

THE BOOKSTORE

By Joseph Sorrentino

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CHARACTERS

FRANK: A well-dressed, well-spoken man, in his mid-late 30's. He's an actor. He is trim, self-possessed, a bit pompous.

HARRY: Owner of the bookstore, isn't dressed so well. He's in his late-50's to early 60's. Although the owner of a bookstore, he has the appearance of a blue collar worker. His clothes are somewhat worn and he wears a sweater or sweater vest over his shirt.

PROPS LIST

Shelves
Books
Counter
Stool

DIRECTOR'S NOTES: Although HARRY owns a bookstore, HE's reluctant to ever sell the books. In fact, HE does all HE can to not sell any. FRANK, who's stopped by to pick up a screenplay HE'd ordered from HARRY's wife, is clueless. Basically, FRANK is entering a world that HARRY has created for himself.

SETTING: *The bookstore is lined with shelves crammed with books but should give the appearance of not getting many customers. There is a worn counter, a stool next to it and a door that may have some bells on it to announce customers. Behind the counter is a shelf with a hand-painted "Special Orders" sign. It has one book on it.*

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HARRY: Oh...oh...I'm sorry...we're closed.

FRANK: Closed? But the sign says...

HARRY: (*Flipping sign over*) Closed. See? (*Shows him.*) Closed. The wife musta forgot to turn it around when she went out.

FRANK: When I called this morning, the woman I spoke with...

HARRY: You spoke with someone?

FRANK: Yes.

HARRY: That'd be the wife. (*Takes out notepad and writes something. Mutters to himself*) ... Tsk, tsk, tsk...answered the phone again...

FRANK: Anyway, she said your hours were 9 to 6.

HARRY: (*Writes in book again*) Told...our...hours... (*Looks at FRANK*) And?

FRANK: And you're supposed to be open.

HARRY: Well, we're closed. For lunch.

FRANK: It's 9:30.

HARRY: An early lunch.

FRANK: At 9:30, it's early for brunch.

HARRY: That's it. That's what we're closed for. Brunch. (*Trying to usher him out*) Come back in oh...an hour or two and we'll get you squared away.

FRANK: I can't wait that long. I have to get to work.

HARRY: And I have to get to brunch. The Apollo only serves the Lumberjack Special 'til eleven.

FRANK: Look, I came all the way across town to pick up a special order.

HARRY: Someone took an order for you?

FRANK: Yes.

HARRY: You're sure it was this store?

FRANK: Absolutely. I got a notice it came in so I'm here to pick it up.

HARRY: (*Writing in book*) Talk to wife. Again.

FRANK: You know...I just happened to be walking down here last month and stumbled across this place. I didn't even know there was a bookstore on this street. Don't you think some sort of sign out front would help?

HARRY: Help what?

FRANK: Get you customers.

HARRY: Why would I wanna do that?

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FRANK: Well...I mean...I...I...can't believe I actually found this place again... not a street sign for blocks...

HARRY: (*Shrugs, mutters*) Yeah, I've always been handy with tools.

FRANK: So can you please get my special order?

HARRY: I'm feelin' a little faint here...must be the diabetes.

FRANK: You're diabetic?

HARRY: Well, not me personally but people in my family are. I'm feelin' all clammy.

FRANK: Here...have a Tic-tac.

HARRY: Great. (*Takes them, shakes out a couple*) How 'bout that? These look exactly like my meds. (*HE puts the rest in his pocket.*) Thanks.

FRANK: Oh...sure...you're welcome.

HARRY: These will keep me 'til brunch. (*Starts to leave*)

FRANK: Sir?

HARRY: Yeah?

FRANK: My special order?

HARRY: But I really gotta get to brunch.

FRANK: C'mon...I gave you my Tic-tacs, didn't I?

HARRY: All right, all right...lemmee have the ticket. I'll see what I can do.

FRANK: Thanks... (*Looking*) I'm sure we'll have you out of here and brunching in no time...I...that's funny...

HARRY: What?

FRANK: I just had it...now where in the devil did I...I just had it a moment ago.

HARRY: (*Brightening*) Don't you just hate when that happens?

FRANK: I sure do. This is so embarrassing...

