

THE INDENTED

II

Proboscis

By
J W Bowe

Contact details:

Serious Biscuits.

admin@seriousbiscuits.com

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SCENE 1:

Ralph is wandering down a canal path towards his friend Charlie Edward Adams, who lives on a house boat named The Bayonet. Charlie sees him on a slow approach.

Charlie: Ralphio! Good to see you, don't rush... I'll help you get onboard.

Ralph: Much obliged, Charlie. Its hot this afternoon, I think even my stick is sweating, it wants to give way.

Charlie: Well let's not let that happen. I just looked at the thermometer; 31 °c coming down on you. Here, take the bench. I saw your Mum earlier, bought that planter and the begonias from her. If she ever needs someone to man that stall for her, I'd love to do it.

Ralph takes a seat at the rear of the boat and steadies himself.

Ralph: You're about ready for employment again, then?

Charlie: I don't know, but I think that I need to think like I am, then that way it may happen without my noticing. Anyway, where have my manners gone? You look like someone on the inside of a hot day without any gin; ice and lime?

Ralph: Yes please. How did you smuggle a freezer onboard?

Charlie: I didn't but it feels better to offer it, doesn't it? I have got tonic in the fridge though. We could go for a spin up the waterway later, if you like?

Ralph: Let's let the gin settle this leg first. Is it wobbly when the boat gets going?

Charlie: She's The Bayonet, Ralph; not just some other house boat. She used to be my grandmothers, and they're both as steady as one another. Let's not though if you'd rather, I couldn't

live with the incursion of being to blame for you losing another pin. I don't really like being to blame for you losing the first one.

Ralph: You weren't, but you will be for not bringing my tonic.

Charlie: Thank you for coming, Ralph. You were always my first real friend, and the last one left... that's the gin talking already. I have had one but there is another bottle, hold on...

Charlie heads down the steps and into the boat and reappears with two large glasses of gin, tonic and lime. He passes one to Ralph.

Ralph: Thank you, Charlie. Why did we never think to take gin to school when we used to hide in the woods while everyone else was cross country running?

Charlie: Come on, Ralph, we did have that cheap tobacco, and the cabbage leaf! Got some more today actually, just for a bit of old times sake.

Ralph: And no running around... just like old times. No wonder everyone hated us back in school.

Charlie: They didn't really hate you, Ralph. Well maybe they did, but it was only because you didn't hate me. Remember Caroline Steadwhick? I couldn't be bothered for the whole thing but I'd always follow her arse for the first mile of that cross country, at least till we met up by the stile. Do you remember her?

Ralph: Yeah of course. She was one of the few girls that I got to talk to, probably because she wanted to hang out with you.

Charlie: Well I was a sophisticate...

Ralph: Nah you weren't, just your parents had a Bentley...

Charlie: I picked her up in that one night. Well Cedric did, my uncle. I was in the back; we took her to the theatre. I don't know

what I was thinking... I certainly never voted for theatre before, ever ever...

Ralph: Was she impressed?

Charlie: Of course, she was from a housing estate. I fingered her on the passenger seat during the interval.

Ralph: In front of Cedric!?

Charlie: Nah, he'd have fucked off to the pub for a few Cognac's by that point. I assume he must have because he let me drive her back.

Ralph: I had no idea...

Charlie: It would have been cheap to have told you. You never want to upset your vanguard at high school.

Ralph: I didn't fancy her that much Charlie, you're OK... What the fuck were you doing at that school, you clearly didn't belong there.

Charlie: You know how that happened; you helped me spend some of the money!

Ralph: So they really gave you that?

Charlie: My parents? Yup; all that private school money they'd saved, all mine on my sixteenth. I think they wanted to make a gesture. And they never liked the other parents at the private schools so they saved it from when I left primary.

Ralph: You'd have got beaten up less if you hadn't taken it.

Charlie: But then what girls would the Bentley have impressed? I don't mean that, Ralph... you'd still have a working pair of legs if I hadn't taken the money. That's always been the problem... would you like another tonic? Mines drying up.

SCENE 2:

The afternoon rolls into evening. Ralph holds his notebook while Charlie rolls up many large skin papers.

Ralph: *Nothing...?* Even by this point?

Charlie: Nothing; not that'll make any sense for your note book anyway. I can remember buying that Volvo estate that you came with me to test drive, then I went on my way the next day.

Ralph: And then nothing for the next three years?

