

VIDEOGENIC

Written by
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Film IS, Forever.

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By Lawrence Whitener

FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL TOWN - MORNING

RAVEN flies down a river, over a train trestle, past a town's small shops, then over a foot-bridge near a waterfall.

CHARLESTON "CHARLY" HAMMERWELL, 40s, in a cheap gray suit with thick black-framed glasses, hurries over the foot-bridge hugging an old leather soft briefcase. Bird poop lands on one shoulder. He stops to wipe it off with a pocket handkerchief.

CHARLY

Start every day in every way the
right way --r-i-g-h-t?

EXT. SMALL TOWN'S CUL-DE-SAC - MOMENTS LATER

Charly scoots past a tiny stand-alone house at the edge of town that looks abandoned. He freezes, then walks backwards but doesn't know why. He looks around, then is surprised to see a hand-painted sign above the front door of the same house reading "Cameras, Antique, Movie-Machines, Vintage."

Centered in the sign between these words is a large hand-drawn eye reading, *You Are Being Watched*.

Charly peers in its dirty bay window and gets excited seeing the camera he has always wanted. He steps back to see an *Open* sign hanging below his dream and enters the shop.

INT. CAMERA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The small unfinished room has a dark dusty customer area with an antique filthy-glass showcases.

The door's hinges squeak like a haunted mansion as its overhead shopkeeper's bell dings. Charly enters, then looks around confused.

CHARLY

This wasn't here yesterday?

No one is present. Charly shakes the door to *ding* its bell again, still no one. He goes to look at the window display and has to stand on his tip-toes to look over its back-board.

He sees a triple-turret crank-handle 8mm movie-machine sitting centered on a water-damaged display-box. He reaches for it. A huge white-gloved hand lands on his shoulder from behind. Charly jumps back spinning.

CHARLY

God Help Us!

RASIK, the shop owner, 60s, 7', wearing Kurta pajamas, a turban with a red broach, and giant white gloves, has one black tooth. His accent suggests he could be from Baltimore.

RASIK

Not today.

CHARLY

Excuse me?

RASIK

Not my job --
(points to floor)
or His.

CHARLY

What --are you talking about?

RASIK

What-ever you are, buddy.

CHARLY

Well bud-dee, I always wanted ...

RASIK

Careful what you wish for.

CHARLY

What? --Anyway, I saw your video-camera ...

RASIK

movie-machine.

CHARLY

What, oh, your "movie machine" --
the one with the triple-turret.

RASIK

Triple-threat.

CHARLY

Excuse me?

RASIK

Not my job, or ...

CHARLY

Yeah, yeah, got it.

RASIK
Works for ...

CHARLY
Does it?

RASIK
What?

CHARLY
Work?

RASIK
Works for me.

Charly goes to leave and opens the door, then closes it. Its bell does not ring, he looks up at it swaying silent.

CHARLY
Let's start over, I'm interested in that 8 mm...

RASIK
Drohung.

CHARLY
It's a Drohung?

RASIK
And twice on Sunday.

Charly drums all eight fingers on his hugged-briefcase.

CHARLY
Drohung in German means, "threat."

RASIK
Good thing it's not at a Gefährden.

CHARLY
"Endangered!?" --Me or the camera?

RASIK
What's the difference?

CHARLY
Never heard of such a thing.

RASIK
One did. No, that's not right --

Rasik holds his thumb and forefinger out forming an "L."

RASIK
two, did.

Charly makes the same L-sign, but holds near his forehead.

CHARLY
"Two?"

RASIK
Inventor and Owner.

CHARLY
Who?

RASIK
Sir Jinn Beelzebub, "who"
disappeared shortly after he built
this single prototype in 1930.

CHARLY
But 1932 was the first 8mm Camera?

RASIK
Ahhh, but 1923 is when 16mm film
was born --just like this orphan.

CHARLY
What does 16mm --?
(catches up)
Wait, there's only one?

RASIK
Or there'd be two.

CHARLY
So it's a collector's item?

Rasik "eyes" Charley, then snaps his fingers pointing.

RASIK
Accountant.

CHARLY
Excuse me?

RASIK
Stop asking, because you won't get
any. It's just the way you became,
you know, kind of a Casper
Milktoast leave-me-alone I'm-an-
idiot thing going on. No offense --
bet you never played sports.

Rasik squints one eye while raising the other's eyebrow.

RASIK

That's why you went out for math club instead.

(snap-finger-points again)

President, right?

Charly remembers fondly to rote-recite his favorite club's definition.

CHARLY

"The study of the measurement and properties of quantities and sets using numbers or symbols."

RASIK

You left out "relationships" --bet you're no good at those either.

