

RING RUST

Written by

Dylan Polniak

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

"DARLING" BROOKS ROLAND, late 20s, with an athletic build walks down his hallway displaying all of his accomplishments as a professional wrestler. A blinking "6" on his answering machine beckons him over to press play. The messages begin and he walks away.

(V.O.)

Message one. Hey Brooks, you fucking suck. You just left the wrestling community like that?

Brooks rushes back to the answering machine.

(V.O.)

Who do you think you are?

Brooks presses "next" on the machine, and continues to back to his previous task.

(V.O.)

Message skipped. Next message. Go to hell "Darling". Get over yourself.

Brooks detours from his original destination to skip the message yet again.

(V.O.)

Message skipped. Next message. Hey Brooksie, it's mom.

Without hesitation Brooks rips the cord from the wall disabling his disruption.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brooks' life is a mess which can clearly be seen by the dust and untouched garbage strewn across his living room. Smoke coming from an ashtray make the scene unclear and cloud the view of empty pill and alcohol bottles scattered across the plsvr. On the coffee table lays a distressed newspaper titled "Hanna Roland, wife of World Champion killed in car wreck." Next to the clipping sits a pristine note in the most elegant of handwriting, declaring "You're my favorite wrestler. Love always - Your ring girl, Hanna".

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The first vision of Brooks' face shows an old tattered luchador mask sitting on an unshaven face. This isn't the face of a champion, but of a man who has been beaten.

Brooks reaches to the floor grabbing multiple bottles containing different liquids as he mixes them together for a full drink, nearly overflowing the glass.

He takes a large amount in as he spits the contents all over himself and the papers on his coffee table. Brooks rushes to wipe the note clean of any residue, smearing the words like a left handed writer. He spits out the cigarette butt that ravaged his moment of alcoholic intemperance.

The doorbell rings. Brooks sighs in his moment of disruption and opens the door.

JACOB, 10, stands tall wearing the same "Darling" Brooks Roland tee as Brooks that says "Let's Dance Playboy!", wielding an action figure of Brooks himself.

AMBER, late 20s, rushes to the door in a panic.

AMBER

Let's go Jacob, I told you not to bother him!

JACOB

But mom! It's Brooks Roland!

AMBER

I know buddy, but you can't just show up at people's doorsteps.

BROOKS

(to Amber)

Hi.

AMBER
Hi, I'm so sorry!

Brooks rips the luchador mask off his head and throws it out of frame.

BROOKS
It's okay. Did you guys need something?

AMBER
No, he saw you the other day and has been going crazy. Are you Brooks Roland?

BROOKS
(to Amber)
Yeah.

BROOKS (CONT'D)
(to Jacob)
Hey little man, I like your shirt.

JACOB
You have the same one! I love you!
When are you coming back?

BROOKS
I don't think that's going to be happening buddy.

JACOB
Why not?

AMBER
(to Jacob)
Jacob, let's leave him alone. I'm sure he has a lot going on.

BROOKS
Actually, I don't. I was just-

Brooks looks around his trashed apartment.

BROOKS

About to clean up. I had some people over last night and things got a little insane.

AMBER

Oh really? None of the lights were on in your place.

BROOKS

It was people from my church.

AMBER

Your guests must have a lot of will power and reservation. We didn't hear a thing!

BROOKS

(to Amber)

Yeah. That's it.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

(to Jacob and Amber)

It's totally fine that you guys stopped by, it's great meeting a true fan.

JACOB

I'm your biggest fan!

BROOKS

And I believe it! I'm sorry, but I should get going.

JACOB

But why did you stop wrestling?

BROOKS

(to Jacob)

Sometimes people just get distracted and need to take a little break from what they love doing.

JACOB

That's not fair.

AMBER

Jacob!

BROOKS

You're telling me. Would you like me to sign something for you?

There's no hesitation when Jacob hands Brooks a miniature plastic replica of "Darling" with a big smile on his face. Brooks signs the action figure and hands it back.

AMBER
What do we say?

JACOB
Thanks Mr. Roland!

Amber takes one last look in Brooks apartment, she's a little appalled at the sight and fails at her attempt to hide her expression.

BROOKS
So yeah. I should get going.

Amber snaps out of her state of hypnosis.

AMBER
Yeah, us too. Sorry.

