Coming Up Roses

by

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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.