

SO YOU WANNA MARRY MY DAUGHTER

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. He could have a scarf draped around his neck.

HARRY: A not so well-dressed man, in his late-50's to early-60's. He's a blue collar worker, currently unemployed. He is a large man and is wearing an untucked and unbuttoned white shirt. There is a menacing air about him.

MARIE: HARRY's daughter and FRANK's fiancée, a couple of years younger than FRANK. Attractive but with just slightly too much makeup.

PROPS LIST

Worn lounge chair

Two kitchen chairs

Champagne bottle

Three champagne or wine glasses

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The play's comedy comes out of portraying this as a realistic situation. The characters aren't meant to be caricatures. MARIE and HARRY have a world that they've created and understand. FRANK has unknowingly entered this world and would desperately like to find a way out of it. HARRY should be subtly menacing throughout with only a slight shift in his mood when left alone with FRANK.

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SETTING: HARRY's livingroom. HARRY's in a worn lounge chair, FRANK and MARIE sit forward on two kitchen chairs, a bit nervous as they've come to tell HARRY their marital plans.

HARRY: So you wanna marry my daughter.

FRANK: I certainly do.

HARRY: *(Pause)* Well I think that's just ... fantastic.

MARIE: Oh Daddy, do you really?

HARRY: I do. Absolutely fantastic.

MARIE: I'm so happy. *(To FRANK)* Aren't you, honey?

FRANK: Happy? Pumpkin ... I'm ecstatic.

HARRY: That's what I am too, pumpkin ... ecstatic.

MARIE: Really? I was so nervous.

HARRY: Nervous? Why?

MARIE: Well ... you know ...

HARRY: But this one looks like a fine young man. Really first rate. Not at all like any of those other ones.

FRANK: Other ones?

MARIE: No, Frank's special. Really special. *(To FRANK)* You know that, don't you sugar pie?

FRANK: Of course ... of course I do. *(Softly)* Honey bunch, what other ...?

HARRY: Oh you kids ... This is what a father hopes for ... to see this kind of love for his little honey bunch. But let's not take it too far, right sport?

FRANK: No ... no, of course not. I would never dream ...

HARRY: Of course you wouldn't. *(To MARIE)* I just want you to be happy.

MARIE: I am. I really am. Frank makes me so happy.

FRANK: I tell her that's my job.

HARRY: What is?

FRANK: Making her happy.

HARRY: Oh ... yes, I can see that. I certainly can. And you have another job?

FRANK: Not a job, really. More of a calling.

HARRY: Minister?

FRANK: Actor.

HARRY: Same thing, right?

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FRANK: I'm not sure I ...

MARIE: Oh, oh ... I almost forgot. We brought champagne. Well, Frank did actually.

HARRY: Champagne? I really like this one. I really do. Champagne.

FRANK: I thought it would be appropriate.

HARRY: It is ... it is. *(To MARIE)* Well, what are you waiting for? Go get it. We have to celebrate.

MARIE: I'll be right back. *(Stops)* I just want to say ... I'm ... I'm so happy.

FRANK: Me too!

(MARIE blows a kiss, FRANK catches it. She leaves.)

(To HARRY) Oh, isn't she just wonderful? I can't tell you how happy we both are. And now, with your blessing ...

(FRANK notices HARRY whose smile has faded. He's staring at FRANK.)

HARRY: *(Softly with menace)* You moron, you really think I'm gonna let you marry my daughter?

(MARIE re-enters with champagne. HARRY smiles.)

MARIE: Frank said this is really good champagne. All I know is it's expensive. Real expensive.

HARRY: Oh, this is the good stuff ... you really know your champagne, don't you?

(FRANK is silent.)

MARIE: Are you all right? Frank?

FRANK: I'm ... I'm sorry. Were you talking to me dearest?

HARRY: Not like the crap those others brought over.

MARIE: Daddy ... such language.

HARRY: Sorry dearest. But this is top shelf. Never had any of it myself you understand ... always wanted to ... champagne taste, beer pocket book, right? Now if any of those others you brought home brought this stuff, things might have turned out different.

MARIE: Oh, yes ... well, we all make mistakes.

FRANK: Lovey ... what others?

HARRY: But did you have to make so many, lovey?

MARIE: Now don't exaggerate, Daddy. I didn't make so many ... not really.

