

Son of Rock

by

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FADE IN

EXT. CONCERT HALL -- LATE NIGHT

A lighted sign off a local throughway trumpets:

Boise Civic Center Presents

BONE MEAL in concert - April 9th

BRIDAL EXPO - April 10th

TITLE OVER:

April 9th, 2005

INT. BOISE CIVIC CENTER -- LATE NIGHT

Hundreds of lit butane lighters, held aloft, illuminate this five-thousand seat arena. The raucous meter of hands CLAPPING in unison is infectious.

CROWD

Forever! Forever!

Nearly every aging head banger in the three-quarters-full venue is on their feet. Their drunken CHANTING is directed at the stage, which is dominated by a series of large screens carrying images of devastating nuclear bomb blasts.

Abandoned musical instruments poke through wafting dry-ice-smoke. Too many guitars, an obscenely large drum kit.

CROWD (cont'd)

Forever! Forever!

The chanting picks up speed.

INT. BACKSTAGE

FLOYD, a balding, paunchy, Band Manager (mid-40s), flies by with a flip phone pressed to his ear. A bored ROADIE lopes to his side as he speeds down a corridor.

ROADIE

Where the hell is he?

FLOYD

Where do you think?

(into phone)

Kim? Don't hang up!

Floyd puts a finger in his free ear and runs.

He passes a concession stand stocked with "World War We" paraphernalia (tee-shirts, CDs, posters, all carrying the same mushroom cloud graphic we saw on stage).

INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING AREA -- CONTINUOUS

An assortment of Heavy Metal HANGERS ON all give the frustrated Bone Meal band members a wide berth.

Drumsticks in hand, PETE (late-40s, comically long hair, gym physique gone-to-seed) kicks at a locked bathroom door.

PETE

Shit, Rock! Come on, man!

ROCK (O.S.)

(behind the door, slurring)

I'm not goin' back out there! I'm not playing that goddamned song again. Ever.

Floyd arrives, panting. A path clears before him.

FLOYD

(into phone)

Last time. My hand to God.

ROCK (O.S.)

They got their two hours! I'm off the clock!

ANDY (late 40's) leans against the wall cradling his bass, scowling in his too-young wardrobe.

BILLY, a surly 21-year-old with a severe crew cut and a guitar strap slung over his shoulder, glowers nearby.

Floyd YELLS through the bathroom door.

FLOYD
I got Kim on the phone, Rock!

The DIN in the room quiets.

The bathroom door opens a crack. A hand emerges, groping. Floyd begrudgingly gives over his phone.

INT. BATHROOM

ROCK relocks the door and drops to the floor, a half-empty bottle of whiskey in one hand, Floyd's phone in the other.

He's a well-used 48-year-old, also long-haired, with a perpetual five-day beard. Like Andy and Pete, he looks older for trying to look younger.

Grinning smugly, Rock cradles the phone to his ear.

ROCK
(slurring)
Hello, beautiful!

INT. KIM'S BEDROOM

KIM (41) is propped up in bed in the dark room. She's furious. MAX (mid-30s) lays beside her, unmoving.

INTERCUT phone conversation.

KIM
Again?

ROCK
'kay. Hello, beautiful!

KIM
No. This is happening again?

ROCK
Your head says "Again?", but your heart says "Again!"

Max throws the covers off, lumbers into the bathroom, shuts the door.

KIM
Paul.

Rock winces at the sound of his given name.

KIM (cont'd)
It's late, okay? So, unless you
have something you need to say—

ROCK
Hey, 's your dime.

Kim turns on the nightstand lamp and blinks irritably.

KIM
It's not my dime. It's never my
dime. Do you know what time it is?

ROCK
Oh, I know what time it is! 's Rock
time! You're lookin' for a little
Rock-onsiliation. A little—

KIM
Stop! Just stop the bullshit and
get your drunk ass back on stage!

ROCK
Wait...who is this?

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Floyd has his ear pressed to the door. His eyes widen as
Rock's call with Kim escalates into a SCREAMING MATCH.

FLOYD
No. No!

The sound of the whiskey bottle SMASHING into the bathroom
wall. Floyd pulls at the doorknob desperately.

FLOYD (cont'd)
Not my phone!

