"A Peasant's Concert" by Jimmy Dangles

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FADE IN:

A PEASANT'S CONCERT: A SHORT FILM

SOMEWHAT LOOSELY BASED ON A TRUE STORY...

SMALL TOWN OUTSIDE OF LONDON, 1871

EXT. MARKETPLACE

PAUL, a well dressed affluent young man of his early twenties walks through the marketplace arm in arm with his young wife MATILDA. The two happily take in the smells of the fresh produce displayed in the open-air stands and absorb the sights of a bustling town. Ahead is CLIVE, a short man looking too old for his 36 years, wearing a casual suit and holding an exquisitely crafted umbrella. Clive hands his payment to the owner of a fruit stand and receives a large melon, to which he smiles thankfully before turning around to face the Paul and Matilda, who are approaching.

> CLIVE Paul! What a surprise to see you on such a wonderful day! How long has it been?

The young man is delighted to see an old friend.

PAUL

Sir Clive Thompson? What a treat it is to see you again! The last I recall you were to embark on an expedition to India. I assume you found what you were searching for?

CLIVE

Yes, yes indeed! And quite an adventure it was to say the least, but that is a story for another day when circumstances afford us the time. Now, this lovely young lady must be the sister I have heard so much of. Karen, I presume?

PAUL

Matilda, and she is my wife of three months.

Clive extends his courtesies to the lovely young woman.

# CLIVE

I was not aware of a marriage, and so deeply apologize for the simple mistake, Mrs. Hawthorne. The pleasure is all mine.

# MATILDA

It is a pleasure to finally meet such a great friend of Paul's as well.

#### CLIVE

My friend, if I may fulfill my curiosities, what did become of Ms. Perkins? Such a tall and handsome young woman she was, and so knowledgeable of the classics. Forgive me if I may find delight in thy petty leftovers, but is she presently available?

#### PAUL

'Tis always the duty of a good friend to provide his sincerest blessings, however I can not answer on her availability. What I do know, and it may trouble you to learn of this, is that Ms. Perkins returned to her family home in Paris no more than two months prior to my first meeting Matilda. As it was, Ms. Perkins and I did not share love, only trite and often painful fornication. But my dearest Matilda, for whom I shall dedicate my life and all my strongest affections, has given me the warmth of love that I had been It is searching for all my years. also true that what she lacks in stature and wit by comparison more than fills her lofty brassiere.

#### CLIVE

Indeed! I must say I am thrilled by your happiness, but it pains my soul that I could not be present at your wedding. So much has happened over the last thirteen months! I will that we set a date for another meeting, perhaps at a time when I will be at ease to tell the story of my adventures in India. (MORE)

# CLIVE (CONT'D)

I shall bake my famous crumb cake, and perhaps the new Mrs. Hawthorne might bake a favorite cake of her own?

PAUL

This all sounds terrific, but I must warn you that Matilda's cooking can at times be best described as, well, beastly, so it is I who do most of the cooking. But I assure you my friend, what she lacks in culinary expertise and experience in common household chores, she more than makes up with the awesome girth of her bosom. I must admit that if only the orphanages held such magnificent instruments there would no longer be hunger among children, for her mountainous but supple breasts would be capable of feeding forty or fifty urchins at a time. Forgive me if I stray from the subject, but how does tomorrow evening sound to you?

#### CLIVE

Tomorrow evening would be perfect if not for a strange sequence of events that befell me just two days past. It saddens me greatly to relate that my beloved father has passed away. I received word yesterday and must leave for home immediately, but I shall return in a week or so, and when I do I shall visit you both, hopefully in better spirits.

# PAUL

Oh, what terrible news this is! My heart now fills with anguish and sympathy, for your father was a great man both in the field of science and in character. He was a true gentleman and will surely be missed by any and all whom were fortunate enough to make his acquaintance. You must know that all of your family will be in our prayers tonight as I am confident your grief is unbearable.

# CLIVE

Your condolences are much appreciated, but I fear I now have to leave in order to reach home by nightfall. There is one more thing before I go however. Have you heard of 'The Howling Montagues'?

#### PAUL

I can not say I have. Who are they?

# CLIVE

They are a musical group that has apparently become quite popular amongst the peasants and even some of the noblest men in London. It is supposedly a unique new style, something the admirers of which refer to as "speed metal." I happen to possess two tickets for tonight's show but since I will be unable to attend, I would be most delighted if you and your amiable bride would go in my place.