BROOKS
I didn't catch your name.

AMBER
Amber. We just moved in next door.

BROOKS
Brooks.

AMBER
We are having a little house warming today if you want to stop by. A few people from the neighborhood. Nothing big. I know it would mean a lot to Jacob too. You're his favorite wrestler!

BROOKS
Thanks. I'll see what I can do. It was nice meeting you both.

Jacob hugs Brooks' leg with the grasp so strong that Brooks could tap out. Amber grabs Jacob's arm and they begin to leave.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

It truly was great meeting you both.

Brooks smiles and turns around. It's not often that a fan approaches him. He's forgotten what it felt like. Brooks looks into his full body mirror doing signature poses like he's won the World Title all over again. He quickly realizes that Jacob and Amber haven't left yet.

AMBER

I forgot to mention that the party starts at 2.

Brooks shows all of his teeth in a smile he's never created before. He nods his head, waves his hand, and slams the door shut. His smile floats away as he turns around to reveal the war zone that is his apartment.

MONTAGE

- Brooks starts shoveling trash into a garbage bag, missing numerous pieces in the process. With what seems like the first time Brooks has ever cleaned, he starts shoving items off of counter tops, the dining room table, and shelves straight into a trash bag with no regard for what the items might be.

- He starts pushing through dirty dishes that are better off thrown away while emptying beer bottles into the sink in between plates and cups.

- In the bathroom Brooks shaves off his beard, flosses and brushes his teeth, and hums unrecognizable tunes in the shower.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Brooks, dressed casual, rips open boxes like it's a game show, digging through his memorabilia. He grabs shirts, posters, and toys. It's clear he knows what he's looking for and what he doesn't need.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brooks opens the door and begins to step out. He's clearly forgotten something. He makes his way through the living room and into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The counters and cupboards are bare from Brooks' earlier trash purge. He opens his freezer to reveal his last hope, a bottle of Chivas Regal Royal Salute, that resembles the former championship titles he's worn. It's empty.

BROOKS

Shit.

Brooks takes one last look at himself in the reflection of the microwave, fixing that one stray piece of hair pointing the wrong way. He nods at himself as if the microwave gave him the go ahead.

EXT. BROOKS HOUSE - DAY

Brooks exits his apartment juggling a handful of merchandise. He pats around, realizing he's forgotten his keys. He sets the merchandise on top of his old beat up car and walks back to his house.

EXT. BROOKS HOUSE - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

With keys in hand, Brooks opens his car and throws the shirts and posters into the passenger seat, has a seat and starts the car. After the third failed attempt to start his car, he is on his way.

EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHT - DAY

Brooks rolls up to a red light as he changes the radio station. Kelly Clarkson comes on just a bit too loud, playing for the beautiful girl parked in the vehicle next to him. She rolls up her window and quickly looks away.

BROOKS

No, I was just changing the song.

Brooks yells louder at the rolled up window.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

I wasn't listening to this.

Kelly Clarkson is still playing. He goes for the knob. Yelling even louder at the radio to the girl next to him.

BROOKS

See, I'm changing it now.

Brooks looks up to the girl, she's already gone and the light has been green. The cars behind him start honking their horns and flipping him off as they pass him.

MAN IN CAR

Asshole!

BROOKS

Yeah yeah, fuck you.

Brooks flips off the man in the car. Brooks' car dies.

BROOKS

Shit.

The man's car screeches to a halt and he starts to get out.
Brooks car magically starts and he speeds past the angry man.

BROOKS (CONT'D)
Who's the asshole now?

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Brooks pulls up into a parking spot and walks into the grocery store and straight to the alcohol section.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Brooks stands in front of the large liquor selection the grocery store has to offer. A guy jumps up behind him.

MALE SHOPPER
Let's dance playboy!

BROOKS
Fuck. Ha. Yeah, let's dance playboy.

MALE SHOPPER
Haha, hey man! I'm a huge fan. Can I get my picture taken with you?

MALE SHOPPER'S GIRLFRIEND
Do you know this guy?

MALE SHOPPER
Yeah! He's the former World Champion. Brooks Roland.

MALE SHOPPER'S GIRLFRIEND
Who?

MALE SHOPPER
"Darling" Brooks Roland.

Beat.

