

"CHARLES'S BAND"

by

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INT. HOUSE. DAY.

An elderly CHARLES sits alone in his empty lounge room. The clock on the wall can be heard ticking. The mantel shelf houses plentiful memorabilia including a photo of Charles and his late wife MARY. Steady PUSH IN to photo, to initiate:

FLASHBACK TO:

Series of shots showing early days.

INT. BOOKSTORE. DAY

A YOUNG CHARLES and YOUNG MARY are flirtatious and in love. They are teasing and tickling each other. Mary notices "Catcher in the Rye" in the shelves.

CHARLES

(Playfully)

Hurry up Mary, we've been here for two hours!

MARY

Oh look Charles!

(She opens the book)

CHARLES

(Reading)

I was half in love with her by the time we sat down.

He starts tickling Mary

CHARLES

(Continues)

That's the thing about girls. Every time they do something pretty, even if they're not much to look at, or even if they're sort of stupid, you fall half in love with them, and then you never know where the hell you are.

(Mary is laughing by this stage)

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE. LATE AFTERNOON.

Young Charles and Young Mary are lying side-by-side on the grass in the late afternoon sunlight

CHARLES

(Staring at clouds)

Look, it's a rabbit!

MARY

That looks nothing like a rabbit!
It's more like a...

Charles cuts Mary off mid-sentence and starts kissing her passionately. He then begins unbuttoning Mary's dress to imply they make love.

INT. CHURCH. DAY

Charles and Mary's wedding is taking place. Mary slides a ring onto Charles's finger as she looks deeply into his eyes.

CUT TO PRESENT

INT. HOUSE. EARLY EVENING / EXT. GARDEN

The clock hits exactly 5pm. Charles gets up from chair, and cuts a rose from his rosebush outside. He visits Mary's grave.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETARY. EARLY EVENING

Charles walks from his car up to the grave. He lays the red rose on the stone and stands there for a moment.

CHARLES

Goodnight, Mary.

INT. HOUSE. NIGHT.

Charles goes to bedroom, climbs into bed and switches off the lamp.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOUSE. MORNING

Charles wakes with a jolt and instinctively looks next to him. The other side of the bed is empty.

INT. CAFÉ. DAY.

Charles is entering the CAFÉ and accidentally bumps into SUSAN, a woman not too much younger than himself.

CHARLES

Oh, I'm sorry, love.

SUSAN

Don't be. (Extending hand). Susan.

CHARLES
(Taken aback)
Oh, er... Charles.
(Shakes hands with Susan) (beat)
Goodbye, then.

Charles moves to his usual table in the corner of the café. Susan also sits on her own in another part of the room. A waitress takes Charles's order and he sits, reading the paper. Susan wanders over after a few moments.

SUSAN
You're here alone.
(gesturing to chair)
May I?

CHARLES
(Uncomfortable)
Sure.

Awkward silence.

SUSAN
Widower?

CHARLES
Two years. You knew?

SUSAN
(Leans closer)
People our age don't have coffee
alone.

Charles notices that the book Susan has been reading is in fact "The Catcher in the Rye." The waiter arrives and pours coffee into cups. Awkward silence.

SUSAN
(Vacantly)
My husband died five years ago.

CHARLES
(Ignoring her)
We used to go to the hill together on
a Sunday. Today is Sunday.

SUSAN
Shhh.
(Referencing "Catcher in the
Rye")
Don't tell me anything. You'll only
start missing her.

CHARLES

I never stopped.
Well, I'll see you later.

INT. HOUSE. DAY.

Charles has just returned home and is hanging up his coat, when he notices a piece of paper sticking out of the pocket. It has Susan's number written on it. He looks puzzled.

He calls the number. It rings at least six to eight times before Susan picks up.

SUSAN

Yes?

CHARLES

Susan. It's Charles, we met this...
(beat)
Yes. Er... My wife died.

Strong emotion is evident on Charles' face.

The clock strikes 5pm again.

EXT. GARDEN. EARLY EVENING.

Charles goes out the back to his garden where he cuts another rose from the bushes.

EXT. CEMETARY. EARLY EVENING.

Charles lays the rose on the grave.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. CAFÉ. DAY.

Susan enters and walks right up to Charles' table. She begins to speak but Charles ignores her and abruptly leaves. He heads back to the hillside.

EXT. HILLSIDE. DAY.

Charles sits alone at the nostalgic spot. A tear wells in his eye.

INT. LOUNGEROOM. EVENING.

Charles sits again in his chair as the clock strikes 5pm. He rises and hesitates. Instead of going outside to the garden, he picks up the phone and dials Susan's number. She picks up.

CHARLES

I was half in love with her by the time we sat down.

MARY

(Pause)

That's the thing about girls.

CHARLES

I'm sorry I walked away. Let me buy you a coffee? Tomorrow?

(Smiles)

Ok.

Charles's gazes at the photo on the mantel, lingering. He turns the photo over and slowly slides off his wedding ring.

THE END