Matilda gives Paul her puppy dog face.

# MATILDA

Could we?

### PAUL

For you dear? Of course. But please tell me Clive, what is this "speed metal?"

Clive smiles and removes two tickets from his pocket, placing them in Paul's hands.

#### CLIVE

I'm actually not sure. You see, I had heard of it before but no one I spoke to knew how to describe it. I had no idea the band would be playing in town, but luckily just last week a beggar approached me asking if I'd like to buy tickets off him. Now of course I was skeptical considering they were probably stolen...

#### MATILDA

Oh no...

# CLIVE

...but since he was offering such a magnificent price I decided to take a chance and see for myself what it is that everyone is raving about.

#### PAUL

Well, I give you my word that I shall do my best to describe it to you the next time we meet.

# CLIVE

Splendid. I must leave you now, but I promise to return in close to a week's time.

PAUL

Goodbye, dear friend. We shall see you soon. Send our best wishes and condolences to your sweet mother and sister!

CLIVE

This I will. I bid you adieu.

Paul and Matilda wave goodbye as Clive unties his horse. Clive mounts and waves farewell before kicking the animal into motion. As the couple watch Clive ride away, GEORGE, a small boy about eight years of age and covered in the filth of poverty, approaches with an empty cup in his hands.

#### GEORGE

Pardon me kind sir, but have you anything to spare a poor child?

PAUL Anything to spare? Ha! Be gone, you filthy maggot!

GEORGE Please kind sir, it's my moth...

PAUL

I said be gone!

George, disheartened, turns to walk away but instead makes contact with the chest of his father, MR. DANLEY, who is standing behind him. Mr. Danley is ragged, worse off than the child, with sunken eyes and a face that looks to be little more than loose skin draped over a skull. Mr. Danley kneels before Paul, placing one hand upon George's shoulders for support.

# MR. DANLEY

I apologize for asking sir, but I would be forever grateful if you could spare even the smallest amount...

#### PAUL

Who is this now? Another beggar? Pathetic! If a small boy in poverty is not enough to awaken my pity, then you definitely can not.

# MR. DANLEY

Please, kind sir, I...

PAUL

My advice to you and those like you is to find an occupation!

# MR. DANLEY

I have an occupation, but I can not work for...

#### PAUL

You are a beggar! Exchanging money for pity is hardly an occupation!

## MR. DANLEY

I am a servant, sir, but I am unable to work for my beloved wife is gravely ill with the fever. Ι pleaded with my master for her to stay in his home but he would not let her. I begged him to allow her a bed in an old barn, and I told him that I would work without pay as long as she stayed there, but he would not accept her sickness on his property. You must understand, my wife is everything to me and a loving mother to my only son. I chose her life over the wishes of my master and was therefore cast out onto the streets. She has not food nor clean water. Please sir, find it in your heart to take pity on us!

# PAUL

Enough! You sicken me! I wish death upon your wife! Maybe when you find yourself free of burdens you may again return to work like the rest of us! Now be gone, both of you! Mr. Danley and George turn away and retreat. Paul and Matilda continue down the street. Matilda turns to her husband.

> MATILDA What a poor family! I demand to know why you could not sympathize with that man!

Paul starts laughing.

PAUL My darling, it is all a ruse.

MATILDA This is no joke! This is no trick! That poor soul's wife will die partly because of your lack of generosity!

PAUL Maybe so. Still, I highly doubt a cheap bottle of wine will cure her ailments.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF LONDON

Paul whips the horses while Matilda sits inside the carriage. The two pass a bottle of liquor back and forth, laughing as they draw nearer to the center of the city.

> MATILDA How much further to the concert do you suppose?

PAUL Not much further.

MATILDA

We must stop soon my love, for it is imperative that I see a powder room in haste.

PAUL

How bad is it, my dear? Can you afford to wait a bit longer until we reach our destination?

# MATILDA

I shall try with all my might, but I fear that if the wicked excrement inside me continues to churn as it has been, I will in time soil both my dress and the fine leather of the seats.

We must not have that. There is a small service station a bit up the road. Here we shall stop and ask the attendant for the typical wooden-handled key, with which you shall use to enter the lavatory.

