

# **“BREAK A LEG”**

Written by: Derek Rudolph Henig

# CHAPTER 1

## BREAK A LEG

The last chord rang out from Drake's guitar, vibrations sent into the depths of the music venue. The returning echo wasn't heard; drowned out by the pleasant noise of cheering and clapping from the crowd.

"Thanks ya'll!" said Drake from the center of the stage, giving a wave to the crowd of about two hundred. Drake looked around at his bandmates. Georgia, behind the drums, smiled back. Keith, with his hands ready on his base, gave Drake a nod that said, "go on."

"Want one more?" Drake shouted into the mic and he was met with exciting agreement from the fans. "Alright, here's our last song for the night. Ya'll have been great. See you next time."

**[song starts]**

There were no thoughts when Drake played. Nothing but the moment. Nothing but the song. He moved around the stage, and smiled to the crowd in between his singing. The audience giving him boundless energy.

**[song fades out]**

After the show, Drake's energy drained quickly. He packed up his guitar, said goodbye to his bandmates and was soon driving along country roads on his way home. He had the radio on high and the windows down, hitting him with warm Summer air and sonic waves. The energy of the show was now completely gone and he needed all the stimulus he could muster to stay awake. After an hour, he pulled into the city of Nashville and then into the parking garage of the apartment where he lived with his wife Tess, and their two daughters.

It was after 2 am by the time he reached his door, so when he stepped into the apartment to see a light on in the kitchen, and Tess sitting at the island with her head dropped, Drake paused. A sinking feeling surged through him. After a moment, he turned and closed the front door. When he looked back to Tess, he noticed the bottle of whiskey out on the counter with two empty glasses awaiting to be filled.

"*She's leaving me,*" was Drake's thought and his heart sank again. He put his guitar case down and walked slowly towards the kitchen. Tess's eyes found his and they were glassy and red. Drake's face was losing color.

"Tess, what's happening?" Drake said in a low voice.

"Sit down," she said with a nod to the chair opposite hers. "How was the gig?"

“The gig was fine, Tess, what’s going on?” He finally sat at one of the stools and Tess reached for the bottle of whiskey, but Drake grabbed her wrist gently. “Seriously Tess, you’re freaking me out here.”

Tess looked up and turned her hand and wrist around so she was now holding Drake’s arm instead. Her touch was consoling; soothing.

“It’s your Father,” Tess said finally, her voice soft. “He’s sick.”

An instant of relief fell over Drake, but it was quickly replaced by a new feeling of worry and dread.

“How sick?” he said, his mouth suddenly very dry.

“It’s bad, Drake. Jean called. Apparently he’s been sick for well over a year, but he didn’t want to tell us. Didn’t want you giving up anything for his sake, according to Jean.”

“Stubborn mule,” Drake said shaking his head and they both smiled weakly to each other.

“It sounded like he doesn’t have long from what Jean told me. He’s in the hospital and the Doctor’s are trying to keep him there, but Hank’s of course refusing.”

“Yea, he wouldn’t want the help would he?” Drake shook his head again and Tess poured out the two glasses with whiskey and slid one over to him.

“We need to go, tomorrow if we can,” she said.

“Yea, of course. I guess it’s good timing that the kids are out of school. We can all go. But, what about work?”

“Charlie’s let us work remotely before, I don’t see why he wouldn’t now. We can take a few weeks, a month, whatever we need and as long as we get the work done Charlie will be happy.”

“I’ll look at flights, now,” Drake said.

“I can do that, you call your sister. She said she’ll be up.”

Drake took a couple sips of his drink, and then called Jean. The phone call didn’t go on for that long. His sister just wanted to talk to him, probably for some feeling of responsibility. The older sister making sure everyone else was ok. He wasn’t complaining though. It was good to hear her voice.

After the call, Tess and Drake toasted Hank and drained the rest of their drinks. When he finally got to lay down in bed, flights booked for the following night, it was 3 am and he was exhausted. Yet, he couldn't sleep. A thought kept him awake and it had nothing to do with his Father.

