THE PHANTOM BARBER

Written by

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OVER BLACK

Ear-numbing music forms. Reverberating in the vein of some corny silent movie as...

TITLE CARD: The Phantom Barber

A voice laced with static comes into motion -- some Orson Welles type NARRATOR.

NARRATOR (V.O.) The phantom... Barber!

The music reaches a crescendo.

FADE IN.

INT. JOHNNY DICK WRANGLER'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

The sun shines through a broken window, glass lined across the flimsy floor boards near it when...

The wrinkled and hoary feet of JOHNNY DICK WRANGLER, 60s, step on it. Still dressed in his pajamas, he rubs his eyes, not comprehending the pain until... He screams femininely.

NARRATOR (V.O.) Legendary was the tale of the Phantom Barber, the story starts with his first victim, one of many in the Phantom's reign of terror.

Johnny gazes around, breathing frantically. He sees the whole room's been trashed, his luxurious and expensive furniture smashed, faeces splattered across the wall.

He peers down as his crotch, notices a bloody splotch of crimson building.

NARRATOR (V.O.) On the first of June, 1942 in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Johnny Dick Wrangler woke up to find he could wrangle his dick no more.

Johnny blasts up. Tiptoeing to avoid further damage to his feet. He focuses, eyes leading to a nearby mirror to see... He's clean shaven. Not a spec of stubble.

He feels his smooth cheeks.

JOHNNY DICK WRANGLER My lord! My ruddy cheeks!

NARRATOR (V.O.) Despite his missing penis, Johnny Dick Wrangler was ecstatic. Why, you ask?

INT. TOWN HALL - BOARD MEETING - DAY

SUITS pile around a large table. Official looking types --Johnny one of them. They all marvel at the cleanliness of his shave. In awe.

> NARRATOR (V.O.) Johnny Dick Wrangler was set to host a meeting between town officials discussing the recent gold excavation that had netted them millions of dollars.

One of the men, MAYOR BAKER, some pudgy fellow in desperate need of a tailor, peers up.

MAYOR BAKER That shave! It's so... Clean.

JOHNNY DICK WRANGLER Ah, yes, quite, but it wasn't my doing.

MAYOR BAKER

How so?

JOHNNY DICK WRANGLER Well, I woke to find that my entire house had been trashed, but also that some mysterious masked man had gave me the cleanest shave of my life. Or any life if I'm honest.

MAYOR BAKER Wait, you're saying some kind of --

Mayor Baker steals a glance at the camera.

MAYOR BAKER (CONT'D) Phantom Barber gave you that exquisite trim?

Johnny Dick Wrangler nods, pleased. The Men stare in wonder.

MAYOR BAKER (CONT'D) Well, that settles it. It would be a sin not to award you all of the proceedings we made from the excavation. All in favor, say aye!

The whole screams in unison -- AYE! All except...

NARRATOR (V.O.) Ah, but Willie Doherty, head of the only hospital in town refused to acknowledge the Phantom Barber. WILLIE DOHERTY, 40s, distinctly ugly, long fluffy Afro, skin pale as moonlight -- shakes his head, can't believe it.

WILLIE DOHERTY He chopped your penis off, you psycho. What are you even doing here?

He's met with vicious looks.

MAYOR BAKER All in favor of eliminating Willie Doherty off the board of executives!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A HUSBAND and WIFE pile around a dinner table, arguing about the Phantom Barber.

NARRATOR (V.O.) News quickly spread of Johnny Dick Wrangler's sudden fortune. Who was the Phantom Barber? When will he strike next?

FATHER I'm just sayin', leave the God dang windows open.

WIFE Why? So you can let your hoochies in and fuck 'em while I sleep?

FATHER Damn it! I need my sexy haircut.

EXT. VILLA - POOL - MORNING

Two ELDERLY WOMEN in bathing suits suntan.

ELDERLY WOMAN #1 I hear Timothy Evans woke up with a pompadour two towns over.

ELDERLY WOMAN #2 I hear the Phantom Barber ain't real, rumor is Miss Dick Wrangler had another man.

