

INTERVIEW WITH A VENTRILOQUIST

By  
Ian J Courter

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[ian.j.courter@gmail.com](mailto:ian.j.courter@gmail.com)

FADE IN:

INT. GREEN ROOM - DAY

Cluttered with cheap commercial furniture. Well-worn chairs and a small table are set up for a face-to-face interview. Producer MAGGIE (40) finishes setting up a camera on a tripod and anxiously checks her watch.

Reporter LORRAINE SANCHEZ (40) sits down in a chair as she reads from a notepad. She takes a sip from a WATER BOTTLE and places it on the table.

Maggie walks up and touches up Lorraine's nose with a brush.

MAGGIE

You alright? You seem outta sorts.

LORRAINE

Yea. Just kinda bummed.

Maggie pauses.

MAGGIE

Don't take it personally. With your drive and talent, you could make anchor next time.

Lorraine smiles slightly.

LORRAINE

Thanks, Maggie. I just don't want to end up doing the farm report.

MAGGIE

Won't happen unless you royally mess up. They just felt you needed more field time.

LORRAINE

Doing what? Interviews in places...

She glances around with a slight sneer.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

... like this.

MAGGIE

(suddenly clinical)  
That's what they're worried about.  
(MORE)

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You need to rein in your body language and facial expressions. People pick up on that and respond in kind... Hey, he's here.

Ventriloquist LARRY PUTZAC (45), unkempt and looking like a bum, gives them a quizzical look as he sits down opposite Lorraine. Maggie rushes to pin a lavalier microphone on him.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You're late. Your agent requested this interview, so the least you could do is be on-time.

Larry shrugs, completely unconcerned.

NEWS CAMERA POV

Maggie's splayed hand covers the frame and curls fingers as she counts down.

MAGGIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

In four, three...

Two fingers. One finger points to Lorraine and withdraws O.S. Lorraine forces a smile.

LORRAINE

Hi, I'm Lorraine Sanchez and welcome to "Up-and-Coming." Tonight we have ventriloquist Larry... Putzac.  
(to Larry)  
Did I pronounce that right?

RESUME SCENE

INTERCUT among the three.

Larry nods and smiles slightly.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

Mr. Putzac remains in character before each show, so he will only speak as a ventriloquist.

Lorraine moves into her questions with Larry.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

So, tell us how you became a ventriloquist?

Larry speaks in a normal voice, but doesn't move his lips.

LARRY

Well, Lori...

LORRAINE

(overlapping)

I prefer to be called...

Lorraine scowls slightly as Larry continues.

LARRY

(overlapping)

... As a kid, I would get my brother in trouble by making it sound like he cussed... a lot.

LORRAINE

Cussed?

LARRY

Seriously? I made it sound like he swore... cursed...

Maggie palms her forehead.

LORRAINE

I know what it means!

LARRY

(continuing)

For a while Mom thought he had tourettes or was possessed, but eventually she caught on. Boy, I got into big trouble.

LORRAINE

So, you can throw your voice?

LARRY

Throw my voice? What am I, a baseball pitcher? I project my voice.

LORRAINE

Right. So how do you do that?

Larry's voice suddenly seems to come from Lorraine.

LARRY

(mimicking her)

I'm Lori Sanchez and I like jello wrestling mememememe...

LORRAINE

Stop that!

LARRY

Hey, you asked.

Lorraine closes her eyes as if counting backwards. After a moment, she regains her composure.

LORRAINE

So, where do you get your material?

LARRY

From everyday life...

(leering at her)

... like people who irritate me.

Lorraine scowls at him.

LORRAINE

Today's not a good day. So, don't even think about it, puppet boy.

Maggie looks WORRIED and shakes her head slightly.

LARRY

I don't use puppets in my routine. Only members of the audience.

LORRAINE

How do you do that?

LARRY

Projection.

LORRAINE

I got that. I mean, how do you use them as props?

LARRY

Well, in case you're wondering, I don't stick my hand up their...

LORRAINE

Whoa, forget I asked! Uh, who's your inspiration? Jeff Dunham?

Larry waves a hand in dismissal.

LARRY

Amateur! Can Dunham do this?

Larry snatches Lorraine's water off the table. She REACTS.

LORRAINE

Hey. That's my...!

Larry drinks while singing.

LARRY

I make my living off the Evening News. Just give me something-something I can use...

Larry dribbles down his front and stops.

LORRAINE

(droll)

Better than you, apparently.

Larry wipes his face and brushes his shirt with his hand.

LARRY

Okay. Can you do better?

LORRAINE

Spill water on myself? Sure. My three year old can do that.

Maggie suppresses a laugh.

LARRY

I mean...

LORRAINE

I know what you meant. So, aside from projecting your voice, aren't you supposed to be funny too?

LARRY

Aren't you supposed to be an anchor by now? You're what, forty-five? What's the matter, Lori? Can't cut it, so you got this gig?

Maggie REACTS with horror.

LORRAINE

(frosty)

Ever been beaten up by a girl, putz?

Maggie puts a knuckle between her teeth.

LARRY

I'd like to see you try, Lori.

LORRAINE

That's Lorraine, putz.

LARRY

Putzac.

Maggie signs to Lorraine for calm and gives Larry a glare. Lorraine dismisses him with a contemptuous wave.

LORRAINE

Whatever. So, when are your next shows?

(muttering)

Not that anyone cares.

LARRY

Well, my next one is in an hour, but you'd know that if you'd been paying attention.

LORRAINE

Great. I'm sure it'll be a full house... all four tables and a couple of barstools.

LARRY

This isn't some dive. It's a real comedy club.

LORRAINE

(scoffing)

Yea, right. It's not exactly Gotham or Dangerfield's.

Larry gives her a blank stare.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

ECU of Larry and Lorraine in turn glaring at each other.

LARRY

(mimicking Lorraine)

Mememememe.

Maggie mouths "no."

NEWS CAMERA POV

Lorraine slings the notepad aside as her right eye twitches.

LORRAINE

That's it. You're mine, little man!

Lorraine LEAPS O.S. as the camera VIEW spins to the floor.

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
Lorraine, no!

LORRAINE (O.S.)  
Say hello to my little friends!

There is a WHACK O.S.

LARRY (O.S.)  
Ow! Not the face! Ah!

LORRAINE (O.S.)  
Why aren't you throwing your voice  
now, Putz?!

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
Let him go, Lorraine!

O.S., Larry screams like a girl, then makes a CHOKING sound.

CUT TO:

SUPERIMPOSE on BLACK SCREEN: "Two Months Later."

EXT. FARM - DAY

Lorraine looks bored as she finishes a live report.

LORRAINE  
... and that's how the new  
regulations will likely affect  
one local farmer. I'm Lorraine  
Sanchez... Channel 10 News.

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
And... we're clear.

FADE OUT:

THE END