Charly turns and opens the door. Its bell is silent again.

RASIK

Three dollar!

Charly closes the door. It's bell now *dings*. He looks up at it swaying while asking skeptical.

CHARLY

Why so cheap?

RASIK

You're number three.

Charly spins to come back.

CHARLY

And the motor works good?

RASIK

Too good --look, I'm not trying to make you buy it. You have to want to be its owner. Do you?

CHARLY

Can't go wrong for three dollars.

RASIK

Sure you can.

CHARLY

What about film?

RASIK

Perpetual, kindly step this way to sign --The Ledger.

Rasik steps behind a counter, pulls out a little Black Book and blows dust off it. He pulls a necklace off over his head with a vintage skeleton-key and unlocks a small lock on the book, then flips its pages open.

CHARLY

"Perpetual" film, how's that work?

RASIK

Works for ...

CHARLY

Stop it! What --"Ledger?"

RASIK

Its transfer must be recorded to become binding. Must be clear as holy water, for whom it belongs.

CHARLY

"For whom" --as in, "bell tolls?"

RASIK

In a moment --"for thee."

Rasik reaches over and pricks the back of Charly's hand with a calligraphy pen, drawing blood, then draws its blood-line on a page, and turns the book around for Charly to sign.

CHARLY

Ow?

Charly signs his name. Rasik slams book closed and re-locks it, then gets the Drohung and comes back with his hand out.

Charly slowly counts three dollars into it. Rasik crumples the cash in that hand as he raises Charly's briefcase-flap, drops book inside, and jams the Drohung into Charly's chest.

CHARLY

What's the book for?

RASIK

Owner's Manual.

Rasik drapes his key-necklace over Charley's head.

RASIK

Only take that off, if --you sell it.

CHARLY

"Only take off --?" That's absurd.

Rasik drapes a huge arm around Charly's shoulders and ushers him out the door.

RASIK

Worked for me.

Rasik slams the door, then leans back against it, free at last. The overhead bell *dings* and *dings*, almost happily. He is the same height as the bell and stares at it.

RASIK

I know, I know, an angel just got
its wings --
(smiles evil)
me.

EXT. CAMERA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charly leans with his back on the door hugging his briefcase and Drohung. He turns to see the window sign is now turned to read, "Closed."

CHARLY

What an odd little fellow.

He walks down the sidewalk to a Bus Stop and waits. A vintage bus pulls up, its doors squeak open, and he gets on dropping change to sit by the window up front. The bus pulls away.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - CONTINUOUS

No one else is on board. BUS DRIVER, 60s, long hair and beard, wears a black leather vest and gloves. He looks like a geriatric biker. They drive in silence.

CHARLY

Tod Street.

DRIVER

(odd chuckle)
"Tod" in German means "death" --
funny.

CHARLY

Yeah, funny --
(to self)
as a heart attack.

Driver stomps on the brakes. Charly is thrown forward.

DRIVER

That's not funny, I had one last year --Get, Out!

CHARLY

But I didn't mean --?

DRIVER

Out, if you please, and even more --
if you don't.

Driver opens doors. Charly is flustered, but exits as told.

EXT. SHUTTLE BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Charly exits and the bus pulls away. Charly holds up his *Drohung* and looks through its viewfinder while filming. The camera's motor hums with a strange vibration.

CHARLY

Hope you have another one.

Charly watches gritty footage rolling of the bus rounding the corner, then stopping so only its tail-end is visible.

Charly holds the *Drohung* down, motor stops whirring. He watches the bus go around the corner, then stop so only its tail-end is visible. He looks down at the *Drohung* as a WOMAN's scream comes from around the bus's same corner.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Aieeeeeeee!

Charly is curious and strolls to investigate.

EXT./INT. BUS AROUND THE CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Woman, 50s, with purple hair, is wearing yellow spandex and stands outside the open-door of the bus pointing inside.

Charly rounds the corner to look where she is pointing.

Driver is slumped over his steering wheel dead as the town's SHERIFF, 50s, in uniform with tactical vest and latex gloves on, bends over Driver holding two fingers onto his neck.

WOMAN

What happened, Sheriff?

SHERIFF

I'm no coroner, but looks like a heart attack.

Charly shakes his head, then snaps his fingers remembering something, and hurries back around the shop's same corner.

EXT. CAMERA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charly knocks on the door politely, nothing. He tilts his head to trace a hand around the door where its "eye" sign had been minutes before. He tries to look inside its bay window, but drapes have been drawn. He studies its *Closed* sign to now see the word, *Don't*, has been scrawled between, *Please*, and *Come Again*. The sign's clock-face has missing hands with *Will Return* pre-printed above, but with the word, *Never*, now hand-printed under. Charly steps back, looks through the Drohung's viewfinder, and films watching a gritty image roll as nothing seems to happen. The camera's motor almost grinds, happy.

