

“RAT ROD”

By

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Treatment - version 4

Logline: After a devastating racing accident, a young rat enters his rockabilly band in a TV music competition to save his home.

Rat Rod takes place in a world populated by anthropomorphic rats. It is composed of two major classes:

The upper class (Alphas) - wealthy, specially bred to possess the best hereditary traits. They are usually albino, with white fur and pink or light color eyes. They tend to be highly intelligent, but are generally conceited and elitist.

The working class (Betas) - struggle to survive, traditionally bred, colored fur, dark color eyes, skilled laborers, generally more grounded.

We open on an empty street in the suburbs. A late model Italian sports car pulls up to a stop light. Inside is a teenage couple, both of them are Alphas – upper class rats with white fur and light colored eyes. Suddenly, they both hear a loud rumble. The driver, Blake checks his rear view mirror. His passenger, Lexi, turns around to see where the noise is coming from. A ragged looking Frankenstein style Hot-rod pulls up alongside of them. It’s a Rat Rod.

Blake revs his engine taunting the other driver. The Rat Rod driver fumbles with his radio to find just the right song. The light turns green and the sports car takes off with a smooth, controlled burst of power. The Rat-Rod driver punches the gas pedal. His tires light up and the street is flooded with smoke. The Rat-rod starts to catch the sports car when the engine starts smoking severely. The temperature gauge needle is pegging the “H”. The Rat-rod is forced to pull over. The driver gets out and opens his hood. A cloud of steam fills the air. As the steam dissipates a young, rockabilly rat is revealed. This is Rodney, a cinnamon colored rat of average build. He’s wearing jeans, a white t-shirt and a vintage racing jacket with his name embroidered on the front.

Rodney slams his hood shut in frustration. After checking his watch, he frantically grabs his skateboard out of the trunk and starts skating down the street. Suddenly, Rodney is startled by loud sirens. He hitches a ride by grabbing onto the back ladder of a hook and ladder fire truck.

Cut to a stage. A sign reads “Talent Show Auditions”. A vintage guitar sits in a stand in front of a Marshall half stack and a microphone is set up center stage. A bassist and a drummer exchange nervous glances,

repeatedly checking the wall clock. Fuzzy, the bassist, is a thin hairless rat. The drummer, Butch, is a large, muscular rat with dark grey fur.

Suddenly, Rodney dashes onto the stage and picks up the guitar. He tunes up with a few harmonics and gives the drummer a nod. They break into a smoking hot rockabilly song. They sound awesome.

Lexi and Blake are seated in the front row. Lexi taps her feet along to the music. Rodney notices her and smiles. She smiles back. Blake sees this and gives her a disapproving stare. She stops. Blake looks to the judges and winks.

30 seconds into the song, a voice over the PA system says "Thank you, we've heard enough."

The band stops playing. They look at one another totally confused by what has just happened. They hang their heads and exit the stage. Blake gives a slow, sarcastic applause. As a disappointed Rodney looks over, Lexi is noticeably embarrassed by Blake's actions.

Cut to the exterior of a large auto repair shop. The neon sign out front reads Skully's Garage. This is where Rodney lives and where the Rat-rodders all hang out. The place is decked out with trophies and racing memorabilia. There's a small recreational area in the back with a pool table and a dart board.

A rat skeleton wearing a pair of Mickey Mouse Club ears emerges from underneath one of the cars. This is Uncle Skully, a zombie rat. He helps the gang build their Rat-rods and lets the band rehearse here after hours. He also took Rodney in after his parents died when he was very young.

Uncle Skully asks Rodney how the audition went. Rodney delivers the news and expresses his frustration. He feels that he can never get ahead because he isn't an alpha. Uncle Skully consoles Rodney as he helps him fix his car. He tells Rodney that it doesn't matter what class he's from, "If you believe in yourself, you can do anything."

