

Impulse

By

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EXT. FOREST - DAY

CHARLOTTE (22) hikes along a pathway that cuts through a line of trees, humming to herself. She has a DSLR on a monopod which she uses as a walking stick. She accidentally steps into some soft, wet mud and shakes the mud off her boot. She occasionally pauses to adjust the camera's settings to take common photos of uninteresting things like, leaves, stumps, tree bark etc. She swings the small backpack off her shoulder to take out a lens. She swaps her wide lens for a zoom lens to take a shot of a bug.

CHARLOTTE (V.O)

My life's been really crazy lately. Let me walk you through it. Between my basement apartment getting flooded a month ago, my boyfriend of two weeks telling me he doesn't love me anymore to my plants all dying cause I forgot to water them, thinking they got enough water from the flood, it's been a lot to handle. Whole reason I came to the forest was cause the deadline for Capture Magazine's photography competition is only two days away and I've been slacking real hard. It's been almost an entire year since I graduated with my photography diploma. I've literally done nothing with it. No job. Nothing.

Charlotte unscrews the DSLR from her monopod and takes a photo of her boots. Once satisfied, she tries a few times to capture a selfie with the DSLR before giving up and opting to take a selfie with her phone instead.

CHARLOTTE (V.O)(CONT'D)

It's not like I haven't wanted to take photos. I've just had a lot of anxiety and it's taken away from my inspiration as an artist. Actually, that's a lie. My best friend's cat died, which was a pretty unique opportunity... but when I showed up with my camera, she thought I was weird and it got kinda uncomfortable. Anyway, my life has literally been too much to handle lately. Today was no exception.

With the exception of bug noises and the rustling leaves overhead, it's fairly quiet, except for Charlotte's occasional click of the camera shutter.

CHARLOTTE (V.O)(CONT'D)

I wandered around aimlessly for hours, getting lost hoping to see maybe a deer...or some other kind of interesting forest creatures, but there was nothing. I mean, I can only take so many photos of trees. There was a bird at one point... but that photo's hardly worth submitting. The composition was all wrong and it flew away before I could take another. **That's when he showed up.**

In the distance, the sound of a CAR disrupts the tranquil wilderness. Charlotte turns to look. She sees a clean, black car driving slowly on the dirt road. It pulls off to the side of the road, about 200 feet away. The driver, A man with long, unkempt hair exits the car. This is PHILLIP (45). He's wearing an old, lightweight jacket and worn-out wool gloves with the fingers cut off. He looks around, conspicuously, then slides into a bright, orange hunting vest. Next, he opens the backseat door and takes SOMETHING out (it is obscured from Charlotte's perspective), tucking it into the back of his belt, like a gun.

CHARLOTTE (V.O)

It looked like a gun. Too small to be a hunting rifle, but I couldn't tell for sure.

In the cover of trees, Charlotte readies her camera, looks through the viewfinder, adjusts her shot, then pulls the trigger, just as Phillip opens the trunk of the car. The trunk is packed with plump garbage bags, each knotted twice. He struggles to pull out two garbage bags, indicating they are quite heavy.

CHARLOTTE

Holy shit he's a murderer.

Charlotte quickly hides behind a tree, crouching down to avoid being spotted. Phillip closes the trunk and darts confidently into the forest, almost directly towards Charlotte. She shuts her eyes tight.

CHARLOTTE

(whispering to herself)

Please don't kill me. Please don't kill me.

Phillip's phone rings. He doesn't answer because his hands are full. Each ring grows louder and louder, his footsteps approaching Charlotte.

EXT. FOREST - DAY - FANTASY SEQUENCE - CONTINUOUS

Phillip notices the monopod peeking out from behind one of the trees. He slows down and peeks around it, seeing Charlotte hiding from him. He drops the garbage bags and reaches for the back of his belt, moving behind the tree.

Charlotte still has her eyes shut as a bullet explodes through the front of her head.

EXT. FOREST - DAY - REALITY

Charlotte is perfectly fine. She opens her eyes and takes a huge sigh of relief, then covers her nose and mouth in disgust. Failing to actually notice her, Phillip passes her tree, a few feet away, and continues walking.

