

Chaplin and Keaton on the Set of “Limelight”

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Time: 1951

Setting: The Movie Set of the motion picture "Limelight," Hollywood, CA.

Characters:

Charles Chaplin, 62. White haired but still fit and vibrant. His Cockney accent is almost, but not quite, eradicated and replaced by a consciously cultured sound. Emotions bubble easily to his face. Usually energetic but sometimes shows a great fatigue from years of struggle.

Buster Keaton, 56. Looks easily as old as Charlie, face weathered by age, drink, and poverty, but still energetic. He sometimes laughs and smiles, though his face is usually inexpressive, which was his trademark. Deep baritone voice. He's physically fit for a man his age. Shorter than Chaplin.

The Tramp, 30ish. Chaplin's famous screen persona. Derby hat, baggy pants, smallish coat, all worn and faded, a bamboo cane and a toothbrush mustache, black. His trademark is his grace and elegance, which lets him dance out of trouble.

Stone Face, 30ish. Buster's famous screen persona. Porkpie hat, baggy pants, caked on white make-up, clean shaven. Short (5'3" or so) but powerfully built. He's known for never smiling, accepting his fate with deadpan stoicism.

The Girl, 20. Beautiful blond 1950's starlet. Plays the foil in The Tramp and Stone Face's comedy skits, plus breaks out and narrates when necessary. She looks wholesome and sweet with a great smile and look.

Beverly, 27. Very American. Curly red hair, not as refined or glamorous as The Girl, a bit forward and brash.

Claire Bloom/Oona Chaplin, 20. Both are beautiful, slender, dignified, and elegant. Long brown straight hair. The two characters look identical. Their only real distinguishing feature is that Claire is British and Oona is American.

The Tramp, Stone Face and The Girl are usually mute when they are performing their comedy routines. The other cast members don't notice them when they are performing.

Stone Face NEVER smiles.

Scene 1: The Dumb Show

At Rise: Two pianos: One stately grand piano, black, shiny and elegant - the other a humble upright, wooden and worn.

We see a title projected onto a movie screen, in the silent movie tradition.

TITLE

Once upon a time there were two funny men...

CHARLES CHAPLIN enters, nattily dressed in an impeccable tuxedo. He's not the Chaplin that the world knew and fell in love with. This Chaplin is an old man, hair silver and neatly trimmed, clean shaven, dapper and cultured.

He acknowledges the audience and sits at the grand piano and plays. His music is classical, elegant, and beautiful. Chaplin is an accomplished pianist.

TITLE

Charlie Chaplin...

THE TRAMP (Charlie Chaplin's famous silent persona) and THE GIRL sit at a dinner table, where they "talk" energetically

The Tramp impales two bread rolls on forks and clears the table in front of him. He then pretends the impaled rolls are feet and does his famous dance from "The Gold Rush" to the music of Chaplin's playing.

BUSTER KEATON enters, watches the scene, laughs along with the audience at the antics. He's an older man, dressed in his comedy outfit: porkpie hat, slap shoes, etc.

The Tramp finishes, The Girl applauds. Chaplin finishes with a musical flourish.

TITLE

...and...

TITLE

Buster Keaton

Buster moves to the upright piano and starts playing. Chaplin and The Tramp exit and STONE FACE enters to play a scene with The Girl at the table. Stone Face is Buster's comedy persona.

Buster sits at the upright piano and plays, a jaunty, ragtime-y, energetic tune.

Stone Face tries to make small talk with The Girl. The Girl grows bored with Stone Face and takes out a compact and starts adjusting her face in the little mirror. Stone Face is put off by The Girl's ignoring him.

After she is done, Stone Face asks for the compact, which she gives him. He then smears on some shaving cream, pulls out a razor blade and starts shaving. The Girl snatches her compact back and leaves the restaurant. Stone Face sulks, then leaves as well.

TITLE

But that was a long time ago.

Buster, now alone on the stage, finishes his piano playing with a flourish. He stands up, unsteadily, takes a flask of whiskey from his pocket, takes a long swig.

BUSTER: That was a long time ago.

He speaks aloud to no one, practicing.

BUSTER: Hello Charlie. Thank you for asking me to be in your picture. Maybe after this one is done, we can talk about another project.

Pause.

BUSTER: That will never work.