Charlie: I wish I could help you with that, Ralph. I mean, I know I went west to begin with, did a bit of cheese rolling in Somerset. Then it all goes blank as far as I can piece it. I think I might have been running away from what happened between you, me, that cunt Martin Withers, and his cricket bat. Or at least I've thought it might be the case. You shouldn't have kept wading in to help me at school; I did never mind having a fight.

Ralph: Maybe I didn't mind them either. And Martin Withers *was* a cunt. Anyway I'm not going to let you keep ransacking things back to that fight. It's done, Charlie; my leg is done and I'm done with thinking of it.

Charlie: Shall I put a record on?

Ralph: No, let me tell you about that day that you phoned me up to tell me you were in London after being missing three years.

Charlie: No... I don't like to think about London any more. It only made my parents more distant when I came back from there empty handed.

Ralph: But you were so happy when you phoned.

Charlie: It was a good job I'd landed, I had to tell someone.

Native; It was a great kids show I thought, had a positive message. Plus I did know enough about horticulture to present my bit in the garden.

Ralph: That's what you were so happy about as I remember it.

Charlie: That; and there had probably just been a quick meeting with a happy merchant before I picked up the receiver and dialled. I think I'm right saying that your Mum answered the phone. Fucking hell; she was more excited about the job than I was. It was a great job... I can't imagine how I held it together to audition. In the end they just filmed me doing shit that I enjoyed doing about my parents' grounds anyway. Except for that digger that I rented from petty cash and drove to location, they edited all that out. I mostly felt that I was doing well in the job. Fuckin shook Stefan Buczacki's hand at the Chelsea Flower Show; that's got to count for something. Christ Ralph, I could have had it all; Gardeners World, the whole lot...

Ralph: You wouldn't have wanted all that attention though, would you?

Charlie: Yeah I would have loved it, anyone one would.

Ralph: Then it's a shame that all those Welsh raves got in your way.

Charlie: Yeah maybe, but there's a market in those raves, I'm convinced that I was onto something with that documentary I ended up making.

Ralph: Well I don't doubt it, but from what you've told me it was stealing the cameras and the boom mike that did it for you, for everything.

Charlie: I think that it was deciding to shoot to camera off my tits on ecstasy that buried it. I've still got the master copies back at my folks' house. Couldn't convince Channel 4 to pay for me to take it to an edit suite and finish it.

Ralph: I can remember your phone call that last day too.

Charlie: From the services outside of London? I just took off, Ralph. I thought I was just going to get a slap on the wrist for borrowing the cameras but the commissioner was very angry. I got up halfway through the meeting and left the room, and then London, all in one stretch of thought.

Ralph: I couldn't work out on the phone if you were leaving for good or just taking a sudden holiday.

Charlie: Nah it was definitely a sacking.

Ralph: But did you think you'd go back to London, to telly?

Charlie: No-one phoned, Ralph.

Ralph: I did.

Charlie: Yes you did, thank you. You'd make a good television commissioner; you actually listen to what people tell you. I probably didn't have the adequate lacking attention span to communicate there. I'd be trying to outline and talk through ideas, follow the process, but everyone else would be waiting to jump in with a full stop. I think the only thing that I ever managed to wrangle on Native was to have stainless steel hand tools on camera instead of cast iron ones. I did charge production for a few bags of compost that I kept for my grow room, too. You wanna start one of these joints while I get you a re-fill?

Ralph: If that's cool, that'd be lovely. I am sorry that it didn't work out for you in London, Charlie. Is it selfish to be happy to have you about again?

Charlie: People always love you Ralph, why would you be happy to have me around again? I wish my Mum or Dad would have said that. Ah, don't let me get sentimental, Ralph, I'm trying to get focused on looking forward. Light that roly and I'll be back in a minute.

Ralph: One thing though...

Charlie: Yes? Is it olives? Do you want some? I've got some, they're delicious.

Ralph: Hold the olives, not even manners can get me through those.

Charlie: No olives... I'm puzzled, where else could this be going?

Ralph: Ah forget it...

Charlie: You getting sentimental as well?

Ralph: Probably.

Charlie: Well now I want to hear it. Plus I would like my re-fill too so you're going to have to come clean with it quickly.

Ralph: Its fine...

Charlie: No it's not, my glass is empty. Come on, what is it? You been sniffing around the bins? I used to have a Labrador that did that; awful bloody mess some mornings. Ever felt sorry for the way a chicken carcass has been treated?

