

"GENTLEMEN' S SPECIAL"

By

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FADE IN:

INT. HIZnHAIRZ UNISEX HAIRDRESSING SALON - DAY

The salon is a typical small town hairdresser's owned by SHELLEY. It has two reclining salon chairs and the usual paraphernalia associated with the job. It hasn't been renovated for 20 years but is clean and retains a certain kitsch charm. Several notices adorn the window including a sign offering a: 'GENTLEMEN'S SPECIAL: A FIVER ON WEDS'.

There are no customers at the moment and SHELLEY and her friend/employee ANITA are talking in a small back room over a cup of tea. ANITA is clearly upset, her face tear-stained and red. SHELLEY is trying to reason with her, though not wholly sympathetic.

ANITA

...I don't know what to do any more.

SHELLEY

Well, it's not the first time, is it? You know what he's like. He gets upset about something, it rattles around in that empty head of his and then he takes it out on you. He's a moron.

ANITA

But it's all my fault.

SHELLEY

No it isn't! Stop blaming yourself. That's what he wants. Look, I'm tired of seeing you like this. You'll kiss and make up as always and then a couple of weeks later you'll be here again, crying your eyes out. It's killing you babe. It has to stop.

ANITA

I know you're right...but I can't.

SHELLEY

Well, you've got to do something...

The bell of the salon door rings. Shelley looks out from the back room and sees a man in his seventies waiting patiently. He is wearing an overcoat, cap and glasses and has a moustache. He is carrying a reusable shopping bag.

SHELLEY

(to ANITA)

I'll go. You get yourself sorted out
and go home. I'll manage.

Shelley greets the old man, takes his cap and overcoat and hangs them on the coat stand. She helps him to the barber's chair, throws the cape over him and secures it round his neck.

SHELLEY

Yes, my love. What will it be? The
Gentlemen's Special?

As this is happening we hear a phone ring in the back room and ANITA answer it.

ANITA

(calling from the back room)

Shell! It's Brian!

SHELLEY

Tell him I'll call him back.

ANITA

He says it can't wait!

SHELLEY

(to the old man)

Sorry love. I won't be long.

SHELLEY goes into the back room and takes the phone. After a few seconds talking to BRIAN she realizes the call will take longer than expected.

SHELLEY

Neet, it's about the house. Could you
start and I'll take over.

ANITA is still clearly upset, trying hard to keep herself together. She wipes her eyes, takes a deep breath and goes into the salon. As she stands behind the man in the chair

she notices his hands rapidly moving up and down between his legs under the cape. She backs off in disgust.

ANITA
YOU DIRTY BASTARD!

Suddenly livid, she grabs a hair dryer and hits him repeatedly across the side of the head.

ANITA
You bastard! You filthy old pervert!
You're all the same!

The old man, restricted by the cape, offers little resistance and cries out for help but after the third blow his head flops forward and to the side, motionless and silent.

SHELLEY rushes from the back room.

SHELLEY
Neeta! Stop! Christ Almighty.
Stop it!

She runs toward ANITA and wrestles the hairdryer from her.

SHELLEY
What the hell have you done!

ANITA is breathing heavily; her eyes raging. SHELLEY dashes to the door, locks it, turns the sign to 'CLOSED' and pulls all the blinds. She moves to ANITA and for several moments stands silently staring at the old man, not quite comprehending what has happened.

SHELLEY
Anita.

ANITA does not respond. She is clearly in a daze. SHELLEY, trying to hold herself together, but outwardly calm, shakes ANITA firmly by the shoulders.

SHELLEY
Anita. Look at me. Look at me, Anita.

Slowly ANITA looks up and begins to realise what has happened.

ANITA

Oh my God! What have I done!

SHELLEY checks the man's pulse, first on the wrist and then on the neck.

ANITA

Call an ambulance!

SHELLEY

It's too late.

ANITA

No, no, it can't be. Are you sure?
Check again.

SHELLEY

He's dead, Neet.

ANITA

Oh fuck. No.

SHELLEY

Christ, Neet. Why!?

ANITA

I don't know. I just saw red. He was...

SHELLEY

...he was what?

ANITA

Playing with himself.

SHELLEY

Playing with himself? What do you mean?

ANITA

You know. Jerking off. Under the cape. I just lost it.

Hesitantly, SHELLEY looks down and starts to lift the cape near the man's groin. She peers under it, uncertain of what she might see. She drops it in surprise and looks

concernedly at ANITA. Slowly, she reaches under the cape and withdraws her hand holding... a pair of spectacles.

SHELLEY

He was cleaning his glasses, Neet.

ANITA

Oh...

Silence. The two women stare at each other. Their world has collapsed in seconds.

