

**this dream isn't feeling sweet**

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# this dream isn't feeling sweet

by [bytheinco\\_nstantmoon](#)

## Summary

It's so hard to play music. It's never been hard before, but now, here, now that he's broken and guilty and bleeding, it's like he's breaking every bone just to strum a chord. It hurts. God, it hurts so bad. But Reggie and Alex want it. They want the band. They want the stage.

They never should have left that goddamn stage.

He doesn't deserve to be up there.

-

or; Luke doesn't know how to cope.

## Notes

i'll be honest idk how i feel abt this one but. it was kind of fun? i don't write luke often enough damn

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

He's tired. God, he's so tired. Down to his bones, down to his soul, he's aching for sleep. He wants just one more moment to sleep. To rest. He doesn't want to be tethered to the waking world anymore. But the world doesn't care what little Luke Patterson wants, so he's awake, and he always will be. He's tethered to this conscious plane for the rest of his eternity, however long that ends up being. And he doesn't regret being a ghost- he doesn't regret meeting Julie, he doesn't regret getting to play again- but God. He's so tired.

He can't sleep anymore, so instead he spends the night out on the streets, wandering up and down Sunset Boulevard, wondering. Just wondering. If he was someone else, what would he think? What would he see in these streets? Would he see history? Memories, from days and weeks and years ago, all layered over each other, all lauding the greater moment they've led to? Would he see heartbreak in the ice cream shop across the street, or love under that streetlight? Would he have spots where he glanced around and smiled, remembering something long past that still lived in the stone? God, who would he be, if he were someone else? Someone who lived for twenty five years, who built themselves up from age seventeen and kept rising, and made mistakes and made memories and slept at night? Who would he be, if he wasn't just a kid?

God, he's just a *kid*.

He leans back against the wall of a store and watches the flow of people pass by. Every single one of them has a story- he wants to know them. He wants to ask. If he could come to life, just for one day, he'd talk to everyone he'd saw. He'd ask about their story. He'd ask why they were here. He'd ask how far they'd come from seventeen.

'Cause there's a whole world of people out there. A whole world of stories. And Luke hasn't got much of one. It's kind of comforting to remember that he doesn't need to. The world doesn't need his story. It's already got so many.

Someday, he thinks, he's going to be standing here on Sunset Boulevard, and then he's going to be gone. Just like that. Just a flicker, like a candle in the wind. Here, and then extinguished. Crossed over.

It's a comforting thought.

He let his head fall back against the wall, closing his eyes. Maybe he let himself drift off into his thoughts, it'll happen. His soul will align itself back into the puzzle and he'll slip back into the stars. He'll dissolve right back into the dust he came from. Maybe. If he just lets himself.

There's a little part of his brain that protests, but he's too exhausted to give it much credit. *The band!* it calls. *What about the band!* And, well- yeah. What *about* the band? Why should they factor in?

Luke lived for music. For seventeen years, from the first note he heard to the last chord he played, he lived for it. It beat inside his heart and ran inside his veins and decorated his skin

like tattoos. It colored his freckles and swelled in his lungs and strengthened his bones. God, Luke lived for music. Little Luke Patterson, the musical boy.

But Luke Patterson died in 1995. Luke Patterson doesn't live for music. Luke Patterson doesn't live for anything. He just stands in the cold, listening to the wind, listening to his own thoughts, and prays to a God he never much cared for that he can slip back into the stars. He just wants to fade. He just wants to sleep. Luke Patterson doesn't much care for music anymore. How can he? Everytime he plays his guitar, his skin rushes full of the heat of stage lights, his head swells with the sound Bobby's strumming, his nose stings with the scent of sweat and bleach and blood. He sings through the taste of his own lungs and stomach, stinging with the feeling of his body wrenching itself inside out. Julie shines like a star, and Reggie fills the stage like he never left it, and Alex brings his own heart back to beating with his drums, and Luke dies again, everytime.

Reggie bounces and jumps and sings, runs his hand through his hair, winks at the crowd, dances along with Julie, leans into Luke with his eyes sparkling, and Luke bleeds from the inside out, because Reggie never should have left that goddamn stage.

Reggie is only seventeen. He's a kid. God, he's a *kid*. He's seventeen years old. He only got to live for *seventeen years*. How fucked up is that? He had a whole life ahead of him. He was going to fill the whole world like he filled that stage. He was going to make mistakes and make memories and sleep at night. He should have been able to sleep at night.

