

COMEDIENNE

By

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FADE IN:

OVER BLACK:

MALE VOICE

There are two types of people in the world: Those with the potential to be funny and those with the potential to be happy. You cannot do both.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

STUDENTS drink in their cliques. Whatever's fashionable this week on display. Over priced continental lager they can't afford. They joke and laugh.

A solitary microphone stand sits center of a makeshift stage. A chalk board reads OPEN MIC NIGHT.

CHARLOTTE, 18, petrified picture of fragility, waits by the side.

Is given a thumbs up by a member of the BAR STAFF.

She takes her first step. Cautious. Nervous trepidation. All the way to the center. The noise dies down. Silence.

Charlotte scours the small crowd. Eyes fixated on her.

CHARLOTTE

How's everyone doing?

Half hearted response from the crowd.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You can do better than that.

A little louder. Nothing special.

BOB (O.S.)

Is it panto season?

Knocks Charlotte back momentarily. She brushes it off. Clearly nervous.

CHARLOTTE

I just got back from London. We got anyone here from down South?

No-one responds. Tough crowd.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Well London--

BOB (O.S.)
(mumbles)
--Opening gigs this way was lazy
even in the 80s.

Throws Charlotte off. A few heads turn--

BOB, 60s, war-torn-cynicism engraved in every wrinkle, leans at the back in the shadows. Neat malt. Probably his fifth or sixth.

Charlotte wants the ground to open up.

BOB (CONT'D)
Just move onto the time of the
month gags.

Some people snigger. Most of the crowd feel bad. Some wait for Charlotte's response. It never comes. She flees.

BOB (CONT'D)
(mumbles)
You're all welcome.

Head shaking disapproval from some onlookers.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Almost completely empty.

Charlotte's slender frame fills the entrance. Red eyes. There would be smeared mascara if she bothered with make-up.

Bob's still there, though, clinging to his chaser.

Charlotte marches up.

CHARLOTTE
What gives you the right to do
that? To say stuff like that?

Bob doesn't bat an eyelid.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I'm talking to you.

BOB
What's up? You never been heckled
before?

CHARLOTTE
That was my first time.

BOB
I don't believe no-one ever heckled
you before.

CHARLOTTE
It was my first time up there.

BOB
Oh really--

Bob begins to move. Rigid.

BOB (CONT'D)
--Well let me tell you, girl,
you're a natural.

Creaks past her to the exit.

EXT. COMEDY CLUB- NIGHT

Charlotte chases Bob.

CHARLOTTE
You know what you are?

Bob brushes his hand through his receding hairline.

BOB
I've been trying to work that out
the last sixty years.

CHARLOTTE
(sarcastically)
I don't believe you're only sixty.

BOB
You really are funny.

And he's off.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bare essentials. Plastic chairs and table. Small TV. Blanket on the floor. Mold forming in the corner of the walls. All too white.

Photos of comics decorate one wall like a hall of fame of who's who in the world of funny - TOMMY COOPER, BILLY CONNOLLY, MORECAMBE AND WISE, MONTY PYTHON and MORE.

Charlotte enters. Pan in hand. Drops herself down onto her makeshift bed.

Tucks into what's ever in the pan. Suppose it looks like food. Sort of.

Charlotte's face suggests otherwise. Tosses the pan down. Flops back. Despondent.

INT. GREASY SPOON CAFE - DAY

A greasy spoon English café: Checkered, stained table cloths; PEOPLE eating full English breakfasts and drinking large cups of tea out of hideously designed mugs; A young WAITRESS overworked and under paid struggling to keep up with orders.

Bob's got a lovely window seat. Slurping from his mug, watching passersby. One by one. Is that a SALMON COLORED SHIRT?

BOB
Went to an all boys school.

One hand on the pram the other on her cigarette, TEENAGE MUM.

BOB (CONT'D)
Skipped school.

TRACK SUIT BOTTOMS IN HIS SOCKS.

BOB (CONT'D)
What's a school?

The English MICKEY ROURKE with his arm around a BARELY PUBESCENT BLONDE.

BOB (CONT'D)
Still hangs around outside schools.

Two MIDDLE AGED WOMEN watch on at Bob with intrigue. Bob notices. Busted.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN
Don't do us.

Bob stands. Throws that coffee down. Catches himself in a mirror. Flicks his thinning hair. Frowns at his reflection.

Those eyes still gawking at him.

MIDDLE AGED WOMAN (CONT'D)
And you?

Bob raises an eyebrow.

BOB
Now that would be telling.