CHARLY

Well then, just go to blazes.

Charly exits around previous corner as smoke begins to pour out from underneath the door's bottom. Rasik screams inside.

EXT. AROUND SAME CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Charly uses his cell-phone to call for a cab. One pulls over immediately. Charly gets in.

INT. STUPOR - CONTINUOUS

Eleven air-fresheners hang from cab's rear-view mirror as STUPOR, Jamaican female, 30s, with dreadlocks, wearing a rasta-cap beanie, pulls down a vintage taxi-meter flag.

Charly tries to get comfortable, but his seat has springs poking through. He sniffs the air and makes a face, then sees the air-fresheners, and points at them fanning the air.

Stupor sees his hand movement in mirror and turns smiling huge showing one shiny gold tooth. It star-gleams.

STUPOR

Not know it be a swamp-car when
bought, mon --smell not go away.

Stupor hangs up a twelfth air-freshener.

CHARLY

Tod Street.

Stupor explodes with a great gregarious Caribbean laugh.

STUPOR

Just learn what dat' mean!

CHARLY

What what mean?

STUPOR

You know, TOD --Transfer On Death.

CHARLY

"Transfer on --?"

(snaps fingers)

Oh right, right, same as P, O, D,
"Payable on Death." A beneficiary,
just different insurance accounts.

(tilts head)

How'd you know that?

STUPOR

Gran-mama, she die last month, I
have to learn alllll about E-state.

CHARLY

Good luck with Inheritance Tax.

STUPOR

(more Jamaican laughter)

Not going to sit on me "tod!"

Stupor looks in her rear-view mirror. Charly doesn't understand. She explains flatly.

UBER

"Tod" --British, to be on one's
own.

CHARLY

(to self)

I'd like to be on my own.

Stupor turns down a street.

STUPOR

Which number be yours, mon?

Charly is watching the meter. It clicks to a whole number.

CHARLY

That be my number, there.

STUPOR

(keeps driving, looking)

Where --?

Charly points to the meter.

CHARLY

There!

STUPOR

Where!

Meter-number drops and *clicks* again.

CHARLY

HERE!

The car screeches to a halt. Both are thrown forward.

EXT. STUPOR TAXI ON TOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Charly exits, glasses disheveled, hugging his briefcase and *Drohung*. Stupor holds a hand out her window. Charly straightens his glasses, then hands her exact change.

UBER

Tip?

CHARLY

Yeah, disinfect your car before ...

Stupor drives away in a huff. Charly looks through *Drohung's* viewfinder and watches grainy filming of the cab driving around the corner as camera motor's wind-key turns furious.

CHARLY

you get the creepie-crawlies.

Charly dry-spits to clear the "smell" out of his mouth as he walks up the sidewalk while the cab goes around same corner.

EXT./INT. STUPOR TAXI AROUND CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

DOG OWNER, 50s, is walking her invisible dog leash wearing a running suit. The sounds of a dog sniffing come from the empty leash as she approaches the trunk of Charly's cab.

DOG OWNER

What is it, boy?

She looks through the back window and sees Stupor having a fit. The leash pulls Dog Owner up to the driver's window.

DOG OWNER

What do you smell?
(looks in driver's window)
Are you okay?

Stupor's head turns to now a skinless skull with rasta-hat and dreadlocks. Its gold-tooth star-gleams.

Dog Owner screams as the empty leash yanks her away to the sound of a dog *Yiping*. Dog Owner has to sprint to keep up.

EXT. CHARLY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Charly is walking up the sidewalk and freezes. He raises the *Drohung* and begins filming. It's treadmill-like motor turns as he watches gritty footage of a his neighbor's BIG DOG, wearing a blue kerchief around its neck, taking a big dump in Charly's front yard.

CHARLY

Film Is Forever!

Big Dog runs behind a tall hedge between the houses.

Charly jogs up to the Big Dog's big "present" and films it.

CHARLY

Sure wish you were a purse pet.

Charly stops filming and enters his house.

CHARLY

Gonna' need a snow shovel.

Big Dog is now a PUPPY that trips over its too-large blue kerchief and trots back around same hedge *Yapping*.

INT. CHARLY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Its small foyer is decorated with antiques. A vintage wall clock ticks across from a Victorian mirror. There is a small display shelf holding older, but single-lens, 8mm cameras.

Charly enters and sits on a bench to open his briefcase. He reaches in for "The Black Book."

