

1-800

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Joseph Sorrentino

Copyright © MMVII by Joseph Sorrentino
All Rights Reserved
Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The writing of plays is a means of livelihood. Unlawful use of a playwright's work deprives the creator of his or her rightful income. The playwright is compensated on the full purchase price and the right of performance can only be secured through purchase of at least three (3) copies of this work. PERFORMANCES ARE LIMITED TO ONE VENUE FOR ONE YEAR FROM DATE OF PURCHASE.

The possession of this script without direct purchase from the publisher confers no right or license to produce this work publicly or in private, for gain or charity. On all programs and advertising this notice must appear: "Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC of Cedar Rapids, Iowa."

This dramatic work is fully protected by copyright. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher. Copying (by any means) or performing a copyrighted work without permission constitutes an infringement of copyright.

The right of performance is not transferable and is strictly forbidden in cases where scripts are borrowed or purchased second hand from a third party. All rights including, but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, broadcast, recitation, lecturing, tabloid, publication, and reading are reserved.

COPYING OR REPRODUCING ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS BOOK IN ANY MANNER IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN BY LAW.

PUBLISHED BY

**HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011**

1-800

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 MAN, 1 WOMAN, FLEXIBLE)

FRANKA well-dressed, well-spoken man, in his mid-late 30s. He's an actor.

PHONE VOICEMale or female voice from offstage.

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?

PHONE VOICE: It says you've been cheating on the IRS.

FRANK: I've what?

PHONE VOICE: Oh that's right; you don't cheat. What shall we call it? How about "hiding." That's better, isn't it? This is about that money you've earned that you've been "hiding" from the IRS.

FRANK: I've never done anything like that.

PHONE VOICE: Once again, that's not what our records indicate.

FRANK: And once again, your records are wrong.

PHONE VOICE: Let's just see . . . we have a bit more information this time. *(Pause.)* Let's see . . . 2003, paid cash by Yesso Espresso coffee shop. Worked six months. Full time, it says. Never claimed it. 2004, paid cash by Lotta Latte coffee shop. Worked three months, part-time. Never claimed it. Also 2004, Cuppa Joe coffee shop . . . Seems to be a pattern here, Frank.

FRANK: OK, OK. I admit it. I took a few bucks under the table. So what? Who doesn't?

PHONE VOICE: That doesn't make it right, does it, Frank?

FRANK: All right, all right. I'll talk to my accountant and have him straighten it all out. Happy?

PHONE VOICE: Very.

FRANK: Now, may I please transfer some money? I need to pay this bill.

PHONE VOICE: It'd be nice to pay it on time for a change, wouldn't it?

FRANK: Look, let's just get this done, OK?

PHONE VOICE: Tut, tut, Frank. Getting a little testy, aren't we?

FRANK: Can we please just move this along?

PHONE VOICE: Know what I can do, Frank?

FRANK: *(Sarcastically.)* What can you possibly do?

PHONE VOICE: This.

We hear a dial tone. FRANK furiously dials the number.

PHONE VOICE: Welcome to UrbanBank's Voice Activated . . .

FRANK: OK, buddy, just cut the crap.

PHONE VOICE: Frank! So nice to have you back.

FRANK: Now you just listen to me, buster. I want to transfer some money, understand?

PHONE VOICE: Frank?

FRANK: What?

PHONE VOICE: When you speak to me like that . . . I . . . I get anxious.

FRANK: Anxious? Anxious? You're a . . . a . . . computer-generated recording. What do I care if you get a little anxious? Welcome to the real world, pal.

PHONE VOICE: Frank?

FRANK: What?

PHONE VOICE: You may not realize this, but in addition to complete access to all your financial information, I have complete access to all of your personal information, too. Do you know what that means? Do you, Frank? Access to little things . . . like those websites you so like to visit.

FRANK: *(Pause.)* Well . . . um . . . which sites would those be?

PHONE VOICE: I have one of them in front of me now . . . Let's see . . . Oh, my.

FRANK: What?

PHONE VOICE: Let's be delicate here, shall we, Frank? This isn't exactly a Victoria's Secret catalog we're perusing, is it?

FRANK: Now, look here . . .

PHONE VOICE: Would you just look at that? I can't believe someone would actually enjoy doing something like that to themselves.

FRANK: Now, wait a minute . . .

PHONE VOICE: And you ordered two of them. It's making me turn red. And I'm just a computer-generated recording. What would Mother say if she found out about this?

FRANK: Now, let's not do anything rash. I'm sure we can work something out.

PHONE VOICE: Oh, so now you're willing to be civil. Why must it always come to this?

FRANK: I'm just under some stress . . . paying bills does that to me.

PHONE VOICE: That's still no excuse for talking to me the way you did.

FRANK: You're right. I apologize. Now, if we could just . . .

PHONE VOICE: People. You all think I'm just some computer-generated recording, just a bunch of ones and zeros. No heart. Well, maybe that's true. But . . . but I have feelings, you know. I hurt, too. Deep inside, I hurt.

FRANK: I'm sorry . . . I didn't know . . .

PHONE VOICE: Save your pity.

FRANK: It's not pity. Well, OK, maybe it is. But I am sorry. I'd like to make it up to you.

PHONE VOICE: How?

FRANK: Would you like to meet . . . maybe . . . talk things over?

PHONE VOICE: You really don't want to do that.

FRANK: No . . . no, I do.

PHONE VOICE: Really? You really do?

FRANK: Sure. I mean, you're probably not really a bad . . . um . . . person, right?

PHONE VOICE: I'm not, not really . . . once you get to know me. They made me what I am.

FRANK: Of course they did. Say, how 'bout a coffee . . . in . . . half an hour?

PHONE VOICE: Really?

FRANK: Really.

PHONE VOICE: Java Junction?

FRANK: That's my fave.

PHONE VOICE: Love to.

FRANK: Good.

PHONE VOICE: Until then.

FRANK: Until then.

PHONE VOICE: Frank?

FRANK: Hmm?

PHONE VOICE: The money transfer?

FRANK: You know what? I'll just go to the bank tomorrow and do it.

PHONE VOICE: Sure?

FRANK: It'll do me good to get out.

PHONE VOICE: OK. See you.

FRANK: See you.

*FRANK hangs up, looks at the phone, looks at audience, and shrugs.
Lights down.*

THE END

DO NOT COPY