CHARLOTTE (V.O)

When he walked past me, he smelled like rotting flesh. I don't exactly know how else to explain it. It smelled kind of like when my mom accidentally dropped a chunk of salmon behind the stove and forgot about it.

Comically frozen in fear, Charlotte stares as Phillip walks away. She raises her camera, adjusts the lens and presses the trigger. As she takes a photo, to her surprise and bad luck, the battery dies. As Phillip walks further away from her, she digs into her pocket quickly to grab her phone. She scrolls through her contacts and calls her brother MICKEY (26). After a few rings, he answers. It sounds like he's somewhere crowded, with music.

MICKEY (V.O)

(non-chalantly)

Hey Charlotte. Good thing you called. Jerry was saying--

CHARLOTTE

(whispered panic)

-- Mickey! Mickey, not now! I-I need you to listen to me. I'm lost in the forest by the lake, and some old crazy weirdo just came and he has a dead body or something and he

cut someone up and put them in
garbage bags and I think he has a
gun and there are more bags in his
tru--.

MICKEY (V.O)

-- Hold on. Hold on. Take a
breather. I can't really hear you.
We're playing a video game and it's
loud. Let me leave the room. Gimme
a sec.

Charlotte shimmies around to the other side of the tree as
the noise on Mickey's side of the call quiets down.

CHARLOTTE

(whispering)

I'm not in the mood to die Mickey!

MICKEY (V.O)

Wait a second. I don't understand.
What's going on?

CHARLOTTE

(whispering)

There's a guy carrying garbage bags
into the forest!

MICKEY (V.O)

What the hell are you doing in the
forest?

CHARLOTTE

(whispering)

Taking photos!

MICKEY (V.O)

Dude. Did you go to the abandoned
house in there? It's architecture
is so old and warped.

She peeks out from behind the tree. Phillip is almost out of
view.

CHARLOTTE

No, Mickey! Listen goddamnit! I'm
alone with a murderer! I'm like
legit rape bait just sitting here.
Help me.

MICKEY (V.O)

Why didn't you call the cops?

CHARLOTTE

Because you're my older brother and I thought you would be able to... I dunno...do something.

MICKEY (V.O)

My advice: hang up with me and call the cops if you're really that freaked out.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks asshole. I don't know what this guy's capable of!

MICKEY (V.O)

What do you want me to do?

Charlotte looks around.

CHARLOTTE

I don't know. Come pick me up?

MICKEY (V.O)

I can't. I'm like 3 hours away and we're drinking a lot of shit. Just run away. Hang up with me, call the cops, and run as far as you can.

CHARLOTTE

No I can't move. What if he sees me and chases after me and I die?

MICKEY (V.O)

You're not gonna die Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I don't know if he's a deranged lunatic Mickey. He's got a gun.

MICKEY (V.O)

Charlotte...

Charlotte looks around the tree again, spotting Phillip, who is headed back towards his car and no longer holding the garbage bags.

CHARLOTTE

Shit! He's coming back! shut up!

MICKEY (V.O)

Me "shut up"? He can't hear *me*! You need to "shut up"!

CHARLOTTE
(whispering)
Do not argue with me! Shut up!

MICKY (V.O)
Listen, I'm here, but I can't do
anything useful. I'll stay on the
line for as long as you need me to,
but you seriously need to call the
cops.

EXT. FOREST - DAY - FANTASY SEQUENCE 2 - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte tenses up behind the tree. Phillip sees her and
walks up to her, terrified that she may have seen him.

PHILLIP
H-how long have you been hiding
there?

Charlotte looks up at him in fear, unable to say anything.

PHILLIP
What, your tongue don't work?

Charlotte stares at him, eyes wide open. He notices her
phone.

PHILLIP
Mickey, huh? Your name Minnie? Why
dont you hang up on Mr. Mouse, hm?

He pulls out a knife from the back of his belt and crouches
down to her with a twisted smile on his face.

PHILLIP
No? Fine. I don't mind. Scream for
me. Let me see your broken tongue.

Charlotte covers her mouth and he grabs her hand. She moans
and he stabs her in the gut. She screams loudly.