Buster takes another swig and staggers off.

BUSTER: Charlie! It's been such a long time, my friend. You look so wonderful still...

Scene 2: Make-Up Room

CLAIRE BLOOM rushes in sobbing violently. She is followed by Charlie Chaplin, who rushes in after her. Claire speaks with a measured, high-class British accent, even when agitated.

CHAPLIN: Claire! Listen to me. Listen to what I have to say.

Claire stops and turns, but does not speak.

CHAPLIN: I am sorry that you're hurt. But I'm making a movie. We're making a movie. You must understand that when I am in the middle of a production, everything else in my life must become secondary.

Claire, disgusted, starts to turn away. Chaplin stops her.

CHAPLIN: Don't turn away. Listen. That scene is the emotional center of this film. It requires that you burst out into tears, that you be very genuinely emotional. That's why I said the things that I said. I needed the effect, and it had to be perfect. When your children and your grandchildren one day hear the name "Charles Chaplin," I want them to think of you and me and that scene and "Limelight."

Claire stammers a response through her sobs.

CLAIRE: You- You- Could- Try- Letting me *act*- Once in a while.

CHAPLIN: Claire-

CLAIRE: Charles. No one has ever directed me like you do. You show me what to do and expect me to duplicate it. You terrorize me and then you ignore me. I don't know what's coming next. I don't understand it. I don't understand any of it.

CHAPLIN: It's simply the way I work. I can't change after five decades.

CLAIRE: But I can't be you, don't you understand? No one can be Charles Chaplin but Charles Chaplin. No one can live up to your standard. And when you make me do the same scene over and over again so many times in front of everyone I feel like shouting, or crying. Will I ever be adequate? Will I ever please you?

CHAPLIN: Claire, you must know that you are doing a wonderful job. If you were not, I would have had you replaced by now. I don't have any qualms about that, you know. I once replaced an actress after an entire year's work when she displeased me.

CLAIRE: What did she do?

CHAPLIN: She asked for time off the shoot to get her hair done. We were to film the closing shot of *City Lights* the next day. It was the most emotional and difficult scene I had ever attempted, and she had the gall to ask for a day off to set her hair right? It was good-bye and farewell to her.

CLAIRE: So, let me see if I understand you. You are trying to comfort me by saying that you can have me replaced at any time without warning?

He takes her by the hands.

CHAPLIN: I am not going to have you replaced. You are doing a remarkable job. And if I were displeased with you, I would let you know in no uncertain terms. Now, do you feel better?

CLAIRE: Yes, Charles. Thank you.

They embrace politely. After a beat, a knock on the door.

OFFSTAGE VOICE: Mr. Chaplin?

CHAPLIN: Yes?

BEVERLY, an assistant, enters. She's wearing non-glamorous work clothing.

BEVERLY: The boys are ready for the next scene when you are.

CHAPLIN: Wonderful. Just give us some time to compose ourselves.

BEVERLY: Yes sir.

CHAPLIN: Oh, Beverly?

BEVERLY: Yes, Mr. Chaplin?

CHAPLIN: Has Mr. Keaton appeared yet?

BEVERLY: Not as of yet. Were we expecting him today?

CHAPLIN: I thought it was today.

BEVERLY: I thought it was on Wednesday.

CHAPLIN: Well, if he does appear today, make sure to let me know.

BEVERLY: I'll keep an eye out.

CHAPLIN: That's all, thank you.

Chaplin turns to Claire.

CHAPLIN: Come, let's get you cleaned up.

They go to a mirror to readjust Claire's smeared make up.

CLAIRE: Who is that person you're waiting for, Charles?

CHAPLIN: Keaton. Buster Keaton. He's the chap who will play my comedy partner in the scene tomorrow.

CLAIRE: Oh. Well I hope he's funny, then.

Chaplin sighs.

CLAIRE: What is it now, Charlie?

CHAPLIN: What has become of this godforsaken world these days?

CLAIRE: Whatever do you mean?

Quietly, Buster enters, unseen by Chaplin and Claire, carrying a suitcase. He listens, stone faced, to the conversation, giving no hint that he is there.

Chaplin searches his bag for a photo.

CHAPLIN: That everyone could forget so easily.

Chaplin finds the photo, hands it to Claire.

