

THE WHEAT KINGS

"Hockey d'Amour"

Written by

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INT. THE SMALL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

While WADE KARR and DANNY CORCORAN play computer hockey, GORDIE WINCHESTER is tearing up the room looking for his Ozzy Osbourne CD.

They are all 17. Wade is muscular and clean-cut--he looks like a bulked-up Christian Coalition member which he is. Danny is a wiry, fidgety sort with numerous nervous twitches. Wade looks out for him. Winchester is a good-looking hot head with a stylin' do and a hair trigger.

WINCHESTER

Where's my Ozzy CD? I can't weld without Ozzy. Man, I'm sick of you guys stealing my stuff.

He rummages through a shelf under the TV. He's blocking Wade and Danny's view of the screen.

WADE KARR

Get out of the way, Winchester.

DANNY CORCORAN

Yeah, move...(distracted, he loses the game)...oh, great, great! (throws down his controller) This computer's defective. I never win at this, why do I try? I give up. I'm no good at anything!

WADE KARR

(patiently waiting out Danny's lament) Go again?

DANNY CORCORAN

Yeah, okay.

Wade starts the game again.

Meanwhile, across the room, MRS.SMALL, lecherous and fiftyish, is enjoying a cocktail while watching LENNY MACINNIS, another beefy 17-year-old, do her vacuuming. He is a good-natured, enthusiastic sort, eager to please. He's also the captain of the Wheat Kings and as a Libra, feels the need to keep balance and harmony in his world. He has his two-year-old son, LENNY MACINNIS JR. in his backpack.

MRS. SMALL

Don't forget under the sofa, Lenny.
That's a good boy.

She admires his strong young arm as he lifts the sofa.

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MRS. SMALL (cont'd)

After this I've got some boxes I want you boys to move for me.

LENNY

Yes, Mrs. Small.

MRS. SMALL

They're heavy. You'll be sweating. You'll probably have to take your shirts off.

Back at the TV.

WINCHESTER

Dammit, Wade. You were listening to Ozzy in the weight room. Don't deny it.

WADE KARR

(with a hint of Christian menace) First of all, don't swear. Second, I would never lie because I'm a Christian. And third, Ozzy makes devil music, so I don't listen to it anyway. At least nothing after "Diary of a Madman" which is when he stopped progressing as an artist.

DANNY CORCORAN

Yeah, c'mon Winchester. Everyone knows he's been repeating himself since "Diary".

WINCHESTER

(offended) Don't come down on Ozzy. He's still evolving and...I don't have time for this argument again. Just give me my CD so I can go to welding class.

Lenny has finished vacuuming. He approaches the guys at the TV.

LENNY

Mrs. Small wants us to move some boxes for her. Then we gotta go meet that new coach at practice.

DANNY CORCORAN

We sure seem to move a lot of boxes around here.

MRS. SMALL

(from across the room) Work builds character.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MRS. SMALL (cont'd)

Mr. Small and I feel we owe that to you players while you live with us.

LENNY

And we appreciate that, ma'am. (to Danny)
Don't worry, when you make it to the pros
other people do this stuff for you.

Winchester makes a scoffing noise.

LENNY (cont'd)

What Winchester?

WINCHESTER

Guys, wake up. As Ozzy says we're,
"going off the rails on a crazy train!"

LENNY

What are you talking about?

WINCHESTER

We're 0-22. No fans are coming to our
games, no scouts, no nobody. And I hear
Mr. Small is having problems with the
boys over at Dakota Federal Bank. Trouble
with the books.

DANNY CORCORAN

But Mrs. Small does the books.

MRS. SMALL

(O.S.) Danny Corcoran! Time to refresh
Mrs. Small's cocktail.

The players exchange worried looks.

DANNY CORCORAN

We're goin' down, baby.

Danny obediently goes to get her glass and disappears into
the kitchen.

LENNY

But if we can just get behind this new
coach, maybe win a couple games...