And with that, he's gone.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

HOARDS of school kids (11-16) pile inside the school grounds. Pushing. Shoving. Texting. Loving.

Across the street, Charlotte watches. Eyes on one in particular--

DANIEL (12), mop of hair as it comes, just your average kid, Charlotte's brother--

Out of sight she watches. Agonizes.

Daniel disappears inside, amidst the rabble.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Some COLLEGE PRICK, you'll wish someone loved you as much as he loves himself, mid routine, laying into an--

AUDIENCE MEMBER, plump and sheepish.

Bob's up front.

COLLEGE PRICK
I should have guessed you were a
dinner lady. Well you look like you
ate all the dinners. And the lady.

He laughs. No one else does. Never a good sign.

College Prick's on Bob now--

COLLEGE PRICK (CONT'D)
And you, what do you do for a
living?

BOB
I heckle comedians.

Stumps him. Bob enjoys his malt.

COLLEGE PRICK
Oh really, and how do you find--

BOB
--But there's nothing funny about
you, so don't worry.

Prick thinks about it. Recoils onto the next.

COLLEGE PRICK
And you, what do you do for a
living?

BOB
Well wait a minute. Come back. I'll
give you something easy.

Has prick's attention again.

BOB (CONT'D)
 I work for the council. I'm a
 librarian. No wait, I'm a traffic
 warden. Even you can do something
 with that.

COLLEGE PRICK
 You're a drunk.

BOB
 No, I'm a traffic warden. But I can
 say I'm a drunk if you want? Do you
 have a response for that?

COLLEGE PRICK
 Seriously, man, what's your
 problem?

BOB
 You asked me what I did for a
 living.

DENNIS (O.S.)
 Bob--

DENNIS, 60s, part of the furniture, this is all he knows,
 directs Bob out.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
 -- Let's go.

Bob empties his drink down his throat.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S KITCHEN - DAY

The inside of a cupboard. Old Mother Hubbard was better
 stocked up. Charlotte rests her head on the door. Tired.

Grabs at the only thing in there to eat. To the oven. Flicks
 it on. It's in another language. Looks German. Presses
 buttons, struggling to make sense.

Rests her head on the oven now. Same sense of fatigue.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

A POSTER promotes a popular comic's up coming tour.
 "Britain's best comic" reads the poster.

Bob scowls at it.

A young STUDENT doodles at the other end of the bus stop.

BOB
 Can I borrow your pen?

She's taken back somewhat. Glances around. No one else there.

STUDENT

Sure.

She hands him it. Bob obliges and approaches the poster--

"He's shit", now added to the poster.

BOB

Thank you.

Hands the pen back. Makes himself comfy again.

STUDENT

He's actually not that bad. I
laughed a couple of times.

Bob ponders. Offers his hand out for the pen. The student accepts.

Bob heads to the poster.

"He's actually not that bad. I laughed a couple of times -
'The Girl in the bus stop'", now added to the list of quotes.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Not much happening tonight.

Charlotte contemplates at the bar. Zoned out on the 1970's decor. No drink.

Dennis multi tasks, rummaging through a box of junk behind the bar and studying Charlotte.

DENNIS

We need to decorate, I know.

Nothing.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

You ain't the first to bail mid
act, y'know.

CHARLOTTE

You know the guy... the guy that
heckled... the other night.

Dennis pulls out something from the box. An OLD PROGRAMME - A
YOUNG BOB WORKING THE STAGE, ON THE FRONT, slides it to her.

DENNIS

That guy.

Charlotte takes it. Surprises her.

CHARLOTTE
He's a comic?

DENNIS
Once upon a time. I'll tell you
something about that night--

Dennis taps the programme.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
--We had to shut early cause' the
police came down... Noise
complaints... Only one noise people
were making that night, though.
Sound all comics dream-a' hearing.

Charlotte hands it back.

CHARLOTTE
That man is a bitter, nasty--

DENNIS
--The guy who did that to you,
isn't the guy on the front-a' that
programme anymore.

CHARLOTTE
What do you mean?

DENNIS
There are two things in this world
that'll turn one-a' these things
black.

Dennis bangs his heart.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
Cancer sticks... and living the
life of a stand up comic. Bob ain't
ever smoked a cigarette in his
life.

Charlotte rolls away.

DENNIS (CONT'D)
Don't take it personally.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A school photo - DANIEL. Charlotte clings to it. Both hands.
Studiously. Holds it up to the wall opposite the photos of
all the comics. Positioning. Hangs it dead center.