HARRY: Not so many? There had to be what? Two, three ... dozen ... and those are only the ones you brought home.

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MARIE: Well ... I mean ... if you insist on counting all of them ... if you include them all ...

HARRY: And I warned you about every one of them, didn't I?

MARIE: You did.

FRANK: Sweetie, did ... did he say two or three dozen?

HARRY: And I told you once they got what they wanted, you'd never see them again. And I was right, wasn't I, sweetie?

MARIE: You were. *(To FRANK)* Daddy's always right.

FRANK: Oh ... oh ... he certainly looks like the kind of father that ... what exactly is it they wanted, precious?

HARRY: There was a time or three I had to step in, right precious? Yes sir, a time or three I'd catch you playing ... what do they call it? Tonsil something ...

FRANK: I believe that's tonsil hockey. Wait a second ...

HARRY: A couple of times I was forced to get a little more ... personally involved you might say.

FRANK: *(To MARIE)* But my sweet ... tonsil hockey ... I mean ...

HARRY: Ancient history. Who cares now? Because this one's a fine young man. Really first rate. *(To MARIE)* Now my sweet, how are we going to drink this without glasses?

MARIE: I'm sorry. With all the excitement, I forgot. *(Stands to leave)*

HARRY: I can't wait to taste this. I saw the ads for this stuff in the magazines at the doctor's. That means it's gotta be good, right? I mean if a doctor ...

MARIE: But you don't have to go to the doctor's any more, Daddy. You're all better now, aren't you? You're really all better.

HARRY: Good as new.

MARIE: That's right. It's so good to have you back to your old self again. *(Leaves)*

FRANK: She's ... she's really concerned about you. But I must say, you certainly do look fit as a fiddle.

HARRY: Fit as a nice big fiddle I could use to bash someone's lousy skull in with.

(MARIE returns.)

MARIE: Daddy, where do you keep the glasses?

HARRY: In that cabinet to the right of the stove. First shelf.

MARIE: That's right. I am just so forgetful.

HARRY: *(To FRANK)* Like her old man.

(THEY laugh. MARIE leaves. HE's serious again.)

Not forgetful anymore. It was the medicine. That's what made me forgetful.

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FRANK: Yeah ... yeah ... I read where that can happen.

HARRY: I heard the whispers. The laughing. They thought I didn't.

Called me maniac. Huh ... I taught them, didn't I? Said I was sick.

FRANK: Who?

HARRY: Doctors.

FRANK: Oh, you can't believe what they say. Most of them are quacks anyway. The rest are just after your money. The health system today is just ...

HARRY: Voices.

FRANK: Voices?

HARRY: I heard voices.

FRANK: Really.

HARRY: The medicine stopped the voices.

FRANK: That's ... well ... uhm ... that's good.

HARRY: So I stopped taking the medicine.

FRANK: Oh.

(FRANK looks at HARRY who smiles and nods, 'Yes.' MARIE returns with glasses.)

MARIE: Here we are. *(Notices that FRANK's uneasy)* Honey, are you all right?

FRANK: What? Oh ... yes ... yes ... I'm fine ...

HARRY: He's just a little out of sorts. Meeting the old man for the first time. Wants to make a good impression, right champ? Relax. In a couple of minutes, you'll feel like part of the family.

(MARIE starts to cry.)

FRANK: What ... what's the matter?

MARIE: Family ... if ... if ... only Mother were here to ... to ... see this ... she'd be so ... so ... happy. Excuse me ... I have to ... *(SHE runs off)*

FRANK: She told me all about Mother. Talks about her a lot. I'm so sorry that ... *(Sees HARRY staring at him again)*

HARRY: So you've heard the rumors.

FRANK: Rumors?

HARRY: About Mother.

FRANK: About Mother? No, I don't think ...

HARRY: They say I killed her.

FRANK: No, I definitely have not heard them. I ... I think I would've remembered that.

HARRY: Rumors ... vicious lies, rumors and innuendo. That's all.

FRANK: Why of course. Why do people say things like that? They have no idea the damage they ...

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HARRY: Then again ... I did.

FRANK: Oh.

HARRY: Wanted to take little pumpkin away. Wouldn't let her. Wouldn't let ... won't let anyone. Anyone. *(Pause)* Ricin.

FRANK: Excuse me?