WINCHESTER

(disgusted) Guys, this is Scrub River.
The end of the line. It's time to face
up to the fact that junior hockey is as
far as any of us are gonna go. That's
why I'm taking welding at Scrub River
Technical College. I'm planning for my
tomorrow, today.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WADE KARR

You sound just like their commercial.

WINCHESTER

Now I'm late and Ozzyless. (He grabs another CD) Guess I'll just have to go with some Sabbath.

He loads the CD into his Walkman and heads out the door.

WINCHESTER (cont'd)

(too loud, over music) Tell that new coach I won't be coming to practice today. I may not ever come again. And stay away from my stuff.

He storms out. Lenny looks after him, worried. Wade Karr pulls the Ozzy CD from under his seat.

WADE KARR

Lord, forgive me.

CUT TO:

INT. WHEAT PALACE ICE ARENA - LATER

DENIS LARUE, black, 35, with some serious road miles etched on his face, walks into the Wheat Palace carrying his duffle bag as music plays under.

Note: As he walks around the ice sheet and toward his office we shoot from his POV while he meets assorted rink characters. The effect is sort of like that party scene in the beginning of "The Graduate" and we should get a sense of "what the hell is this guy walking into?"

Denis looks up to see the Silo (the bar overlooking the ice sheet) Studying him with great interest are some grizzled WHEAT FARMERS and big-haired, sluttily dressed LOCAL GIRLS. One of them, the beautiful JEANINE, wears a Dairy Barn uniform.

WHEAT FARMER ONE

Oh, I don't believe this.

WHEAT FARMER TWO

Doesn't look like any hockey coach I've ever seen.

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As he walks past the zamboni garage, TOMMY KOWALCHUK, the zamboni driver, is tinkering with his machine. He hustles out to meet Denis and walks with him.

TOMMY

You like it hard and fast or watery and slow?

DENIS

Excuse me?

TOMMY

You're the new coach, right? Your ice. How do you want it?

DENIS

Uh, cold?

TOMMY

I'm Tommy Kowalchuk, zamboni driver. I can give it to you any way you want, I'm that good.

DENIS

Okay.

TOMMY

(very rapidly) Maybe you got a weak goaltender? I'll lay a pile of slush in his crease you couldn't get a snow plow through. I can do it. Or say you're playing a team with a lot of speed, you want to slow them down in the neutral zone? Whoops! I overheat my water just a smidge--suddenly they're skating in a marsh. Course you gotta be subtle about these things, and I am. I am subtle. So what do you say?

DENIS

Let me get back to you on that, Tommy.

TOMMY

Okay, coach. Good idea, feel out your charges a bit first. I'll be here. Remember, only I can deliver the goods.

Denis looks up at the Silo again. They're all still staring at him.

BROOKE

You think he knows Boyz to Men?

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CONTINUED: (2)

JEANINE

Brooke, don't be so, like, ignorant.

BROOKE

Why do Dairy Barn girls think they're so cool?

JASMANE

I know. They're all like that over there.

Denis walks on. He looks toward the ice. BERT AND JAN HAUPMANN, the flamboyant husband/wife figure skating directors are putting a pairs team through its paces. The male skater has his hands on Bert's hips.

BERT

And it's a salchow into a toe-loop and then lift! I said lift, Peter. (Peter struggles in vain to lift Bert)...Oh, you get the idea.

Jan notices Denis. She nudges Bert and they skate over, exit the ice, and walk with him.

JAN

Yoohoo!

BERT

Are you Denis LaRue, the new hockey coach?

DENIS

Yes.

BERT

I'm Bert Haupmann, this is my wife Jan, we run the figure skating program here in town.

DENIS

Nice to meet you.

BERT

We're so excited to have you here.

JAN

Good to have a splash of color in dreary old Scrub River.

BERT

And let me just say that we are such fans of your culture.

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CONTINUED: (3)

DENIS

What a relief. Some people don't like French Canadiens.

JAN

(oblivious) We always encourage our skaters to use black music in their programs.

BERT

It's true. Just last week at sectionals Moppsy Fitzhue did a wonderful short program to a Ray Charles number.