HARRY: Happens to me all the time. The wife says it means I'm losing my mind...and believe me, I didn't have all that much to begin with.

FRANK: Oh, I believe you.

(*HARRY begins to drift away mentally.*)

Sir?

HARRY: Sorry, we're closed.

FRANK: We've been through this already, remember? Special order?

HARRY: Oh yeah, that's right. I remember now. Find that ticket yet?

FRANK: No, I...I...can't...I must have lost it. Look, if I told you the title, could you get it for me anyway?

HARRY: I'd love to.

FRANK: Thanks.

HARRY: But I can't.

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FRANK: Why not?

HARRY: Well...books are very popular things, you know. You might not be the only person ordering that particular book, ever think of that?

What if it's someone else's special order and they come in looking for their book and you've already taken it. What do I do then?

FRANK: I don't know...order another copy? Anyway, it's not a book.

HARRY: But this is a bookstore. If it's not a book...

FRANK: It's a screenplay. When I was in here last month I bought a book and...

HARRY: You bought a book.

FRANK: Yes...

HARRY: Here?

FRANK: That's right.

HARRY: Not from me you didn't (*writes in book*) ...that wife of mine.

FRANK: When I mentioned I was an actor she said you also carried screenplays and...

HARRY: Which one?

FRANK: Beg pardon?

HARRY: Which one'd ya want?

FRANK: The Godfather. Part one.

HARRY: The best. Am I right?

FRANK: Absolutely.

HARRY: That opening...

FRANK: (*With an Italian accent*) "I believe in America. America's where I made my fortune..."

HARRY: That over the shoulder shot...

FRANK: Brilliant.

HARRY: Brando moving his hand... (*Mimics it.*) The way he does that...

FRANK: Amazing. Just one little (*Repeats gesture*) ...and it's absolutely clear who's in command.

HARRY: (*Starts walking FRANK to the door*) No doubt. No doubt at all.

Well, (*Repeats gesture, opens door and ushers FRANK out*) real nice talking to you.

FRANK: A pleasure. (*Leaves. Stops, re-enters*) Now hold on...

HARRY: Sorry, we're closed.

FRANK: I was just in here, remember? And I still want my screenplay.

HARRY: I really wish I could help you but without a ticket...and like I said, The Apollo only serves the special until eleven...Get me those two pancakes, maple syrup...

FRANK: Maple syrup? I thought you were diabetic.

HARRY: It's...it's, uh...sugar free is what it is.

FRANK: Of course.

HARRY: I really gotta get goin'...

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FRANK: Well, I'm not leaving.

HARRY: But I really need that Lumberjack Special. Is it me or is it gettin' dark in here? I'm feelin' all flush.

FRANK: Trust me, you look fine.

HARRY: I've done all I could.

FRANK: All you could? You haven't even looked. Well I'm not leaving until ...son of a gun... *(Pulls notice out of pocket)* Here it is. Here's the notice. I guess I missed it the first time. *(Hands it to HARRY)* Here. Happy? So if you don't mind, I'd appreciate it if you'd just go back there and get it. Then you can go enjoy your Lumberman's Special.

HARRY: Lumberjack.

FRANK: Whatever. So, may I have the screenplay?

HARRY: Oh...oh sure...Sorry, I can go off on tangents sometimes.

FRANK: Can't we all?

HARRY: The wife's always tellin' me, "Stick to the point Harry. Stick to the point." Boy, I'm tellin' ya, there are days I'd like to stick a point right through her....

FRANK: Sir. Please. My screenplay.

HARRY: Oh...of course...Uhm...You know...she wrote this one up...I have no idea where she put it.

FRANK: How about under "Special Orders?" *(Points)* Right there. See the big sign? It says, "Special Orders"...That's where I'd start.

HARRY: I'm sure you would.

(FRANK picks up a book from counter, begins flipping through it.)

HARRY: What are you doin'?

FRANK: Nothing...just flipping through...

HARRY: Well stop it. You're bending the cover. *(Takes book from him)*

FRANK: I'm sorry. I thought I might buy...

HARRY: You can't. It's not for sale.

FRANK: I thought it was.

HARRY: Well you thought wrong. What do you think? You can just come in here and buy anything you want?

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