Luke shrinks down the side of the building, wrapping his arms around his knees. He doesn't cry. He should cry. He should be crying, sobbing, bleeding, aching, ripping himself open with pain again and again, an eternity of torture for every year, every day, every *minute* that he stole. He should be screaming and breaking and dying, again and again and again, because they were only seventeen and he stole that away.

It's so hard to play music. It's never been hard before, but now, here, now that he's broken and guilty and bleeding, it's like he's breaking every bone just to strum a chord. It hurts. God, it hurts so bad. But Reggie and Alex want it. They want the band. They want the stage.

They never should have left that goddamn stage.

He doesn't deserve to be up there.

Luke opens his eyes and watches people pass by him. A rush of bodies, a rush of stories, a rush of time. There are twenty five years of other people's memories soaked into this street, into this pavement, and he's drowning, disintegrating. He's not meant to be here. He's not *enough* to be here. He's only seventeen. He's only a kid.

Luke runs his hand through his hair and finds himself back at the studio. He reaches for his notebook, flipping it open and going through the pages. Crooked Teeth. In the Night. Get Lost. Finally Free. Heartbeat. Wings. Unsaid Emily. And finally, in the back, half scribbled chords, messy lyrics that he can hardly read. He doesn't need to read them, though. They're ingrained in him.

"Luke?" Reggie's voice comes from behind him. "What are you doing?"

“Writing,” he replies, mostly distracted. “I’ve got- I think I’ve got it. I’ve got it.”

The floor doesn’t creak under Reggie’s feet as he comes closer, not like it should. Not like it would if he were alive. Luke stole the creak of the floor from him. “You’ve got... what?” he asks. He sounds alarmed.

“I’ve got it,” Luke says again. “I’ve got it. It’s gonna- I think this is gonna do it-”

“Is gonna do *what?*” Reggie asks, a little louder.

Luke looks up at him. “Is that-” he feels his desperation soften a bit. “Do you want that shirt?”

Reggie glances down at it. “Oh, I- wait. No. Stop trying to distract me,” he accuses, pointing a finger at him.

“I’m not trying to distract you! I was just-”

“You *are*, I wear this shirt all the time-”

“Since when?”

“Since always?” Reggie’s brows wrinkle. “I’ve been stealing this shirt since before we died.”

It’s casual. Reggie is comfortable.

Reggie is standing here in front of him, looking annoyed, wearing his shirt and looking entirely comfortable, and Reggie is dead. Reggie is dead. Reggie followed Luke out of the Orpheum in 1995 and never came back. Reggie is dead. Luke is a murderer.

He feels lightheaded all of the sudden, and he stumbles, landing on the piano bench. Reggie startles, but it’s only a moment before he’s in front of him and holding his hands tightly. His eyes search Luke’s face, concerned. “Luke? What is it? What’s wrong?”

“I-” Luke can’t breathe. He can’t breathe. Fuck, but he doesn’t even need to, he doesn’t even need to, because he’s a ghost, because he’s dead, and he doesn’t need to breathe, and he never even needed to breathe in the first place, because he only lived for seventeen years and they were *wasted* and he’s a *murderer*-

“Luke!” Reggie is squeezing his hands. “Luke, talk to me. Talk to me, please. What’s going on?” He sounds panicked. Why is he panicking? Why does he care, why the *fuck* does *he* care, when Luke *killed* him, when Luke stole memories and creaking floorboards and breathing from him, when Luke is the reason he’s only seventeen- “Luke, can you look at me?”

Luke shakes his head. “No,” he croaks out, squeezing his eyes shut. “No, no, no, I’m *sorry*-”

He’s crying. It hurts. Every sob feels like it’s ripping his whole body open, stripping it to scalding from the inside out, flipping his ribs and organs upside down and yanking his muscles like putty, breaking him, and it’s the first relief in twenty five goddamn years. He’s a

murderer, he's a thief, he's only seventeen, but he's hurting- he's hurting, and it's only a fraction as much as he deserves, but thank God he's getting repaid at all. Alex and Reggie deserve avengement. Luke just prays it comes at the price of himself.

"I'm sorry," he's saying. "I'm sorry- I'm gonna figure it out, Reggie, I'm gonna figure it out, I'm gonna fix whatever I need to fix and then it'll all be okay, it'll all be okay, and you can *sing*, and-"

"What are you-" Reggie grips his hands hard. "Luke, what the hell are you talking about? What are you fixing?"

Luke lets out another broken sob and leans their foreheads together. It's comfortable, being this close to Reggie. He likes being close to Reggie. "Whatever I need to," he repeats. "Whatever I have to do. I'm going to do it. Don't worry. I just have to figure it out. I just have to fix it."