#### MATILDA

'Tis true that I normally would cringe at the thought of opening my anus in such a place, with all those ghastly coin-operated contraceptive machines hanging on the wall and the like, but I do fear I am in dire need.

# PAUL

So be it. We shall stop the carriage there, but make certain that you do not read what is written on the walls inside, for it is legend that carvings on service station stalls are the spells of evil witches.

# MATILDA

I shall not read those blasphemous words.

# PAUL

Splendid.

The two sit in silence for awhile as they make their way through the woods and toward the outskirts of the city.

PAUL

My darling, I was just thinking, would you find it more comfortable to stop in these woods instead, so that you may expel your demons and refresh yourself with gentle oak leaves?

#### MATILDA

I can not! A lady of my distinction would never entertain the idea.

PAUL

Are you positive? You must know that I would never tell a soul.

MATILDA I am as sure as the stars sparkle the heavens.

The two continue to ride on in silence for a short while.

PAUL

Dearest Matilda, I say this only out of curiosity, but what do you suppose you would do if we were deep in the forests, without another town for miles, yet you were stuck in the same situation as now?

MATILDA I would hold it, of course.

PAUL

Are you sure? If there were not a water closet for miles each way, and you needed one as badly as you do now, you would hold it?

MATILDA Must we really discuss this at such a time?

PAUL Very well. I apologize for my curiosity and refuse to discuss it further.

The two continue on in silence again.

MATILDA Please hurry my love, I have to go right now.

Paul cracks the whips to make the horses move faster.

PAUL It's just up ahead here...

As Matilda's discomfort increases, she twists around in her seat and groans.

MATILDA Paul, I have to go...

PAUL

Just a minute now...

Paul cracks the whips again.

Yah! Come on!

Matilda twists around some more.

MATILDA Paaaaauuuuulllll.....

EXT. LONDON

Paul and Matilda now enter the city borders.

# PAUL

Almost there now...

Matilda groans even louder.

PAUL

Ha! Look ahead now, to the right! Do you see the service station approaching?

## MATILDA

Oh, thank God!

Paul drives the carriage to the service station and stops. He gets out and attempts to help Matilda down like a gentleman, but she grabs his arm and propels herself out of the carriage. She hits the ground in a brisk walk and heads for the door. Paul ties the horses and follows.

INT. SERVICE STATION

Paul enters the service station as Matilda stands before the counter, clearly in an argument with the attendant.

MATILDA This is horrible Paul! This devilish man refuses to let me use the lavatory!

PAUL

Excuse me sir, but would you mind terribly if my wife uses your commode? It is a matter of urgency, for you see inside of her is a putrid chaos threatening to soil her clothes. This quite distresses her, and quite frankly frightens me as well, so I pray you let her into your lavatory to kindly refresh herself.

#### ATTENDANT

I am sorry sir, but that I can not do.

# PAUL

Then think of it this way if you will. Each piece of excrement within her body is like a tiny brown ship caught up in a torrid storm of foul urine pouring from the vile heavens above. And the brave little maggots and ringworms inhabiting these unholy boats, whom for the purpose of this analogy we shall call sailors and deck hands, cling stubbornly to each vessel for dear life. Such horror must it be for these poor souls, casting curses at their Intestinal Gods over such fortune, as their rickety turd-ships violently fling from wave to wave, diving under the surface just long enough to almost drown, then thrust above water again as if to deny them both the beauty of life and the mercy of death. Will you not take pity on these poor travelers? Will you not allow this wicked mass which impregnates the bowels of my beloved wife to be deposited into a friendly reservoir? Please, I beg of you, allow her to perch upon your humble toilet so that she may empty her being of this unsightly soup.

# ATTENDANT

I give my sympathy to your wife as well as other fellow travelers who have approached me with these same concerns before. However, it ills me to say that is impossible for your wife to take a dump in my toilet, for no toilet do I have.

#### PAUL

What? Surely this can not be! 'Tis true that our one and only Almighty God hath never created a service station without, at minimum, one lavatory!

## ATTENDANT

I am sorry to distress you sir, but it is so.

Then may I ask where it is that you so routinely unfasten your trousers when nature so silently screams through your stomach?

# ATTENDANT

I assure you this situation of which you speak has never occurred, for I make positive that my business is done at home before I embark on my journey to work.