More DESTRUCTION from inside the locked bathroom. A JANITOR
rushes in, fumbling with a key ring. He pops the door open.
Floyd sticks his head inside.

FLOYD (cont'd)
Fucked!

Stepping back into the dressing room, he pokes his finger
into the chests of two ROADIES standing nearby.

FLOYD (cont'd)
You and you. Get him up. And don't
step on my SIM card!

INT. VENUE HALLWAY

Too wasted to stand, Rock is rolled on a wheeled office chair back to the stage.

INT. OFFSTAGE

Rock is lifted off the chair and he stands unsteadily. Roadies work to strap on his guitar and he suddenly "comes to", takes a wild swing at one of them. The roadie ducks the blow expertly and keeps at it.

The rest of the band prepares to go back onstage for their encore. Billy drains his beer and turns to Andy.

BILLY
How about we don't play it?
(gesturing to Rock)
I mean, if he doesn't want to...

Andy straps on his bass and levels a glare at Billy.

BILLY (cont'd)
How about, for one night, we *don't*
close with the same shitty, sell
out, top-40-

ANDY
Sing the damn song.

Andy walks onstage to wild CHEERING. Pete follows, as does a reluctant Billy. Rock is gently pushed in their direction.

INT. ON STAGE

Rock staggers into a spotlight and stands there, swaying. The crowd's furor quiets. All eyes are on him.

As unstable as he seems, Rock strikes a few RINGING CHORDS on his guitar with perfect clarity. The crowd explodes on recognizing the song, their SCREAMS drowning out the band, which kicks into power ballad overdrive.

BILLY
(at the microphone, singing)
Forever,
This love of ours...

Rock wobbles in the spotlight like an oversized toddler.

INT. MID-WESTERN COMMUNITY CENTER -- AFTERNOON

A TODDLER wobbles in front of a table carrying a coffee-maker and stacks of cups. He's reaching for the creamer...

AA WOMAN (O.S)
So, it's one day at a time, right?
Freeze, Travis!

The kid does as he's told.

The WOMAN is a washed-out 35-year-old. She stands at a podium facing rows of half-empty folding chairs. She keeps up her soul bearing with one red-rimmed eye on her boy.

AA WOMAN (cont'd)
When I wake up...hell, if I wake
up...I always thank my maker for
another... Travis!

Rock and Andy startle at the hollow sound of the creamer CLANKING to the floor. They both hide behind dark glasses.

A few rows up, a seedy 40-year-old texts frantically on his phone, throwing star-struck glances back at Rock.

The MEETING HOST gets up and scans the room.

AA HOST
Thanks, Doris. Okay, who's next?

Andy and Rock each gesture for the other to go politely, back and forth, like a booze-addled Laurel and Hardy. Finally, Rock stands and makes his way to the podium.

ROCK
Hello everyone. My name is...

He takes off his sunglasses. The texter renews his efforts.

ROCK (cont'd)
My name is Paul, yada yada yada.

ROOM

Hello Paul.

ROCK

Been sober for zero days. Ground
zero-

The door to the center flies open and another aging HEAD BANGER bursts in. The sight of Rock at the podium stops him cold. He tips his head to the texter and sits.

ROCK (cont'd)

So anyways, I'm finding I don't
need it lately. But it's a habit.

Two more BONE MEAL AFICIONADOS slip in, ogle Rock, then wave discreetly to the texter. Rock rubs his eyes weakly.

ROCK (cont'd)

And when you're in a different town
every day, habit's all you got.

Another BONE MEAL FAN, this one brown-bagging a beer, shuffles in. He flashes Rock the horns, his tongue lolling.

Andy stands, anticipating Rock's move for the door.

ROCK (cont'd)

Screw it.
(passing the brown-bagger)
You bring enough for everyone?

The brown-bagger offers his beer to the alcoholic next to him. And Rock has left the building.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

A decrepit tour bus belches smoke as it struggles to keep up with left lane traffic.

INT. MOVING TOUR BUS

A drunk, 40-something GROUPIE struts her stuff in a revealing French Maid's outfit. No easy task in a rolling common room littered with fast food wrappers, dirty clothes, empty bottles.

Rock is sprawled out on a day bed, three sheets to the wind. His eyes are barely open.

GROUPIE

Like this?

She's working it, bending deeply at the waist to feather dust the floor.

