

Standup Routine

by

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INT. COMEDY PERFORMANCE - NIGHT

JAMES is standing on a wooden stage with a wireless microphone in his hand. A flood light shines on him. Everything around him is too dark to be seen clearly. JAMES then poses in a shimmying star shape as if to say 'look at me!'

JAMES  
Hello, audience! How ya diddlings??

The AUDIENCE shouts positively as JAMES stands upright, normally.

AUDIENCE  
We're diddling fine! How you diddling?!

JAMES  
I'm diddling great! So, my mental home let me out for the day, give me a shout if your mental home has let you out for the day!

An AUDIENCE MEMBER shouts.

AUDIENCE MEMBER  
Woooo! Woooohooo! Wooooooohhohooohoo!

JAMES  
Hi Steve.

The flood light follows JAMES around as he causally walks across the platform.

JAMES  
So I hit Dan, the other day. And he was like 'ow!' and I was like 'yeah'. Then he was like 'what did you do that for?' And I was like 'You know what, I don't know.' He was going 'has anything made you upset recently?' It really got me thinking. Yes. Yes, I am upset. Just the other day I was in my girlfriend's house and she explained how she always thought I was too good for her. Then she said 'but after I got to know you, I was thinking... maybe not so much.'

The AUDIENCE gives a sympathetic groan.

JAMES

So, yeah. I hit Dan. Then I remembered the time I ate everything in her house as fast as possible to impress her parents, but they just called me greedy. I was actually called the greediest person they'd ever seen, I was told I have an eating disorder and should go back to the home! I explained how I was training to be a speed eater and they should look up to me, but they weren't having it and ordered me to pay for everything. The thing is I ate caviar. I can't pay for that!

The AUDIENCE groans again.

JAMES

As I was so upset afterwards, I voluntarily went to the home again, but no one wanted me there. I asked why, and they said I make the people so nauseated there, they pass out! I was like 'wow, they passed out? Maximum points!' Then they got really angry!

The AUDIENCE gives another understanding noise.

JAMES

Thanks for being so supportive, I really do appreciate it! But you know I don't really hit Dan, don't you? You know I'm just playing?

The AUDIENCE shout.

AUDIENCE

We believe you!

JAMES

So we know I don't hit Dan. HOWEVER, if I DID hit him, do you know how I'd do it?

AUDIENCE

How??

JAMES

With a spade!

The performance goes on and on, you get the idea.

INT. POLICE STATION, ONE WEEK LATER - DAY

JAMES is sitting facing a POLICE OFFICER in a bare room. The former bites his thumb, clearly nervous.

POLICE OFFICER  
Hello, James. Are you well?

JAMES  
No, you?

POLICE OFFICER  
I'm fine thanks.

JAMES gives a double thumbs up.

POLICE OFFICER  
James, there have been very serious allegations made against you. Do you know what they are?

JAMES  
Making mental health nurses faint from stress?

POLICE OFFICER  
No. Are you aware that your podcast co-host has accused you of assaulting him?

JAMES  
Oh, THAT.

POLICE OFFICER  
So you're admitting it?

JAMES  
Whoops. I mean no.

POLICE OFFICER  
James, you could go to jail...

JAMES  
Where's the evidence?

POLICE OFFICER  
For one thing, you talk about hitting him for at least half an hour in your comedy performance that you call 'Why I hit Dan and how.'

JAMES  
In my performance I make it VERY clear that I'm joking...

POLICE OFFICER  
Yes, and no one believes you.

JAMES  
Are you sure? You should have been to my latest gig, the audience did actually say they believed me...

POLICE OFFICER  
Yes, to try and calm you down. People feel fearful when they hear the kind of things you say.

JAMES  
Are you sure?

POLICE OFFICER  
Positive.

JAMES  
Oh. But it's a complex investigation? Lots of people to question, over a long time?

POLICE OFFICER  
Yes.

JAMES  
In that case, I won't be going to jail right away? If I get wrongly convicted, I mean?

POLICE OFFICER  
Right.

JAMES  
Great. Because I want to keep performing.

INT. COMEDY PERFORMANCE, A DAY LATER - NIGHT

JAMES is back on stage with the light shining on him. He raises both hands high in the air and shakes them. Very showbiz. However, he looks nervous.

JAMES  
How ya diddlings??

AUDIENCE  
We're diddling fine!

JAMES casually walks around again.

JAMES

Wish I was. So I got accused by the police of hitting Dan in reality and not just in my sweetest, most precious dreams!

The AUDIENCE are sympathetic once again.

JAMES

Glad you believe I'm innocent. You're not scared of me are you?

There is silence. JAMES scratches his head as he rambles.

JAMES

Glad you're fine, so let's go back to my old fictional routine that we all know and love! So I hit... So I hit..

.

JAMES clearly starts to sweat.

JAMES

(to himself)

Well not HIT... So... Dear Jesus, what in God's name am I supposed to talk about without coming across as shady? I don't think I can do this...

JAMES stands still and looks down.

JAMES

(to himself again)

Just explain my old routine was just a joke and repeat it. Easy, you've started already and it's worked.

JAMES finally finds the confidence to look ahead.

JAMES

So, I kneed...

The AUDIENCE is silent.

JAMES

I'm so sorry, this performance is harder than I assumed it would be. It feels too real. But it isn't.

An AUDIENCE MEMBER shouts as JAMES scratches his head once more.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Just pretend you're innocent!

JAMES  
 (mumbling)  
 Err... punch Dan, kick him, and so  
 forth. But not in real life...

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER  
 This isn't funny, this is a thousand  
 people watching a crazy person!

JAMES  
 So I was at my girlfriend's house...

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER  
 Who'd go out with you??

JAMES  
 This is a very specific kind of  
 person, but imagine someone who  
 seemed to want all the food in her  
 house gone, but she hated the thought  
 of putting it in the bin, and her  
 parents put up with that or at least  
 pretended too for a while or  
 something and then got SO angry, I  
 don't know, THAT'S who I'm...

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER  
 (interrupting)  
 Get off!

JAMES nods.

JAMES  
 Will do. But put in a good word to  
 the police for me, please. And punch.  
 .. No, don't punch Dan but do and  
 don't. Oh never mind, bye.

The AUDIENCE boos.

JAMES  
 Bye.

JAMES walks off the stage as the light follows him.