EXT. FOREST - DAY - REALITY

Charlotte tenses up as Phillip passes another time, and
again, he does not notice her. She puckers her face from the
stench.

MICKY (V.O)(CONT'D)
Can you talk yet?

CHARLOTTE
(whispering)

No.

MICKEY (V.O)
What's he look like?

CHARLOTTE
He looks like a murderous janitor
with a hunting vest.

Phillip returns to the car, opens the trunk, and pulls out another two large garbage bags. One of the bags is dripping. Some of it drips on his shoe. Phillip notices and curses, kicking his shoe to shake it off. Charlotte again moves to the opposite side of the tree so she remains out of Phillip's sight. She does however peek out from behind the tree.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
He's got more bags.

MICKEY (V.O)
How many more?

CHARLOTTE
I think that's it. He's coming
again. Shh.

MICKEY (V.O)
You shoulda been out of there 10
minutes ago.

Phillip again heads in Charlotte's direction once more. She holds her breath and holds her nose as Phillip passes again, leaving a trail of deep red liquid dripping behind him. Charlotte's eyes open wide.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
One of the bags is leaking blood,
Mickey.

MICKEY (V.O)
Jesus Christ. He really is a
murderer. If you don't hang up and
call the cops right now, I'm gonna
do it. One of us has to, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
I have to think of a plan.

MICKEY (V.O)

No, I already told you what to do.
Stop stalling. Run while he's got
his back turned.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. But I have a crazier idea and
it might be crazy enough to work.

MICKEY (V.O)

I don't think now's the right time
for this.

CHARLOTTE

It'll work and they'll make a movie
about me one day.

MICKEY (V.O)

You're not *in* a movie! There's a
real-life murderous janitor on the
loose. Don't do anything stupid!
Just run away!

Charlotte takes a deep breath and exhales.

CHARLOTTE

Ok. I'll call you soon.

MICKEY (V.O)

Charlotte!

She hangs up with Mickey and takes off running away from the tree, and Phillip. She runs, adrenaline pumping, clutching her monopod and camera until she reaches Phillip's car, which still has the keys left in the ignition. She throws her stuff inside, hops in, and starts the engine.

Phillip hears his car turn on, and twists his head to look. He drops his bags, and runs towards the car.

PHILLIP

Hey! That's my car! What are you
doing?!

INT. PHILLIP'S CAR - DAY

Charlotte fiddles with the stick-shift for a moment, putting it into 'drive'. When she hits the gas, the car shrieks instead of moving.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Phillip is almost at the road.

PHILLIP
Hey! Heyy! Stop!

INT. PHILLIP'S CAR - DAY

Charlotte realizes the emergency hand brake is on. She unlocks the brake, and hits the gas again. This time, the car jolts forward and she drives away, leaving Phillip chasing after the car, waving his hands in the air.

CHARLOTTE (V.O)
And then I came straight here.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Charlotte sits awkwardly at an interrogation table. She's still in her winter coat, scarf, gloves, etc. and her hands are handcuffed to the table. Police OFFICER CRANE (35) is facing her, taking notes on a yellow notepad. The officer looks at her blankly.

CHARLOTTE
There's one more bag in the trunk.

OFFICER CRANE
Haven't heard a story like that in a long while.

CHARLOTTE
All I wanted was to take a nice photo. I never expected any of this.

OFFICER CRANE
Let me get this straight. Did he have a gun or a knife?

CHARLOTTE
I think a gun. It could have been a knife. I don't actually remember

OFFICER CRANE
Why do you think he didn't shoot at you?

CHARLOTTE

I don't know sir. Maybe it actually was a knife?

OFFICER CRANE

Are you aware that the vehicle you drove here -- the one that presumably belongs to a, quote-unquote, "murderous janitor" -- is now considered a stolen vehicle?

CHARLOTTE

I guess... but I did it for the sake of justice.

Officer Crane stands up and exhales.

OFFICER CRANE

Now, you sit tight Miss Bishop. I'll be right back.

Officer Crane leaves her alone in the room. She stares into the two-way mirror for a while, then she tries scratching her nose by bending down to where her hands could reach. The officer re-enters the room holding a coffee.

CHARLOTTE

(pointing to the two-way mirror)

Is there anyone actually in there?