The first Elderly Woman takes off her glasses, gives a look.

NARRATOR (V.O.) Indeed, the Phantom was as elusive as his rumors.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Two BOYS, surrounded by cheering SCHOOL CHILDREN -- duke it out in a circle. One of them puts the other in a headlock.

BOY #1 Your daddy didn't wake up with a sidepart!

BOY #2 Did so! He's best friends with the Phantom Barber.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

1940s FRATBOYS kick stones, smoke cigarettes. Minding their own business when...

A MANIC LAUGH -- darts their attention towards a nearby roof. They focus. See the silhouette of...

THE PHANTOM BARBER -- blanketed in the moonlight as he holds a straight razor and some scissors. His strop twirls and flaps as he leaps from roof to roof, still laughing.

> FRATBOY #1 Is it a bird? FRATBOY #2

Is it a plane?

FRATBOY #3 It's Frank Sidebottom.

Fratboy #3 is slapped across the head.

FRATBOY #2 Frank Sidebottom hasn't even been invented yet, you dweeb.

FRATBOY #3 You're a dweeb.

FRATBOY #1

Look!

Their eyes head towards the Phantom Barber, still vaulting from buildings when -- HE FALLS. Body bouncing across nearby walls and clotheslines as...

SPLAT -- the Fratboys cringe.

THE NEXT MORNING

POLICE and TOWNSFOLK pile around a dead body. Gasps and murmurs enveloping the scene when...

Mayor Baker, face unseen, pushes his way through.

MAYOR BAKER Out of my way, you skinny shits.

Mayor Baker chucks a POLICE OFFICER to the ground, finally finding the DEAD BODY -- masked with a white blanket.

MAYOR BAKER (CONT'D) So.. It seems the Phantom Barber came as quickly as he went by. What's the consensus here, boys?

Nobody says anything. Mayor Baker gazes back, paranoid. Notices all eyes are on him.

POLICE OFFICER Y-your moustache, sir...

Mayor Baker feels his moustache, notices it's now the classic Hitler Toothbrush.

NARRATOR (V.O.) But it seems the Phantom was just getting started...

The Townsfolk continue glaring until -- cheers envelop him. Everybody going nuts as Mayor Baker chortles. Loves it.

> MAYOR BAKER Thank you, Phantom Barber!

LATER

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER, some hard-boiled Fedora-wearing brute stolen straight out of 20s noir novels, kneels at the scene.

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER He's dead, alright. Yes, yes. Very dead but... This is not our phantom!

Collective gasps surround him.

NARRATOR (V.O.) After finding the dead body, Detective Manchester, the best dang investigator in the south -concluded that this was a copycat. But not everybody believed him...

WILLIE DOHERTY (O.C.) Are you fucking serious?

All eyes head towards Willie Doherty, standing nearby.

WILLIE DOHERTY (CONT'D) He's not the barber? How do you even come to that conclusion?

INT. VARIOUS - MONTAGE

- Some shabby old CODGER wakes, finds his hair is now buzzed and ear chopped off. He feels his head knowingly, begins giggling like a school girl.

> CODGER Brandine, he chose me! I'm gonna be rich! Rich like the Dick Wranglers.

NARRATOR (V.O.) Sightings of the Phantom came far and wide.

- A toothless HOUSEWIFE wakes to see she now has a bowl cut.

- A twelve year old BOY cuts his own hair in the mirror, peeking back occasionally as...

MOTHER (O.C.) What are you doing in there, hon'?

BOY

N-nothing!

Just as the door swings open and ... His MOTHER enters.

BOY (CONT'D) I just wanted to be like him, ma!

- Police KICK down a door to a salon. Arrest every BARBER inside, Detective Manchester follows behind.

NARRATOR (V.O.) Despite the Phantom's noble deeds and beloved status, Government officials were pressuring the police to put an end to his rule.

Detective Manchester shakes his head. Spits. Twice.

- A newspaper flies at the screen. "The Phantom Barber Strikes Again!"

- Willie Doherty, face lined with sweat, stands in an operating theatre, carefully extracting an organ.

