

THE CLEANING

By Joseph Sorrentino

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-904-1

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PUBLISHED BY BROOKLYN PUBLISHERS
1-888-473-8521

THE CLEANING

Ten Minute Comedy Skit

By Joseph Sorrentino

SYNOPSIS: Frank needs a dental cleaning. He saw an ad in a local paper about a cut-rate dentist and he's decided to give it a try. But things don't work out quite so well for him as he tangles with Harry, a semi-psychotic dental hygienist, and the intimidating Herr Doktor.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 either, 1 extra; gender flexible)

FRANK/FRAN (m/f)A well-dressed, well-spoken man. Age is flexible. *(47 lines)*

HARRY/HARRIET (m/f)A dental hygienist. Age is flexible but older than Frank. *(49 lines)*

HERR DOKTOR (m/f)Age flexible. *(Non-Speaking)*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is everyone's worst "visit to the dentist" nightmare. Feel free to be creative with the screaming in the opening scene. It shouldn't go on too long but should build nicely, ending in a deep moan. Herr Doktor makes his gestures with his riding crop and they should be very simple; a slight wave or something. They don't necessarily indicate what he's saying but Harry understands. Women can play any of the roles and if they play either Frank or Harry, simply change the names to Fran and Harriet.

PROPS

- Signs on a wall “Welcome To Our Dental Clinic: No Pain, No Gain” and “Pain Is Just Weakness Leaving The Body”
- A very worn lounge chair
- Some cheap folding chairs
- Small table next to the lounge chair with a tray of dental (and other) tools
- Power drill
- Hammer and chisel
- Small cabinet with drawers
- Magazines
- Bed sheet
- Riding crop
- Monocle
- Some dental tools
- Small hand bell
- Latex Gloves

PRODUCTION NOTES

FRANK is trim, self-possessed man, well dressed and well spoken. HARRY is sloppily dressed. He wears a lab coat splattered with what looks like blood. His manner alternates between menacing and conciliatory. HERR DOKTOR is a very rigid man dressed in an immaculate lab coat, a few military medals pinned to it. He wears riding boots and has a riding crop, wears leather gloves. He has a monocle dangling on his chest. His hair is slicked back. If there were any such thing as an “underground” dental clinic, this is it. Cut-rate doesn’t begin to describe the place: a lounge chair in place of a dental chair; some old tables and cabinets; general clutter. FRANK is sitting in the examination room, flipping through a magazine. He checks his watch, sighs and then is startled when he hears screaming from off stage. FRANK reacts to the screams, is frightened. He looks increasingly uncomfortable as the screaming continues.

VOICE: (*HARRY or HERR DOKTOR can do this voice, offstage. Screaming.*) No! No! Please....Not that! Please! I beg you!! No!! AHHH! For the love of...Help me!! Somebody!! AHHH!!! (*Pause, then a long, sad groan.*) Oh...oh...

FRANK stands and is about to leave when HARRY enters, wiping his hands on a dirty rag.

HARRY: Sorry for the delay...we're runnin' a little late today. (*Pause.*) And where do you think you're goin'?

FRANK: Me? Nowhere. I was just...stretching my legs. That's all. Just stretching my legs.

HARRY: Hmm...

FRANK: What...what was that screaming?

HARRY: Screamin'? What screamin'?

FRANK: It sounded like someone was being murdered.

HARRY: I didn't hear any screamin'.

FRANK: But it was coming from there (*Points to where HARRY entered.*)

HARRY: (*Looks, turns back to FRANK.*) Sorry, friend...I just came from there and there wasn't any screamin'.

FRANK: But there was. I heard it. It was horrible.

HARRY: Oh...I know...it was probably comin' from the Apollo Diner. It's right next door. That's all it was. The Apollo. Happens all the time.

FRANK: Oh. But why would..? (*He notices HARRY'S lab coat.*) Is...is that blood?

HARRY: Where?

FRANK: There...all over your lab coat. It's covered.

HARRY: It's ketchup.

FRANK: Ketchup?

HARRY: Yep. I just ate a cheeseburger...it was delicious...at the Apollo. Where the screamin' was comin' from.

FRANK: Awful lot of ketchup.

HARRY: (*Takes a step toward FRANK, menacingly.*) I like ketchup. You got a problem with that?

FRANK: No...no, not at all.

HARRY: Good.

FRANK: But that screaming...

HARRY: I told ya, it was the Apollo. Don't worry about it. Probably someone tried to skip out without payin'. Happens alla time. So, whaddya in for?

FRANK: Excuse me?

HARRY: Why are you here?