# PAUL

You lie! You lie! Do not try to deceive me into believing that you have your bowel movements marked on your pocket watch! You sicken me! Come darling, we shall venture to the restaurant across the street!

Paul takes Matilda by the arm and walks her quickly outside.

EXT. LONDON

Paul and Matilda jog across the street to the take out restaurant. Paul opens the door of the restaurant, and Matilda bolts inside.

INT. TAKE-OUT RESTAURANT

Matilda rushes to the counter. Paul follows.

MATILDA Pardon me, miss, but I am in dire need of a powder room. To which direction is it?

HOST I apologize miss, but we do not offer public toilets.

PAUL

What?

HOST

I am sorry, ma'am.

MATILDA I really have to go bad! Please miss, have a heart!

HOST I am sorry, but is forbidden. PAUL Then to where must she travel for a commode? I know of no such place. PAUL This is madness!

HOST I do apologize, but 'tis our policy.

PAUL Then I shall pay you! How high is the price?

HOST I understand your frustration, sir, but truly there is no price for such a service.

PAUL Unbelievable! I demand to speak with the governor!

HOST 'Tis I who supervises this operation, and I assure you nothing can be done.

PAUL What has this world come to?!

Paul grabs Matilda by the arm.

PAUL Come love, we shall find you an evacuation spot yet!

Paul and Matilda leave the restaurant.

EXT. LONDON

Paul stops outside the take-out restaurant and looks both ways for another place to go. He takes a few steps from the restaurant to try and read the sign of the building down the street, and as he does, Matilda takes off running toward the service station. Paul studies the sign down the street and realizes that the building is a theatre. He turns to tell Matilda but she is gone. Paul peers through the glass of the take-out restaurant, but she is not in there. He looks back toward the gas station and sees Matilda preparing to squat in an open parking lot.

# N00000000!

Paul dashes across the street, cutting in front of several moving carriages and pushing through a small group of openmouthed onlookers. As Matilda begins to pull down her pants and squat to the delight of a developing crowd, Paul shoots into the picture and tackles Matilda to the ground. A large sigh erupts.

> MATILDA What is wrong with you?!

PAUL I can't let you do this!

MATILDA

I need to go now!

PAUL

My God woman, not in front of all these people! Hurry, there is a theater just down the way!

Paul takes Matilda's hand and lifts her up, then takes off down the street to the theater. Matilda is waddling behind as fast as she can.

# INT. THEATRE

Paul and Matilda hurry through the doors and up to the counter where a WOMAN stands.

PAUL Pardon me miss, but my wife needs to use your water closet!

MATILDA Please! I can not wait any longer!

WOMAN I'm sorry, but 'tis no place for a resting bum.

MATILDA Do not take me as a fool! Direct my wife to your squathouse forthwith!

WOMAN

I'm sorry, we...

Just then Mr. Danley and George appear behind Paul and Matilda. Mr. Danley steps forward and confronts Paul.

# MR. DANLEY I beg your pardon sir...

Paul and Matilda turn around shocked at the sight of the spurned beggars.

#### MR. DANLEY

I beg your pardon sir, but I have a small shack behind this building, and while it isn't much more than a few boards nailed together, we do have a large pail that when pressed against the cheeks of a firm buttocks creates a reliable seal. Your wife will surely find it uncomfortable, but it is discreet.

Matilda, trying as hard as she can not to squirm, smiles affectionately at Mr. Danley.

MATILDA I shall never find a more comfortable outhouse in my life.

# EXT. SHACK

A relieved Matilda stands next to Paul outside of the shack, opposite Mr. Danley and George.

PAUL I honestly can not thank you enough for your generosity, Mr...

# MR. DANLEY

Danley, Victor Danley, and this is my son George. Really, it is no trouble.

PAUL

Mr. Danley, I am Paul Hawthorne and this is my wife Matilda.

The former strangers exchange pleasantries.

# PAUL

I must sincerely apologize for my rudeness earlier. You have proven to be a true gentleman and a righteous soul, for had I been in your place, I doubt even I would have allowed such a terrible person into my home.

#### MR. DANLEY

I accept your apology, but you must understand that I did not think ill of you for the things you said to me today, as everything you said was true. I am a lowly beggar.

Paul opens his wallet and takes out some money. He starts to hand it to Mr. Danley, but he pushes Paul's hand away.