*"She's leaving me."*

That idea and feeling that filled him when he first saw Tess at the Kitchen counter. *Why did I think that?* It bothered him. He hadn't done anything wrong to warrant such a thought, but then again... hadn't he? At the instant he thought Tess was leaving him, he also new why she would be. The words from his band's last song tonight entered his mind.

*"I'm Happy..."*

Yet, Drake new he wasn't happy, but didn't know, why? In fact, he never paused to acknowledge it, to see it; but, when he saw Tess it all came forward. He wasn't the man he was when they got married. He thought back to when he wrote that song. Tess and him, newly married, no money to their name. They were so excited though. They really were so happy to be out there in the World just doing it. There was nothing more they needed than to just be alive.

He thought about how they moved away from their homes in Colorado, to Nashville so Drake could pursue his musical ambitions; about having their two daughters, now ages 3 and 5. Now, they actually had the money, that his song spoke of not needing. Their day jobs provided all they wanted and more. Even his music career garnered some income from touring and sales. By all accounts, he could be considered fairly successful there too. Yet, as he lay there in bed, watching as the blinds covering the windows began to glow orange from the rising Sun, he couldn't ignore what he was feeling. Lost, and definitely not happy.

*"What the hell happened?"* he thought.

## CHAPTER 2

# INTERMISSION

*“Welcome, to Stoller’s Farm and Ranch!”*

The words, illuminated by the headlights of the rented SUV, welcomed Drake home. He drove underneath the large, hand-carved wooden sign, held up by telephone-pole-sized posts on the sides of the dirt road. He smiled, and looked to the back seat. His daughters were fast asleep, heads bobbing to the bumps and dips in the road. Tess reached over and grabbed his hand and they smiled to each other.

When they pulled up to the large white farmhouse, Drake put the SUV in park and then sat there looking at the house for a minute.

“Come on,” Tess said, encouragingly, opening her door. Drake followed suite and after a moment they were walking up to the house, each carrying a sleeping girl. Drake had Abigail, the oldest, and Tess carried Charlotte. As they walked up the porch stairs, the front door opened. A thin woman wearing rolled up jeans, and a loose t-shirt smiled back at him. She was thinner than he remembered, and her face looked tired, but her smile was still the same.

“Jean,” Drake said giving his older sister a one armed hug. They held on for an extra squeeze before pulling apart and looking at each other.

“You look good, baby bro,” Jean said.

“It’s good to see you,” he replied with a reflecting smile.

“Tess!” Jean said with more excitement in her voice and they hugged as well.

Together, they all made their way inside and into the Kitchen where a large wood table sat the remaining family except for Drake’s parents. *Looks like mom kept pop there for another night*, Drake mused to himself. Jean’s husband, Rick, stood up from the table first and walked over to greet Drake and Tess. Rick was a big man, with a bushy beard, but a gentle giant. Then, Drake’s brother Tommy walked over. Tommy resembled their Father the most. He was also thin, but like Jean, and like his Father, there was a hidden strength from years of labor on the farm and working the animals on the Ranch. Tommy pushed his wire-framed glasses onto his face and hugged Drake.

“Kids asleep?” Drake said to Jean.

“Yep, all three,” Jean answered. “Michael tried to convince us he was old enough to stay up, but his sister would never allow that!” She laughed and everyone joined in.

“Hey Drake,” Rick said, “let me take Abigail there and Tess and I can go get them into a bed.”

“Oh, sure, thanks Rick,” Drake said and slowly handed his daughter into Rick’s giant arms. Tess and Rick disappeared up the stairs, and Drake was now alone with his siblings. Jean disappeared into the Kitchen for a moment and then returned with a bottle and three glasses. They sat down together in silence, and toasted their Father.

“So, what’s the deal?” Drake said, breaking the silence after a few sips of his drink. “Is he coming back to the house, or staying at the Hospital?”

“What do you think?” Tommy said with a chuckle. “This is Pop we’re talking about.”

Drake laughed softly and continued his questions, “When does he come home then?”