CHAPLIN: There, that's him. You honestly don't know who Buster Keaton is?

CLAIRE: He's so young. I thought the role called for a washed up has been.

CHAPLIN: Well, that's him. I mean that's an old photo. He's close to my age.

CLAIRE: Did he work for you in your silent moves? That was a long time ago.

CHAPLIN: Young lady. Back in the 1920's there was no more original comic mind than the one resting on Buster Keaton's shoulders. He didn't make the most money, of course, but he was unquestionably the most formidable of them all.

CLAIRE: What, better than you?

CHAPLIN: I didn't say he was better than I. Just more original. You see, back then there were entire months when my cameraman would come to work in the morning, bleary-eyed and sleepy-headed. "What in heaven's name has happened to you, Rollie?" I asked. "Charlie, I was up last night watching the late showing of Keaton's new movie, trying to figure out how he does it. I've seen it 16 times now and I still don't have a clue. The man's a genius!"

CLAIRE: Well, if Keaton was so brilliant, then why isn't he working today? These small cameos can't pay his rent.

CHAPLIN: It's a bit of a sad story. His marriage fell apart, rather famously. He drank himself into a stupor. And then the fool let himself lose creative control of his own movies, can you imagine that? Later on I saw him toiling away in third rate productions... horrible two reelers, where he was the only thing worth watching. The last I heard of him, the poor fellow had been kicked out of some circus in Paris.

CLAIRE: How nice, then, that you're throwing him a rope. Or a bone.

CHAPLIN: Well, he can certainly do this part. That is, if the man's sober.

CLAIRE: I must say that he bears a curious resemblance to the character that you play in this movie.

CHAPLIN: How do you mean?

CLAIRE: Well your "Calvero" character in this movie is a washed up entertainer ruined by drink and obscurity.

CHAPLIN: And so is Keaton. I see. Well I assure you, it's completely coincidental.

From offstage, Beverly's voice calls.

BEVERLY: Mr. Chaplin!

Chaplin calls without looking. Buster is amused.

CHAPLIN: Not yet. Tell the boys we'll be there soon.

Chaplin sits in his chair and sighs.

CLAIRE: Is there something the matter, Charles?

CHAPLIN: I do hope I haven't erred in hiring Keaton. Such a sad case, I know. When I heard about him getting kicked out of that circus... How low one can get if one really works at it. Even someone like him, a true genius. There's just no telling if the man has anything left.

Buster puts his hand on Chaplin's shoulder.

BUSTER: Mr. Chaplin!

CHAPLIN: We're not ready yet. How many-

Chaplin turns, sees Buster. A look of pure shock. Claire looks too. Suddenly, Chaplin breaks into a wide grin, stumbles to his feet.

CHAPLIN: Mr. Keaton! Buster. How... excellent you look. What a surprise!

BUSTER: I do have a few miles left in the tank, Charlie.

CHAPLIN: Yes... But, how? So... fit! You look very well. The last I heard you were toiling away...

BUSTER: I know. But those circuses pay better than y'might think, Charlie, especially the French ones.

Chaplin chuckles, looks Buster up and down. The Girl realizes that Buster has overheard their conversation and is horrified.

Beverly enters.

BEVERLY: Mr. Chaplin, I think this Buster fella is... Oh.

CHAPLIN: Thank you Beverly. But as it turns out, not needed. You may however want to visit wardrobe and tell them that he's arrived.

BEVERLY: Right away.

Beverly exits.

BUSTER: Wardrobe. What's wrong with what I'm wearing?

CHAPLIN: You are a vision, indeed. The floppy hat, the baggy pants, the slap shoes. Just like the old days, like you're 25 again. But we're not playing our old characters anymore, Buster. I am not The Tramp today, and you are not... you.

BUSTER: Who are we, then? Laurel and Hardy?

CLAIRE: You must be Buster.

Buster turns to Claire, raises his hat.

BUSTER: Good afternoon, miss.

CLAIRE: Hello.

CHAPLIN: How negligent of me. Buster, meet Claire Bloom, the very talented leading lady of our little company.

CLAIRE: Lovely to meet you.

BUSTER: Charmed. (to Chaplin) A very lovely girl.

CHAPLIN: (to Buster) Never you mind. (to Claire) And of course, Buster Keaton, comedy legend.