ROCK

's good. But kinda really do it.
Like pick those clothes up, put
away those CDs...

She does as she's told, as erotically as she can while staggering, smiling. Rock continues to fade.

GROUPIE

This gets you hot?

ROCK

(yawning)
Uh huh.

INT. MOVING TOUR BUS / NOOK TABLE - CONTINUOUS

The band is huddled around the table, listening in, behind a partition that separates them from the rest of the bus.

BILLY

This is why you don't shell out
for a cleaning service?

Andy flips through the pages of the *Newsweek* he's reading.

ANDY

And it's a scathing indictment of
the state of the once mighty
women's movement.

BILLY

How'd he get her into the costume?

ANDY

He poured her in.

Suddenly...

GROUPIE (O.S.)

What the hell?!

ANDY
(without looking up)
Uh oh. Trouble in paradise.

The groupie staggers over to the nook table, furious.

GROUPIE
Stop this goddamn bus!

Andy gets up calmly and moves toward Rock.

PETE
Easy, sweetheart.

GROUPIE
I don't deserve this.

Andy stops at Rock's side. He's out cold, holding an empty fifth. The groupie storms past, teetering toward the door.

The bus comes to a slow stop on the highway berm. The groupie tries to pry the door open, unsuccessfully.

PETE
There's nothing for miles, honey.
We'll stop at the next town.

She's crying now.

GROUPIE
I'm not your honey. My kids don't
even pull this crap. Clean your
own damn room!

Andy tries to rouse Rock, to no avail. Andy takes his pulse, then leaps up and darts toward the driver.

GROUPIE (cont'd)
Open the goddamn door!

BILLY
Lady, you gotta calm down.

GROUPIE
LADY?!

The bus lurches forward to a chorus of CAR HORNS.

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT -- MORNING

The tour bus is visible through the restaurant's plate glass window. It occupies a full seven spaces in the parking lot of the Hospital across the street.

Andy and Pete sit in a dining booth. Billy is sprawled out in the next booth over, at a remove from the others. He's cradling a portable DVD player in his lap.

ON THE DVD PLAYER

A documentary. A younger Rock (early 20's) is being interviewed on screen. He's wild-eyed, a bundle of energy.

YOUNG ROCK (on SCREEN)
The guitar is a weapon. An instrument of destruction! It's meant to lay things to waste.

Footage of Rock and a YOUNG GUITARIST (NATURAL, 22) playing live runs over his monologue. They're smiling, leaning against each other, the necks of their guitars crossed.

The HEAVY-METAL MUSIC they make is an aural assault, jack hammers on steroids, a minor-keyed cacophony.

YOUNG ROCK (V.O. on SCREEN)
You don't play guitar to soothe the beast. You play it to tear down the old order.

Rock and Natural face each other, holding their guitars by their necks, and swing them - like baseball bats - into one another. They splinter and SCREECH dramatically.

BACK IN DENNY'S

Floyd takes a seat at the table with Andy and Pete.

FLOYD
Okay, we got three options.

DOCUMENTARY NARRATOR (on DVD)
The passing of guitarist Joe "Natural" Naterelli led to a string of replacements that-

All eyes turn to Billy.

FLOYD
Do you mind?

Billy exhales heavily and powers down the DVD Player.

FLOYD (cont'd)
We bring in someone else.

Billy looks away self-consciously.

ANDY
No one replaces him.

BILLY
Great. So, I spent the last three months rehearsing for nothing?

PETE
Easy. What else we got?

FLOYD
We cancel some shows. Not that we can afford it. It all depends on how much time he needs.

Silence all around.

ANDY
And door number three?

Floyd slumps back in his seat.

FLOYD
Party's over. We kill the cash cow.

The band stares off in different directions.

INT. HOSPITAL / PRIVATE ROOM -- DAY

A sitcom LAUGH TRACK spews from the speaker of an in-room TV.

A hospital bed WHIRS as it props a corpse-like Rock up into a sitting position. Floyd is at his side.

FLOYD
So where to?

ROCK
Back home, I guess.

FLOYD

Or we could just drop you off at a liquor store. Kinda the same thing, really. So, I'm thinking Wellbrook.

ROCK

No rehab. Just let me sleep.