HARRY: Ricin. That's how I killed her. Just a pinch. Completely untraceable. Got the idea from the Ruskies. That's how they offed Georgi Markov.

FRANK: Who?

HARRY: Bulgarian dissident ... couldn't prove it, of course. They used a little ball in the tip of an umbrella ... holes drilled in for the ricin ... stick him in the leg ... shoot that ball in ... You gotta give it to them Ruskies. Bunch of ignorant peasants but they sure are mechanical. I never got the umbrella to work right.

FRANK: You know, maybe I better see what's keeping Marie.

HARRY: Champagne.

FRANK: But the champagne's right here.

HARRY: That's how I offed the wife. Pinch of ricin in her champagne. Worked like a charm. Works like a charm. Always does.

FRANK: Always does?

HARRY: A few of them played a little too much hockey with pumpkin so ...

(MARIE returns, composed.)

MARIE: Here I am.

HARRY: Here she is, the light of my life ... *(To FRANK)* ... and now yours. *(To MARIE)* All better?

MARIE: Yes. Frank, are you sure you're all right?

FRANK: Oh ... I'm fine. Really. *(Softly)* Sugar, could we have a moment?

HARRY: *(Picks up glasses)* Now you two stop that whispering and carrying on like that. This isn't going to turn into anything like all those other times, sugar. No hockey playing here.

FRANK: No way.

MARIE: Daddy, I keep telling you Frank's different.

HARRY: Of course he is. I keep telling you I like this one. He's really all right.

MARIE: That's quite a compliment, dearest. Daddy doesn't say that about just anyone.

FRANK: Doesn't he?

HARRY: He certainly doesn't, bub. Well then ... what are we waiting for? Let's celebrate. To the happy couple. C'mon ... drink up.

(FRANK and MARIE take a sip, HARRY drains his glass.)

Woo! That really is the good stuff, isn't it? It really is. *(Points to FRANK's glass)* Look at that precious. Frank's glass has a chip in it. Lemmee get you a new one.

FRANK: No ... no, really ... that's OK. Why it's not even a chip ... barely a nick.

HARRY: Don't be silly. No future son-in-law of mine is gonna drink out of a chipped glass. I'll be back in a jiffy. You kids relax. *(starts to leave)* And don't do anything I wouldn't do. Got that, chief?

FRANK: Got it.

HARRY: Plenty of time for that after the wedding.

FRANK: If then.

(HARRY leaves.)

MARIE: *(Moving close to FRANK)* Thank goodness we finally have a moment alone.

(FRANK bolts off chair.)

What's the matter?

FRANK: Nothing. I just ... like he said, don't do anything he wouldn't do.

MARIE: Oh, Daddy's such a kidder.

FRANK: Is he?

MARIE: Why are you so nervous? Come here.

(SHE tries to kiss him, FRANK pulls away.)

You afraid of Daddy? Don't be silly ... he's just a big kid.

FRANK: Of course ... of course he is.

MARIE: Always teasing people.

FRANK: Teasing ... sure ...

MARIE: That's all. I mean, he knows what we've been doing...

FRANK: Oh no ... maybe ... maybe that wasn't the best thing to tell him ...

MARIE: Would you relax? I mean, he's not a maniac.

FRANK: I never said that ... no ... never even thought it ...

MARIE: What is it with you today?

FRANK: Well, I have to tell you ... have to ask ... see, he really convinced me he ... I'm sure he was just joking but he is really ... convincing ... he uhm ...

MARIE: What?

FRANK: Well, all right ... I know he was just teasing but he said he heard voices and...

MARIE: *(Angry)* He does not hear voices.

FRANK: Well of course not but he was so ... Sugar, why are you ...? I mean, he's the one ...

MARIE: He doesn't. Not anymore. Understand? He's better. Do you hear me? He's all better.

FRANK: *(With a nervous laugh)* All better? All better?

(HARRY returns with a glass of champagne.)

HARRY: Here we are. Fresh glass. *(Stops)* What're you laughing about?

FRANK: Nothing. Wasn't even laughing. Not really. Barely a chuckle, if that.

HARRY: Well then. How 'bout another toast? *(Gives glass to FRANK, speaks softly)* Topped off with a little stuff I had stashed away *(Winks. Then louder.)* To your future. Bottoms up!

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