BUSTER: You make it sound like I'm already dead when you say things like that.

Pause. Nervous laughter. No one knows what to say.

BUSTER: So, what's this dang movie about anyway?

CHAPLIN: We'll get to that later. Come, come. We have some catching up to do.

BUSTER: Y'know Charlie. I was thinking. Maybe after this thing we should... talk a little.

CHAPLIN: Oh?

BUSTER: Y'see, I have some ideas.

Chaplin leads Buster offstage. Claire looks at Keaton's headshot, shrugs, sets it down and leaves.

TITLE

Exposition.

The Girl comes out and addresses the audience. During the speech, she notices the two players in the background, and becomes increasingly annoyed at their antics.

THE GIRL: In 1951, Charles Spencer Chaplin summoned Joseph “Buster” Keaton to the set of his latest movie, *Limelight*, to play a small but pivotal role.

Stone Face enters, carrying a traveling bag.

THE GIRL: From the years 1920 to 1930, Keaton was one of the silent film era’s most accomplished comedians, second only to Charlie Chaplin.

The Tramp enters, shuffles past Stone Face with a hop.

THE GIRL: In 1929, Keaton’s contract was sold to the Metro Goldwyn Mayer studios. Despite assurances to the contrary, Keaton soon lost artistic control of his films and eventually fell from the ranks of Hollywood’s stars.

Stone Face pantomimes signing a contract.

THE GIRL: In the 1930’s, Chaplin became the last of the silent comedians to make the switch to sound. His movies remained triumphant, but his reputation was marred by numerous scandals.

The Tramp tries to walk past while hiding his face.

THE GIRL: In the 1930’s, Keaton was often dead drunk and dead broke. He recovered his senses, but was forced to take work wherever he could find it, making hundreds of low-grade comedies.

Stone Face pantomimes drinking.

THE GIRL: In the 1940’s, Chaplin was sued by a woman for paternity of a child, persecuted by the government for his political views, and reviled by the American public for his outspoken support of Russia during the second world war. He made only two movies in a span of ten years.

The Tramp pantomimes being a judge and passing judgment.

THE GIRL: In 1951, in the twilight of their careers, screen legend Charles Chaplin summoned screen legend Buster Keaton to the set of Chaplin’s latest movie to play their first ever scene together.

The Girl exits, dragging both comedians offstage by the ears.

Scene 3: In the Make-Up Room

Beverly has Buster on a block with his arms out. There is a costume laid out on a chair. Beverly searches the dressing room drawers, turning the room inside out.

BEVERLY: ...you would think that I would get some notice. You would think that since it's my job to have everything ready, they might tell me in advance that you might be coming and that I should have the costume stuff ready, but I suppose a genius like Charles Chaplin can't be bothered with those sorts of details.

BUSTER: How long do I have to hold this position?

BEVERLY: You can put your arms down. I can't take your measurements until I find the tape measure which should be right here.

BUSTER: I know my own measurements, you know. My waist is 28 inches and my inseam is 26.

Beverly stops her rummaging and talks to herself.

BEVERLY: Alright, Beverly. Let's think about this. Suppose I take his word on it. And then something goes wrong. His pants start slipping in the middle of a scene. Who would get yelled at in front of the entire crew? Me. Is there any reason I wouldn't get yelled at? No. He yells at Rollie the camera fella, and he's been working with Chuck for three decades. No, I have to find the darn thing and measure his darn waist myself and it's supposed to be here. It's always here.

(to Buster)

You know you can come down from there.

BUSTER: Oh? Well, I'd rather stay if you don't mind. I rather enjoy the view from up high. It's not a view I get very much these days.

BEVERLY: Well, you could also help me look for the tape measure, you know, if it's not too much of a bother.

Buster thinks for a moment. He sees a long ruler sitting on a table, hops off the block and picks up the ruler.

BUSTER: Excuse me?

BEVERLY: What?

BUSTER: Do you have any string?

BEVERLY: There's spools of it in the cabinet over there.

Buster goes to the cabinet, takes out a length of string. Beverly is getting even more irritated searching for the missing measuring tape.

BUSTER: Um... Miss?

BEVERLY: What?

BUSTER: Hold this.

He hands her the long ruler.

BEVERLY: What do I-?

