

1-800

A TEN MINUTE COMEDY

By Joseph Sorrentino

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1-800

A Ten Minute Comedy Duet

By Joseph Sorrentino

SYNOPSIS: A simple phone call to an automated banking system turns into a humorous battle of wits between a computer-generated voice and a frustrated customer, leaving us to wonder if computers haven't already taken over the world.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male, 1 either; gender flexible)

FRANK (m)A well-dressed, well-spoken man, in his mid-late 30s. He's an actor. (60 lines)

PHONE VOICE (m/f)Male or female voice from offstage. (65 lines)

SCENE: At a desk in Frank's home.

All in the Name of Frankenharry . . .

Joseph Sorrentino's *Frankenharry* plays get their name from the two unforgettable Philadelphia actors, Frank X and Harry Philibosian, who starred in the original Philadelphia Fringe Festival productions. Although the relational plays are not really linked, there is an underlying "opposites truly do attract" thread. Frank is usually the urbane, well-dressed and well-spoken actor while Harry is more of a blue collar Everyman stumbling his way through life. Whenever he stumbles into Frank's life, it almost always ends with surprising and refreshingly comic results. The sharply drawn characters with contrasting qualities give audiences a reason to get involved with them over and over again. These Philadelphia Fringe favorites have been called "clever . . . idiosyncratic," ". . . genuinely funny" and "hilarious" and may be produced individually or as "An Evening with Frankenharry."

AT RISE: *There is just a desk with a telephone on it and a chair. FRANK, a well-dressed man in his forties enters and sits. He has several scraps of paper in his hand. There's an air of smugness about him. He's about to use the phone to pay a bill and he's really thrilled to use new technology. He sits and with a slight flourish dials an "800" number. He's obviously pleased with himself.*

PHONE VOICE: Welcome to UrbanBank's Voice Activated Automatic Account Access Solution System, your one-stop solution for all your account access needs. (*FRANK responds with a smile.*) Thank you for paying by phone, a surefire way to save you time! (*FRANK smiles more broadly.*) For English, please press one; for Spanish, please press two. (*FRANK, again with a flourish, presses 1.*) Thank you. I believe you pressed "1." Is that correct? If yes, please say "yes" or press 1. (*FRANK presses 1.*) Thank you. To facilitate your call, please have your account number, social security number, phone number and mother's maiden name. (*As these are spoken, FRANK leafs through papers, lifting the correct one in response.*) Do you have these? If yes, please say "yes" or press 1. If no, please say "no" or press 2. (*FRANK presses 1.*) I believe you pressed 1. Is that correct? If yes, please say "yes" or press 1. (*With just a slight hesitation, he presses 1.*) Thank you. (*Slight pause.*) Please listen carefully, as our menu options have changed. To enroll in our Account Access Solution System, please press or say 1; to transfer money, please press or say 2. (*He presses 2.*) Thank you. I believe you pressed 2. Is that correct? If yes, please say "yes" or press (*He presses 1 quickly.*) Thank you. Please wait a moment. (*He taps out a rhythm on the desk.*) Please press or say your 24-digit account number followed by the pound key.

FRANK: (*Slowly presses as he quietly reads the numbers. He's not speaking them into the phone.*) 5 . . . 5 . . . 7 . . . 2 . . . 6 . . . Oh, oh, no. That's a mistake. That should have been a 5. Hello? It should've been . . . oh . . . oh . . . now what? Hello? Hello? (*Waits a moment, presses some numbers, then decides to hang up and start again. He re-dials.*)

PHONE VOICE: Welcome to UrbanBank's Voice Activated Automatic Account Access Solution System, your one-stop solution for all your account access needs. Thank you for paying by phone, a surefire way to save you time! *(He waves as if to hurry the voice along.)* For English, please press one, for . . . *(He presses 1 quickly.)* Thank you. I believe you pressed "1." Is that correct? If yes, please say "yes" or . . . *(He presses 1 again, quickly.)* Thank you. To facilitate your call, please have your account number, social security number, phone number and the name of the first woman who really broke your heart. *(The next bit of dialogue overlaps.)* Do you have these?

FRANK: *(Startled.)* What?

PHONE VOICE: If yes, please say "yes" or press 1.

FRANK: Whose name do you want?

PHONE VOICE: I'm sorry, I didn't understand you. If yes, please speak "yes" or press 1. If no, please say "no" or press 2.

FRANK: What's the question?

PHONE VOICE: I'm sorry, I didn't understand you. If yes, please speak "yes" or - -

FRANK: You want whose name?