WIFE

Charleston "Charly" Hammerswell!

Charly flips his briefcase flap shut trying to hide the *Drohung*.

WIFE, 50s, alpha-female, right out of a 1950's magazine ad for "frumpy housewife," storms up to him wearing oven mitts and threatens him with a bloody cooking mallet.

WIFE

What is that?

Charly tries to hide the *Drohung* more. Wife stomps a foot and points with her mallet. He presents his latest acquisition.

WIFE

Another one? You know how tight our budget is, how dare you bring ...!

Charly holds up three fingers.

WIFE

Three what? --Hundred!

Charly waves his three fingers side-to-side shaking his head.

WIFE

Three --dollars?
(scowls at *Drohung*)
Only you would buy a broken ...

Charly shakes his head meekly. Wife is still disgusted.

WIFE

Still an eyesore, put it with the rest of your useless collection, useless --then come to supper!
(exits angry)
And wash your hands, Lord knows where that's been!

Charly "polishes" his prized camera with handkerchief.

CHARLY

Yes, my precious --
(polishes softer)
precious.

Charly places *Drohung* on his camera shelf, turns it slightly to present it better, takes off his key-necklace, hangs it off the largest lens, smiles proudly, then exits.

INT. CHARLY'S FOYER - LATER THAT NIGHT

Foyer is empty with his briefcase still on the bench.

Knock on front door.

WIFE

What idiot --? Get that, idiot!

Charly, dressed same, shuffle-enters. He stops to look in the mirror to straighten his tie and glasses, then opens door.

Sheriff stands outside. Charly hesitates, then steps back. Sheriff enters scanning for threats.

SHERIFF

Routine investigation, you see or hear anything suspicious today?

CHARLY

Everyday in every way.

Sheriff tilts his head at Charly, then snaps his fingers.

SHERIFF

Saw you at that bus earlier.

CHARLY

Just bought a movie-machine.

SHERIFF

You bought a camera --at the new camera shop, that just burned down?

CHARLY

It did? Was fine when I left, Owner did act a little weird.

SHERIFF

(gets out pen and pad)
How so?

CHARLY

"So" he literally pushed me out the door and locked it, after selling me that --

Charly points at *Drohung*, but now sees its key-necklace is missing. He feels his chest, and pulls the key out.

CHARLY

that camera?
(puts key back under shirt)
Quoting "For whom the bell tolls."

SHERIFF

(takes notes)
He did, huh --how'd you get home?

CHARLY

Stupor.

SHERIFF

Driver, Jamaican?

CHARLY

Yes --and her car smelled liked something died in it!

SHERIFF

It did.

CHARLY

What?

SHERIFF

Her --did you see it pick anyone up after dropping you off?

CHARLY

My neighbor's dog was "dropping," that's all I saw.

SHERIFF

Speaking of, do you own a puppy?

CHARLY

Heaven's no, why?

SHERIFF

We think someone "exchanged" one for your neighbor's dog. Might be the same person who attacked your driver.

(hands a business card)

Keep your doors locked and call us if you hear anything suspicious.

Wife enters hands-on-hips, now with *Playtex Living* gloves dripping with sudsy dish-water.

WIFE

What'd he do now?

SHERIFF

Who?

Wife jab-points at Charly throwing specks of dish-water.

WIFE

That!

SHERIFF
(flicking water off vest)
Why, would you ask --"that?"

WIFE
Because "that" feckless pile of
human crap is just taking up space
until she, he, it, whatever --dies!

SHERIFF
(puts away pen)
Uhhhh, thank you for your time.

Sheriff opens the door backing out and closes it.

WIFE
Well?

CHARLY
Well, wha ...?

Wife slaps Charly.

WIFE
Don't sass me! Why was he here?

Charly uses his handkerchief to wipe off his wet cheek.

CHARLY
Driver who brought me home, died.

WIFE
Probably committed suicide --
(exits evil-laughing)
to get away from you!

Charly pantomimes her same words back at her.

WIFE
I heard that!

Charly covers his mouth with both hands, then takes off the
key-necklace to hang it over the *Drohung* again before exiting
and turning off the lights.

INT. CHARLY'S FOYER - MIDNIGHT

A flashlight sweeps the area as Charly enters in grey pajamas
but with his suit jacket overtop. He sits on the bench and
opens his briefcase to pull out "The Black Book." He shines
his flashlight on the *Drohung* to get its book's key, but
necklace is missing again.

He pats his chest, looks surprised, then pulls the necklace over his head and uses its key to open "The Black Book." He flips some pages, then flips more, then all of them frantic. They're all blank.

CHARLY

What --is going on?