Buster holds his finger to his lips, adjusts Beverly so that she holds the ruler straight across. He then takes the string and pulls a length across his belt line, marking with his thumb where it loops. He then pulls the string taut next to the ruler and measures.

BUSTER: Twenty-eight inches. Do you need my inseam next?

BEVERLY: You know what? I'll take your word for it. Here. You can fill it out.

She hands the measurement sheet to Buster, who goes to write down his measurements.

Chaplin rushes in.

- CHAPLIN: Ah, there you are. How goes it?
- BUSTER: Fine, Charlie. Just getting to know the help.
- CHAPLIN: Yes, dear Beverly. The most capable assistant a director can ask for.
- BUSTER: I can see that already.
- BEVERLY: I'm done with the measurements. I can start adjusting the costumes.
- CHAPLIN: Splendid.
- BEVERLY: I need to remind you that we have a preliminary press conference this weekend.
- CHAPLIN: Just wonderful. I'll bring the suit of armor, and you bring the snakebit kit.
- KEATON: That bad, eh?
- CHAPLIN: It's not worth talking about. (to Beverly) Go on.
- BEVERLY: Eugene wants you to look at the latest stage model for the ballet.
- CHAPLIN: Right. After today's filming then.
- BEVERLY: Melissa and Andre are scheduled to arrive next Monday. Andre seemed very keen to begin work on the choreography.
- CHAPLIN: Yes, he would be. Have you seen the spare copy of the script? Buster needs to start learning his lines.
- BEVERLY: It's underneath your notes on lighting. By the costume sketches?
- CHAPLIN: Splendid. (He starts off) Oh, Beverly?
- BEVERLY: Yes, Mr. Chaplin?
- CHAPLIN: Can you see that this measuring tape I borrowed be put back?

He tosses the missing measuring tape to Beverly who catches it. She stares at Buster, who smiles as he finishes the measurement form.

- BUSTER: Good to see that Charlie hasn't lost his comic timing after all these years.

Beverly puts away the measuring tape.

- BEVERLY: This is one of those days mother warned me about.
- BUSTER: The only change I would've made was I would've had you fumble the measuring tape. Then I would have caught it in midair. That would've been even better.
- BEVERLY: You know, I'm glad that you're enjoying yourself, Mister.
- BUSTER: Call me Buster.
- BEVERLY: OK, Buster. You know that fellas like the great Charles Chaplin, they don't realize that it's the regular schmoes like you and me. We're the ones who do the grunt work that make him look like a star.

Beverly goes to work on the costume, ignoring Buster.

- BUSTER: Right. Just us regular folk.

Chaplin enters holding a very large script.

- CHAPLIN: Ah, I found your copy of the script. So where was I?

BUSTER: Ready to make your grand re-entrance.

CHAPLIN: Yes... so I was about to explain the movie.

Chaplin moves to the center of the room, acting out his words in pantomime as much as he can.

CHAPLIN: In a nutshell, it's boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy meets girl again tale. By the time your character appears, my character, Calvero, is downtrodden and desperate, but set to star in one last attempt to recapture the former glory and fame he enjoyed in the waning days of vaudeville before the movies came and destroyed it. You are present in the climax, the pivotal point of the entire movie. Calvero tries to find one show, one hit, that will redeem his career, with your character's help, of course, and pull him back from the brink of oblivion. And you say...

He hands Buster the script.

BUSTER: "I never thought it'd turn out like *this*." (to Chaplin) Funny.

CHAPLIN: I'm glad that you think so.

Buster continues reading.

BUSTER: "If anybody else says it's like old times, I'll jump out the window." Heh. But it's nothing like old times, is it? And after this scene?

CHAPLIN: After this scene we go directly into the final triumphant return to glory of Calvero. I get back into my shabby stage costume and win back the adoration of the public... with the help of my comedic sidekick, of course.

BUSTER: Of course. What's our shtick?

CHAPLIN: I am a downtrodden tramp violinist and you will accompany me on the piano.

Chaplin points to the upright piano.

BUSTER: A Piano. Hmm... Yes, I know. I can play it too hard, and then break a wire. Then I'll be forced to climb inside the piano...

CHAPLIN: Buster.

BUSTER: My hands will get stuck inside the wires...

CHAPLIN: Buster. I have the routine planned out. I will do a bit of business with a disappearing leg and a broken violin string. You will fumble with your sheet music.

