

CHERRY-FIRE RED

by

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**FADE IN:**

**EXT. MAIN STREET - DAWN**

A small, sleepy town. A handful of mom and pop stores flank deserted sidewalks.

A sign in a shop window reads: 'Back at 7 am.'

An automated street-lamp dims with the growing light.

A handmade flyer on a fence shows a photo of a bicycle. It reads: MISSING BIKE, \$\$ REWARD! A phone number beneath.

The faint CLICK-CLICK-CLICK of a bicycle in freewheel... A cyclist crosses an intersection, slips from view into a

**EXT. SIDE STREET - DAWN**

HOYT, 40s, cycles barefoot past picket-fenced homes, a drunken grin plastered across his weathered face.

HOYT (V.O.)  
'You ain't riding, you ain't  
living', ain't that what you said?

Hoyt's dirt encrusted feet work the pedals.

HOYT (V.O.)  
Told me that the day you took off  
my training wheels.

BRRING! He tests the bell, cackles blissfully.

HOYT (V.O.)  
Man, you lived to ride.

**EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - CREEK-SIDE - DAWN**

A leafy vista of wild flower and BIRDSONG. A stream babbles somewhere O.S.

A soggy hat flops up from a fold in the land. A pair of hands follow as a sodden, disheveled Hoyt hauls himself over the lip of a creek.

He lies on his back catching his breath. Slips a beer from his overcoat and cracks it open.

HOYT (V.O.)  
 If only that were all you lived  
 for.

He watches the beer foam over the lip...

**EXT. STREET-CORNER - DAY**

Hoyt sits on a bench. He angles a worn polaroid to the light, basking in memory.

**INSERT - POLAROID**

HOYT, 8, and 'PA', 30s, sit astride bicycles. Hoyt beams with pride atop his CHERRY-FIRE RED 'CHARIOT'. Pa looks on with an easy smile, beer in hand.

HOYT (O.S.)  
 That there was a brand new 1975  
 Wills & Braemer Chariot. Can't much  
 tell on account of the wear, but  
 that ain't no ordinary red, that's  
 Cherry-fire. Boy riding it's me,  
 man on my left was my Pa'... could  
 be he still is. Sometime that night  
 he went out for cigarettes and  
 never came back.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Hoyt swigs from a brown-bagged beer.

HOYT (CONT'D)  
 Gramps said you never was a  
 smoker...

**EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY**

TOWNSFOLK too-and-fro the sidewalk. Hoyt idles among them, a bedroll strapped beneath his tattered backpack.

HOYT (V.O.)  
 I remember the day that picture was  
 taken. You met me at the school  
 gates... we rode the long way home  
 together, you on that ole' Bledsoe  
 Creeper you won off Uncle Lowe.

He stops to watch as a FATHER, 30s, and SON, 10, pedal by.

HOYT (V.O.)  
Every kid had a Chopper. But you  
gave me a Chariot. Nothing Adam's  
side of Eden built before or since.

The Son pulls a little wheelie. The Father laughs.

Hoyt smiles with them.

HOYT (V.O.)  
Felt like the angels inflated those  
tires with a sweet breath of Heaven  
itself.

Hoyt stops to admire a Beach Cruiser parked in a bike stand.  
He sighs, mentally caressing each welded curve...

HOYT (V.O.)  
I been riding. You better know it.

**EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY**

Legs dangle from a dumpster as Hoyt rummages around inside.

HOYT (V.O.)  
Found a strawberry-tint low-rider  
in Mexico City in eighty-three.

**MOMENTS LATER**

Hoyt holds a tattered sweater up to scrutiny.

HOYT (V.O.)  
A candy-apple cruiser in French  
Canada sometime in eighty-seven.

**MOMENTS LATER**

Hoyt, dressed in the jumper, leans against the dumpster. He  
brushes the dirt from yesterday's bread and takes a bite.

In the background, a telegraph pole with several 'MISSING  
BIKE' flyers attached.

HOYT (V.O.)  
Once even a pedalo in a Reno yard  
sale. Electric crimson so said the  
tag... Yes sir, I woulda'...

**EXT. STREET-CORNER - DAY**

Hoyt slips the polaroid into a protective ziplock bag. He screws his eyes shut, thinks...

HOYT

I forget the year. I know it was a Sunday. Landlocked. What's a man to do?

He moves to take a pull on the beer, pauses to toast the space beside him -- it's occupied by a KID, 8. The kid slurps on a milkshake, wary yet intrigued by this stranger.

Hoyt squints at the waning sun.

HOYT

(to the Kid)

You know what 'El que roba bicicletas' means?

The Kid shoots him a blank look.

Hoyt shrugs. Nor does he.

**EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY**

Shadows creep across the road. A store CLERK, 20s, drags a sandwich board inside.

Through a store window: an OPEN sign flips to CLOSED.

The street-lamp flickers to life in the gathering dusk.

**HOYT'S RIDING MONTAGE**

Night. Hoyt steals through the front gate of a residence.

He tips his hat gratefully as he wheels a Townie back out.

Dawn. Hoyt threads the Townie down an alleyway. He beams, in a world of his own.

He drags himself from the creek.

His thumb CLICKS a bike's gear...

Night again. Hoyt peruses a bike rack.

And now dawn. Hoyt rides across an intersection.

He emerges from the undergrowth, beer in hand.

His thumb CLICKS up a gear...

Dawn. Hoyt coasts a side-street on a BMX. He pulls a clumsy wheelie -- loses his hat. He stops, backs up to collect it.

CLICK...

Night. A glassy-eyed Hoyt tilts at a unicycle in a front-yard. Takes a pull of beer and moves on.

Dawn. Side street: Hoyt strains behind the handle-bars of an old clunker of a bicycle. Bearings CREAK. Chain GRINDING against the cogs.

**DRUNK HOYT'S FANTASY POV:**

He looks down at the CHERRY-FIRE RED 'CHARIOT' free-wheeling beneath him... Polished rim catching the sun's first rays.

'Pa' rides ahead. He turns to offer Hoyt a fatherly smile of encouragement.

**END FANTASY POV**

BRRING-BRRING... Hoyt pumps the rusted clunker to 'catch up.' He wobbles off down the road, drunk and alone.

**EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - HILLSIDE - DAY**

First light. The town stretched out below.

Hoyt's hat flops up from some unseen void. He hauls himself into view. Lies there, winded. Pulls a beer from his coat.

HOYT (V.O.)

I looked for you, you'd better know  
it...

**EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK**

The Father and Son ride into the distance.

HOYT (V.O.)

I'll meet you on the road, I know I  
will. You ain't riding you ain't  
living.

**EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY**

Hands tape a homemade flyer to a public notice board. It shows a photo of the rusted clunker. It reads: MISSING BIKE, CASH REWARD! A phone number beneath.

A dozen or so handmade flyers surround it, all offering rewards for missing bicycles...

**FADE OUT**