

HOT ROD

Written by

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FADE IN:

we see a series of close-ups:

A hand goes into a glove; a cape is fastened around a neck; A helmet chinstrap is snapped; goggles are adjusted over steely blue eyes; a boot comes down on the kickstart; a gloved hand revs the engine...

EXT. PACIFIC NORTHWEST - EARLY MORNING

Pull back to reveal a man on a pale blue moped. This is ROD KIMBLE, 30, adventurer, dreamer, lover, doer. He wears an ill-fitting pale green suit and a cape. His moped is aimed toward a ramp which leads to one parked MAIL DELIVERY JEEP.

Rod revs his engine and turns to his step-brother, KEVIN AGNEW, the manager of his crew, earnest and loyal, early 20's. Rod shouts over the whine of his excruciatingly loud engine.

ROD

Kevin, did you reinforce the take-off ramp?

KEVIN

No. we didn't have time.

Rod looks at Kevin blankly, then glances over at a bunch of guys eating donuts. This is HIS CREW --

There's EUGENE, late SO's, a super racist/sexist in failing health; RICO, 40's, Gulf War Vet who's obsessed with death and violence; DAVE, 20's, mega stoner and true believer in Rod's mission; and AL GEISER, 56, a timid insurance salesman who joined up to add a little excitement in his life. These guys are not A+ material.

ROD

They're good men. I know they did their best. And that's good enough for me.

Rod spins his finger over his head and calls to his crew.

ROD (CONT'D)

Bring it!

They don't react. Kevin gives Rod an enthusiastic thumbs-up. Rod nods. It's time. He closes his eyes, revs his engine and gently caresses the moped gas tank.

ROD (CONT'D)

(to himself)
Soul of an eagle.

He begins to PEDAL, hits the gas and ACCELERATES toward the ramp.

ROD (CONT'D)
Yieeeeeee!!!!

He hits the ramp and it collapses immediately causing Rod to ride full-speed into the side of the postal truck landing on the ground with a sickening thud.

AL GEISER
(looking up, holding
a donut)
Son of a bitch.

Kevin runs to him.

KEVIN
Rod, are you okay?

He cradles Rod's head. Rod SLOWLY OPENS his eyes.

ROD
I'm fine. Oh, yeah. Wow. That
ramp definitely collapsed right
there. Rico should really look into
that because --
(then, eyes
fluttering)
Here it comes. Good night.

KEVIN
Oh, my god. Rod, what do !do?

ROD
Just turn me over if I start
throwing up.
(then)
...and going grey.

Rod gives a triumphant thumbs-up.

ROD (CONT'D)
Rock and roll! I'm out.

Rod falls UNCONSCIOUS.

•TITLE SEQUENCE"

Stylized credits. A seventies font. Lots of RED, WHITE and BLUE and stars and stripes.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Establishing. It's a warm spring day. End of May.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Rod is driving a bus filled with grade schoolers. He has a black eye and he operates the clutch with a stick. He talks to a THIRD GRADE GIRL in a KARATE uniform in the front seat. This is OLIVIA, 8, level-headed without being precocious, Rod's confidante.

ROD

...I can 't completely describe the feeling but when I collided with the side of the bus I felt like I connected with some ancient life force.

OLIVIA

Oh.

ROD

Maybe it was the way my moped and I accelerated into a stationary object at twenty-seven miles per hour, or maybe it was the fact that I forgot to eat breakfast that morning, but for a brief fleeting second I felt like the first amoeba who grew legs and walked out of the primordial ooze. You know what I mean?

OLIVIA

Not really. So, you didn't make the jump?

ROD

When did you get so ends-oriented? No, technically I didn't make the jump in your traditional western sense of the word, but it was a success in other ways. Namely, it taught me a lot about myself, my bone structure vis a vis which joints bend which way, and it revealed certain technical limitations of my crew.

OLIVIA

Oh.

ROD

You've got to learn to respect the journey, Olivia. That's the key to enlightenment. That's what the Tao teaches us. Read your Lao Tse. It's all in there.

Rod hands Olivia an orange piece of paper.