Suddenly there is an impatient tapping on the window. A woman's voice is heard outside.

WOMAN

Hello! Is anybody there? Helloooo!

She rattles the door handle. SHELLEY is startled.

SHELLEY

Oh fuck. What time is it? Oh, shit.
It's Mrs Anderson. Come for her cut
and blow.

SHELLEY goes to the window, peers through the venetian blind and shouts through the closed window, thinking quickly on the spot.

SHELLEY

Is that you Mrs Anderson? Sorry love.
We're closed. We've um...a...um a burst
pipe. It's just happened. Water
everywhere.

WOMAN

(unseen)
But...my hair.

SHELLEY

You'll have to come back next week
Mrs Anderson. You'll get your feet
wet. Next week. Bye!

(to ANITA)

Christ. We'd better hurry up. If she
saw anything we're screwed.

ANITA

(desperate)

I'm sorry Shell. So sorry. What am I going to do? Please don't call the police. Shell. Please don't call the police.

SHELLEY

Shut up will you. I'm trying to think. Oh FUCK! Ok. Ok. Ok. First, we've got to move the body out of sight and clean up.

ANITA

Then what?

SHELLEY

I don't know yet. But we haven't much time.

They go to move the body, SHELLEY grabbing beneath the old man's shoulders; ANITA, shaking, holding the feet. Just as they start to move him, the door is rattled again, followed by a tap on the window.

SHELLEY

Fuck. WE'RE CLOSED!

MAN'S VOICE

(unseen)

Shell. It's me. I've got the revised drawings from the architect. Why are you closed?

The two women dump the body back in the chair. SHELLEY cautiously opens the door for BRIAN.

BRIAN

Everything's sorted. The lads can start filling the foundations on Friday.

SHELLEY pulls BRIAN inside.

BRIAN

What's going on?

BRIAN sees the man slumped in the chair.

BRIAN
Is he alright?

SHELLEY
(incredulous)
Er...no Brian. He's not alright. Look
at him.

BRIAN
What the hell happened?

SHELLEY
Neet. She attacked him.

BRIAN
Attacked him...!? What the hell for?
Have you called the police?

ANITA
No, please Brian, no!

SHELLEY
We can't Brian. She's already been
done for GBH. She'll have no chance.

BRIAN
So bloody what. She's killed him
hasn't she? She's a liability. Always
has been. I've told you time and time
again to get rid of her...

SHELLEY
She's my friend Brian!

BRIAN
Some bloody friend! It's time she
took responsibility. I'm not having
you been done as an accessory as
well.

He takes a proper look at the body.

BRIAN
Oh bloody hell! It's old Ted Jenkins.

SHELLEY

You know him?

BRIAN

I did some plastering work on his house a few months ago. Fuck! She's killed one of my customers.

SHELLEY

You've got to help us. Please Brian.

BRIAN

I can't.

SHELLEY

Please. For me.

BRIAN is caught in two minds. He feels his head is about to explode but he loves SHELLEY too much to fail her.

BRIAN

OK.OK. Christ! Ted Jenkins. Nice old chap. I gave him one of your promotional flyers.

SHELLEY

Does he live alone?

BRIAN

Yea. On Cedar Road. He's a widower.

SHELLEY

Come on. We've got to get rid of the body. Where's your van?

BRIAN

It's parked round the corner. Oh no. Come on Shell. You're not serious. It's a bloody stupid idea. If the cops suspect the slightest thing, forensics will be all over it. That's assuming no one sees us casually carrying a body into the back of it in broad daylight in the first place. Either way I'm done for. We're all done for.

ANITA

You said he lives alone. We wait till night and then dump the body in the canal. Nobody will miss him.

BRIAN

(wanting to strangle ANITA)
For fuck's sake! Are you out of your mind!? No. We have to call the police. This is just ridiculous.

SHELLEY

I've told you. She needs help.

BRIAN

Yeah. Psychiatric fucking help. Not: let's-hide-the-body-and-talk-about-this-in-an-English-way-over-a-nice-cup-of-tea kind of help.

SHELLEY

Well, she wouldn't have gone berserk if it hadn't been for that dickhead boyfriend of hers. I'm not letting her go down for this. She's been through enough. I've got an idea. Shut up and take your trousers off.

EXT. THE STREET - DAY

It is now late afternoon and the light is fading. A handful of shoppers pass by but the street is generally quiet and no one takes much notice of the salon. The door to the salon opens and an old man comes out wearing a cap and overcoat and carrying a re-usable shopping bag. He pauses, then starts to walk cautiously, almost shuffling, to the end of the high street, all the while keeping his head low. Twenty metres from the salon and across the road, is a surveillance camera. He pauses, his back turned to the camera, before continuing and turning left out of view. Only now we see it is not in fact a man. It is SHELLEY wearing the old man's spectacles and sporting a makeshift moustache.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SALON - DAY

BRIAN

I still think it should be me. She's hardly bloody convincing. This is crazy.