“Well,” Tommy continued, “Mom’s there tryin’ a get him to stay a bit longer, but... I’d say by tomorrow night.” They all laughed together again.

“How’s Mom?” Drake said.

“Same as ever,” Jean answered. “The two of ‘em. The way they act you’d never know something was wrong. Mom singin’, Pop jokin’ and both still tryin’ a work.”

Tess and Rick returned to the Kitchen a few minutes later and they all spent the next couple hours catching up until Drake’s eyes were watery with exhaustion. They were all on the same page, and decided to call a quits for the night. Jean and Rick took one of the spare rooms rather than try to get their kids home, and Drake and Tess took another room. Tommy left to go back to his small home on the property.

In the morning, Drake woke to the smell of bacon frying.

“*Rick is a good man,*” Drake thought, taking another whiff of the bacon.

Within a minute of his eyes opening, Abigail was opening their door with her younger sister, Charlotte, trodding behind, trying to keep up. Their cousins, Jean’s kids, Michael, Bella, and Teddy came bursting in shortly after to greet their Aunt and Uncle. Like an excitement tornado, all the kids were soon barreling out of their room and down the hallway towards the stairs.

When Drake got downstairs, Rick was indeed in the Kitchen frying bacon, and cooking eggs. Jean sat at the table with a cup of coffee and her laptop open.

“Morning,” Drake said to the room and Jean gave him a nod and raised her coffee in hello, while Rick bounded over with a full smile.

“Morning, Drake, Tess,” Rick said and passed Tess a cup of coffee, and then one for himself.

“Thank you,” Drake and Tess sounded at the same time. Drake sat down across from Jean at the table, and took a few sips of his coffee.

“We’ll be heading to the Hospital after breakfast,” Drake said looking to Jean and then to Rick, “are you two going to be here?” Jean nodded.

“Yea,” Rick called from the stove. “We figured you’d want to do that, so we’ll keep an eye on Abigail and Charlotte if you’d like.”

“That would be great,” Tess answered.

An hour later, bellies full of Rick’s excellent breakfast, Tess and Drake left to go to the Hospital. It was a thirty minute drive from the house to Denver, where his Father was being treated. When they reached the floor his Father was on, and turned down the hall towards his Father’s room, his Mother, Etta, was stepping out into the hallway. She looked just like Jean, although not as thin.

“Mom,” Drake called down the hall. When she turned, the smile was without any worry.

“Look at you,” Etta said, eyes on Drake, “And Tess,” she said fondly as her eyes turned her way, “so good to see you.” They hugged, and Etta began talking immediately.

“We better get you in there now. You’ll be a good distraction. Your Father’s getting a bit restless.”

They walked into the room, and Drake looked around hesitantly not sure what to expect. Yet, when his eyes found his father, he looked the same as he remembered him. Thinner, like Jean was, but the same energy behind the eyes.

“My. Boy,” Hank said with a grin. “My. Girl.” And Hank held out his arms. Drake and Tess gave him awkward hugs leaning over the bed.

“I hear you’re being a little fussy, Pop,” Drake said.

“Ahh!” Hank said, swatting an invisible fly out of the air. “If I’m gunna die, I might as well do it at home. I don’t wanna die lookin’ at four plain walls. Can’t even see the mountains from this window!”

“I hear ya, Pop,” said Drake, not sure what else he could say.

“It’s not about you staying forever,” Etta chimed in, “Just another day or two so they can finish their tests.” Hank swatted at another invisible fly.

“I’m dying, what other tests matter?” Hank joked, and everyone couldn’t help but crack a smile.

“See what I’m dealing with?” Etta joked.

The rest of the Hospital visit was full of telling stories, and a few serious moments. Drake finally learning the full extent of the medical issues his Father was facing and had been facing. Hank had an aggressive cancer that had come on fast. They’d tried all sorts of treatments over the past year and a half, but things only worked for a short period before the cancer coming back. This time, things were too far gone, it came back too fast and too strong. Any treatment options were so crazy and wild, they’d probably kill him before the cancer did.

