

EASTBOUND JUNGLE

by
Brad Cupples

Brad Cupples
PO BOX 721841
NEWPORT, KY 41072-1841
Email: brad.cupples@gmail.com
© 2007

EASTBOUND JUNGLE

Synopsis

Set in a small hobo “jungle”, or camp, Eastbound Jungle follows a small group of hobos through a deeply tragic character driven story. These hobos have chosen a life of travel, freedom, and short term migrant work for themselves in opposition to the humdrum existence of “civilian” social obligations. They are a tight knit group depending only on each other to survive their travels.

This small society is forever fractured with the accidental death of one of their own. Guilt, anger, and paranoia run rampant as they deal with the repercussions from this tragedy. As their patriarchal leader seeks to preserve the peace and camaraderie of the community a manipulative parasite plays on the emotions of a traumatized man using his fear to get what she wants. As a battle of will rages for his sanity, dark revelations lead to a tragic climax. Eastbound jungle explores themes of freedom, guilt, and justice in a world set just on the outskirts of our own.

Cast 3M 1F.
Single location set.
Approx. 1 hr 15 min.

CHARACTERS

- SCRATCH..... Somber and brooding, he has recently turned from the dependable and solid figure he was known to be, into a shadow of his former self broken by guilt, fear, and paranoia. Early to mid 30's
- RATCHET..... The patriarchal elder of the Hobo community. Rational and easy going, he is of a generation that no longer exists, and everyone knows it, including himself. Late 50's -60's
- CALEB..... Reckless young hobo, brash and selfish. Early to mid 20's
- CLEAVES..... A parasitic black widow, manipulative and cold. Carries herself with an air of sensuality that she no longer possesses. Late 40's - mid 50's

Note: These characters are hobos, not bums or vagrants, they are not intended to be comical, or stylized in anyway.

SETTING

A Hobo "jungle", a simple campsite with a large fire and a few crates to sit on. This is their makeshift meeting place, living room, and asylum from the civilian world. The jungle is located near the railroad tracks just on the outskirts of Salt Lake City, Utah. Though the City and State make no difference to the staging of the play. It is a dark and foreboding location, the only comfort it provides is it's isolation.

TIME

The action in this play take place over the course of one night, the final scene taking place right on the edge of daybreak.

SCENE 1

EXT. Hobo Jungle -- LATE NIGHT

(A temporary makeshift camp built from various odds and ends, some pilfered from garbage, other bits carefully preserved from past travels. A large discarded oil drum houses a fire. The "jungle" is built just on the outskirts of civilization in a lightly wooded area. The noises from the city are never to far from camp. Though set right outside Salt Lake City, this Hobo Jungle could easily be anywhere. The set does not need to be elaborate only the fire and some make-shift seating are absolutely necessary. There is a dark isolated sense of foreboding in the atmosphere of the camp. Lighting should remain low throughout the play.)

(SCRATCH, early 30's, sits on a small crate intently piecing together a well worn and patch-covered coat. He is haggard and obviously hasn't slept)

(RATCHET JACK, mid to late 60's enters warming his hands at the fire)

(SCRATCH nods a half-hearted greeting.)

(RATCHET eventually ambles his way over to Scratch)

RATCHET JACK

That's a good coat there. Heavy thing, ain't it?

(Silence)

RATCHET JACK (Continued)

Reckon it's got two or three winters in it, more if you get good grainers. Sleeping in them grainers you won't get her as scratched up. You always been good at gettin' them grainers. I could get to the same station, same day of the week, hell same day of the month-- not a one to be had, but you...heh, you...

(Silence)
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK (Continued)
You goin' up to Ogden?

SCRATCH
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
What time's the Western Pacific?
RATCHET JACK
Nine.

SCRATCH
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
More like Nine-Thirty.
RATCHET JACK
Probably Eleven.

SCRATCH
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
(finally breaking a smile)
Wouldn't doubt it.
RATCHET JACK
I'm thinkin' about headin' back downtown myself.

SCRATCH
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
Didn't doubt that either.
RATCHET JACK
You got enough thread there?

SCRATCH
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
I'll make do.
RATCHET JACK
I wouldn't mind fetchin' it. If you needed some more.