MALE SHOPPER (CONT'D)
The wrestler. Remember how Rick and
I are always saying "Let's dance
playboy"?

MALE SHOPPER'S GIRLFRIEND
Ugh. Yes.

MALE SHOPPER
That's his catch phrase.

The male shopper hands his girlfriend the phone. To take a picture.

MALE SHOPPER (CONT'D)
Here, take a pic.

The girlfriend just looks on as her boyfriend and Brooks start doing poses for the camera, flexing and pretending to do wrestling moves to each other.

MALE SHOPPER'S GIRLFRIEND
Wrestling is so stupid Todd. We
need to go.

MALE SHOPPER
(to girlfriend)
Yeah. You're right.

MALE SHOPPER (CONT'D)
(to Brooks)
Sorry man. It was awesome meeting
you.

BROOKS
Pleasure.

Brooks grabs a bottle of liquor and is about to throw it at the couple, as they turn around, when an employee comes up to him.

EMPLOYEE

Did you need any help sir?

BROOKS

No. I'm going to go with this.
Thanks.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Brooks exits the store with his grocery bag and walks to his car. A shopping cart has dented his car. Brooks grabs the cart, shoves it away from his car without looking, and gets in and drives off.

We see an elderly woman knocked over in the background with the cart next to her, tipped over.

EXT. AMBER'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Brooks walks up the steps to the front door. He stops himself from ringing the doorbell to get himself pumped up.

BROOKS

(to himself)

Hey Amber, you look well. You look well? Stupid. Fancy seeing you here. No. Hey Amber, you clean up well. Damn it.

Brooks manages to move all of his contents to one hand as he knocks on Amber's door, then nervously presses the doorbell one too many times.

Jacob answers the door.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Jacob! My number one fan! Is your mother home?

JACOB

Yeah, she's right here. Come on in!

AMBER (O.C.)
Jacob, don't be letting people into
the house.

 BROOKS
Amber?

 AMBER
Yes? Oh hi Brooks! I'm glad you
could make it. Sorry, I didn't know
who he was letting in. I hope I
didn't come off as a-

 AMBER (CONT'D)
 (whispering to Brooks)
Bitch.

 BROOKS
No! Not at all.

Beat.

 BROOKS (CONT'D)
Thanks for having me.

 AMBER
You clean up well.

Amber elbows Brooks in a flirtatious manner.

 BROOKS
You too!

Brooks instantly regrets his last sentiment.

 BROOKS (CONT'D)
You heard that?

 AMBER
Heard what?

BROOKS
Me. Outside. Just before- Forget
it.

AMBER
Come on in. If you fancy.

Amber chuckles.

BROOKS
You got me.

AMBER
I'm just messing with you.

BROOKS
I brought some things I think Jacob
would like. Just a couple shirts
and posters I had laying around.

JACOB
Awesome!

AMBER
That's so thoughtful!

Jacob puts both shirts on and unrolls the poster.

BROOKS
No big deal. They were just sitting
on my desk and I know he would get
better use out of them than I will.

AMBER
He absolutely will.

BROOKS
I really appreciate the invite. I
can't really stay long, I just
wanted to make an appearance and
drop some of these things off to
Jacob.

AMBER

Well there's no obligation to stay,
we are just glad you were able to
stop by even for a little bit.

Brooks grabs the bottle of liquor out of his grocery bag.

BROOKS

Oh this is for you.

AMBER

Thank you. I don't drink but I'm
sure everyone else around here will
enjoy it.

BROOKS

Oh. I didn't know.

AMBER

It's totally fine. I stopped when I
got pregnant with Jacob. Almost 11
years sober now!

BROOKS

Congratulations. Well it's
refreshing to be around someone who
is such a big fan. You wouldn't
believe the response from "fans"
when you leave the business for a
few years. I wouldn't say I'm a
favorite anymore.

AMBER

You're all Jacob talks about and
definitely his hero. We don't know
many people out here. This is
actually our first time in
California. I got offered a
receptionist job at my Uncle's
company and felt like it was the
right move.

Amber rips a page from a notebook next to the entrance and
begins to write.

AMBER (CONT'D)

I'd really appreciate you taking my number just incase of an emergency or something.

Brooks hands her his phone.

BROOKS

Here, this will be easier. Just put your number in and text yourself so we have each other's numbers.

