

'SMILE'

A Short Film by Allan Plenderleith

OPENING TITLES AND MUSIC

INT. SCHOOL - ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

We begin on a CLOSE-UP of the gloomy face of a 9 year old boy
- DANIEL.

MALE VOICE (O/S)

Smile!

Daniel, however, does not smile.

FEMALE VOICE (O/S)

Come on Daniel, don't be miserable.
You're mother will kill me if you've got
a face like a wet Wednesday.

Daniel reacts to this by looking even more miserable.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT

It's school photo day, and the PHOTOGRAPHER, a trendy 33 year old chap, has set up his camera, tripod, lights and screen in the centre of the room. A queue of restless pupils wait in line as their teacher, a MRS. HENDERSON stands to one side.

Mrs. Henderson is clearly frustrated with Daniel and comes over to him.

MRS.HENDERSON

Oh for goodness sake. How hard can it
be? Just a little smile.

Daniel's eyes are fixed forward and he refuses to budge. Mrs. Henderson throws her hands up in the air in defeat and begins pacing around the room.

MRS.HENDERSON (cont'd)

Oh I give up, Daniel Patterson. It's the
same every year. I ask for one simple
thing and you...*(her rant fades off into
a background mutter)*

The Photographer can see another approach is required. He sidles up to Daniel and pretends he's taking an exposure reading.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHOTOGRAPHER

(quietly)

You know, a smile is a very powerful weapon. It has all sorts of secret powers.

Daniel looks interested for the first time. The Photographer returns to behind his camera; Mrs. Henderson is still muttering away to herself.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Er, Mrs. Henderson...

Mrs. Henderson stops her mumbled rant and looks up.

PHOTOGRAPHER

...a wee coffee?

The photographer flashes her a charming smile. Mrs. Henderson is tickled by this.

MRS. HENDERSON

Hmm? Oh! Certainly!

She exits the hallway with a renewed bounce in her step.

Daniel looks genuinely surprised.

PHOTOGRAPHER (cont'd)

Now how about a little one for me, hmm?

Daniel gives half a smile, too lost in thought to put his heart into it. The photographer laughs to himself before pressing the button.

There is a BRIGHT FLASH...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - AFTERNOON

School has finished for the day, and Daniel is walking down the street, deep in thought.

Up ahead, a Yorkshire Terrier is tied to a lamppost. He comes to a stop before the dog, his face emotionless.

The dog looks up at him and is similarly unmoved.

Daniel decides to test out the photographer's theory and grins at the dog, bearing all his teeth. The dog reacts by bearing its teeth, snarling. The dog begins barking wildly at him, tugging on its lead.

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CONTINUED:

Daniel jumps back, startled. He thinks about this for a moment but shrugs it off, and continues down the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHTS - SAME TIME

Daniel comes up to the crossing and presses the button.

A car pulls up at the red light.

Daniel sees a MALE DRIVER sitting in his car, miserable after a grim day at work.

Daniel decides to try again. As he walks across he smiles cheesily at the driver. The smile is clearly false and he actually looks slightly mad.

The driver looks up and appears puzzled at first but then begins smiling.

As Daniel crosses, he twists and begins walking backwards, smiling at the driver all the while. The lights change to green but the driver fails to notice.

Suddenly, CRASH!, the car lurches forward - someone has crashed into his rear.

The driver slaps the steering wheel and begins getting out of his car.

Daniel scarpers.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - SAME TIME

An elderly lady is sitting at the bus stop, chewing. Daniel enters the bus stop and glances over at her. She has some toffees in her lap and is moaning to herself about the late bus when she notices Daniel.

ELDERLY LADY

Oh, pay no attention to me, son.
The bus is late again and I'm going to miss Countdown.

Daniel clocks the toffees and gives her a 'bambi-eyed' smile.

ELDERLY LADY (cont'd)

My what lovely teeth! I used to have lovely teeth like that until they all fell out! Look.

The Elderly lady pushes her teeth out and they land in the bag of toffees.

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CONTINUED:

ELDERLY LADY (cont'd)
Oooopsh!

DANIEL
Aaaaaaarh!

Daniel runs out of the bus stop in horror as the bus arrives.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUS - MOVING - SAME TIME

Daniel steps onto the bus, pays, and runs quickly up the stairs, safe from flying false teeth.

He sits down, adjacent to a pretty young girl around the same age as himself, on the other side of the bus.

She is texting a message on her mobile phone, her thumb moving like lightning. She looks over and sees Daniel. He decides to put on the charm and gives her a flashy 'dodgy car salesman' smile.

BUS GIRL
(aggressively)
What are you grinning at?

Daniel keeps grinning, too embarrassed to stop.

BUS GIRL (cont'd)
Are you a psycho or somethin'?

Daniel eyes widen in panic - the smile is cracking.

BUS GIRL (cont'd)
I'm going to start getting taxis home.

The girl stands up and moves to another seat.

Daniel's face drops, slightly miffed at this rejection, and he stares out of the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN ROAD - BECOMING DARK

The bus pulls away revealing Daniel, walking down the street.