WILLIE DOHERTY Nurse, some help.

Willie Doherty peers across, sees the NURSE holding the same newspaper. Rage pulses through him.

NARRATOR (V.O.) The Phantom was everywhere, yet no where. What did he look like? Who was he?

WILLIE DOHERTY Are you serious?

The Nurse, hurt by his comment, storms out.

END MONTAGE

INT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

The Nurse, phone to her ear, now stands inside, desperately waiting for somebody to pick up when...

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER (O.C.) Hello, doll face. What do I gotta do to make you break?

NURSE H-how did you know I was a woman?

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER (O.C.) Real men see past these flimsy barriers. Throw me the deets.

NURSE I... I think Willie Doherty from the hospital is the Phantom.

INT. LITTLE SALLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Pink, pink, and more pink -- there's also a teddy bear, a large one.

On the bed sleeps LITTLE SALLY, 7, cute as a button but... Stricken with cancer. Face pale. No hair. Eyes twitching -- a bad dream.

> NARRATOR (V.O.) And when all seemed lost, Little Sally came to save the day.

INT. HOSPITAL - CANCER WARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

CANCER PATIENTS attached to IV drips lie peacefully on beds -- one of them Little Sally, head thick with hair.

NARRATOR (V.O.) You see, Little Sally was one of the first patients in the Americas to test nitrogen mustards injected by vein -- or in other words, chemotherapy in its birth.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Little Sally stands at the mirror, pulls lightly at her hair - notices it falling in coils.

NARRATOR (V.O.) But with the lack of hair --

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

KIDS point and giggle at Little Sally, now bald.

NARRATOR (V.O.) She was the laughing stock of the classroom.

INT. LITTLE SALLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Back to where we were -- Little Sally struggles to sleep, tussling around when...

SPLAT -- a wet wig is plopped across her bald head. She gently awakens. Seeing the silhouette of...

The real Phantom Barber! His hair puffs out like an Afro -an assortment of different tools lining his bloodied belt, wearing too-tight denim cutoffs as... He retrieves a knife, about to carve it towards poor Little Sally when --

CRACK -- the door is smashed open.

The Phantom Barber jumps back. Finds Police Officers in the room, guns pointed.

POLICE OFFICER #1 Stop, or we'll um, shoot!

The Police Officers look closely, eyes widening --

POLICE OFFICER #1 (CONT'D) I-I don't believe it... The Phantom Barber.

PHANTOM BARBER MY NAME IS FRANK SIDEBOTTOM!

The Phantom Barber does a little dance, prancing around like Billy Elliot -- this guy's a complete nut but...

The Police Officers stare at him in awe, refusing to acknowledge his psychopathic behavior.

POLICE OFFICER #2 H-he's amazing...

PHANTOM BARBER SUCK ME OFF, PIGGIE! POLICE OFFICER #1 Magnificent.

PHANTOM BARBER FUCK YOOUUUUUU!

The Phantom Barber slings the knife at the first Police Officer. It bounces off his jacket.

He exchanges an awkward glance with his Partner, then ---

POLICE OFFICER #1

Um, ow!

He pretends to fall, over dramatizing the whole moment, unsure as...

The Phantom Dancer springs towards the window, leaping outside, his denim-laced ass shining in the moonlight.

NARRATOR (V.O.) To any simpleton, the image of the denim ass may have been seen as grotesque, but to Detective Manchester and select members of the queer community, it was a very promising lead in the case.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Four walls. A mirror and other classic stuff.

Little Sally sits on a chair. Her wig now visible in the light. Upon closer inspection, we find it's some torn off scalp, the blood peels down Sally's cheeks.

She stares at Detective Manchester leaning on a table.

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER Now, Little Sally, my ears hear you but my mind ain't understandin' -could you try and convince it otherwise?

LITTLE SALLY Well, he had big poofy hair, like a clown. And he was wearing denim short shorts. Plus, he gave me hair!

Detective Manchester scrunches his brow, stands. Rubs his chin, putting the clues together when...