BUSTER: I... I fumble my sheet music?

CHAPLIN: Yes. There are a few variations we can play off of, but that will be the basic tenor of the scene.

BUSTER: (Shrugs) Alright. You're the boss. So then what?

CHAPLIN: Well, eventually, we do have to play. When we play, it'll be a mad parody of musical virtuosity. And it's received to great acclaim from the audience. And during the end of this final triumph, Calvero tumbles into the orchestra pit, ending up wedged into a timpani drum. A doctor is found. On-stage, my protégé, the beautiful ballerina named Terry, dances to acclaim while Calvero learns that he has

suffered a fatal attack and will not last the evening. His last wish is to be in the wings to watch his true love dance as he expires. The end.

Chaplin looks euphoric in envisioning the scene. Buster looks confused.

BEVERLY: The costumes is ready to try on.

CHAPLIN: Ah. Let's get you dressed.

He herds Buster behind a dressing screen.

BUSTER: Tell me, Charlie, is the whole movie like this?

CHAPLIN: Like what?

BUSTER: A... I don't know... Some sort of sappy... A valentine to the old days?

CHAPLIN: I don't know if I'd call it a valentine, Buster. I just wanted to tell the story of all those vaudevillians put out with the coming of movies. Technology causing the obsolescence of the human, a whole class of noble performers gone. It's a theme I think any auto worker in Michigan or farmer from Duluth can get behind.

BUSTER: All well and good, Charlie, but no one's going to be able to watch all this lost glory stuff and not think of you.

CHAPLIN: That will be their problem, I'm afraid.

BUSTER: Well, what do you think?

Buster is dressed in the costume. It's baggy and shabby looking.

CHAPLIN: Perfect! You look absolutely decrepit and wretched. And when make up is done with you, you'll look twenty years older. Hmmm... Maybe we could make it more shabby.

BUSTER: I have my image to think of, you know. Don't make me too shabby.

CHAPLIN: Beverly, take Buster's jacket and rough it up a little.

Beverly takes Buster's jacket. Oona Chaplin, Chaplin's wife walks in, holding a picnic basket.

OONA: Hello? Are you in?

CHAPLIN: Darling!

He goes to Oona and kisses her affectionately.

OONA: How is Lovie today?

CHAPLIN: Just wonderful, as usual. Wonderful. And how was your day?

OONA: Simply darling, darling. I brought you sandwiches and a salad and fresh squeezed lemonade.

BUSTER: And here I thought your days of canoodling with leading ladies was over, you old devil.

CHAPLIN: Excuse me?

BEVERLY: Uh, Buster-

BUSTER: I knew that talk about Chaplin the changed man was just talk.

CHAPLIN: Buster. This isn't.... This is my wife. Oona.
BUSTER: Didn't I just see you earlier?
OONA: No. That must have been Claire. She happens to resemble me.
BUSTER: I see. Well, that's why I was a comedian, you see. For sometimes I make a fool of myself.
OONA: It's no matter, Buster, really.
CHAPLIN: She's been quite keen to meet you in fact.
BUSTER: Is that a fact, now?
OONA: Well, I've watched quite a few films from that time. After marrying Charles, how could I not?
BUSTER: I'm mighty flattered a young pup like yourself remembers an old coot like me.
OONA: Remember you? I would say that you'd be extremely difficult to forget.
CHAPLIN: If you don't mind, I need a word alone with my wife.
BEVERLY: I have the jacket ready to try on.

Chaplin and Oona talk on one side of the stage. Beverly and Buster talk on the other. Their conversations overlap.

OONA: So I brought chicken salad and a turkey club-
CHAPLIN: Thank you Oona, but-
OONA: I found this wonderful deli near the house-
CHAPLIN: That doesn't matter right now.
OONA: Didn't you want me to bring lunch?
CHAPLIN: You know that I do. But... did you visit the bank today? (Pause.) Well?

Oona can't look Chaplin in the eye.