ROD (CONT'D)

Here, I'm jumping the incinerator tomorrow morning. You should ask your man if you can go.

OLIVIA

But doesn't your leg still hurt?

ROD

I won't lie to you, Olivia. It's incredibly painful. If I was in the wild right now I'd try to chew it off. But the show must go on.

OLIVIA

Why don't you just rest until your leg feels better?

ROD

Well, that's impossible. We already made the fliers.

OLIVIA

Just make new ones.

ROD

Oh, Olivia. New fliers require paper and... a Xerox machine... And paper. It's very complicated.

Olivia looks at the FLIER and shakes her head.

ROD (CONT'D)

What?

OLIVIA

I just don't understand why you need to hurt yourself all the time.

ROD

(laughing too hard)
Need to hurt myself? That's ridiculous. Olivia, I'm a stuntman. Getting hurt is an occupational hazard.

Being a

OLIVIA

Do you love being a
stuntman?

ROD

Of course I do. You know that.

OLIVIA

And stuntmen get hurt?

ROD

Sometimes, yes.

OLIVIA

Then by the transitive property, you
love getting hurt.

ROD

Jesus. What goes on in that school
of yours? Do you have a Communist
teacher or something?

(then)

Look, you're too young to understand
things like fate and destiny but
when you grow up you're going to
think about bigger things than
spelling bees and karate practice.
You're going to think about what
kind of mark you're going to leave
on this world when you're gone. We
all have destinies in this life, my
young, young friend. And for better
or worse, my destiny is danger.

Rod stops the bus and reaches to open the door, WINCING in
pain.

ROD (CONT'D)

Ahh...

OLIVIA

I got it.

Olivia stands up and opens the BUS DOOR with two hands.

ROD

Thanks.

OLIVIA

You're a good person, Rod.
Experiencing pain isn't the only way
to give your life meaning.

Rod stares at Olivia blankly.

ROD

What does that mean?

OLIVIA

See ya.

She gets off the bus. Rod shakes his head, bemused.

ROD

Funny mixed-up kid.

Rod drives off.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS LOT - LATER

Rod pulls into the lot. We see his PALE BLUE MOPED attached to the back of the bus.

I.N.T. SCHOOL BUS OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

The bus dispatcher, DENISE, late 20's, bright and very together, sits at her desk in a sundress as Rod LIMPS IN.

DENISE

I can't believe you came into work today, Rod.

ROD

Hey, someone's got to drive those kids. And I made a sacred promise to this company when I signed up. take my vows seriously.

He tries to lift his arm to put his bus keys on the counter.

ROD (CONT'D)

Ahhh . Ahhh.

Denise takes the keys from him.

DENISE

You need to go to a hospital and get checked out. You are hurt.

ROD

This is nothing. You should have seen me after I tried to jump Kevin's Sentra over the quarry. Plus, I have to finish handing out these fliers for the jump tomorrow.

Denise looks at the flier.

DENISE

Incinerator jump. You can't do this.

ROD
No offense, Denise. But I've been training really hard lately and I don't respond well to negative reinforcement.

DENISE
No. It's just that you're in no shape for another stunt right now. You need to give your body time to rest and heal. Why don't I come over and make you dinner tonight so you can relax.

ROD
Ooh, I'd love to, fella. But I have plans. Wrestle my stepfather Frank on Thursday nights.

DENISE
Wrestle? Like this?

ROD
No. I'm going to wear a helmet.
Rod's boss, MR. SHERF, 50, a grizzled middle-aged man, pops his head out of his office.

MR. SHERF
Kimble. My office. Now.

Mr. Sherf slips back inside the door. Rod smiles at Denise.

ROD
He must have read my proposed changes for bus protocol and route strategy. Probably wants to pick my brain.

Rod WALKS OFF. Denise watches him go, worried.

INT. MR. SHERF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Sherf sits behind his desk eating lunch as Rod enters.

MR. SHERF
Have a seat, Rod.

ROD
I'd love to, sir, but my legs don't exactly bend right now.

MR. SHERF

Rod, I'm going to cut right to the chase.

ROD

That's the way I play, governor. My brain is open. Pick away.

MR. SHERF

You're fired.