That evening, at Lexi's large estate, a dinner party is taking place. Lexi (short for Alexis) comes from an affluent family of albino rats. Her father, Doctor Finnian is the personal physician to the Mayor and is a member of high society. Her parents have high expectations of Lexi and pressure her to conform to their culture. It is forbidden for her to socialize with the lower class. Forced to take music lessons since she was very young, she is a classically trained cellist, but secretly listens to rock whenever she can. Her father demands the best for her and wishes for her to marry Blake, the son of the Mayor. Blake is going to medical school in the fall.

When asked about her plans for the future, Lexi tells the guests about her intention to try out for "Music Showcase" a televised music competition. Stunned by her news, her father forbids her from auditioning, because he feels that such things are reserved for the lower class. Lexi pouts over her father's decision.

Instead of comforting her, Blake decides to change the subject and asks how the plans for the new country club are coming along. Doctor Finnian responds by telling Blake that everything is proceeding

accordingly and that his suggestion of using Skully's land was brilliant. Lexi is further upset by this and asks to be excused.

While searching for a tool, Rodney discovers the foreclosure notice tucked away in Uncle Skully's tool box. He confronts Uncle Skully who tells him about the plans to level the place and build a country club for the upper class. He learns that they will lose their home unless they can pay back the loan in time. Rodney vows to help any way that he can.

After telling the band the news, Fuzzy suggests playing at the Hootenanny, a large music festival and car show celebrated by the working class. It takes place at The Ranch on the outskirts of town. Rodney questions whether they are good enough after what happened at the talent show, but is persuaded by Butch and Fuzzy.

The next day Rodney and his band mates pass out fliers for The Hootenanny. Lexi grabs a flier. Her best friend, Cassie talks her into going. In order to fit in, they disguise themselves by dyeing their fur and wearing colored contact lenses. Blake grabs a flier and throws it the trash. He reports their actions to the principal and the band is asked to stop distributing fliers on school grounds.

At the Hootenanny, a disguised Lexi and Cassie make their way to the front row for "Rodney and the Rats". The band takes the stage, but is quickly disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm from the crowd. The girls start to dance and motivate the crowd. The crowd grows and the band feeds off of the positive energy.

After the show, the girls introduce themselves with fake names, Cindy and Penny. As the band is loading their gear into their cars, Rodney asks the girls if they want to go to an after party. They agree and follow Rodney back to Skully's Garage.

Inside the garage, the girls are amazed by all of the cool racing stuff. They are checking out the trophies and are startled by Uncle Skully. Rodney introduces them. After Uncle Skully heads to bed, they ask about what happened to him. Rodney explains that he was a lab rat that got exposed to some toxic chemicals that were designed to preserve cheese.

Lexi picks up Rodney's guitar to get a better look at it. She carefully examines all of the instrument's patina. Rodney tells her that its name is "Charlene". She asks why he calls it that. He points to a poster of his idol "Jimi Ray", one of the greatest rockabilly guitarists in the world. Jimi Ray is an alpha. In the poster, he's seen playing a vintage purple sunburst guitar. He tells her that Jimi Ray's guitar is named "Scarlett". It's the Stradivarius of electric guitars and was hand made for him before he recorded his first album. Rodney continues to explain that "Charlene" was his father's guitar and that he named it after his mother.

Lexi looks at the clock and panics when she realizes how late it is. Cassie wants to stay a bit longer, so Rodney offers to give Lexi a ride home in his Rat-rod. On the way, it begins to rain. The dye in her fur starts to run. Rodney is shocked to learn that she is really Lexi. At first he is upset and calls her a poser.

Lexi apologizes for her deception and says that she really likes him. Lexi explains to Rodney that they're really a lot alike; she's a musician too and has been playing the cello since she was little.

She expresses that their social differences shouldn't keep them from seeing one another. Rodney eventually agrees and asks to see her again.