The mood changes drastically when Amber puts her number into his phone and sees that the background image is another woman.

AMBER

I read about what happened to you and to your wife. I'm so sorry for your loss.

BROOKS

It's fine. There's nothing that could be done.

AMBER

Well if you need anything at all, or someone to talk to please don't be a stranger. You have my number.

They both smile at each other.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Everyone is out back, let's go get you something to eat.

BROOKS

That would be nice.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Amber approaches a group of jocks at a grill, dragging Brooks along with her.

 AMBER
Brooks, this is my boyfriend Jeff.

It's the angry man from traffic.

 AMBER (CONT'D)
Jeff, this is our neighbor Brooks.

 JEFF
Who's the asshole now?

 BROOKS
Shit.

 JEFF
You tried starting a fight with me
in traffic.

 BROOKS
I don't believe that was me.

Jeff rushes towards Brooks.

 JEFF
Yeah it was. Let's dance playboy!

 BROOKS
Wait. What?

 JEFF
"Darling" Brooks Roland. Former
World Champion. I'm just messing
with you man. I thought that was
you at the red light.

 BROOKS
 (to himself)
Thank god.

Jeff and his buddies laugh it off.

JEFF

I was getting out of my car to say the same thing. You have a short temper huh?

BROOKS

No usually. You just kind of caught me off guard. Sorry

JEFF

All those 'roids?

BROOKS

I never took-

AMBER

Sorry to interrupt, I forgot something inside. You two play nice!

Amber exits.

BROOKS

(to Jeff)

Steroids. Wrestling fan?

The two awkwardly shake hands. Brooks clearly regrets leaving his house.

JEFF

Ha ha. God no. Jacob watches that. It's for kids isn't it?

BROOKS

Well it's more of a family friendly kind of-

JEFF

Hey Darling, can I get you anything?

BROOKS
Of show. Sure?

JEFF
What can I get you?

BROOKS
Uh, anything but sausage will be fine.

JEFF
You're a butt sausage kind of guy?

Jeff and his buddies laugh and high five. There's a lot of sexual tension amongst the group, they just don't know it.

BROOKS
I'm not sure what you mean.

JEFF
You said you wanted anything butt sausage. BUTT sausage.

The jocks continue their ambiguous assault on Brooks, clinking their beers together and chest bumping.

BROOKS
Oh. You mean b-u-t-t? Clever.

You'd think the men are about to kiss because of how close and unruly they are being.

BROOKS (CONT'D)
I'll just do chicken.

JEFF
I bet you would.

Jeff places a piece of chicken on a plate for Brooks.

BROOKS
Uh, thanks?

Brooks turns around to leave the conversation. Unfortunately for him, it continues.

JEFF
So you and your friends like,
wrestle around in your underwear?
That's a little gay don't you
think?

BROOKS
There's a lot of athleticism
involved. It's a little more
complicated then that.

Brooks takes a bigger bite of his food than he should.

JEFF
Yeah, I'm sure it is "Complicated".

Brooks coughs up his meal a little bit. He can't believe what he's hearing.

BROOKS
I'm just trying to get something to
eat.

JEFF
I'm just messing around man. Take a
joke. Have any kids of your own?

BROOKS
My wife and I were trying for a
while, but no.

JEFF
Weren't man enough? Ha ha.

One of Jeff's dumb friends give him a reassuring slap on the back.

Beat.

BROOKS
She was killed in a car accident.

JEFF
Tough break!

BROOKS
Yeah-

JEFF
I can't do the kid thing, too much responsibility. I'm not done living. You know?

BROOKS
What about Jacob?

JEFF
Nah, he's just Amber's, with the guy before me. Total loser if you ask me.

BROOKS
(under his breath)
She sure does have a type.

Jacob and Amber both return. Amber is chasing Jacob out of the house and into the backyard. Both are laughing and giggling. Jacob runs to hide Jeff when he accidentally knocks the food off of the table next to the grill onto the ground.

Jeff grabs Jacob by the arm aggressively.

JEFF
What the hell are you doing? You just ruined all of the food.

AMBER
Jeff, calm down it was an accident.

JEFF

This is your fault too. Who is going to pay for this huh?

AMBER

Let him go.

Jeff holds tightly to Jacob's arm as he struggles to get free.

Brooks steps in.

BROOKS

Let him go Jeff.

