

ON LOCATION

A Ten-Minute Comedy Duet

by
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Characters: A well known DIRECTOR, discussing his latest movie. CHARLENE, the star of the film, with an opposing viewpoint. Both of them are kind of snobbish; a British accent can add some flair.

DIRECTOR: *(as if HE's talking to a camera for a documentary)* I don't believe it's the director's job to dangle the actors like marionettes on strings. That's for petty egocentric control freaks. I let my actors get creative. I let them - no, I *command* them - *(as if talking to an actor, with vigor)* "Take your character and run with it. *(a bit too aggressive)* Run, you mangy dog! *(catches himself and pulls back)* As far as you can, and don't look back."

CHARLENE: It was as disorganized as a teenager's bedroom! We had no direction, no explanation, no understanding. Neither I nor my character had any inkling of where to begin!

DIRECTOR: I just like a movie to be about *(hands in the air as if this is some sort of great unheard of discovery)* the actor. Scripts are so confining. They're like little prisons, little six by ten rooms with a hard cot, boiled potatoes, and an open toilet. *(with disdain)* Words here, words there, *(as if!)* stage directions. It takes away from the spontaneity of what a movie is supposed to be.

CHARLENE: He wouldn't even let me read the script after we started shooting. I just had to go out and do. I might not have minded so much if we weren't in the desert. One hundred and twelve degrees of pure boiling boredom. I had no way to pass time but learn lines, and I couldn't even get to the script.

DIRECTOR: *(lovingly)* Ah, the desert!

CHARLENE: *(miffed)* I was the lead actress! And no script! No direction.

DIRECTOR: *(as if answering a new question)* Charlene? She's fascinating! She's a bundle of energy. She *is* cinema! *(changing attitude)* She's impossible.

CHARLENE: He's impossible!

DIRECTOR: *(thinking back angrily)* It's like finding a B movie at the bottom of a box of Cracker Jacks. I doubt she'd listen to a thing I said anyway, *(gets control of himself and forces a smile)* which is why I insisted she make her own discoveries.

CHARLENE: He wouldn't answer a single question. I had to do the whole thing on my own. The producers paid him 20 million dollars simply so they could put his name on the front of the film. And then, we're pressed into these stupid "making of" documentaries where we're supposed to coddle each other's indefatigable egos.

DIRECTOR: Sure, we could have done it without her. I'm sure a lesser actress would have done just fine. But...

CHARLENE: *(disappointed)* I'd looked forward to working with him for years.

DIRECTOR: She signed the contract, and we paid her fifteen million dollars. I daresay she didn't deserve a penny.

CHARLENE: I deserved every penny I got, for putting up with that fathead. All twenty million. *(divulging a secret)* Oh, we told him fifteen so he could feel more important, but I wasn't about to work for a penny less than him.

DIRECTOR: *(like it's a secret as well)* I know they gave her twenty, but she wants me to think it's fifteen. She's so spoiled; the producers knew they couldn't pay her any less than they paid me. But the perks she got! Air conditioning! Ice cream! In the desert? *(scandalized)* It was flown in from Norway. *(scandalized)* And a feather bed. I hope she's allergic.

CHARLENE: Oh, the conditions! *(sneezes)* Intolerable.

DIRECTOR: *(changing the subject)* How do I think it will turn out? I think we have a winner here. A smash!

CHARLENE: Not only did he do nothing to help the film progress...

DIRECTOR: It totally has my stamp on it.

CHARLENE: But while making no contribution to the film *(emphasizing it)* what-so-ever....

DIRECTOR: *(proud of himself)* You might call me a stamp collector.

CHARLENE: ...he made my personal life a nightmare.

DIRECTOR: I become part of their lives, from the time they get up till the time they go to bed. *(all too proud)* I make them become the characters they play.

CHARLENE: He had this barbarous idea that I should live my entire day as Violetta. That's the main character. A miserable tortured soul if there ever was one. *(indignant)* I'm an actress! I *portray* torture and misery. I *live* a life of luxury. And they don't mix.

DIRECTOR: I'm excited about the movie. I just know it's going to be a big hit with the audiences back home...

CHARLENE: The living quarters were abysmal.

DIRECTOR: I'm... I'm... I know there's a word for it... *(HE tries to find his word.)*

CHARLENE: No hot water, microwave dinners, and that man in my face every minute, except of course when we needed direction. It was total-

DIRECTOR: Bullish! That's the word. I'm bullish on it. Now some people might be skeptical out there about how I like to put a movie together. But I believe that with my former track record, that sort of criticism is absolute-

CHARLENE: I wanted a shower.

DIRECTOR: Hogwash.

CHARLENE: A simple lowly shower.

DIRECTOR: As I said, hogwash!

CHARLENE: We were in some very miserly part of the Sahara just outside of Timbuktu. On location, my patoot! I'd rather have stayed in Hollywood and shot the film in a parking lot. We had to create a full blown sandstorm. I'll bet Spielberg uses computer animation.

DIRECTOR: I'm a firm believer in "on location." It makes for a bit of a bill when we do science fiction, but I think it gives the actors a better understanding of what we're doing. And they need that, since I don't let them look at the script once we start shooting.

CHARLENE: **(with disdain)** On location! You think, ah, romance! Destination of love! Athens! Rome! Constantinople! **(annoyed)** We went to Timbuktu! I thought it was a made up place my mother invented.

DIRECTOR: **(with glee)** No one believed they were going to Timbuktu. No one. They were on the plane thinking any minute now I was going to tell them they were heading to Athens, for example. Or South America.

CHARLENE: Anywhere but Timbuktu. Even for twenty million dollars. Twenty million lousy dollars. In the fourteenth century Timbuktu **(using slang)** had it going on, as they say these days. Six hundred years later, **(full of wrath)** it's a desert town!

DIRECTOR: **(all too amused with himself)** Charlene made a total fool of herself. Well, they all did. It was so impromptu. We incorporated every bit of it into the movie.

CHARLENE: I hate to think of the footage they're using. He had the worst sense of humor. **(imitating him)** "She slipped in camel slop! Brilliant!" And nothing is more distasteful than getting sand in a pina colada. Nothing. It totally upsets the balance of pineapple and coconut. It starts to taste like Hi-C!

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