MR. DANLEY I can not accept this.

MATILDA Why not? You are in need!

MR. DANLEY

This is true, but I will not accept payment for a kind favor.

PAUL

I'm not paying you for a favor; I want to make up for my actions earlier. Matilda believed your story but I must confess I did not. I had unreasonably assumed you would spend these funds on liquor, and had I known better, I would have given you this long before.

#### MR. DANLEY

Mr. Danley, when God gave man the gift of fire, He knew it would be used for cooking and warmth in the same way it would be used to kill His faithful and burn down His churches. Yet still, God gave man fire. When one gives to another, it is not because of a story nor does it have anything to do with what end the donation will be used towards. Charity comes from the heart. It is up to you to decide if and when to give, however I do hope that in the future when you see another man in such a state as I, I hope you that you can look beyond his appearance and still see a man.

Paul puts the money back in his pocket.

PAUL You are a better man than I. MR. DANLEY That I am not, for my wife is dying and I can not provide for her as you can.

MATILDA Can we meet her?

MR. DANLEY I would not risk exposing you to her sickness...

PAUL It is nothing. We insist.

MR. DANLEY Very well then.

Mr. Danley and George step into the shack. Mr. Danley motions for Paul and Matilda to follow.

INT. SHACK

Mr. Danley and George lead Paul and Matilda to a bed where the REBECCA is asleep. Mr. Danley touches her forehead to awaken her.

MR. DANLEY Rebecca? Are you awake?

REBECCA Victor? Who are these people? What's that smell?

MR. DANLEY I'd like to introduce you to a nice couple I met today. Rebecca, meet Mr. and Mrs. Hawthorne.

Rebecca sits up and smiles at them.

REBECCA Nice to meet you both.

# MATILDA

Your husband is a very generous man. I had to use the bathroom and no one around here would let me. Had we not happened upon such a delightful fellow, I'm afraid to consider what would have happened.

# REBECCA

He has always been a good man, and it pleases me to hear of your good fortune. I apologize for the state of our home...

# MATILDA

No apology is necessary. I am thankful to be here.

Matilda looks around the room. She spots a poster hanging from a board reading "The Howling Montagues."

#### MATILDA

Are you an admirer of "The Howling Montagues?"

#### REBECCA

Oh, very much so! My husband, he tries so hard, had tickets to the show tonight that he had purchased for our anniversary over one month ago, but our situation became so poor that I told him to sell them. He didn't want to of course, but the poor man hadn't eaten in three days and as much as I'd adore the experience, I couldn't bare seeing him hungry.

Matilda and Paul stare at each other in amazement.

MATILDA

How would you like to go to the concert tonight?

# REBECCA

Ha! Tickets sold out in one day! Victor had to sleep outside waiting for the box office to open, but then again by the looks of things, what else is new?

Mr. Danley, Rebecca, Paul, Matilda, and George all share a hearty laugh.

MATILDA Do you have the tickets, Paul?

Paul reaches into his coat and pulls out two tickets. He hands them to Rebecca. She examines them, then nearly leaps from her bed.

#### REBECCA

Where did you get those ?!

# MATILDA

As fate would have it, it was a friend of ours who unknowingly purchased these tickets from your husband.

# REBECCA

This is incredible!

PAUL

The show is about to begin, so surely you can not expect to arrive promptly by walking. However we would be quite pleased to give you a ride in our carriage.

# REBECCA

I can not accept this...

#### MATILDA

These tickets were for me, and I assure you it would only cause me displeasure if I were present and you were not.

Rebecca looks to Mr. Danley for approval. Mr. Danley gives in.

MR. DANLEY You go with Mrs. Danley. After her ordeal tonight, she deserves it.

REBECCA What will you do?

PAUL

I think I speak for the both of us when I say Mr. Danley and I will find a way to enjoy ourselves.

INT. CONCERT HALL

Matilda and Rebecca are topless and having the most fun they've ever had, singing and dancing along to "The Howling Montagues." One of the band members is spitting fake blood onto the crowd.

EXT. SHACK, AGAINST THEATER WALL

George is devouring a loaf of bread. Paul and Mr. Danley are slouched against the wall of the theatre, laughing hysterically as they each suck down a bottle of cheap wine.

FADE OUT