“It’s not giving up,” Hank said, explaining why he chose to refuse further treatment. “It’s a matter of enjoying my remaining time. I fought, but God has another plan for me, and I can live with that. I can die with that too.”

Drake and Tess got back to the Farm and Drake just needed some time to be alone. So, he decided to go for a walk around the property. Something he’d done a million times since he was a kid. He walked through the fields of corn, and other vegetables. He walked among the grazing horses and other animals. The mountains were clear and tall in the sky, and Drake understood what his Father meant earlier. This place is freedom at least. But, then, ahead of Drake was a fence. A fence that had never been there before. There was a sign that read, “Private Property,” but it wasn’t a warning to others to stay off of Stoller’s lands, it was for Drake to stay off of someone else’s land. Land that was supposed to be part of their farm and ranch.

*“What is going on?”*

## CHAPTER 3

### LAST SONG

Drake was fuming. He wanted to yell at Jean. How could she let this happen? Clearly they were having financial trouble. Maybe he could've helped? If they only said something. He stomped through the grounds now, hardly noticing anything around him. Drake made it back into the house, with his anger ready to be flung at Jean, but when he saw her at the kitchen table with her laptop, the anger melted.

Drake could see the cause of her thinner appearance, now. He could see the sleepless eyes, and the slightly hunched shoulders of someone with the weight of the World on her. Jean looked up to him, and like the wise older sister she was, her face nodded to him in understanding. With her foot, she kicked out a seat at the table for him.

"I take it you've seen the fences," Jean said, and Drake took the seat at the table.

"Yea," he said, no anger in his voice, but disappointment. "Could I have done something? If Pop told me about everything sooner?"

"Nahh," Jean answered quickly. "Pop's choice in the end. We were technically doing fine, or at least scraping by with the added medical bills. In fact, I even had some great ideas to really expand things. Changing things on the Ranch side a bit, but I needed that land. Maybe in the future." Jean looked disappointed herself now.

"Then, why did Pop sell?" Drake said, and then added, "I'm sure he trusted you with your idea."

"He trusted me," Jean said with a little doubt in her face. "I don't really know what he was thinking. The medical bills were expensive and we had to take out a second mortgage to pay for them, but we were doing fine. Next thing I know, the mortgage is paid off in full, and the fences started going up."

"So, he sells the land to pay off all the medical bills?" Drake said.

"Yea, now I'm just trying to figure out new ways to expand things here so we can maybe get the land back one day. Feels like a part of our history is gone, or something."

"I know what ya mean," Drake said. "Anything Tess and I can do? Website work? Design? Social Media? I doubt I'll be much help as a farm-hand at this point, but I'll try if you need it."

They both laughed as Jean reached over and grabbed his hands inspecting them.

“Seriously,” Jean smiled, “these hands are baby soft! All but the finger tips, of course. Might have to put you to work out of principle!”

The next three weeks seemed to have flown by.

“*Too fast,*” Drake kept thinking. He stood with his eyes closed, trying to remember all the details, all the memories he could. They flashed around in his mind like a movie montage from one scene to the next, in no particular order.

His girls, Abigail and Charlotte, running around the Farm with their cousins.

Charlotte’s tears, when she was too slow to keep up to her sister.

Abigail’s tears, when she fell and cut her knee on the ground.

Even the tears of his daughters made him smile as the memory always ended with bright smiles. The momentary pains of life instantly forgotten, as they raced away from him, or Tess, back into the fray of running children.

Drake’s mind flashed to his brother Tommy, expertly walking through the Farm, checking on things, testing soil, and comically trying to explain to Drake the intricacies of what he was doing. Comically, because the science of it all went straight over his head, and straight over everyone else’s heads too. His father chiming in, after a minute of Tommy’s lecture.

“As impressed as I always am, Tommy,” Hank said through struggling breath, “My time is too short here to allow this conversation to continue.” Hank laughed and coughed as Etta rubbed his back, everyone laughing along. Albeit with a few worried glances towards Hank.

