

THE CHECKOUT LINE

By Joseph Sorrentino

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THE CHECKOUT LINE

A Comedy Play

by Joseph Sorrentino

SYNOPSIS: Have you ever been behind someone in a checkout line who insists on counting out a pile of change rather than simply using cash? Then you'll know how frustrated Frank gets when he allows Harry in front of him at *The Checkout Line*.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 males, 1 either; gender flexible)

FRANK (m) A fit, well-spoken, although a touch pompous, actor. Age flexible but younger than Harry. *(69 lines)*

HARRY (m)..... Older than Frank, heavysset, a blue collar type. *(67 lines)*

CASHIER (m/f) Age flexible. Doesn't speak but communicates using her riding crop. *(Non-Speaking)*

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: A grocery store.

SET

The action takes place in a very modest grocery store. There's a counter with a cash register (or adding machine) and a small bell on it. A couple of shelves stocked with a few items behind the counter.

PROPS

- Basket
- Various Grocery Store Items
- Riding Crop
- Bag of Prunes
- Cash Register
- Call Bell
- Various Pocket Items (gum, candy, rubber band)
- Coins (pennies, nickels, quarters, dimes)
- One Dollar Bill
- Five Dollar Bill
- Jar of Marmalade
- Closed Sign

COSTUMES

HARRY – Blue collar type attire that has pockets.

FRANK – Well dressed, wears a watch.

CASHIER – Dressed all in black, riding boots, a monocle and holding a riding crop.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When Cashier laughs, it's a mirthless, guttural laugh. When Harry asks Cashier a question, she gestures with her riding crop. Frank gets more and more anxious as time goes on.

AT RISE: *As lights come up, FRANK enters in a hurry. Carrying a basket overflowing with items and a few more in his arms.*

FRANK: *(Checking his watch.) Just enough time to drop these off at home and then hurry to the theater. (Stands at the counter, looks around.) Where the devil is the cashier? Hello? Yoo-hoo! (Checking his watch.) I don't have much time. Hello! (Notices bell and hits it. No response. Looks around, hits it again. Waits. Drums on counter.) I do not have all day.*

FRANK hits the bell again, looks around. CASHIER enters, unnoticed, and stands behind the counter. FRANK doesn't see her and as he raises his hand to hit the bell again, CASHIER puts her hand on the bell. FRANK hits her hand, leaving his hand on top of hers. She stares at her hand, FRANK slowly turns and does the same. They slowly look up at each other; she's obviously displeased and lets out a low growl. FRANK quickly lifts his hand up.

FRANK: Oh. Oh, I am so sorry. I didn't see you. Or your hand.

CASHIER rubs her hand and lets out a low growl.

FRANK: No one was here and I hoped that some vigorous ringing of the bell would bring someone. Which it has. I'm afraid I am rather in a hurry. I have tickets to an exquisite reimagining of "Death of a Salesman" and I am feverishly excited.

Begins taking items from his basket, oblivious to the fact that CASHIER just stares at him.

FRANK: Tickets were not easy to get, I can tell you but I myself am an actor...you probably guessed that didn't you?

FRANK waits for a response from CASHIER, gets none.

FRANK: Perhaps not. Anyway, I was able to call in a few favors—I am quite active and well known in the business—and was able to acquire tickets.

HARRY enters, carrying a small bag of prunes and stands behind FRANK. HARRY and CASHIER exchange looks, rolling their eyes, as FRANK continues talking. At some point, HARRY clears his throat, quietly at first, to get FRANK'S attention but it doesn't work.

FRANK: This version, updated for the new millennium, is called, "Death of a Sales Associate." The main character, Wilamina Loperson...can you believe in the original the character was a named Willie Loman? Loman? Really? Hello. Can you say "sexist?"

FRANK waits for a response from CASHIER, gets none.

FRANK: Perhaps not. Anyway, in this new version, Wilamina is a sales associate in a 7-Eleven and her hours keep getting cut. Poor woman is really stressed...single mom, several kids, bills piling up... *(Has finally emptied the basket, checks his watch.)* Oh my, I didn't realize...it's even later than I thought.

CASHIER hasn't moved to ring anything up.

FRANK: Why don't you just go ahead and start ringing up my purchases?

CASHIER gives no reaction.

FRANK: My purchases. The items I placed on the counter. Right there in front of you. As I said, I am in a bit of a hurry. I don't want to miss...

HARRY clears his throat loudly, finally getting FRANK'S attention. HARRY looks at the pile of items FRANK has on the counter, then at his one item, then at FRANK. HARRY gives FRANK a pleading look.

HARRY: All I have is one item. And a small item at that.

FRANK: Well, I just emptied my basket, so I shan't be but a moment... *(To CASHIER.)* Since you don't appear to be doing much, why not ring up my items? These. The ones on the counter.

CASHIER ignores him.

HARRY: It doesn't seem fair. I mean, all I have is one bag. One small bag.

FRANK: I can see that and if I weren't in such a rush...

HARRY: Prunes.

FRANK: Prunes?

HARRY: What I have in this small bag. Prunes. That's all I got. Keep ya regular, prunes do. Are you regular?

FRANK: I'm not sure I care to disclose that.

HARRY: 'Cause if you're not regular, no way can you be happy.

FRANK: Is that so?

HARRY: Absolutely. And, boy, I gotta tell ya, thanks to these babies *(Holds up bag of prunes.)* I am one happy guy. Care for one?

FRANK: No thanks.

HARRY: Sure?

FRANK: Yes.

HARRY: Positive?

FRANK: Absolutely positive.

HARRY: Completely certain?

FRANK: *(Getting angry.)* Sir, please. I need to have my items totaled so I can get to the theater. *(To CASHIER.)* I'm really in a rush, so if you don't mind...

HARRY: But all I have is this one tiny, little bag of prunes.

FRANK: Well I'm sorry but I was here first, my items are waiting to be bagged... *(To CASHIER.)* why don't you go ahead and start on them... *(To HARRY.)* and, as I said, I am in a hurry, so please stop...

CASHIER taps the riding crop on the counter, getting FRANK'S attention, points to HARRY'S bag of prunes, then at FRANK and lets out a menacing growl. CASHIER taps the riding crop in her hand.

FRANK: Know what? On second thought, why don't you go ahead?

HARRY: You sure?

FRANK: Yes. If that's all you have, you'll be done quickly...

HARRY: That I will.

FRANK: ...and I suppose it's really not fair that you should have to wait...

HARRY: No it isn't.

FRANK: ...even if, as I've said multiple times, I am rather in a hurry.

HARRY: Why that's very kind of you.

FRANK: Don't mention it.

HARRY: OK, I won't.

HARRY slowly walks around FRANK.

FRANK: Did I happen to mention I'm in a rush?

HARRY: You most certainly did. Several times.

FRANK: Hasn't had much of an effect.

HARRY: No, I it hasn't. *(Stands in front of FRANK.)* Thank you again.

FRANK: You're welcome.

HARRY: Very kind of you.

FRANK: Don't mention it.

HARRY: That's right. That's what you said before so I won't. Mention it, that is. *(To CASHIER.)* Hello, Missy. How's your day going?

CASHIER gestures with her riding crop.

HARRY: Boy, you can say that again.

CASHIER gestures with her riding crop, HARRY laughs.

HARRY: *(To FRANK.)* She is so literal.

FRANK: Is she. Now, please, can we move your transaction along? I really must...

CASHIER points her riding crop at FRANK who immediately stops talking. CASHIER makes another gesture toward HARRY.

HARRY: Yes, this is all for me today.

CASHIER gestures with her riding crop.

HARRY: Of course, of course. Please, help yourself.

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