Rodney tells her about the foreclosure. She acts like this is news to her and doesn't mention her father's involvement. Lexi suggests that they try out for "Music Showcase". They could use the prize money to save their home. Rodney doesn't feel that the band is good enough. Lexi encourages him further by telling him that Jimi Ray is one of the judges. Rodney is intrigued.

The next weekend Lexi and Cassie meet up with the band at a Drive-in Diner. They are confronted by Blake and his sidekicks. Blake asks Lexi what she is doing with these losers. Butch jumps up, ready to kick some ass. Intimidated by Butch, Blake backs down and challenges Rodney to another drag race. Rodney is hesitant, but Blake sweetens the deal by putting up a \$500 prize. He accepts and they agree to meet at "The Strip", an abandoned airfield a few miles away.

The group meets at the landing strip. Blake shows up with his father's sports car. Rodney and Blake line up their cars for the quarter mile race. Lexi drops the flag and the cars take off. The start is the same as last time. Blake accelerates smoothly while the Rat-Rod struggles for traction. Rodney catches Blake and passes him. This time the temperature gauge of the Rat-Rod holds at 180. Blake fumbles through the gears and misses a shift. Rodney passes Blake and wins the race. Fuzzy waves the checkered flag at the finish line.

Blake is embarrassed. He insists that his shifter stuck and asks to race again, "Double or nothing". Rodney accepts the challenge. Before the start, Rodney's car is sabotaged by one of Blake's sidekicks. During the race, his engine explodes into a huge fireball causing him to crash into a ditch. A front wheel breaks loose, flies into the air and strikes Fuzzy in the head. Even though she knows she will be punished, Lexi immediately calls her father for help. Doctor Finnian gets there before the ambulance and saves Fuzzy's life.

Doctor Finnian scolds Lexi for lying and forbids her from seeing "those heathens" ever again and tells her that Blake will take her back if she were to apologize to him.

A few days later, Lexi sneaks out of the house to see Rodney. He is frustrated after losing all of the money. She asks why they aren't rehearsing for Music Showcase. He tells her that there's no way they can win without Fuzzy. The band desperately needs a new bassist. Lexi has an idea. She walks over to Fuzzy's bass and starts to play. She's good, really good. Butch and Rodney look at one another in amazement. They start to play along. The band is back in business.

Blake tells Lexi's parents that she is still seeing Rodney and is playing with him at Battle of the Bands. They are furious and head to the show.

At Music Showcase, Blake and his gang sneak backstage. Just before the band is about to go on, Blake destroys Rodney's guitar. Rodney is devastated. Jimi Ray witnesses the conflict and hands Rodney his "Scarlett" guitar. Jimi Ray raises his sunglasses and reveals to Rodney that he's secretly a Beta too. Jimi Ray winks and tells Rodney to go "tear it up". The band takes the stage and sounds better than ever.

As Lexi's parents witness their daughter's true passion, their anger quickly turns to pride.

While the band is on stage, Blake breaks into the safe and steals the prize money. As he makes his way through the backstage hallway to make a quick exit, he confronts Fuzzy who is still recovering from the accident and is on crutches. He knocks Fuzzy to the ground, but Fuzzy manages to whack Blake in the knees and make him trip. The money flies out of his jacket in front of Doctor Finnian and his father, the Mayor. Blake confesses that he didn't get into medical school and was going to use the money to bribe his way in.

Rodney's band wins first place and the garage is saved. The money is given to Uncle Sully to pay off the bank.

After the show, Doctor Finnian apologizes to Rodney and admits that he was wrong about him. He praises Lexi for her playing and encourages her to follow her dreams.

Inspired by Rodney, Jimi Ray takes the stage for the first time without his white colored fur, revealing to everyone that he is truly a Beta. Jimi Ray sees Rodney and winks at him. Rodney winks back.

Lexi gives her dad a big hug and then yanks him out onto the dance floor. Lexi's mom follows by offering her hand to Rodney.

Everyone, both upper and lower class, unite and celebrate together.

THE END