He suddenly bumps into a LARGE BOY of about 13, who is talking to a LANKY BOY.

LARGE BOY
Hey! Are you blind?

DANIEL
Sorry.

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CONTINUED:

LARGE BOY
Sorry? Give us your money.

DANIEL
Huh?

LARGE BOY
(shouting)
I said give us your money or you'll be
going home in an ambulance!

Daniel looks at the boy and his friend and, realising he can't fight back, tries a counter tactic - he smiles.

LANKY BOY
What's he smiling for?

The Large Boy is confused and enraged at the same time. He raises his fist.

LARGE BOY
I'll wipe that smile off your stupid
face!

Although nervous, Daniel's smile holds, acting as his shield. The Lanky Boy holds the Large Boy's arm.

LANKY BOY
Don't waste your time. He looks like
he'd enjoy it.

Daniel is empowered by this and his smile strengthens. The Large Boy thinks for a minute and agrees, lowering his fist.

LARGE BOY
Nutter.

Before they leave, the Large Boy pushes Daniel - he stumbles backwards losing his balance and falls into a dirty puddle.

The boys leave, laughing.

The smile finally slips from Daniel's face, leaving him looking thoroughly miserable. He sighs deeply and stands up, his trousers soaked through.

Before him we see a small pair of legs in tights with shiny shoes. We PAN UP to reveal a little girl of about 6, observing Daniel.

Daniel notices her and stares back curiously.

The little girl, seeing Daniel's gloomy expression, gives him a very cute, loving smile.

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Daniel is taken aback. The girl's smile erases all pain from Daniel, and for the first time without trying, he smiles back.

Daniel runs home.

CUT TO:

EXT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - EVENING

The warm orange glow of Daniel's house lights welcome him home.

CUT TO:

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

A cheerful Daniel enters the hallway and arrives at the kitchen door. His flustered Mum is in the kitchen preparing dinner.

MUM

Daniel! You're late! Get that table ready before your Dad comes in. Honestly.

His Mum turns around to look at him. Daniel knows what to do to make his Mum feel better...

MUM (cont'd)

Well, come on then!

A broad, cheeky smile spreads across Daniel's face.

MUM (cont'd)

(suspicious)
What've you done wrong?

DANIEL

Nothing.

His Mum looks puzzled.

MUM

You've done something.

Daniel shakes his head.

MUM

What's the daft smile for then?

Daniel shrugs and his smile becomes even cheekier.

His Mum begins to soften and she can't help but smile.

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CONTINUED:

MUM

Look at that cheeky wee face. Come here
you.

His Mum hugs Daniel and begins tidying his hair.

MUM (cont'd)

(affectionately)

Look at the state of you. OH, and you
had the school photo today. Did you give
a nice smile?

Daniel looks into the distance guiltily, his smile now
twisting into a grimace.

MUM (cont'd)

Oh, not again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANIEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A thoughtful Daniel climbs into bed and looks out through the
window.

CUT TO:

DANIEL'S P.O.V. - THE MOON

A bright crescent moon lights up the night sky.

CUT TO:

DANIEL

...he rests his head on his pillow and as he does...

CUT TO:

DANIEL'S P.O.V. - THE MOON

...the camera tilts and the moon becomes a large beaming
smile.

CUT TO:

DANIEL

...he closes his eyes, with a little smile on his face.

FADE TO BLACK:

(SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS)

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - CORRIDOR - NEXT DAY

Daniel is running down the corridor as fast as he can.

INTERCUT WITH CLIPS OF KIDS HAVING PHOTO TAKEN

...a boy pulls a daft face, a girl poses like a beauty queen, a boy is too short for the frame and the camera is moved down to bring him into view, a girl has a tooth missing and tries to smile without showing it, a teacher tries to flatten down the gravity-defying spiky hair of a boy, etc....

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL - ASSEMBLY HALL - DAY

The photographer has finished another day's session and is just packing up.

Suddenly the assembly hall doors burst open, and Daniel flops in out of breath.

The photographer looks up.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Oh, alright?

DANIEL

Yeah.

(pants heavily)

Can you take another picture?

PHOTOGRAPHER

What? Of you?

Daniel nods.

PHOTOGRAPHER (cont'd)

I'm kinda finished for the day, pal.

DANIEL

Please?

Daniel smiles once again. This time he really means it, and the photographer sees it.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Wow, so you have got teeth after all.

Daniel laughs.

PHOTOGRAPHER (cont'd)

Aye, go on then. Sit on that stool and I'll do a quickie.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

We see a mantelpiece adorned with various pictures of Daniel through his life.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE-UP OF PICTURES

We PAN LEFT across the pictures.

Daniel as a baby, not smiling.

Daniel as a toddler, bawling his eyes out.

Daniel on the first day of school, in a huge grump.

Daniel at his own 6th birthday party, miserable.

And finally, the largest photo in a spectacular gold frame, is Daniel with the largest cheekiest grin you've ever seen in your life.

CUT TO:

END CREDITS AND MUSIC

The End!