Takes a step back. Proud. It sits alone. Charlotte affords a
smile at her brother.

The bulb blows. Leaves Charlotte in darkness. An exasperated breath follows.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charlotte stands on a camping chair, center of the room. Fiddling with a light bulb. Struggling. Wobbling.

The bulb won't go in. She groans. Writhes around at it some more. Frustration. Jumps down.

Her brother's photo falls off the wall. Sums up Charlotte's mood.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Bob slouches on a chair at the back of the club. The usual crowd enjoy their drinks.

Charlotte drops down opposite Bob. Awkward.

CHARLOTTE

You going to insult the next person
up as well?

BOB

If they're as bad as you. Now girl--

CHARLOTTE

--Charlotte.

BOB

Girl, you wanna' watch wannabe'
comedians stand up there and tell
you things they've observed while
standing in line at the post
office, be my guest.

CHARLOTTE

If you don't like their acts why do
you come?

Bob shakes his head.

BOB

Move.

She has no intention just yet.

BOB (CONT'D)

What, is it an apology you want?

CHARLOTTE

Cause you'd be capable?

BOB

If you want to sit and chat, make an appointment. Hell, we'll go for coffee Saturday morning. I'll bring you along to feed the ducks with me on a Wednesday afternoon, but right now... Go away.

CHARLOTTE

No.

BOB

Want some advice? Don't try and make small talk with old comics; young comics remind us of what we used to look like.

CHARLOTTE

I have hair, I don't believe you used to.

And she's off.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A torch light dances about the living room. Fixates on the photo of Daniel briefly. Then down onto the make shift bed.

Torch light points to the ceiling. Dead still. Resting on the ground.

Charlotte flops to the floor. Wraps herself in her blanket. It's flimsy.

She curls into a ball. Flicks the light off. Darkness.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bob tosses bread towards a small army of ducks.

A FATHER and DAUGHTER (5) hand in hand, stroll by. She loves the ducks. In awe of them surrounding Bob and his bread.

Bob spots the daughter staring. Offers her his last slice of bread, catching her Father's attention in the process.

The Father nods, it's okay.

The daughter takes the bread. Thrilled. Skips off tossing crumbs. For a moment, a look of content from Bob.

Charlotte sneaks up, dropping herself down alongside Bob. He takes it in a second.

BOB

Of all the duck ponds, in all the parks, in all the world, she walks into mine.

CHARLOTTE

What?

BOB

You know I wasn't being serious about spending my Wednesday afternoons with you.

Charlotte doesn't react. Irritates Bob.

BOB (CONT'D)

You see that one at the back--

Points towards a duck.

BOB (CONT'D)

--He quacks at everything. I reckon even you have a chance with that one.

Still nothing.

BOB (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

CHARLOTTE

I want you to help me put together a routine.

Bob's really frowning now.

BOB

No chance.

CHARLOTTE

Why?

BOB

Cause I've seen this movie a dozen times. The old mentor always dies right before the end.

CHARLOTTE

It's cute you still make jokes.

BOB

Scathing.

CHARLOTTE

You inspired me.

BOB

And I thought you were the quiet
and sheepish type.

CHARLOTTE

I treat people how they treat me.

BOB

Oh so you think I deserve it?

Bob's up.

CHARLOTTE

Don't you?

Grabs a PASSERBY.

BOB

Want to see something funny?

Gesticulates to Charlotte.

BOB (CONT'D)

This girl here. She's something
else.

(to Charlotte)

Go on, make her laugh.

Charlotte's awkward. So too the passerby.

PASSERBY

Erm, sorry, what...

BOB

You like to laugh right, well this
girl... she's about to blow your
mind.

CHARLOTTE

What?

BOB

You're a comedienne aren't you?
Show this woman how funny you are.

Silence. Bob's not bothered either way. Charlotte's
embarrassed. Pleases Bob.

BOB (CONT'D)

She really is funny, but--

(whispers)

You wouldn't want to be there when
the laughter stops.

PASSERBY

Can I--

Bob instructs the Passerby on.

Charlotte, firmly seated, almost cowering back. Humiliated.

BOB

You're not a comedienne.

Bob's smug. Heads off.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Is that a yes then?

This girl doesn't give up that easy. Bob swivels round. Not as smug.

BOB

Why do you want to do stand up so much?

CHARLOTTE

What's wrong with wanting to make people laugh?

BOB

Look girl, there are two types of people in the world: Those with the potential to be funny and those with the potential to be happy. You cannot do both. Go try be happy.