

“PUSH-UP”

A SHORT COMEDY BY SAM GRABER

ESTIMATED RUN TIME – 10 MINUTES

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SUMMARY

The assistant picture taker at the local Department of Motor Vehicles camera station searches for the perfect push-up.

CHARACTERS (2M, 1F)

CHIP, mid 20s, male

GIRLS GETTING LICENSE / OLGA / DMV LADY (all female)

DMV BOSS / GAY GUY / CHEST HUMPER (all male)

Casting note: CHIP is played by one actor while all female roles are played by one female and all male roles by one male, for a total of three players.

SETTING

The camera station at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Push-Up was first performed by Seven Collective (NYC) on October 28, 2013 as directed by Jajmi Robinson, stage managed by D. Ajane Carlton, and with cast:

CHIP – Michael Flood, Jr.

Female Roles – Rachel Russell

Male Roles – Rommel Tolentino

THE PLAY

CHIP behind the DMV counter, near a stationary mounted camera.

CHIP

I'll admit, I took the job at the Department of Motor Vehicles camera station to meet girls.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 1

Hi, I'm here to get a new license.

CHIP

I've come to know everything about them. Their eye color, their hair color.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 1

Excuse me!

CHIP

But they've never known me.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 1

I'm here to get a new license?

CHIP

Smile.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 1

How's it look?

CHIP

Pixelated and forlorn.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 1

Creep.

CHIP

I'll admit, I could never get past the 'smile' part.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 2

Hi, I'm here to get a new license.

CHIP

What was past their smile? Their female companionship? Their wives? Beckoning my pontoon of yearning to crash upon their shores of succulent caress?

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 2

Creep.

CHIP

I'll admit, it's made me forlorn.

DMV BOSS

Hey, Chip!

CHIP

'Sup, boss.

DMV BOSS

You suck, Chip, that's 'sup! Licensees are complaining, and I never get complaints around here. So get it together, sucko, cuz *this* is the DMV.

CHIP

I was glad he called me out. I was twenty-seven years old, the new assistant picture taker at the DMV, and a long time removed from a deep, meaningful first date with a woman. So I did what anyone in my situation would do: I hired a personal trainer.

OLGA enters, eating ice cream.

OLGA

Privyet, hombre! You call me!

CHIP

I took your business card from the bulletin board at the Dairy Queen across the street.

OLGA

Oh, yah? It works!

CHIP

What doesn't work is me and girls. They don't seem to like me. Or notice me.

OLGA

Why, what you think girls like?

CHIP

I don't know, that's why I'm here. I'm ready to try anything.

OLGA

Hey nuts-numb, ready for secret of week?

CHIP

Okay.

OLGA

Girls like: Really. Big. Pecs.

CHIP

Really. Big. Pecs.

OLGA

The pectoralis minus, the pectoralis firmus, swelling very bulbous-like over sternum.

CHIP

So girls are drawn to a manly chest.

OLGA

In the box wine loads. For this, you need latest craze: the push-up.

CHIP

I've seen the push-up, of course. And I've heard the stories passed down by generations. But the push-up seemed so unnatural. To turn away from sky and sun, from lurking predators, putting my chin on the ground like some executioner's block. We're so distrustful of the earth.

OLGA

Okay, cake beef, don't put chin on ground, just do push-up.

CHIP

How exactly?

OLGA

You clients with all the talking! Just do push-up!

CHIP tries, struggles, can't.

CHIP

I can't.

OLGA

Body: straight, arms: angle, head: forward, down-up. Kaboom. Push-up.

CHIP again struggles, grunts, and achieves.

CHIP

I did it! Did you see that? I can do a push-up!

OLGA

Kanyeshna, of course! Step one complete. Now step two: make push-up part of life. You have bodily function, you push-up. You breathe, you blink, you get pancreatic shock from Dairy Queen, you push-up.

CHIP

Those are involuntary actions.

OLGA

And so push-ups shall be.

CHIP

It made sense. Total sense. I think, the push-up follows. I move, the push-up follows. And the girls will follow.

Sound of a toilet flushing.

CHIP

I started pushing up in secret, mostly in the unisex, astride the commode, with the door locked, and the lights off, when no one was looking. And other places at the DMV as well, like behind the camera before each picture, when no one was looking.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 3

Hi, I'm here to get a new license.

CHIP

What was it that drove me? I mean, girls, sure, but was it something deeper?

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 3

Okay, maybe someone else could take my picture.

CHIP

Self-preoccupation? Vanity? Nah. But then the most amazing thing happened.

OLGA

Bag douche, what up!

CHIP

Two! I can do two push-ups! In a row.

OLGA

You are junkie now.

CHIP

Olga was right. In the span of down and up I became obsessed, a fanatic, the journey obscuring the destination. [To OLGA] Show me more. Olga showed me the myriad of possibilities stemming from the common push-up: the vulture, the gorgon, the Wolf Blitzter. From a singular, elegant motion, the varieties of mutation. An endless road only exhilarates the traveler.

*CHIP on the ground, by the DMV counter,
doing push-ups.*

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 4

Hi, I'm here to get a new...what are you doing?

CHIP

Oh, um, the Wolf—

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 4

—your chest, is like, *so big*.

CHIP

Really?

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 4

My phone number.

CHIP

Already have it. Along with your VIN, date of birth, and weight.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 4

Creep.