Overhead light clicks on and Wife enters angry in a floor length flannel nightshirt and piggy-slippers that squeal. She stab-points wearing overnight gloves and greasy facial cream.

WIFE

That's what I'd like to know,
mister --explain yourself!

CHARLY

What that Sheriff said --I couldn't
sleep, so came down, to read about
my new ...

WIFE

"New!" Oh, you are so worthless.
You know you have to get up early.
We can't afford for you to lose
your job. Why do I have to always
be the adult! You, make, me, sick.

The wall clock's pendulum stops swinging. Wife sees it has stopped and goes to it. Charly grabs the *Drohung* filming. Its motor hums as he aims it at her and daydreams out-loud.

CHARLY

Why can't you just --disappear?

Charly looks through the viewfinder, she's not there, but the wall clock's pendulum is swaying. He holds *Drohung* down and tilts his head looking at her standing near the wall clock which is still not ticking. She spins to him.

WIFE

I heard that, mister! You just try
leaving me, I'll take you for every
penny you're not worth. I'll keep
you in court for years and you can
forget about --etc.

Wife rambles on with her tirade as Charly looks through the viewfinder again, she's not there, but the wall clock is now ticking again. He holds *Drohung* down to study her confused.

Wife takes a deep breath, then continues her chiding.

WIFE

then you have another think coming,
and furthermore ...!

Wife gets a funny look, then stares at her feet. They begin to disappear like being erased. Her "erasing" continues up her legs as she screams and never stops as her hips are gone, abdomen gone, first one arm, then the other gone, until she is just a floating head. She lifts her chin like a drowning person cackling as the *Wicked Witch of the West*.

WIFE

I'll get you my pretty --!

She is gone. Their neighbor's Puppy outside begins howling. Her disembodied voice expires with one, last, cackle.

WIFE (O.S.)

and your little dog, too!

Wall clock's pendulum begins swinging freely. Charly jumps back afraid. Pounding on front door.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

What's going on in there!

Charly steps left, then right, but can't decide. More pounding on door with Sheriff's muffled yelling.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

We don't just go away --open the
door, Sheriff's Department!

Charly's heart is pounding as he blurts out.

CHARLY

It's not my fault, I didn't do it!

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Probable Cause --open the door, or
I'll kick it in!

They'll never believe him. Charly holds his hurting chest, looks at *Drohung*, gathers "The Black Book" and key-necklace, then holds up *Drohung* with shaking hands to look through its viewfinder at himself in the wall mirror. He closes his eyes as his lips move silently talking to himself. Only the excited whirring sound of the *Drohung's* motor is heard.

Door handle explodes inwards from Sheriff's boot as the door swings open. Sheriff enters wearing tactical gloves with his weapon drawn. He scans the room. No one is there. He hears the *Drohung's* motor still humming and looks down. *Drohung* is lying on its side on the floor. Its motor stops.

Sheriff scans the room again.

SHERIFF
Come Out, Hands --UP!

Drohung stands itself upright. Sheriff aims down at it.

SHERIFF
What the --?

Sheriff quickly scans room again, then holsters his weapon. *Drohung* rocks slightly. Sheriff jumps back, then picks it up cautious. He looks through its viewfinder suspicious, is startled, looks in it again, then carefully lays it down. He step-by-step backs out of doorway closing the broken door.

DOG OWNER (O.S.)
What's going on Sheriff?

SHERIFF (O.S.)
Stay back, everybody just stay --
back! I'm calling in the State
Police.

Movement and shadows flicker inside *Drohung's* viewfinder.

EXT./INT. DROHUNG THROUGH VIEWFINDER - CONTINUOUS

Charly now stands inside *Drohung* pounding on its viewfinder's glass holding out his key-neckchain and "The Black Book."

JINN BEELZEBUB, 50's, hair greased back, wearing a 1930's tuxedo jacket, top hat, and monocle, enters angry to grab the key-necklace and book from Charly. His monocle falls out as hits Charly over the head with "The Black Book" yelling.

BEELZEBUB
What have you done? You were
supposed to release me!

Charly's had enough for once in his life and puffs up.

CHARLY
Oh yeah? Well, release --this!

Charly knocks off Jinn's top hat. Jinn is beyond incredulous, then begins strangling Charly who knocks away his hands and begins strangling Jinn back. They take turns breaking free and strangling each other ad-infinitum.

INT. CHARLY'S FOYER - SAME

Drohung flip-flops around like a caught-fish on the floor, then settles and rights itself.

Rasik's white, but now singed and sooty huge gloved-hand reaches-in to remove it.

RASIK

Works for me.

Earlier merchant bell *dings* in agreement.

SHUTTER CLICK.