BEVERLY: So I didn't know you were in movies, before. I thought you were vaudeville.
BUSTER: I was in a couple of films in my time.
BEVERLY: Any I ever heard of?
BUSTER: Well. There was *The General*... or maybe you heard of *The Navigator*.
BEVERLY: No.
BUSTER: How about *Our Hospitality*? *The Battling Butler*? *The Cameraman*?
BEVERLY: When were all these? I've never heard of any of them.
BUSTER: The 20's.
BEVERLY: How about more recent? Like the 30's?
BUSTER: Well... There was *The Passionate Plumber*...
BEVERLY: Oh. I saw that one. With Jimmy Durante, right?
BUSTER: Yes, with Jimmy Durante.
BEVERLY: What a kick. I remember you now. Of course. You were in *What! No Beer?* and *Speak Easily* with Durante. You were his sidekick, the little fella. I never would have guessed.

Buster glowers as Beverly adjusts the jacket.

OONA: No. I didn't go to the bank.

CHAPLIN: Oona.

OONA: I meant to. I did, but it was such a wonderful day, and the children wanted to go to the park and play. And then it was noon-

CHAPLIN: I need you to do this. I know you don't like it, but it's necessary.

OONA: But why is it necessary? Do you really think-

CHAPLIN: You need to trust me on this one.

OONA: But surely they can't do that to us.

CHAPLIN: We cannot let ourselves be at their mercy. Please, go to the bank. For me.

OONA: I know, I just-

CHAPLIN: We've been over this so many times.

OONA: I know, Charles. I just don't want this to be true. You weren't born here, but this is my country. I just don't want to think that someone can just take away your life because they don't like what you think or what you say.

Chaplin holds a crying Oona.

CHAPLIN: I know, I know, I know....

BEVERLY: So what's it like, being Jimmy Durante's sidekick? That must've been something.

Buster looks at the girl, shows no reaction whatsoever to her question.

BUSTER: Let me show you something. Beverly, was it?

BEVERLY: Yes.

BUSTER: Could you hand me my bag over there?

She fetches the bag, hands it to Buster. He looks inside and hands her a photo.

BUSTER: Take a look at that.

BEVERLY: Oh. What a beautiful house. It's like a mansion.

BUSTER: It had 43 rooms, if I recall correctly. Imported marble from Italy, custom built every piece of it. 12 acres. It took two and a half years to finish.

BEVERLY: It's absolutely gorgeous. Is this one of those postcards of the Hollywood mansions they sell at the drug store? The dwellings of the superstars?

BUSTER: No. That used to be my house.

Beverly is absolutely stunned and embarrassed. Buster goes and takes the photo from her hands, puts it in his bag again. They sit in silence, staring ahead.

OONA: Why can't they just leave us alone?

CHAPLIN: Because I've said too many things. Because the country is set to march itself off a cliff, and it will trample anyone who says otherwise.

OONA: I don't want it to be like this.

CHAPLIN: Neither do I.

They embrace.

BUSTER: Do you have any other questions?

She shakes her head.

BUSTER: Why don't you get me a coffee, Beverly?

BEVERLY: Yes, sir. I'm terribly-

BUSTER: Just get the coffee.

Beverly starts to exit in a rush. Chaplin looks up.

CHAPLIN: Beverly. What's the matter?

BEVERLY: Need... to get coffee.

CHAPLIN: Splendid. Make mine a tea.

Beverly exits on the verge of tears.

CHAPLIN: What on earth is the matter with that girl?

BUSTER: I cannot imagine.

OONA: I should go too-

CHAPLIN: Don't be mad at me darling.

OONA: I'm not mad at you. I could never be mad at you.

Oona exits on the verge of tears.

BUSTER: What was-

CHAPLIN: It was nothing.

BOTH: Women.

CHAPLIN: Maybe now we have some time to discuss the scene.

Chaplin closes the door, leaving them in private.

BUSTER: That Beverly. That's one pretty little number, Charlie. Is she just your assistant?

CHAPLIN: I'm a married man now, Buster. As are you.

BUSTER: You were married before, too. I was married before. It's not exactly an insurmountable obstacle.

CHAPLIN: Beverly is my assistant. Oona is my wife. And I'm very keen to keep it that way.

BUSTER: Charlie Chaplin gone straight. I thought I'd never see the day.

CHAPLIN: Posh! And I suppose you'd jeopardize your marriage to Eleanor for some star struck, would-be starlet?

BUSTER: So you're really a one woman man these days, huh?

CHAPLIN: I swear it to be true.

BUSTER: Just Oona?