OFFICER CRANE

Maybe. Maybe not.

Charlotte purses her lips.

OFFICER CRANE (CONT'D)

We're sending a squad car out to the scene. We're going to keep you in custody a little while longer, but you have the right to a private phone call.

CHARLOTTE

Am I under arrest or something? Because I didn't do anything.

OFFICER CRANE

You're not under arrest, we're just holding you here until we have some more information about the validity of what you've told us today.

CHARLOTTE
I swear I'm telling the truth.

Officer Crane ignores her.

OFFICER CRANE
Alright. Is there anyone you'd like
to call?

CHARLOTTE
My brother. Mickey. I don't know
his number off by heart though.
It's in my cell phone. The other
officer took it.

Officer Crane exhales deeply, lazily.

OFFICER CRANE
Be right back...

Officer Crane leaves. Charlotte puts her head down.

CHARLOTTE
(to herself)
What a day...

Officer Crane re-enters a few moments later. This time with
Charlotte's cellphone, and her camera.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I can actually show you what he
looks like! I took a photo of him.

Officer Crane glances at her skeptically.

OFFICER CRANE
Sure.

Officer Crane looks through the mirror, then hands her the
camera. She turns it on and clicks over to a shot of Phillip
opening the trunk. Charlotte turns the camera over to the
Officer.

CHARLOTTE
That's him.

OFFICER CRANE
I'll be damned, that's Joseph
Patatsky.

CHARLOTTE
You KNOW him??!!

OFFICER CRANE

'Course I know him! He's the owner of that fish market down on Glen Haven Avenue. Swell guy. Hard to believe he's the one in your story.

The colour drains from Charlotte's face.

OFFICER CRANE (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

CHARLOTTE

Thats how he smelled...like rotting fish...

Officer Crane points to the image on the camera's screen.

OFFICER CRANE

How's about we go have a look-see inside of that car.

CHARLOTTE

If it's fish, I'm gonna cry.

EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - DAY

Rolling a trolley, Charlotte, Officer Crane and OFFICER #2 walk to Phillip's car, which is poorly parked in the handicap spot, closest to the entrance. Officer #2 pops the trunk open, smells the disgusting stench of rotting fish, then gags comically.

Using a pair of rubber gloves, Officer #2 removes the bag from the trunk and places it onto the trolley. He looks up at Officer Crane and Charlotte, awaiting nods from both, before untying the knot. Charlotte looks away.

CHARLOTTE

God, I'm gonna puke.

Inside the bag are a bunch of dead fish heads, carcasses, and other fish parts in sloshy, bloody water.

OFFICER CRANE

Well, there's your good news. Still disgusting. Any idea what he was doing bringing them out to the woods Ms. Bishop?

Charlotte shakes her head no.

CHARLOTTE

I was just trying to stay alive.

OFFICER CRANE

Had this not been fish, I would've had to arrest you properly, kid. If your DNA -- hair, fingerprints, sneeze spray, anything -- was found in this car...

He let that trail off.

CHARLOTTE

...I'm really sorry for all this confusion...

OFFICER CRANE

That's okay, you were trying to do the right thing.

CHARLOTTE

Can I call my brother now?

OFFICER CRANE

Sure. Let's get those handcuffs off you.

Officer Crane unlocks her handcuffs and hands her her phone.

OFFICER CRANE

You're free to go, Miss Bishop.

She promptly dials her brother, taking a few steps away from the officers.

CHARLOTTE

Mickey! Hey -- Yeah. Everything's fine -- yeah I'm alive -- No you won't even believe me -- At the Police station -- I drove here in the guy's car -- I know, I know -- Can you come pick me up? -- Shit. right. I forgot -- How am I supposed to explain to mom and dad why I'm at the police station?

SLOW FADE TO: BLACK

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE EVIDENCE ROOM - LATER

Officer #2 empties the garbage bag of fish guts, one piece at a time, examining it all. After pulling out a few fish skeletons and heads, he freezes. With shaky hands, he pulls out what looks like a human finger with pink nail polish on it. He stares at it for a second.

OFFICER #2

Hey Crane? I got something i need
you to see.

CUT TO: BLACK

END