Then, Drake’s mind flew to Jean putting him to work on the farm as promised. Drake was sweating profusely and his arms were tired beyond use within a couple hours. Tommy, skinny looking as he was, didn’t appear to be struggling at all doing the same things Drake was doing. Drake’s siblings ganged up on him with an onslaught of jabs towards his baby-soft hands and his large-looking, but useless muscles.

Drake’s mind flashed to another memory, or memories, as many fireside nights blurred into one. Etta singing her favorite songs, playing her guitar. Drake singing along with her. Hank telling stories to all the kids who listened on with rapt attention. And then, of course, there were the s’mores and the kids faces lighting up with each bite. Tess sitting beside him, holding his hand.

His mind zoomed to two nights ago. A moment alone with his Father, sitting on the porch. Hank covered in blankets, despite the warm night air. The whole conversation was still so fresh in his mind, and Drake knew it would always remain so.

“Pop,” Drake began, rocking in his chair slightly, “Why didn’t you tell me you were sick? I would’ve been able to help out, or come home more frequently.” Hank looked at Drake with intense eyes.

“That’s exactly why I didn’t say anything,” Hank said. “I’m not your responsibility, nor Jean’s or Tommy’s.” Hank coughed for a few seconds before continuing. “Didn’t want you feeling like you needed to be here. That you had some obligation.”

“And if I wanted to be here? Wouldn’t that be my choice?” Drake said. “Isn’t you making the choice for me, by not telling me... isn’t that you feeling responsible for my life?”

“Huh...” Hank huffed. “That’s a fair point. Maybe I’ve made my kids a little too smart for my own good.” Silence filled the night air for a few moments before Hank spoke again. “I apologize for that, especially now I’ve had the chance to watch you these last few weeks.”

“What do you mean?”

“I was going to send your butt back to Nashville as soon as I came back from the Hospital, and tell you to not come back until my funeral!” Hank laughed through coughs. “But, I’ve seen you around here, and you’re happy. As long as that stayed that way, you had a room here.”

“Thanks?” Drake said with a question in his voice. Hank looked back with those knowing eyes that seemed to be a family trait.

“Don’t you know what it’s all about my boy?” Hank said, “I thought you knew, but maybe you just knew the idea, and not the reality of it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Life. This life. Your life,” Hank said, more energy in his voice than there had been in days. “It’s about nothing more, and nothing less than happiness. Look at me. I’m on death’s door, but I’m a happy man. I see the great things around me. I’ve done my best with what I was given, and I made as many days I could, happy ones. Even the rough ones. Even when I was diagnosed with this ruddy cancer. We still sang that night... or rather, your mother sang and we tried to join in. There’s no time to waste, my boy. We don’t know what we’ve got left on our clock. I should have told you sooner about all this. I see that now. Should of gave you the choice and trusted you to choose what made you happy. Coulda kicked your butt back to Nashville if I needed to, if you weren’t happy here.”

Hank laughed and then went into a fit of coughing that lasted a full minute. Drake stood up from his rocking chair and went over to steady Hank through the fit. When it was over, Drake remained there, kneeling by his Father's side.

"One last thing," Hank said. "Your sister, Jean, coulda been a fortune 500 CEO if she didn't love this place, and maybe she'll make this place something beyond my dreams when I'm not in her way. And Tommy, could be working for some conglomeration of something, making hundreds or thousands of Farms around the globe into... Idk... something more than they are. I've told them as much many times. But, they love *this* farm. And *this* ranch. This place was always my dream, my happiness. I never expected it to be theirs as well. And you! You could be a country music star one day. Or, you may remain the middle-level music star you are now." Hank winked at Drake who smiled back. "Whatever," Hank continued, "All the biggest dreams in the World, might sound exciting on paper, Drake. But if you can't do it with love in your heart, you got nothing. If it's not putting love in your heart, you gotta walk away from it, and towards whatever will. I never told any of you what to do with your lives. Never. But, I will tell you this now, with my dying breaths. I'll give myself permission," Hank chuckled. "Be happy," he said. "Nothing else matters but that."

