

Coming Up Roses  
by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - MANHOLE - DAY

CHARLIE, 30, muscled, tattoos, gentle face, slides a cast-iron manhole cover aside as if it's light as an ice-cream wafer. GORDIE, 40, brings up the rear.

The men make their way down an internal ladder through the sludge and darkness of the -

UNDERGROUND SEWAGE TUNNELS

They talk as they walk.

CHARLIE

If it's a tree root again we're gonna' need The Giant down here.

GORDIE

Huh? Oh, right, yeah. Sorry... I was thinking about that dating advice you wanted. Thing is, girls love men who love dogs. It means you're committed, you're vulnerable. Next time, talk about your dog.

CHARLIE

I don't have a dog. And, I wasn't that bad... Was I?

THE SOUND OF A SHRILL WHISTLE (PRE LAP)

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. DANCE HALL - SPEED DATING EVENT - NIGHT

A WOMAN MC, in her 40s, blows hard on a sports whistle. Candles and roses adorn tables for two. Dated disco music plays as men and women hover expectantly.

MC

Okay, gentleman. No hogging extra time. Move on to the next eligible bachelorette.

Charlie sits in front of a doe-eyed brunette woman, STELLA, 29. She's the most beautiful girl he's ever laid eyes on.

Charlie and Stella just stare at one another. Charlie drums his fingers on the table nervously.

CHARLIE

Interesting fun fact. Everyone flushes. It's a fact of life. Cause everyone poops. Think of the most esteemed person in the world -

Stella looks a little nonplussed at the suggestion.

CHARLIE

- Go on.

STELLA

Okay... Um, the Dalai Lama.

CHARLIE

Haha. Excellent choice. Then you've got your Queen of England, your Barack Obama, now close your eyes and imagine them with their pants down around their ankles, sitting on the bog.

STELLA

Eww.

CHARLIE

I know, right? I mean think of it as the great equalizer. Everyone at some point is just a regular Joe.

STELLA

What is it you do?

CHARLIE

You got your cops, your firefighters, all national heroes. And then my line of work. I'm in disease prevention - cholera, typhoid, now a thing of the past.

STELLA

You're a doctor?

CHARLIE

Ah, no. You could say my number one business is taking care of everyone else's number two business.

STELLA

Huh?

CHARLIE  
I'm in sanitation. Unlike some jobs  
there's never a downturn. Haha.

Charlie wiggles his eyebrows comically. Disappointment shows  
on Stella's face.

CHARLIE  
What about you?

STELLA  
I'm a beautician.

CHARLIE  
Ah well, you sure are a beauty.  
Expect you'd know a bit about deep  
cleansing yourself, then?

STELLA  
Deep-tissue facials we call them.

CHARLIE  
Ah-ha. Right, so you'd be au-fait  
with micro-beads and the potential  
dangers they pose to our sewer  
systems. What you want to use are  
the biodegradable exfoliants like  
sea salt, crushed shells, sugar,  
sand, and ground bark.

STELLA  
Ground bark?

CHARLIE  
You could be a pioneer.

An uncomfortable silence. The MC blows her whistle.

MC  
Two minutes, people!

CHARLIE  
At home, do you use flushable  
wipes? Cause they're not you know.  
Ever seen a fatberg? Most people  
think whatever goes down the S-bend  
just disappears like magic but...

THE SOUND OF THE FINAL WHISTLE (PRE LAP)

BACK TO SCENE

Charlie face-palms his forehead.

CHARLIE  
Verbal diarrhea.

GORDIE  
You think?

CHARLIE  
Yeah. Needed to put a trap on it.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

MC  
Time to move on, gentlemen.

Charlie and Stella rise from their chairs, almost butt heads.  
Charlie extends his hand.

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry I'm such a klutz, I've  
really enjoyed meeting you...

Stella puts her hand forward then quickly retracts it.

BACK TO SCENE

CHARLIE  
She couldn't even bring herself to  
shake my hand.

GORDIE  
Can't blame her really. You were  
talking shit.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, go on a date with me, 'urine'  
for a treat.

Charlie and Gordie climb out of the man-hole into the glare  
of blinding daylight. For a moment Charlie thinks he's seeing  
things. He stares across the road.

GORDIE  
What?

CHARLIE  
Ten o'clock, gorgeous girl by the  
Starbucks, next to the big  
chiselled guy showing off his  
dalmatian.

GORDIE  
Hate to say I told you so.  
(whistles in appreciation)  
Ooh, dear...

CHARLIE  
What?

GORDIE  
Casanova's dog just left his  
calling-card. If you wanna be a  
hero... Ooh, whoops! I can't watch.

Charlie takes off as fast as his legs will carry him.

EXT. STREET - CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Stella's stiletto heel slides in dog excrement, she's about to go over when Charlie swoops in, steadies her.

A look of surprise from Stella as their eyes meet, then hold.

CHARLIE  
It's okay, I got ya.

EXT. STREET - PARK BENCH - LATER

Charlie returns with Stella's shoe, wet, but clean.

CHARLIE  
I went for a job at a fire-hydrant  
factory once, couldn't get a park.

Stella giggles, looks deep into Charlie's eyes as he bends on one knee, slides her shoe effortlessly onto her foot.

CHARLIE  
Who would have thought, eh? A  
perfect fit. Hey listen, about the  
other night...

STELLA  
No worries. It's all coming up  
roses now, in'it?

FADE OUT.