ANITA

(trying to reassure him)

It's not your fault. His trousers were too small for you.

BRIAN

No, it's your bloody fault. So shut up or you'll be going the same way as Ted. I'm going to get some stuff. Keep the door locked.

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET - DAY

Finally SHELLEY arrives at the front door of a well-kept semi-detached house. She hesitates and nervously looks from side to side to see if anyone is watching. She stands poised to go in when we HEAR a car passing. The driver slows down, sounds his horn and shouts a greeting.

DRIVER

(unseen)

Alright Ted!

SHELLEY half turns and acknowledges the driver with a quick wave. She catches her breath, nervous but relieved that 'Ted' has been seen entering his home. She takes a pair of rubber gloves from her pocket and puts them on. She then takes out the door key, lifts her glasses so she can see the keyhole clearly and enters the house.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SALON - DAY

Ted's body lies trouser-less on some plastic sheeting BRIAN has laid out on the floor. He wraps the body in the

plastic and secures it from head to toe with duct tape. TED now lies there like a plasticized mummy. ANITA stops wiping down the chair and mirror to look on mortified.

BRIAN

Don't stand there like a wet
lettuce. Put the kettle on. I need a
cup of tea.

EXT. TED'S BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

The back door opens and SHELLEY's head pokes round the corner, carefully checking to see if the coast is clear. Convinced no one is watching, she steps outside. Discretion is now of the essence. She removes the coat and cap to reveal her own pullover underneath. She crouches to take off the oversized shoes and then slips out of Ted's trousers. She takes her own shoes and trousers out of the shopping bag and puts them on. She breathes a sigh of relief. Next, she takes a large carrier bag from the inside pocket of the coat, puts the discarded shoes and rolled up trousers in it followed by Ted's glasses. She leans in through the door, carefully placing TED's shopping bag near the table. Phew. Nearly finished! She carefully locks the door, puts the keys in the carrier bag followed by her rubber gloves, hugs it to her chest, takes one last look around and heads for the street.

She's lucky. No one is around. She moves quickly, aware that she might be conspicuous without a coat on this chilly evening. She takes her phone from her trouser pocket and makes a call.

EXT. A SIDE STREET NEAR THE SALON - NIGHT

A medium-sized van is parked up: 'BRIAN BODDY-BUILDER' is emblazoned on either side. SHELLEY approaches cautiously, swiftly opens the back door, throws in the bag and jumps in herself, pulling the door closed behind her.

Moments later, BRIAN appears, jumps in the driver's seat and drives the van round to the front of the salon and reverses up to the salon door. As he opens the back doors of the van, ANITA opens the door to the salon and SHELLEY slips smoothly inside, unseen from the street.

INT. THE SALON - NIGHT

ANITA jumps at SHELLEY nearly knocking her over in her desperation to hug her.

SHELLEY
Alright Neet, knock it off. Just remember. I never left, right!

ANITA
Shell!

SHELLEY
What?

ANITA
Your moustache.

SHELLEY
Oh shit!

SHELLEY rips off the moustache with a wince managing to put it in her pocket before BRIAN notices.

BRIAN
Any problems?

SHELLEY
Er...no. Nothing. I changed in his garden. Didn't want to leave any hairs or anything on the furniture.

BRIAN
Good thinking. Come on. We need to go.

BRIAN, SHELLEY and ANITA pick up Ted's body in unison and bundle it into the back of the van. BRIAN slams the van doors shut.

BLACKOUT.

FADE IN

INT. THE SALON - DAY

It is a few days later and the salon is looking refreshed. SHELLEY is closing the door behind a customer.

SHELLEY

Bye, Mrs Anderson. Mind how you go and sorry again for last week.

It's been a busy day and she exhales contentedly, happy to have a breather. She closes the door and starts to tidy up. ANITA is in the back room.

ANITA

(unseen)

Fancy a cuppa?

SHELLEY

Best thing you've said all day!

SHELLEY is sweeping up hair when the salon doorbell rings. She spins round to see in front of her a senior gentleman, mid 60s, wearing a cap and overcoat and sporting a moustache. He is carrying a newspaper. SHELLEY's heart practically jumps out of her mouth; her jaw hits the floor. Almost simultaneously, ANITA comes out of the back room carrying Shelley's tea and nearly drops it in astonishment as she sees the old man.

ANITA

Oh shit. Sorry. I'll get a cloth.