JAN

Brought down the house. We even listen to it ourselves.

BERT

Mostly the blues, in fact I'm a bit of a blues musician myself, which is ironic because I'm actually a pretty upbeat person.

JAN

Feel free if you want to pop in and sing a negro spiritual or something.

DENIS

Maybe I could bring some collard greens and we'll make an evening of it.

BERT

Wonderful idea. And now that we're all friends we were wondering if you might do us a favor...

JAN

A solid if you will. You see they've got us cramped in that little space behind the concession stand...

BERT

There's just no respect for figure skating around here.

JAN

And with our program growing so much we just thought that maybe we could switch offices...

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CONTINUED: (4)

DENIS

I don't think so, you see, I don't really like figure skating people.

The Haupmanns are stunned into silence for a moment.

WHEAT FARMER ONE

I like this guy.

Denis walks away.

JAN

(determined) I want that office, Bert.

BERT

(sly) Patience, honey lips, patience. My friends at Dakota Federal Bank tell me we won't be waiting long.

JAN

Bert Haupmann you are an absolute devil.

BERT

Kiss me quick.

CUT TO:

INT. WHEAT KING LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MURRAY SMALL, 50, pudgy, badly dressed and bland banker KEN STUMPF are meeting in one corner of the locker room while the players dress, tape their sticks and jam Ozzy in the background

KEN

Well, anyway, Mr. Small, I think you know why I'm here. The board's getting anxious.

MR. SMALL

Look, Ken, I've been doing business with you fellas at Dakota Federal for a long time. All I'm asking for is a little patience.

KEN

I realize that, but your last payment was over three months ago. Attendance is down and the way the team is playing I don't see how you're gonna...

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MR. SMALL

But that's why I just hired a new coach. There's a whole new spirit among the players. Right fellas?

Cut to Wade and Danny.

WADE AND DANNY

(without much spirit) You bet, Mr. Small.

MR. SMALL

He's got a new attitude he's bringing from the Iron League. There's a buzz in town about our team, Ken. A buzz!

KEN

Look, the board meets this afternoon. I think I can stall them for awhile but they're gonna need some results soon.

MR. SMALL

(holding a coffee mug) And we're gonna get you those results, Ken. Why, this Wednesday we've got mug night. Buy a ticket, get a free mug with Coach Denis Larue's picture. That is marketing gold. Am I right, Lenny?

LENNY

Marketing gold, Mr. Small.

KEN

I don't know. (looks at mug) Hey, this is Sydney Poitier.

MR. SMALL

Well, we didn't have Denis's photo available.

Murray hands Ken some Wheat King tickets.

MR. SMALL (cont'd)

Tell you what. You bring the boys out to the Flin Flon game tomorrow night. Let them see for themselves that the Wheat Kings are improving.

KEN

I'll see what I can do.

Ken gathers his things and heads for the door.

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CONTINUED: (2)

MR. SMALL

This new coach is gonna cause a buzz in town, Ken. A buzz! Just wait til you hear what they're gonna say...

DANNY CORCORAN

(O.S.) Holy smokes, the new coach is a darkie.

Denis Larue has walked into the room. Everything stops. The players pause mid-tape job. The chatter halts. Even Ozzy is silenced.

DANNY CORCORAN (cont'd)

Was that out loud? I'm an idiot.

DENIS

If you don't mind I prefer the term "colored boy."

A pause. No one's sure how to take that.

LENNY

That was sarcasm, right coach?

DENIS

That's right, son. Now get dressed. There's a new sheriff in town.

CUT TO:

INT. ICE RINK - LATER

Denis and the team are skating around the ice. He's barking orders at them like a stern task-master.

DENIS

Alright, let's get cones set up and do some stick-handling drills. Want to see what kind of "talent" we have. And I'm using that term loosely

LENNY

No can do, coach.

DENIS

And why's that?

LENNY

Budget cuts. Mr. Small sold our cones to Moose Jaw last week.

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