Hank held out his hand to Drake, and Drake reached back to hold his Father's. Hanks hand was cold, even with the layers and layers of blankets and clothing he had around him. The grip of his hands had a surprising strength to it, and his eyes were fierce looking into Drakes.

The memories flashing before Drake stopped as he opened his eyes in the present, a tear falling from his face. Drake looked down at his Father. Hank's eyes were closed, laying there still and peaceful, in his best suit.

## CHAPTER 4

### TAKE A BOW

All Drake could think about as he moved away from his Father's coffin, was how fast the bad memories, the hard memories, fade. *"If you choose it,"* he could hear his Father's voice in his head. How could Drake spend a minute thinking about the effects of cancer, the struggles and pains his Father faced, when his Father's dying words to Drake were to be happy? And they weren't empty words either. Drake could see his Father's face from that last night clear as day. When the serious notes of the conversation faded, even at death's door. Hank was happy.

"What are you thinking about?" Tess's voice said and Drake was pulled out of his reverie. Drake wasn't sure he could respond at first, but then the words and feelings came to him in an instant. He looked back at Tess and grabbed her hand.

"I'll tell you later," Drake said with a reassuring smile. Tess didn't press him.

They took seats in the room where friends and relatives would come to pay their respects to Hank Stoller. It wasn't until night time that Drake was able to be alone with Tess. They were sitting on the porch, where he had sat with his Father just a few nights ago.

"So?" Tess said, prompting the conversation.

"Right," Drake said hesitantly. He gathered his thoughts before looking at Tess. "That night, when you waited up for me to tell me about my Father."

"Yea," Tess said.

Drake took a deep breath and then continued, "My first thought as I walked through the door was that you were leaving me."

"What?" Tess said and she looked at him worried.

"Yea, I didn't understand why, but I get it now. Or I get it more fully now."

"Well, don't leave me in suspense," Tess said looking a bit afraid. Drake grabbed her hand and smiled at her to ease whatever fearful thoughts she was having.

"I didn't realize how unhappy I've been until that moment. I guess I thought that you might've had enough of me. Because I think I'd had enough of myself. I've been on a hamster wheel, chasing a dream I never checked in to see if I still wanted."

"You don't want what exactly?"

“To be on the road all the time, away from you, and the girls,” Drake said, and Tess looked back with full understanding in her face. It seemed that the only person Drake was fooling on his quest was himself.

“What clicked?” Tess asked.

“I just, I don’t know. I love playing music, and writing music, I just hate the other stuff. I don’t think that dream was ever mine. Maybe just something I thought I needed to chase?”

“So, then,” Tess said leaning closer. “What will you chase now? What will make you happy?”

“Everything is great, but the travel part. I don’t want to stop writing or playing music, but I think I’m fine being a bit more behind the scenes instead of the frontrunner. I’ve also really enjoyed being back here and seeing the girls playing with their cousins. I’m not sure how you’re feeling here?”

“Are you kidding?” Tess said back. “If you’re suggesting a move, I’d move back in an instant. Nothing can beat these mountain views, and I agree... it’s been great seeing the girls running around here. My parents would flip with excitement.”

“Are we doing this?” Drake said, a grin forming from ear to ear.

“I think we are,” Tess answered.

Together, Tess and Drake walked inside where everyone was sitting around the living room looking exhausted. The kids were all upstairs playing in one of the rooms. Drake looked at his mother who almost immediately stood up from the couch. Etta walked over, and looked at him clearly trying to discern his thoughts.

“As long as you’re not doing it out of some pity for me,” Etta said.

“Doing what?” Drake said, smiling and shaking his head, looking at Tess to see if she somehow told his mother something. She looked just as confused.

“Moving back to Golden of course,” Etta said with zero doubt in her voice. “If it’s what you want, there is room here for you as long as you need it.”

*What is with this family and knowing everything I’m thinking?* Drake thought.

Jean got up from the couch and appraised Drake’s face for herself and then she smirked.