Reggie's voice is cracking. "Luke- Luke, honey, I need you to explain," he says. "I need you to tell me what you mean. Because right now-" he pauses, his words hitching. "Right it sounds like you're talking about your unfinished business. But you're not. You're not, right?"

"I'm going to figure it out," Luke promises.

Reggie is frozen for just a moment before his hands drop Luke's and come up, grabbing his face. "No," he says numbly. "No, no, no, you can't-" he shakes his head. "You can't do that. You can't say that. You can't- you can't *leave me*, Luke, what the hell-"

"I don't want to play anymore," Luke whispers. "I don't wanna, Reg. I hate it. I hate it. It hurts, it hurts, I wanna *die*, but I'm already dead, I'm already dead, I fucking *died*, and you died, and I killed you, and I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so fucking sorry, but I hate music, I hate singing, I don't wanna sing-" he dissolves into a sob. "I don't wanna sing, Reg," he manages, his voice plaintive. "I don't wanna sing. I can- I can taste myself *dying* when I sing."

Reggie doesn't say anything right away. He just holds Luke's face, rubbing at his thumbs, and lets him cry. Luke shudders and screams and whispers and crumbles, but Reggie stays there, warm and solid, holding him together. Holding him in place. Holding him here, in the studio, here in this time, here and awake and falling further and further into the guilt that's been rotting his voice for twenty five years. Reggie holds his face until he runs out of tears. And then Reggie says, "I love you," so sincerely that Luke dies all over again. "I love you," Reggie repeats. He leans their foreheads back together. "We shouldn't have died. But I'm glad I died with you."

Luke lands at the bottom of the grave he's been digging for himself and shatters.

"I'm tired," he whispers hoarsely. "I'm so fucking *tired*, Reggie."

Reggie rubs at his skin again, soft and sweet and so much gentler than Luke deserves. "I know. I know. But you don't have to cross over to rest, Luke. You don't have to leave us to find your peace."

“I want to burn.” All his pieces are shattering again, shattering into pieces he doesn’t know how to repair. “I want to *burn*,” he repeats, and he’s full of venom, “I want to hurt. I want to be broken, Reggie, I want to be *destroyed* for what I did to you.” And then he says, “I’m sorry,” again, but it doesn’t taste right anymore. It just tastes like blood and broken glass and the exhaustion that haunts a haunting boy.

Reggie’s tears drip down his cheeks. “You didn’t know,” he says. “You didn’t know, Luke. It’s not your fault. It’s not your fault.”

“But I-”

“And even if it were,” Reggie continues over him, “Even if it were, I would forgive you.” His voice is steady with certainty. “I’m not happy to be dead. But as much as I want to breathe, as much as I want to connect- as much as I want music, as much as I want water, as much as I want *life*, I don’t want it more than you.” He holds Luke’s face firmly, tenderly, between his hands, and Luke’s bleeding heart is caught between his teeth. “I would rather be dead with you than alive without. And if you cross over-” His grip tightens. “If you cross over, I would rather be dead with you than dead without. I’d rather have you. I want *you*. You’re my best friend.” Reggie breathes out, long and shaky, his tears falling slowly down Luke’s face. They trace over his lips. He can taste grief in the salt. “I want *you*,” Reggie repeats. “I died with you. I would die again without you. You’re my best friend, Luke. You’re mine. You’re *me*.”

The grave that Luke lays shattered in is shallow. He’s scattered there, a thousand broken pieces that he doesn’t know how to fix, and Reggie just reaches down and holds them. He just holds them. He doesn’t put them back together. Luke’s not sure if they’ll ever be put back together, no matter how long his eternity is, but- but they’re not dust. They didn’t crumble completely.

He’s just glass in a grave for now, but it’s shallow.

“We kept on climbing till our stars collided,” he sings. His voice is raspy and cracking, but Reggie joins in anyway. “And everytime we fell behind, were just the keys to-”

His voice hitches, but Reggie finishes for him. “Paradise.” He rubs his tears off Luke’s face. “Paradise,” he repeats, quieter. “It’s not never yet. Okay?”

Luke swallows hard. “Okay,” he whispers. Reggie doesn’t say anything else, but he holds his face until morning, and their slow, shared breath almost feels like sleeping.

## End Notes

okay you're welcome!!! goodnight now

comment to let me know what you thought!!! unless ur lev in which case i already know u hate me sorry babe

hmu on tumblr @rxggiepeters to kill me if u want

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