ROD

What?! On what grounds?

MR. SHERF

Parents don't like having a stuntman driving their kids to school. Period. End of story. You're gone.

ROD

But I never do stunts on, with or at my bus. And I would never put a child in harm's way. That's item 12R of my personal code of conduct. You have a copy of that.

MR. SHERF

I gave you a choice, Rod. Stunts. Or the bus. You made your choice.

ROD

But that's like telling the sun not to rise. Or a rooster not to have feathers. Or a bat not to use its ears to see. It's against god! Mr. Sherf, you, sir, are against god!

MR. SHERF

Get out.

ROD

But --

MR. SHERF

Out!

ROD

(determined)

The Chinese character for crisis is made up of two separate words -- problem and opportunity. And it is this spirit, this enlightened eastern spirit, that I will accept this horrible news, you godless

swine. Thank you, Mr. Sherf, for presenting me with half a crisis. And by that I mean the opportunity part.

Rod knocks on his desk.

ROD (CONT'D)

Good **day** to you, sir!

INT. SCHOOL BUS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Rod marches out to Denise's desk, FURIOUS.

DENISE

Rod, I'm so sorry.

ROD

Don't be sorry for me, ladyman.
This firing is like a gift from
(collapsing)
Whoa...

Rod braces himself on Denise's counter, DIZZY.

DENISE

Rod. Are you okay?

ROD

(wobbly)
Hypoglycemic... Need treats. Honey
nut Cheerios...

Rod reaches into his POCKETS and stuffs CEREAL into his mouth.

DENISE

That's it. We're going to the hospital right now to get you checked out. Let's go.

ROD

(shoving cereal in
his mouth)
No offense, Denise. I'm sure you know a lot about buying flannel but what do you know about health?

DENISE

Rod, I'm starting medical school next year.

ROD

Well, get back to me in four years
when you're a real doctor.

Rod lets go of Denise's counter and collapses again.

ROD (CONT'D)

No. Not quite there yet.

DENISE

Rod, this could be really serious.
You don't mess around with head
injuries.

ROD

Sell crazy somewhere else, Lilith
Fair. My head is the only place on
my body that didn't get injured
yesterday. This is blood sugar
related, I assure you!

Rod keeps SHOVING Cheerios into his mouth.

DENISE

Rod, please cancel the jump
tomorrow.

ROD

Negative!

DENISE

Then let me drive you home.

ROD

Double negative!

DENISE

Rod, why are you so stubborn? I'm
just trying to help.

ROD

(knocks on the
counter)

I said good day to you, sir!

Rod STUMBLES out of the office. Denise watches him go. She
looks down at the flier, worried.

EXT. SUBORBAN TOWN - LATER

Rod rides his PALE BLUE MOPED past a gas station. The
attendant gives Rod a wave. Rod takes his hands off the
handlebars and salutes the man with a flourish.

Rod passes a soccer field. He drives up on the curb and stands on his seat with one leg. The middle-aged MEXICAN MEN all wave and cheer and call out his name. Rod gives the thumbs-up.

Rod passes some teenagers smoking pot in the high school parking lot. They give him the hang-ten sign and cheer. He spins around backwards on his seat and salutes them. They CHEER louder.

EXT. ROD'S NEIGHBORHOOD - A LITTLE LATER

Rod pulls onto his street. A bunch of kids are riding bikes in the street. They call out Rod's name and cheer. Rod clumsily tries to do a handstand on his handlebars. He almost kills himself. The kids cheer. He rides on.

EXT. ROD'S HOOSE - CONTINUOUS

Rod smiles as he pulls into the DRIVEWAY of his suburban neighborhood. He gets off his moped, leans it against the garage and bows to it, MARTIAL ARTS style. He then walks toward his house.

INT. ROD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

A middle-aged woman is at the stove stirring something in a pot and humming to herself. This is MARIE AGNEW, early 50's, Rod's mother. Rod enters with a duffel bag.

ROD

Hey, Mom.

MARIE

Hi, honey. How was your day?

Rod sits at the kitchen table and pulls athletic equipment from his bag.

ROD

Not so great. I got fired.

(then)

Where's Prank?