CHIP

I'll admit, it was affecting my work. I couldn't focus on taking pictures, on getting heads to fit in some predetermined frame. The camera takes pictures of *faces*, the neck up, while the world craves *chest*. Before my chest was a rudderless, nebulous, shapeless, formless, fitnessless detritus of purposelessness. Now my life had new meaning, the push-up!, which never rejected my advances, taking me down towards the lie and pushing me up towards the truth. [Push-up down] The sit-up. [up] Truth. [down] The Stairmaster. [up] Truth. [down] Men's yoga pants. [up] Truth. I had become enlightened.

OLGA

Muffin stud! I got incredible fantastic milestone for you. The marathon. Twenty six point two freaking push-ups.

CHIP

Point two.

OLGA

In place where chaos and mayhem swirl like vanilla soft serve.

CHIP

Show me this place.

Sounds of a nightclub, music, GAY GUY dances nearby.

CHIP

Twenty five, twenty six...point two! [Collapses]

GAY GUY

God, DMV, you're like my superhero. You think you could snap a picture, *outside?*

CHIP

And with that I was pectorally liberated. My personal trainer told me! And personal trainers have more control over me than anyone else, except maybe my boss.

DMV BOSS

Hey suckmeister! Where the hell have you been? I'm getting more complaints!

BOSS freezes.

CHIP

Look at his arms. Are they not disproportionate? Are we not all disproportionate? What it could mean for the world if we all gathered at one location on this disproportionate planet and pushed-up, all of us pushing at the same time from the same place, in one motion pushing the world into another orbit, another plane of being, where triceps never tire, forearms never falter, pectorals never peter, where these crude amphibious legs could evolve into another set of arms, so that four limbs unite in pushing us to the highest heavens of space and time.

DMV BOSS

Complaints, suckenstein! Listen to this: man bras, shoulder pads, *neck meggings*? You don't need all that to take a picture, do you? So let's go! We got someone renewing a Class C!

CHIP

These chest-challenged picturees, masquerading as souls, they don't even know.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 5

Hi, I'm here to get a new license.

CHIP

You ever ride on the back of a man doing twenty six point two freaking push-ups while eating your expired license?

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 5

My ex-boyfriend, and he was a creep.

Outside, the sounds of crickets.

CHIP

I'll admit, in the warm summer evenings I'd stalk the Dairy Queen, watching lovers lick the charged air between them. I couldn't relate. These people *took walks* and *rode their bikes*. There had to be someplace where all my push-uppingness would pay off. So I did what anyone in my situation would do. I consulted the internet.

CHEST HUMPER is on, doing the perfect push-up.

CHIP

There were thousands of them, from all over the world, posting videos of their private push-up routines, glamorizing their chests. But one raised the push-up to a calling, who reached the end of that endless road with the perfect push-up. I messaged him: Chest-Humper, I love you! You’re everything I strive to be.

CHEST-HUMPER

Come to me.

CHIP

Where are you?

CHEST-HUMPER

Seaside Heights, New Jersey.

CHIP back at the DMV counter.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 6

Hi, I’m here to get a new—

CHIP

I’m raising money to travel all the way to Seaside Heights, New Jersey to meet the Chest Humper, and as part of my campaign all you have to do is check off next to the organ donor box that for every push-up I do you’ll donate a dollar to this very important cause.

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 6

Why, yes. I will.

CHIP

It was a long, long journey. I’ll admit, I’d never left Trenton before.

At the DMV counter, now DMV LADY.

DMV LADY

Welcome to Seaside Heights DMV, just take a number, we’ll—

CHIP

[Conspiratorially] I’m here...to see...the Chest Humper.

DMV LADY

Ay! Jerome!

CHEST HUMPER appears, by the camera.

CHIP

I messaged you.

CHEST HUMPER

I know.

CHIP

I didn't take a number.

CHEST HUMPER

Neither does anyone else. [Circling CHIP] Impressive. Answer me this: why do you push-up?

CHIP

Because I no longer believe in fear.

CHEST HUMPER

You are ready. Go to the boardwalk. Once there, take off your shirt, and all will become clear.

CHIP

Yes, your Chest Humperness.

Sounds of an ocean boardwalk.

CHIP

The boardwalk. Saturday. A gaggle of unwashed Jerseyites. I tremble in wild anticipation as I unbutton my custom Ed Hardy, from bottom to top, slowly saving the reveal for last. I slip off one shoulder, the other shoulder!...and then!...nothing. Nothing at all. No girls, no panting, no clawing, not even a seagull excreting its sentiment. Like I wasn't even there.

Sounds of an angry mob.

DMV BOSS

Hey, sucksack! Where the effing eff have you been? I've got complaints AND a line! You believe that? A LINE! So aim and click and don't give no shtick!

GIRL GETTING LICENSE 7

Whew! Hi! I'm here to get—

CHIP

A license, I know. Was it all for nothing? Some malicious lie? Torment is seeing the answer, believing in the answer and then having it disappear like an unspoken whisper in the hot summer night. I’m just a man with a dream. Smile.

OLGA

Daddy mack! Where you been?

CHIP

Seaside Heights.

OLGA

The hell what for?

CHIP

I’m not sure anymore. I thought I knew, but...all those push-ups and not one girl.

OLGA

Kanyeshna, of course! The push-up was so last week.

CHIP

What do you mean?

OLGA

The push-up is pushed *out*.

CHIP

Out? Well, what’s in?

OLGA

The pull-up.

CHIP

...the pull up!

Music rises as...

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.