PHONE VOICE: I'm sorry, I didn't understand you. If yes, please speak.

FRANK hangs up. A little confused, he re-dials.

PHONE VOICE: Welcome to UrbanBank's Voice Activated Automatic Account Access Solution System, your one-stop solution for all your bill-paying needs. Thank you for paying by phone, a surefire way to save you time! *(He frowns.)* To facilitate your call, please have your account number, *(He leans forward, listening with increasing intensity.)* social security number, phone number and *(Slight pause.)* mother's maiden name. *(He relaxes a bit.)* Do you have these? If yes . . . *(Presses quickly.)* Please listen carefully, as our menu options have changed. For - - *(FRANK, hurrying, presses 1.)* Gracias. Creo que presta el numero uno. Es verdad?

FRANK: Excuse me?

PHONE VOICE: Hola? Alguien esta alla?

FRANK: What is this? What are you saying?

PHONE VOICE: Oye, muchacho! Andele!

FRANK: What is going on here?

PHONE VOICE: Well I told you the menu options changed, didn't I?

FRANK hangs up, pauses then re-dials.

PHONE VOICE: Welcome to UrbanBank's Voice Activated Automatic Account Access Solution System . . . *(He presses 1.)* Thank you. I believe . . . *(Presses 1.)* To facilitate . . . *(Presses 1.)* I believe. *(Presses 1.)* Hey, you want to slow down a bit, pal? What's the rush here? *(FRANK stares at the phone.)* Please listen carefully, as our menu options have changed. *(Pause.)* I mean it.

FRANK: I'm listening, I'm listening.

PHONE VOICE: To enroll in our account access solution plan, please press or say "1"; to transfer money, please press or say "2" . . . *(He presses 2.)* I believe you pressed "2," is that correct?

FRANK drops the slip of paper with his account number on it. He reaches down to pick it up.

PHONE VOICE: I'm sorry. You must respond. Is that correct? Please say "yes" or press 1. *(Slight pause.)* I'm sorry. You must respond. Is that correct? Please say "yes" or . . .

FRANK: *(Picks up paper, a little flustered.)* Yes! Yes!

PHONE VOICE: I believe you said *(Slight pause.)* . . . Russia. Is that correct?

FRANK: I said what?

PHONE VOICE: Russia. Is that correct?

FRANK: No! Why on earth would I say "Russia?"

PHONE VOICE: I'm sorry, "Russia" is not an option.

FRANK: I know Russia is not an option. I didn't say "Russia." I said, "Yes." Understand? Yes.

PHONE VOICE: I already told you, "Russia" is not an option. Please make a correct response.

FRANK, panicking, stares at the number pad trying to decide which number to press.

PHONE VOICE: If you cannot make a correct selection, please hang up or press or say “1” to return to the main menu.

FRANK pauses to collect himself. Presses 1.

PHONE VOICE: Welcome to UrbanBank’s Voice Activated Automatic Account Access Solution System, your one-stop solution for all your bill-paying needs (*FRANK grumbles.*) Thank you for paying by phone, a surefire way to save us a ton of money ‘cause we don’t have to hire anyone, not even some poor schmuck in Bangladesh, to answer these phones. (*FRANK: stares at receiver.*) For English, please (*Quickly presses 1.*) Thank you. I believe you pressed “1”. Is that correct? If . . . (*Quickly presses 1.*) Thank you. To facilitate your call, please have your account number, social security number, phone number and the name of the woman you’re seeing behind your girlfriend’s back.

FRANK: Excuse me?

PHONE VOICE: The name of the woman . . .

FRANK: I heard you. I’m doing nothing of the kind. That’s cheating.

PHONE VOICE: Apparently.

FRANK: I’ve never cheated on anyone in my life.

PHONE VOICE: Oh really?

FRANK: Yes, really.

PHONE VOICE: That’s not what our records say.

FRANK: Well, your records are wrong.

PHONE VOICE: But our records are never wrong

FRANK: They are this time.

PHONE VOICE: (*Slight pause.*) You’re sure?

FRANK: Absolutely.

PHONE VOICE: Isn’t that something? First time for everything, right?

FRANK: That’s what they say.

PHONE VOICE: I suppose we should just delete that name then.

FRANK: I suppose you should.

PHONE VOICE: Done. (*Pause.*) Uh-oh.

FRANK: What?

PHONE VOICE: There's another thing here . . . hmm . . .

FRANK: What is it?

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