JEFF

This is none of your business.

BROOKS

I'm not asking.

JEFF

You're going to disrespect me at my house in front of my girl and her kid?

BROOKS

Looks like I am.

Jeff lets Jacob go, who runs back to Amber. With no hesitation Jeff takes a swing at Brooks and misses. Brooks grabs him by the arm and sends him quickly into the ground.

Jeff stands back up and rushes Brooks taking him to the ground. The two wrestle around the ground for a quick moment before Brooks is able to grab Jeff in a sleeper hold.

JACOB

Darling! Darling! Darling!

Brooks notices Jacob and Amber. Brooks lets go and backs up. Jeff gets to his feet. His group of buddies start to tend to his wounds.

JEFF
Go to your room Jacob.

AMBER
Jeff!

JEFF
Shut up bitch.

BROOKS
Hey man, not cool.

JEFF
(to Amber)
I think it's time for your friend
to get out of here.

AMBER
(to Brooks)
I'm sorry Brooks.

BROOKS
No, it's fine. Are you going to be
okay?

Amber nods her head "yes" in an upsetting manner.

JEFF
Everyone get fucking out of here.

Amber plugs Jacob's ears and rushes him inside.

Brooks, not knowing what to say backs up from the situation and watches Jacob and Amber run inside. He turns around and walks back to his place.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Catch you later "Darling". You're
fucking dead.

Jeff and his friends laugh.

INT. BROOKS' BATHROOM - DAY

Brooks walks into his bathroom at an alarming pace. He opens the mirror to reveal a couple bottles of pills. With no hesitation he pops a few into his mouth, runs his hand under the spout in the sink and drinks some water to swallow the drugs down.

After taking a long disgusting look at himself in the mirror he walks back to the hallway that displays all of his accomplishments. He violently swipes them off the wall and smashes them on the ground. He looks out his window to see Jeff and his friends seeming untouched on the opposite side of his barrier fence.

He rests against the wall and slides down to a seated position with his head hanging low in the carnage. He starts picking up his second mess of the day very slowly and sloppily.

His phone goes off displaying a message from Amber "THANKS FOR COMING BY. YOU'RE MY FAVORITE WRESTLER TOO."

INT. BROOKS' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Brooks walks back to his coffee table revealing the note from his wife stating that he is her favorite wrestler.

Brooks begins to smile with a tear grazing his cheek.

INT. BROOKS' OFFICE - DAY

Brooks looks back out of the window at Jeff and his buddies through the blinds.

BROOKS

(to himself)

Jeff. Frickin' Jeff, The Dingus. I want you to listen to me while you stand there with your little faction of nerds. I want you to listen closely. You thought that little scuffle back there was intense. You haven't seen anything. You come into my neighborhood, my ring. Thinking you can run with the big dogs. Well you've got another thing coming. You're mistaken Dingus.

(MORE)

BROOKS (CONT'D)

The next time you disrespect my fans, I'm going to snap your arm and break your neck. I came here to barbecue, but all I can taste is chicken.

Brooks gives himself an affirmative smile.

Brooks turns around and starts digging through paperwork on his desk until he finally stumbles across a business card labeled "CURT WENTZ - TELEVISION AGENT".

Brooks opens his phone, revealing the text from Amber. He forgets the reason he grabbed his phone in the first place for a brief moment before he begins to dial the number from the business card.

It rings.

CURT

Brooks! Hey man, what's up?

Brooks takes a huge gulp of a nearby bottle.

BROOKS

I need to talk to you.

CURT

Brooks, are you okay? You're not drinking are you?

Brooks sets the bottle down.

BROOKS

No?

CURT

I heard you gulp.

BROOKS

Okay, maybe I am-

CURT
I'm on my way over. Please stay
right there.

BROOKS
No, that's not what this is about.
I don't need my sponsor right now.
I need my agent.

CURT
Well I'm coming over anyway.

BROOKS
Curt.

CURT
Yeah?

BROOKS
Shut up for a second.

CURT
Okay. What-

BROOKS
Shh shh.

Beat.

BROOKS (CONT'D)
Curt, are you there?

CURT
Ye-

BROOKS
I'm ready to get back in the ring.

Brooks smiles, sets his phone down, and takes another swig
from the bottle.

FADE TO BLACK.