

BOWL  
THE  
MAN  
DOWN



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A SHORT BY

MAND PASKUSKI

FADE IN:

EXT. MOM + POP BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

SAFF, JORDIE, BAX, ROONI and GOGO (25-35), fold out of a VINTAGE CAR. They sport BOWLING SHOES slung over their shoulders.

Saff's say STRIKER on the heels.

Rooni is the only one without her own pair. They enter the door to the alley.

INT. MOM + POP BOWLING ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The boot room collects some more shoes as they peel off to grab BALLS of their choice.

They converge at LANE SIX.

INT. COUNTER

Rooni stands at the counter, waiting to get shoes.

JUNJI (any age), skulks over.

JUNJI  
What size kicks?

ROONI  
Six?

Junji pops the SIZE SIX SHOES on the table.

INT. LANE SIX

The others are TYING SHOELACES and chatting. Rooni sits to slide on her shoes. Too big. She wiggles her toes.

Ominous music fills our ears. A LIGHT overhead flickers.

INT. COUNTER

Rooni returns the size Six.

ROONI  
Too big.

Junji places new shoes down on the counter.

JUNJI  
Try the fives.

INT. LANE SIX

Rooni sits again and slides the SIZE FIVE SHOES on. Still... too big.

SAFF  
Seriously? You guys, fives are even too big.

BAX  
Yo, Rooni, man. Ask for the kid's sizes.

INT. COUNTER

Rooni for the third time, returns the shoes.

JUNJI  
You're kiddin' me. Still too big?

Rooni shrugs.

JUNJI (CONT'D)  
Do you know the legend of Short-Toe-Joe?

She shakes her head.

Junji points to a PICTURE on the wall behind him: A man holding a BOWLING TROPHY.

JUNJI (CONT'D)  
Came here everyday of his life. Practically lived here. Best striker this side of the river. One day, at the Championship Bowl, on the last turn, an opposing player tied Short-Toe-Joe's shoelaces together without him knowing. When he got up to bowl he fell over and the ball dropped from his hand, over the line, into the gutter. Ref said there was nothin he could do and that it would count towards his score. STJ took up his bowling ball and clobbered it into the guy's skull, then one by one he took out the rest of the opposing team like bowling pins.

(MORE)

JUNJI (CONT'D)

His last words were that he got his  
strike in the end. People say he  
still haunts the lanes. Biggest man  
I ever met with the lightest feet  
you'd ever see.

(beat)

He wore a size four.

Rooni stares at the picture. Junji turns to grab the shoes  
from a box under it. Short-Toe-Joe's pair.

JUNJI (CONT'D)

We only have the one pair. Guess  
ole' Short-Toe-Joe's ghost'll be  
with you today.

Rooni grimaces a thank you and returns to the lane.

INT. LANE SIX

Saff and Bax have already gone. Gogo's turn.

JORDIE

Go go, Gogo!

SAFF

Yeah, Gogo, knock 'em dead.

Gogo picks up her ball and tip toes to the line, sweeping  
into a long, graceful bowl.

Rooni hesitates a moment before sliding on Short-Toe-Joe's  
shoes.

JORDIE

They stink or somethin'?

ROONI

No, Junji said they belonged to  
Short-Toe-Joe.

The rest of her friend's mouths fall open. Gogo returns to  
her seat, pouring a PINT OF ALE for herself.

BAX

Whoa, Rooni, man. That's fucked up.

SAFF

He like... went psycho serial  
killer on a whole team in here  
years ago.

ROONI

Yeah, that's what Junji said.

JORDIE

That's rad. I say let the ghost  
guide the rube.

(beat)

What? She needs a little beginner's  
luck no?

BAX

I dunno, man. Still freaky.

SAFF

Go on, Rooni. He may have been a  
bad man but he was still one hell  
of a bowler.

Rooni looks at the shoes, beckoning to be worn. She slips her  
feet into them and ties tight knots.

The MONITOR reads: ROONI'S TURN.

She strides for the balls.

ROONI

No holes?

The others giggle. That's cute.

BAX

No holes. Five pin, man.

ROONI

Right.