(SCRATCH sets the Jacket aside)
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
SCRATCH
You ever been out to Klamath Falls this time of year?

(RATCHET picks up the coat and examines it.)
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
RATCHET JACK
Klamath Falls. Yeah. Yeah, it don't change too much out there. Same sunshine near all year. It's warm, damn warm.

SCRATCH
Do Not Copy Or Reproduce
Yeah

RATCHET JACK
People are different though-- ain't worth much out there. Of course, that... That's probably a lot of places. You get out there and you'll find your way.

SCRATCH
I've been there before.

(RATCHET sets the coat back down)

RATCHET JACK
I know it. But this time, well this time... you'll find your way, just the same.

SCRATCH
Didn't say I was goin' anywhere *for sure*.

RATCHET JACK
I know it.

SCRATCH
Just cause a man makes an inquiry... it doesn't mean I'm going anywhere just yet.

RATCHET JACK
I know it.

(CALEB, 20's young and energetic, enters. He goes directly to the fire warming his hands)

CALEB
Ratch, you got any reason to hold on to that book?

RATCHET JACK
Take it.

CALEB
Don't really want it myself, not for reading anyways.

RATCHET JACK
Do what you want with it.

CALEB
Well I just figured if things get cooler around here...

SCRATCH
I thought you were goin' to Ogden.

CALEB
Ogden's a busy town. Flashing lights, excitement, people, I think it'll still be there.

RATCHET JACK
You been there before?

CALEB
Nope. But I've got big plans for it.

RATCHET JACK
Heh. Have a good trip.

CALEB
Gotta get somewhere, for now anyways.

(Silence, Ratchet looks to Scratch)

(Caleb rips a section out of the
book for the fire)

RATCHET JACK
It ain't *that* cold yet.

CALEB
It's gonna be.

RATCHET JACK
It ain't yet.

SCRATCH
It isn't gonna get much colder tonight.

(Caleb cuts Scratch a harsh look)

CALEB
I never put a lot of stock in amateur forecasters, things
never come out like they plan.

(Silence)

RATCHET JACK
Well, regardless, there ain't no reason to start burning up
books.

CALEB
I don't want to be cold.

SCRATCH
I can think of worse things to be.

(Silence)

RATCHET JACK
You seen any newspapers today?

(Caleb looks at scratch)

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

No. CALEB

RATCHET JACK

Wanted to get the scores.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

Giants? SCRATCH

RATCHET JACK

Yeah.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

Lost. SCRATCH

RATCHET JACK

Sounds about right.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

Anything else? CALEB

SCRATCH

Huh?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

In the paper... anything else in the paper? CALEB

SCRATCH

What else do you need to know?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

Not a thing, Not a damned thing. CALEB

(Caleb changes the subject)

CALEB (Continued)

I'm gonna head over to Panley's and get a drink or somethin'

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

(Ratchet and Scratch wait for him to leave before speaking)

RATCHET JACK

You sure they lost? The Giants?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

No. SCRATCH

RATCHET JACK

Have you seen a paper at all?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

Nope. SCRATCH

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
That's about what I figured.

SCRATCH
What about you? You got any news?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
No.

SCRATCH
Nothing?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
I haven't heard anything. Nothing at all.
(Pause. Scratch looks off trying to get his bearings)

SCRATCH
Klamath Falls connects to the Union, don't it?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Yeah it's a straight shot.

SCRATCH
That's how I remembered it, same line as Ogden.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
You've got a good memory.

(Scratch picks up the coat and goes back to stitching it)

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK (Continued)
It's a good bit warmer in Ogden.

SCRATCH
Yep.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Salt Lake isn't a bad place to shop around for work.

SCRATCH
Nope.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Not as warm as Klamath Falls though.

SCRATCH
It's not too bad here.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Yeah?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
Temperature, I mean.

(Scratch cuts the thread off, and starts patching a new hole)

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Scratch. What are you planning on doing?

SCRATCH
Gettin' somewhere that's warm, That's all.

(Silence)

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

(Scratch stares into the jacket putting his thoughts together)

RATCHET JACK
Warm, huh?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
Yeah.

RATCHET JACK
You're putting a lot of work into patching that thing up.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
I take care of what's mine.

