? Got a nice office, comfortable chair, benefits to beat the band...Cute secretary?

DANIEL

(smiles, nods)

I think you've just listed all the perks of my job right there. That's about as good as it gets.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM/HALLWAY - EARLIER

Linda applies makeup in front of the mirror. She studies her reflection, vacant.

In the background, Joseph plays with a TOY TRAIN, rolls it back and forth on the hallway floor.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick stares across the table.

PATRICK

I thought that's what it would take. Is five years not enough...? Of course not.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

A YOUNG COUPLE pass behind Patrick and Daniel.

PATRICK

I used to work down at the docks.

Patrick holds out two hardened, callused HANDS, palms up.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

That's why I didn't shake your hand just then.

He looks down at Daniel's hands, smiles.

PATRICK (CONT'D)  
I wouldn't want to damage those  
pretty things.

Patrick laughs.

Daniel forces another slightly bewildered smile. He looks at his hands, glances down the platform again, frowns to himself.

Patrick looks past Daniel, his expression turns serious.

PATRICK (CONT'D)  
You see that woman down there? On  
our side, the furthest away from  
us...with the young boy?

Daniel looks down along the line of people. He spots Linda waiting at the end. Joseph stands beside her, clutches the toy train, a school bag strapped to his back.

DANIEL  
Yeah.

Patrick looks wistfully at Daniel who still watches Linda and Joseph.

PATRICK  
She's had to raise that kid by  
herself.

DANIEL  
Oh, you know her?

PATRICK  
They take the eight o'clock to  
school, she teaches there...

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - EARLIER

Linda hands Joseph his school bag.

PATRICK (V.O.)  
Her husband, Joe Gibson...a good  
man. He would have made a  
wonderful father, if given the  
chance. He was killed some years  
back. She was pregnant at the time  
with the boy...very tragic.

She helps him strap it on his back.

PATRICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
He swerved to avoid a drunk driver  
who'd just caught his wife  
cheatin'. He hadn't taken it too  
well, got pissed and drove down  
the motorway on the wrong  
side...Joe clipped him and crashed  
into the barrier, he was an  
actuary too.

Linda leads her son out of the house.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

Again Daniel isn't sure how to react...nods.

DANIEL  
Yeah...must have been tough.

Patrick nods solemnly.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick swigs from his can.

PATRICK  
You wanted me to rot in there...

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Linda ushers Joseph into the backseat of the car. She gets  
in behind the wheel.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

A TRAIN approaches faintly in the background.

PATRICK  
The guy got a few stitches, minor  
injuries. She and all her family  
waged war outside the courts when  
he was being released...They  
couldn't believe he was being let  
out so soon. Five years...! That's  
not justice, is it?

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick rubs his temples.

PATRICK

You'll be happy to hear my family haven't talked to me since I've come out. Friends...? I don't have any.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Linda drives down the short driveway, turns left up the street.

A TAXI is parked across from the house. Patrick sits in the back.

He has a word with the driver, gets out. The taxi waits as he crosses the road towards the house.

PATRICK (V.O.)

My wife moved away with her new man...Thankfully we never had any children.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

The train gets closer, WHISTLES its impending arrival.

Patrick takes a deep breath, braces himself. Daniel avoids eye contact, welcomes the train's intervention.

Linda crouches down by Joseph as he points at the train in wonder. He holds up his own miniature model as if to compare.

PATRICK (V.O.)

You have to know how sorry I am, both of you...and I realise these words mean nothing...

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - EARLIER

Patrick stands at the front door.

PATRICK (V.O.)

That's why I need to prove it.



INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick leans forward. He picks up something, obscured from view, off the table.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

Patrick's face is rigid with concentration, his teeth gritted.

PATRICK

If I jump in front of that thing,  
what are my chances of survival?

Daniel turns to him, confused.

DANIEL

What?

PATRICK

Come on, it's like what you do for  
a living, isn't it? I wanna hear  
some figures, Daniel...estimates,  
percentages. Tell me my odds here?

DANIEL

What are you talking about?