ON TV

The sitcom goes to a commercial and the OPENING CHORDS of "Forever" ring out. An attractive model in a flowing gown runs her hand along the side of a sleek, new hybrid car.

NATURAL (V.O.)

(singing, original recording)
Forever, this love of ours...

ROCK

Christ! Turn it off.

Rock roots through the sheets, looking for the TV remote.

NATURAL

(on TV, singing)
Forever, a love reborn each night.

FLOYD

If it wasn't for this commercial, there'd be no tour. No new record.

The remote is M.I.A., so Rock rings for a nurse.

FLOYD (cont'd)

And this is how you repay Toyota for rescuing you from obscurity? Talk about biting the hand.

ROCK

The hand's feeding me hospital food, Floyd. Turn it off!

FLOYD

So *where to*, Rock?

Rock pulls a pillow over his face.

ROCK

Just finish me!

INT. TAXI CAB -- DAY

Rock sits stoically in the back seat, behind dark sunglasses.

The cab rolls up a long driveway, past a large McMansion, toward a small cottage that abuts the property. The Golden Gate Bridge is visible in the distance.

Kim stands at the door of the cottage. As hard as she's worked to counter it, there's still a hint of trailer park about her; hair a little too high, skirt a little too short.

There's a no-nonsense look in her eye which has nearly eclipsed a winning, party girl smile.

Rock takes off his sunglasses and his eyes widen at the sight of her. He takes a deep breath, grabs the door handle.

EXT. COTTAGE -- DAY

Rock climbs out of the cab. The driver pulls bags out of the trunk while Rock and Kim share an awkward hug. Rock throws a look toward the cottage.

ROCK
For me? Where's the help gonna sleep?

KIM
Don't start.

They move inside.

ROCK
Where's Max?

KIM
He's working. Which people do.

INT. COTTAGE -- DAY

Everything about the place says new money and plenty of it.

The driver sets the bags by the door and goes out for more.

KIM

So ground rules. One. You drink,
you're out. No second chances.
Two. No guests. Your boozier
friends—

ROCK

Can I shit in the front yard? Oh,
I'm sorry. Is that three?

Kim pastes on a smile.

KIM

Right. Let's try this again. I'm
glad you're here.

ROCK

Glad to be here.

Rock wanders aimlessly, taking in the new digs.

KIM

You need to be around family now.

He stops at the front window, peers through the curtains.

ROCK

Yeah, that's exactly what I...

He panics at the sight of a four-year-old boy (JUSTIN)
walking hand-in-hand with his YOUNG NANNY (SHERRI, early
20s) toward the cottage.

ROCK (cont'd)

No. This is too fast. I'm not ready.

KIM

Not ready for what?

ROCK

He's not going to recognize me.

KIM

Don't be ridiculous.

Kim opens the door and Justin and the nanny enter. Pulling
it together, Rock squats and throws his arms open wide.

ROCK

Dude! It's me! Dad!

Justin ambles into his embrace, smiling.

ROCK (cont'd)
You're so big!
(to Kim)
He's so big!

Kim nods, smiling tightly.

JUSTIN
Where were you?

Rock chokes up at the sound of his tiny voice.

ROCK
I was on the road, pal.

JUSTIN
You shouldn't go in the road.

Justin wanders off, exploring.

ROCK
He's really talking, huh?

KIM
And he uses the toilet, and he
brushes his teeth...

Kim picks up Rock's guitar case and one of his bags abruptly.

KIM (cont'd)
...and he destroys his room every
night and everything else you'd
expect a four-year-old to do.

Rock moves to pull the guitar case out of her hands.

ROCK
Okay, Kim. I get it.

KIM
No, you don't.

A brief, silent battle of wills.

KIM (cont'd)
Let's go, Just! Your Dad's gotta
unpack and I have to get to work.

The Nanny walks back in with Justin.

KIM (cont'd)
Sherri, this is Paul.

They nod to each other. Justin gives Rock a hug and he and Sherri head out the door. Kim is right behind them, about to leave, when she stops herself.

She moves back to Rock and embraces him tightly.

KIM (cont'd)
I'm glad you're here.

Out of her line of vision, Rock closes his eyes and drinks in her empathy. Separating, he's back to hard-bitten cynic.

KIM (cont'd)
Call if you need anything.

Rock nods as Kim leaves, words catching in his throat. He waves and turns away.

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