RATCHET JACK
It ain't gonna be too much use to you if you go anywhere that's warmer than here.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
I take care of what's mine.

RATCHET JACK
I know you do Scratch. I just... I just want to know what you're planning on doing here.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
I don't know. Ratchet, what... what do you think I oughta do?

RATCHET JACK
Oh hell, Scratch, I don't know.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
If you were me... If you were me what would you do?

RATCHET JACK
You can't listen to me, I don't know what to tell you.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH

Ratchet, I'm been racking my brain here. I Ain't no good at planning things out, I never have been. But you, you always know what to do. You just do, always did.

RATCHET JACK

I don't know anything Scratch.

SCRATCH

I know it's no good, I don't have a lot of options ahead of me right now, but... Well Damn it Ratch, you gotta have some sort of an idea here.

(Ratchet Jack gives it heavy thought desperately trying to give him some sort of viable advice, Scratch gives him his total and undivided attention)

RATCHET JACK

(exasperated)

Why don't ya just... wait it out. Just give it some time...

SCRATCH

Wait it out? What, here? You want me to wait it out here?

RATCHET JACK

Then go. Go where ever you want to. Go to Ogden. Go to Klamath Falls. Hell, go to Canada.

SCRATCH

Well I can't just stay around here, knocking about.

RATCHET JACK

Look Scratch you've got this big idea something's gonna happen. I'm telling you it ain't. Nothing is gonna happen. People are reasonable mostly, things may not be as bad off as you're thinking they're gonna be. Just give it a chance.

SCRATCH

You remember when we was both going through Vicksburgh?

RATCHET JACK

Yeah.

SCRATCH

Couple of summers ago, with Piccalilli and Trent?

RATCHET JACK

Yeah.

SCRATCH

I had a dream the other night.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
About Vicksburgh?

SCRATCH
That old bag lady down there, the one that was always yellin'
about the weather every time the clouds came in.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Yeah, she was a whirlybird for sure.

SCRATCH
Well in this dream there was, there was three of her.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Three?

SCRATCH
Yeah.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

RATCHET JACK
Heh, I suppose that's enough to set you off from sleepin'.
(Pause)

RATCHET JACK (Continued)
That it?

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
No...

RATCHET JACK
Well let's have it.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
You see there's three of 'em and they were yellin' about the
clouds...

RATCHET JACK
Yeah.

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
And then I looked up, I looked up and damned if there weren't
the darkest blackest clouds I'd ever seen.

RATCHET JACK
Heh

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH
Then I looked back at 'em and one of them bag ladies was
killing this little pig and there was blood everywhere it was
all over the ground and the other one, she was just sitting
there.

(MORE)

Do Not Copy Or Reproduce

SCRATCH (Continued)

She was just watching it, she's watching her kill this little pig and eating a handful of nuts like there wasn't nothing happening. She was just sitting there like it was a damned movie or something. And the blood's all over the ground.

(Ratchet start to laugh to himself
but realizes Scratch is serious)

RATCHET JACK

It's just a dream...

SCRATCH

And then the last one, she looks right at me and starts screaming and screaming, just going crazy and then the other two start screaming. And they're screaming their heads off right at me, but for some reason, it don't bother me really... I'm not scared. I'm... I'm sort of angry. Not for the screaming though, just angry. I don't know why though -- they haven't done anything to me. I'm just angry at 'em for being there and then it starts lightning and thundering and it's raining...

(Scratch is visibly shaken Ratchet
passes him a flask, he numbly takes
it.)

RATCHET JACK

Rain ain't too bad. Cools you off, washes the dirt off of buildings and rich people's cars.

SCRATCH

That dream, it was so real. I mean I could hear them screaming at me, I could feel them staring at me. It's like they knew who I was.

RATCHET JACK

It's a dream Scratch.

SCRATCH

It didn't feel like one. It was realer than a dream.

RATCHET JACK

Some dreams just feel more real than others. You woke up didn't you?

SCRATCH

Yeah, but I ain't been back to sleep.

RATCHET JACK

You just need to get out and do something to clear all this mess out of your system. Go out get some fresh thoughts rolling around in that head of yours.