Daniel looks back at the oncoming train, warily eyes up  
Linda and Joseph.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - EARLIER

Patrick takes out something, obscured from view, from his  
pocket. He pushes it through the LETTERBOX.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

A trembling Patrick looks Daniel in the eye.

PATRICK

Pretty fuckin' long I bet.  
Somewhere in the billions, yeah?  
(smiles, at peace)  
Good.

Daniel sets down his briefcase, realisation dawning on him.

He regards Patrick with dread.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick holds a DICTAPHONE in front of him. He brings it closer to his mouth.

PATRICK

I hope you can find peace now.

He presses STOP.

INT. LINDA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

The Dictaphone lies on the "WELCOME" rug inside the front door.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

The train is right before the station. The brakes GRIND as it slows down. Linda and Joseph watch it go by.

Daniel's worried gaze is fixed on Patrick.

DANIEL

Hey--

Patrick shouts something back but it's drowned out by the sound of the nearby train.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - EARLIER

Patrick steps back into the cab. It pulls out, heads in the same direction as Linda went.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

Patrick moves towards the edge of the platform.

Daniel is quick to react, reaches out to grab him. He grasps Patrick for a split second...loses his grip.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick finishes his beer, rises from the table.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

Patrick reaches the edge, jumps...

A loud THUMP sounds as he makes contact with the passing locomotive, disappears underneath.

The train SQUEALS, SCREECHES, GRINDS, coming to a stop.

Daniel and surrounding people look on, stunned, try to process what has just happened.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - EARLIER

Patrick pays the driver, exits the cab. He walks towards the entrance of the train station.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

It registers...Some of the onlookers SCREAM, some turn away, others are frozen to the spot.

Daniel can only look on, mouth open, paralysed with shock.

The train's SQUEALS and SCREECHES sound above everything.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Patrick switches off the kitchen light. He slowly ascends the short stairs illuminated by the upstairs landing light.

The Dictaphone lies on the table shrouded in partial darkness.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - MORNING

Daniel peers down the track...nothing coming.

Linda and Joseph pass by behind him. Joseph drops something--

The toy train hits the ground. It bounces and rolls along the platform, hits Daniel's foot.

Daniel picks it up.

Joseph trots up to him tentatively, Linda follows.

Daniel studies the train...it doesn't appear to be damaged.

DANIEL

I think you'll get a few more  
journeys out of it.

Daniel hands the train to Joseph who takes it, turns back to his mother.

She takes his hand, smiles at Daniel, looks down at her son.

LINDA

Say "thank you", Joseph.

He stays quiet, timid, leans into his mother. She holds him.

LINDA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, he's a little shy.  
Thank you.

DANIEL

(flashes a smile)  
You're welcome.

She replies with a quick smile, turns away, leads her son down the platform.

Daniel admires her slim figure for a moment before looking down the track...again, nothing coming.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - LATER

The train continues to SQUEAL and SCREECH to a gradual halt.

Amid the confusion and hysteria, Daniel looks over at Linda and Joseph. One hand covers her mouth, the other grips her son, who faces into her, shielded from the scene. He holds the toy train tightly with both hands.

Some of the surrounding people turn to look at Daniel.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - EARLIER

Patrick steps on to the platform.

He spots Linda and Joseph take their place at the far end.

He surveys the crowd, rests his eyes on Daniel half way down, the only person waiting alone...approaches him.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Dictaphone lies on the table.

The upstairs landing light switches off...darkness

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - MORNING

The Dictaphone lies on the rug.

A couple of letters flutter through the letterbox, rest on top of it.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Patrick stands beside Daniel, focuses his attention on him momentarily before staring straight ahead, inhales deeply.

LATER

Shock and confusion is still rife among the crowd, a few creep closer to the edge of the platform.

Daniel gazes down at his hands.

PATRICK (V.O.)  
(inhales deeply)  
God, I love these mornings...don't  
you?

Then back at the train.

PATRICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...I was up at half six, rose with  
the sun. Kinda gives you a feeling  
it's gonna be a nice day...

Then towards Linda who stares back at him.

FADE OUT.

THE END