SHELLEY

No. I'll do it. You see to the gentleman.

SHELLEY grabs the mug from a disconcerted ANITA and glares at her as if to say 'pull yourself together' before disappearing into the back room.

ANITA

Er...Sorry. Please take a seat Mr... er, er.

BERNARD

It's Bernard. No formalities. Just Bernard.

BERNARD takes off his cap and coat, hangs them up and moves toward the empty chair, casually tossing his newspaper near the wash basin. The headline '**Concern Grows For Missing Pensioner**' is clearly visible. He sits down and ANITA throws the cape around him. His demeanour is casual and genial throughout.

BERNARD

(sniffing)

Ah. Fresh paint. I love the smell of fresh paint. Some folks don't, you know.

ANITA

Oh...er...yes. Really?

BERNARD

Yes. My late wife couldn't stand it. Gave her headaches.

ANITA

Oh. That's nice. I mean...er...

BERNARD

Been decorating have you?

SHELLEY emerges from the back room sensing ANITA is struggling to make small talk.

SHELLEY

(interrupting abruptly)

...yes, we had quite a bit of water damage last week so we thought we'd use the opportunity to freshen the place up a little. We just reopened today.

BERNARD

Yes. It's amazing what you can cover up with a lick of paint.

SHELLEY is not sure how to take that last remark. Meanwhile, ANITA has spotted the headline and has turned pale. BERNARD watches her through the mirror.

BERNARD

It's a bad job about that pensioner.

ANITA

Er...yes. Any news?

BERNARD picks up the paper and scans the article. SHELLEY and ANITA are suddenly on a knife edge again.

BERNARD

Reported missing two days now. No idea of his whereabouts...no sign of violence or robbery blah, blah. Police frogmen will search the canal tomorrow. Must have fallen in. Silly old sod...or else he was pushed.

ANITA

Pushed? You mean killed?

BERNARD

Well, no one's safe nowadays. Even round here. Especially old folk.

SHELLEY

I know. What's the world coming to, eh? I don't feel safe myself sometimes.

BERNARD

Anyway, we'll find out soon enough. If or when they find his body.

SHELLEY

(eager to change the subject)
Would you like a cup of tea Bernard?

BERNARD

Ah, thanks very much. White. No sugar. I'm sweet enough as my dear wife used to say.

SHELLEY laughs politely and goes into the back room.

BERNARD

But you know, I don't think they'll
find him in the canal.

ANITA

Oh? Why not?

BERNARD

Just a hunch.

ANITA

You think he's still alive?

BERNARD

No.

ANITA

Oh.

BERNARD takes off his glasses, breathes on the lenses and
wipes them clean with the end of the cape before putting
them back on. ANITA gasps and steps backward; the
coincidence too much for her to handle. She is becoming
more and more uneasy; her agitation more and more difficult
to contain.

SHELLEY re-enters with BERNARD's tea and hands it to him.
BERNARD continues to talk between sips.

SHELLEY

Here you are love. How come we've
never seen you before Bernard?

BERNARD

Thanks. Oh, I live on the other side
of town. On Kilham Road. I saw one of
your flyers in the corner shop.

SHELLEY

Kilham Road?

BERNARD

Yes. You know it?

SHELLEY

Er...yes. Yes I do.

BERNARD

Anyway, I don't come into town much these days so I thought it a good excuse to get out. Especially with all the noise.

SHELLEY

Noise?

BERNARD

Yes. They're building a new house on the street. Too much noise for my liking. Lorries coming and going; vans, cement mixers. You name it.

SHELLEY and ANITA are looking at each other, worried as to where this conversation is heading.

BERNARD

I even saw a van up there the other night. God knows what they were doing so late. Delivering something by the look of it. Like a carpet. Bit early for that I thought. They haven't even got the foundations in yet. Still, the dark can play funny tricks on your eyes, can't it?

SHELLEY is increasingly concerned, unsure what to do or say. ANITA is shaking, her knuckles white as she squeezes the scissors. Does this old man really know what happened?

SHELLEY

What is it you want Bernard?

BERNARD

Me? Oh I just came in for the Gentlemen's Special.

BERNARD looks at SHELLEY through the mirror, amused by her discomfort. Their eyes lock as BERNARD smiles ambiguously.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREET- DAY

We see the hairdresser's salon from across the street; passers-by walk casually past as if on any normal day of the week. Through the semi-open blinds on the window we can make out three figures, two women and a man, in conversation. One of the women seems particularly agitated and her arm seems to be slowly rising; the metal of the scissors in her hand glinting in the light. Suddenly, the blinds are pulled and a hand carefully reaches through slats and turns a sign to 'CLOSED'.

FADE OUT.