She picks up a red ball and BOWLS!

JORDIE

St-ee-rr-ii-kk--e!

Rooni delights!

MONTAGE:

They play on, the pint glasses fill and empty and fill again.  
A new PITCHER is brought out.

They dance, funky-chicken, twist-and-shout their spares and  
strikes. Rooni takes a great lead.

END OF MONTAGE:

Approaching the final turn.

BAX

Hot damn, Rooni, man, you're a natural!

SAFF

I told you she'd be fine.

GOGO

So, now's the important question...  
Rooni, do you wanna join the league  
and become part of our team? We  
start up in the fall so we'd have  
the summer to practice and get real  
good.

ROONI

I dunno, I... I'm--

JORDIE

Rooni, you're schoolin' us. Look at  
that scoreboard!

She smiles.

ROONI

Okay, yeah.

SAFF

Yeah?

ROONI

Yes.

They hug and clap and cheers their beers. Junji approaches  
with another PITCHER. The girls on that side of the table  
look up in chat.

JUNJI

Not bad for your first time.

Jordie sparks an idea, nudges Bax. He indicates to tie  
Rooni's shoelaces together. They fold under the table  
inconspicuously. The girls don't notice, still in  
conversation with Junji.

JORDIE

Call it initiation.

BAX

Hilarious.

They tie her shoes.

JORDIE

Not too tight, she has to be able to walk up to the ball bay without noticing.

They giggle and come back up to the table.

JUNJI

Let me know if you need anything else.

BAX

Alright, Rooni, man!

JORDIE

You're up.

Rooni gets up and strides for the ball bay.

JORDIE (CONT'D)

Check this out.

Jordie RENAMES Rooni's name to SHORT-TOE-JOE on the MONITOR.

SAFF

That's not funny, Jordie.

Bax and Gogo giggle.

Rooni's LACES TUG GENTLY where they're tied but she doesn't notice yet.

She selects her BALL and steadies herself into position.

Then...

She lunges and trips... the ball falls and rolls over the line, right down the center lane and knocks over ONE PIN.

Her face in a grimace.

Bax and Jordie jump up and laugh.

JORDIE

We gotcha!

BAX

You been initiated!

SAFF

What did you guys do?

GOGO

What the hell, guys?



Rooni's shoes vibrate. Her face reddens and... yes... it's as if she's been POSSESSED!

She speaks in a LILT. Her bottom lip hangs to one side.

ROONI

Ye thought ye'd pull one over on  
ole' Short-Toe, didja, you crooked  
bastards!

FURY IN HER FACE.

SAFF

Rooni?

Jordie sinks into his seat, clutching his chest.

The SINGLE PIN she hit is PICKED UP by the PIN CLEARER.

JORDIE

I don't feel so good.

ROONI

Thought ye'd muck up me chances at  
the gold, didja? Ya cheatin'  
traitorous scum!

Her ball bounces up out of the BALL SPIT. She grabs it and HURLS it down the lane. TWO more pins KNOCK over in a CRACK. Two pins left on opposite sides of the lane.

ROONI (CONT'D)

Two down, two to go.

The scoreboard reads: ONE BOWL LEFT.

Bax and Gogo sink into their seats, clutching chests. Jordie's choking violently.

BAX

Oh, shit.

GOGO

What's happening?

Saff's freaking out. What the fuck?!

ROONI

Nobody does Short-Toe-Joe dirty and  
gets away with it. Nobody!

Junji and Rooni make grave eye contact. He leaps over the desk.

Rooni turns and BOWLS. The ball rolls and rolls down the side. It CLIPS the right pin sending it ricocheting left.

It KNOCKS the other down.

CLOSE: as it tips and makes contact with the waxy lane, spinning and then completely still.

Saff sinks to the floor, lifeless.

Junji falls to his knees.

Rooni grins like a madwoman and the MONITOR READS: WINNER!  
SHORT-TOE-JOE!

She sits to remove her shoes. The moment they come off, she snaps out of it and looks down at the horror. SCREAMS.

TITLE CARD TAG: BOWL THE MAN DOWN.

THE END.