The door swings open and an ASSISTANT enters.

ASSISTANT Sir, Willie Dohetry needs to see you. He said it's urgent.

INT. DETECTIVE MANCHESTER'S OFFICE - LATER

Detective Manchester sits at his desk, smoke wafting from both a cigar and cigarette in his mouth.

Willie Dohetry sits in front of him, frantic.

Two Police Officers loom behind him.

WILLIE DOHERTY You don't understand. This man is a complete psycho. I mean, there's some kind of connotation surrounding him where he's being hailed as a hero. It's disgusting. He murdered Sally's mother and literally skinned her hair off and attached it to the poor girl's head. He needs to be arrested.

The Detective stubs out his cigarette. Stands. Lumbers to the window, watches the stormy sky.

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER If I were to entertain your vague accusations, Wally --

WILLIE DOHERTY

Willie.

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER If I were to entertain your vague accusations, Waldo, well, you'd be in a whole lot of trouble. And not the good kind.

WILLIE DOHERTY And why's that?

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER On your feet!

Willie, confused, does as he's told, revealing... DENIM SHORT SHORTS.

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER (CONT'D) A-ha! Cuff him, Piggies! I mean -police piggies -- I mean Police Officers!

The Officers leap for him. One of them grinds up against him, smells his hair.

OFFICER (whispers) You have some very nice tanned legs, Mr. Phantom Barber sir. WILLIE DOHERTY The cutoffs? This was a present from a traveling salesman. You're crazy! I'm innocent.

DETECTIVE MANCHESTER Precisely what the Phantom Barber would say!

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Willie, sleeping quietly on the sorry excuse for a mattress -- stirs a little as...

Hands gently grab his hair, begin snipping it off.

NARRATOR (V.O.) Nobody could ever confirm that it was Willie Dohetry who was the Phantom Barber -- even if it was obvious it wasn't him.

MORNING

Willie yawns, groaning awake as... He sees clumps of hair around him. His heart sinking when he discovers he now has a classic 40s mullet.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

At the Witness Box, mullet and all, Willie sits, hands cuffed and faced lined with a Hannibal Lector mask.

The PROSECUTOR patrols around, nodding occasionally.

PROSECUTOR Mr. Dohetry, it is to my understanding that you were found snooping around the crime scenes of every "Barbering", as they call it.

WILLIE DOHERTY So was the whole town.

PROSECUTOR

But you see, they weren't ugly, nor did they have an Afro! I rest my case. Jury, if you may.

The Prosecutor nods at the JURY, who murmur against each other when... One of them stands --

JURY MEMBER We find the Phantom Barber... Guilty.

The disinterested JUDGE takes a deep breath.

JUDGE In accordance with the laws of this county and the state of Mississippi, you are hereby charged with eight counts of murder, two counts of sexual assault, and one count of wearing denim cutoffs in public, the penalty for which is...

The whole room waits, on the edge of their seats --

JUDGE (CONT'D) Death by... Rotting away in a mental institution!

He slams his gavel down.

WILLIE DOHERTY Wh-what? I'm ugly because of my parents... And my hair is poofy because I'm Jewish!

EXT. ASYLUM - GATES - NIGHT

Rain pours as Willie Dohetry, now strapped to a straight jacket, is dragged inside the gates by two ORDERLIES.

WILLIE DOHERTY BECAUSE I'M JEWISH!

Mayor Baker and Detective Manchester watch him.

MAYOR BAKER

Hush, you.

Detective Manchester shakes his head in disdain. Mayor Baker pats him on the back. Jumps into a car as he drives off.

Detective Manchester is left in the storm. Water pattering against his suit, eyes piercing. Lightning strikes.

NARRATOR (V.O.) The legend of the Phantom Barber was never officially solved. Some say he's in Oklahoma giving people buzzcuts. Some say he got arthritis and lost his life. Or perhaps --

Detective Manchester takes off his fedora as...

POOF -- a fucking ginger Afro explodes out. Blanketed in the freezing rain.

NARRATOR (V.O.) -- he's always been right underneath our whiskers.