Ralph: No bins, Charlie. Please, the moment has passed anyway.

Charlie: Was it about your leg?

Ralph: I suppose that it would be.

Charlie: That people love you because you wear that walking stick very well? It's true, you do. I said so to your Mum once.

Ralph: What did she do to you?

Charlie: She stared at me, then came and gave me a massive cuddle.

Ralph: Were you crying?

Charlie: Probably, I think I used to go round and see your Mum when I needed to weep. I don't do that any more.

Ralph: That's probably for the best. Now you've got that off your chest you should fill those glasses.

Charlie looks at Ralph with suspicion.

Charlie: You're a slippery eel to unravel, Ralphie... can I get you any olives?

SCENE 3:

Charlie sits with his leg dangling over the house boat while he fishes. Ralph busies himself writing up some notes until Charlie breaks the silence.

Charlie: How is it going with the chronicling? Met any sexy girls who could be lonely for my company?

Ralph: You've got to think more hobbyist than sexy, Charlie.

Charlie: I don't know; there are some pretty sexy hobbies out there. This girl I knew in London, she had hobbies... I bet she's grown out of all that now. Strange looking girl, but adorable.

Ralph: What did she look like? If you only had one word to use.

Charlie: ... ericaceous.

Ralph: Well that's certainly a word. What was her name?

Charlie: I never remember the names, Ralph. Ooh, hang on, the line is tickling...! Looks like we're on for a bit of bream tonight! Scratch that... she's already got away. You got any girls you're trying to reel in at the moment; any little hobbyists?

Ralph: Of course... but I think that you find the walking stick more appealing than she does. I'm just the mascot of my own presence I'm afraid.

Charlie: No you're not. I've seen how the girls look at you, but I think they just don't know the best way to approach. Like that one at the pub a couple of months back.

Ralph: Ivy?

Charlie: She was creeping all over you.

Ralph: We're friends, I see her every week pretty much.

Charlie: She's very fond of you... I've got a nose that sniffs out the truth of these things. I like seeing girls take pleasure in you. Is that an alright thing to say?

Ralph: I'll take it without offence, thank you.

Charlie: When are you seeing her next?

Ralph: We don't need to talk about that, we're supposed to be helping you through your memories.

Charlie: We can... hang on; someone else is on the line! What shall I be reeling in... oh, nothing again.

Ralph: I don't think you've got a future as a fisherman, Charlie.

Charlie throws the rod out into the water.

Charlie: Apparently not. I do have an idea of what I'd like to do though... what I think everything that I've been doing is leading towards. It's still a bit of a secret, Ralph...

Ralph: I'm excited, where on earth could this be going...

Charlie: Let me spare you the drama. You know how I like nature?

Ralph: Yes. Except for just seeing you throw your fishing rod into the water, yes, I know you covet nature. And?

Charlie: You see that willow over there... the way she cascades into the water?

Ralph: I do... it is poetic I can't argue.

Charlie: She's not poetic Ralph, she's sensual. Am I going too far to suggest that she's sexy? I don't think so.

Ralph: I'm not sure what to think of that but definitely go on.

Charlie: It's not just the willows, have a look around you... nature is a pretty sensual. The grasses in the fields on your route along the path; don't try and tell me that the way those grasses move isn't akin to a fine pair of satin knickers? Or the way an antirrhinum opens its form on a fine summers afternoon... it's not nature, Ralph, its erotica.

Ralph: I'm still with you... certainly very curious.

Charlie: I'm going to make a nature documentary; saying it all aloud to you has confirmed it. But I don't want to just show shaky footage of a badger hanging around at night, or some admiral butterfly crashing into a buddleia and having it off with it. I want to show nature as something sexy, intimate... voluptuous. You understand me, Ralph...?

Ralph: I do try as best I can.

Charlie: It's going to be called Proboscis. I'm going to write and present it myself. Wanna be the boom operator?

Ralph: Wanna tell me where you're getting the cameras this time?

Charlie: It's all going to be legit, Ralph. I'll start shooting next spring.

Ralph: And you'll be fishing in that as well?

Charlie: Nah, there's nothing sexy about a bream.

Ralph: True... I'm not the ideas man here.

Charlie: No... you just know all the inner workings of those who are.
You've got it all written down, like Gods foreman. Let me
come over there and bless you... hold still dear friend.

Ralph: Charlie...

Charlie: Ralphie... saints preserve us...

Ralph: Charlie...!

THE END