FRANK: Oh. Just a cleaning. I saw your ad. Your rates are terrific. Very cheap.

HARRY: That they are.

FRANK: Truth be told, going to the dentist always make me nervous.

HARRY: Nothin' to be nervous about. Nothin' at all. *(Points to sign.)* You see our motto?

FRANK: "No pain, no gain." "Pain is just weakness leaving the body." Nice.

HARRY: What did I tell ya? Nothin' to worry about. Really. You're in good hands here. *(Extends hand, notices a smear of "ketchup" on his palm, wipes his hand on his lab coat.)* Maybe I should put a little less ketchup on my burgers, huh?

He gives a small chuckle and FRANK echoes it. HARRY extends hand.

I'm Harry. I'll be doin' your cleanin'.

FRANK: *(Shakes his hand.)* Frank.

HARRY: Have a seat *(Points to the lounge chair.)*

FRANK: There?

HARRY: Yep.

FRANK hesitates.

Problem?

FRANK: No...it's just...no dental chair?

HARRY: Totally unnecessary. Look, them other "real" dentists?

That's how they drive up their prices...lotsa equipment you don't need...dental chairs, X-ray machines...Novocain. Most of that stuff's just for show. Sidtdown.

HARRY points FRANK to the chair and he settles in uncertainly. HARRY takes a bed sheet out from the cabinet. It's wrinkled, dirty and has "ketchup" on it. With a flourish, he puts it on FRANK.

Comfy?

FRANK: I guess.

HARRY: Good...so...you got problems with your teeth?

FRANK: Nope. Just here for a cleaning.

HARRY: Toothaches?

FRANK: No.

HARRY: Abscesses?

FRANK: Not a one.

HARRY: Gum disease?

FRANK: Nope.

HARRY: Hoof and mouth perchance?

FRANK: No, I'm just here for a cleaning.

HARRY: OK, fine. If that's all you want, that's all you want. Let's get to it then, OK? So, Frank, how often do you floss?

FRANK: Me? Why, every day...just about.

HARRY: Really. Well that's terrific. Just terrific. You know, most people don't. You're lucky if they floss once a week but they'll come in here and they'll, well, they'll lie to me, Frank.

FRANK: Will they?

HARRY: They will. They come in here and tell me to my face...right to my face...that they floss every day, when it's absolutely clear they don't.

FRANK: How silly...to lie like that.

HARRY: That's exactly what it is: silly. Because, Frank, I have ways of... *(Takes latex gloves from his pocket and puts them on, snapping them loudly.)* ...finding out the truth. Now let's just see what the teeth of a person who flosses every day look like, shall we?

He yanks on the lounge chair's lever and pushes FRANK so he's lying back. He opens FRANK'S mouth, peers in.

Yes, let's just see what that looks like. *(Pause.)* Tartar! Excessive tartar! Floss every day, do we Frank?

FRANK: Well...practically.

HARRY sits on FRANK, straddling him.

HARRY: Don't lie to me Frank. Your teeth aren't lying to me... they're telling me exactly what's going on in there...why don't you?

FRANK: But I...

HARRY: Ask yourself this, *(HARRY imitates "Dirty Harry's" voice.)* "Do I floss every day?" Well? Do ya? Punk?

FRANK: OK, OK. Maybe I miss a day here and there.

HARRY: Miss a day here and there. That's not true. You know that's not true. Believe me, I know that's not true. How are we going to establish any kind of trust if you continue to lie?

FRANK: Really, it's just a day or two here and...

HARRY: Frank, I'm here to help you but you have to want to be helped. How can I possibly help if you won't tell me the truth?

FRANK: But...

HARRY: Like I said, I have ways of finding out the truth. *(Reaches for the power drill and holds it up.)*

FRANK: OK, OK. I floss maybe twice a week....

HARRY presses the "On" button a couple of times.

What am I saying? Once a week...once a week. If that.

HARRY: There. Now don't you feel better, Frank? When you tell the truth? *(Puts the drill down.)*

FRANK: Absolutely. No question. One hundred percent better.

HARRY: Of course you do. And remember...I'm here to help.

HARRY opens FRANK'S mouth again and peers in.

Our teeth are our friends, Frank. Ignore them and they'll go away. Do you ignore your friends like this?

FRANK, with his mouth open, mumbles a reply.

Of course you don't.

FRANK mumbles.

Whatever you say, Frank, whatever you say. Tsk, tsk, tsk...Oh, this is not good, not good at all.

FRANK mumbles.

I can't do this alone. I'm gonna need some help with this Frank.

HARRY closes FRANK'S mouth.

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