“Well,” Jean began, “as long as you keep those baby-soft hands off the Farm, I think we’ll be good.” Tommy laughed out loud from the couch, throwing his head back, but then got up and was the first to give Drake a hug.

They didn’t rush back to Nashville, but decided to hang around for a few more days to settle some logistics. The day before they were going back to Nashville to begin the moving process, Drake found himself alone in the farmhouse. He walked around for a while aimlessly, until he unconsciously found himself standing before his mother’s guitar hanging on the wall in the living room. He hadn’t played the guitar since that last gig just outside of Nashville, about a month ago. Probably the longest he’d gone in years without playing. Drake lifted it off the wall hanger and sat down at the couch.

The beautiful Martin guitar felt good in his hands, yet he almost felt nervous for a second to play. Then, his fingers formed a G-chord and he strummed with his fingers. A soothing wave washed over him. Soon, he was jamming away unaware of anything around him. Then, an idea struck him and he played just the last line of his song.

*“I’m happy... aint that the way it’s supposed to be.”*

Drake smiled. It was true again. He knew it. Not just because of the excitement that the new adventures ahead brought, but it was also the knowledge that he wasn’t returning to chase something he didn’t want to pursue. That it was ok to give a dream up, for one that was his own.

“There’s no time to waste, my boy,” his father said to him. *“Time waits for no one,”* Drake thought, echoing the idea in his own words. Hank’s face filled Drake’s mind and the words Hank spoke on the porch poured into Drake’s ears. Drake’s thoughts became consumed by all of his Father’s actions towards himself his whole life. Then, Drake began to play again.

**[some of the beginning of the song]**

Words came to his mind and he began to sing.

**[some singing]**

Drake paused, and ran to the Kitchen, returning with a pad and pen. He began to write. Crossed a few things out and wrote some more. He played again, singing his new words, and within an hour it was done. His eyes welled with tears as he sang the final words of his newly written song.

“Damn,” Drake muttered to himself. “Thanks, Pop.”

## CHAPTER 5

### ENCORE

It was late February, and the new rhythm of life for Drake, Tess, and their kids was completely second nature now. Drake and Tess decided to take their move as an opportunity to transition into starting their own web-design and branding business. Their first client was The Stoller Farm & Ranch, done free of charge of course. Jean really did have a knack for business and was in the early stages of turning the place into that “something special,” Hank spoke to Drake about. Most importantly, Drake was happier than he’d been in a long while. He didn’t need a big fancy dream to chase.

Everyone was over the farmhouse for dinner, snow and frost still prevalent in the window frames. As soon as Rick stopped going back for more steak and potatoes after his third helping, Drake thought it was the right time.

“Hey, everyone,” Drake said standing up. “I want to show you all something.”

“Show away,” Etta said, smiling up to him leaning back in her chair. Drake pulled out his phone and searched for the Spotify app.

“Have you all heard the new album by Ryan Rush at all?” Drake said.

“Only a song or two,” Jean said.

“Yea, same,” Tommy added. “Heard it’s really good though.”

“I think you really need to listen to this one song,” Drake said. “Hold on,” and finally Drake had it. “Ready?”

“Yea?” Everyone said in questioning tones. Drake hit play on the song titled, “Break a Leg.” As the notes filled the air, Drake’s heart raced. When Ryan Rush’s voice sang, Drake only heard his own voice.

**[start the song]**

“Wait a minute...” Etta said. “I’ve heard this, but...” Drake’s mother looked up to him more critically now. “You were playing this months ago.”

**[song playing low, but in and out of the conversation]**

“Wait,” Jean said catching up. “Did you write this?”

Drake shook his head up and down, “I was able to work with my band’s agent and get signed as a song-writer. The first one they bought was this one. The one I wrote for Pop.”

“That is awesome,” Rick said.

“Start it over,” Jean said, leaning forward on the table.

They all raised their glasses to Drake, as they listened to one of his own songs being sung by one of the most prominent stars of the day. It made him shake his head in disbelief.

“*Pretty soon,*” Drake thought. “*Those fences will be coming down.*”

**THE END**