A Whimsical Tale from The Life of the Unfortunate Francis Leary

by

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PITCH BLACK

An alarm clock buzzes violently far away. Then closer and closer.

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM

A hand smacks down on the snooze button.
The flickering display reads: 6:00.

INT. BATHROOM

The mirror on the medical cabinet slings shut and in the glass shines the reflection of FRANCIS LEARY, late twenties, unassuming, perpetually sleep-deprived.

He monotonously blows his nose with sickly eyes, as the radio chatters indistinctly in the background.

INT. BEDROOM

Francis sits on the side of his unkempt bed, his body sunken, with an old dial-phone in his lap.

FRANCIS
Hi, Jeremy, this is Francis. I’m calling in sick today.

The other end of the conversation is vague and unintelligible. We can’t hear what the he’s saying.

FRANCIS
Yeah, it’s probably one of those 24-hour things, I should be ready tomo-

The other end interrupts.

FRANCIS
Oh? Well...no I guess I could come in, if it’s important?

Francis sticks a paper-towel into his running nose.

FRANCIS
(nasally)
Seven? But I usually don’t come in until Seven thirty?
FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Yeah, no it's no big deal. Maybe
a bit of fresh air might even do
me some good, you know?

Francis chuckles nervously.

FRANCIS
What? Okay...I'll bring Danish.

CLICK. The other end of the line disconnects.

EXT. BUS-STOP - MORNING
It's still dark and the rain pours down. Francis stands in
there soaked, unaffected, nose dribbling.

The bus approaches the stop, its lights gleam through the
morning darkness.

Francis steps up to the curb.

But the bus doesn't slow down. Francis waves imaginatively
with his arms to the bus-driver, who pretends he doesn't
see.

FRANCIS
Hey!

The bus passes right by him, and Francis sets off in futile
pursuit right into a deep puddle off the curb.

He sighs deeply.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM

Francis hurries down the steps to the platform and looks
up, just as the train closes its doors. He narrowly slips
in by the last second.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN

Francis sits in his seat next to an unkempt biker with a
blank stare into the car and an old lady with parrot in a
cage.

Francis sniffs - something reeks. He looks to the biker,
who glares back at him and Francis quickly averts his eyes
on air.

The doors connecting the cars shoot open and a couple of street musicians enter. One plays the flute and the other the tambourine, some sort of gypsy-music.

They fervently sing and dance along, but terribly off-key, while Francis sinks into his seat trying to escape the horrible singing.

Then the train speakers static.

TRAINS ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Due to unscheduled construction
in tunnel 8, this train will make
its final stop at Queensboro Station. Please confer the ticket office for other extending lines.

PARROT-LADY
(shrugs)
Jumper.

INT. PLATFORM

Francis hurries through the subway halls and yanks out his cell-phone, but it's soaked too.

FRANCIS
Shit...

A man stands by a couple of pay-phones and chats casually.
Francis runs over to the phones and lifts the receiver of the other one, but notices the chord has been cut.

Then turns to the man, a rugged guy with handlebar moustache.

FRANCIS
Excuse me.

The man turns slightly, glances at Francis and turns back.

FRANCIS
I'm sorry but I need to make an urgent phone-call...

HANDLEBAR MOStache
(in the phone)
Hold on, baby.
(to Francis)
What the fuck is your problem?
Can't you see I'm on the phone?
FRANCIS
Yeah, I'm sorry, but I thought
maybe I could-

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
You could what? Take my phone?

FRANCIS
No, I-

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
You think you deserve this phone,
man? You think because you wear a
shirt and tie you're more
important than me?

FRANCIS
(startled)
It's a clip on...

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
Let me tell you something, buddy,
I was in Desert Storm! I flew
missions behind enemy lines -- I
blew up a lot of shit, so I
didn't have to take shit.
So I think I've earned my god-
damn right to use this phone!
(brief pause)
And should I choose to do so, I
could stand here all day! That's
my constitutional fucking right, man!

Francis flinches frightened, taken aback.

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
That's fuckin' it. Give me your
wallet.

FRANCIS
What?

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
I said give me your fucking
wallet.

FRANCIS
You're robbing me???

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
I'm taking back what's mine.

FRANCIS
No!
Francis takes a step back, disgusted. The man grabs him by the collar.

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
Pay up, or step up, buddy!

Francis wrestles free and pelts down the hall away from the man.

HANDLEBAR MOUSTACHE
Hey, come back here!

EXT. CITY STREET - SUBWAY ENTRANCE

Francis leaps up the steps and into the street, where a taxi swerves across the lane to dodge him. He flies up on the hood, into the windshield and finally lands on the ground in front of it.

The cabbie and his passenger, another cab-driver, rush over. Francis moves slightly -- sporadic moans and flinches testify he’s alive.

FRANCIS
Ow...

PAKISTANI CABBIE
Is he dead?

PAKISTANI CABBIE #2
You killed him, Sanjay!

PAKISTANI CABBIE
No, I think he’s still alive.

PAKISTANI CABBIE #2
You’re right. He could sue us for millions! You have to finish the job.

PAKISTANI CABBIE
“Finish the job”? Have you gone mad? We’re not gonna kill him!

PAKISTANI CABBIE #2
He practically threw him himself at us! I read about this -- ‘Murder-by-cab’.

PAKISTANI CABBIE
‘Murder-by-cab’? You just made that up now!

PAKISTANI CABBIE #2
Well, I’m not losing my license!
PAKISTANI CABBIE
Look, we’re the ones who should sue his ass, look what he did to my car!

Francis moans again, louder.

FRANCIS
(garbled)
I’m alright...please don’t sue me...

PAKISTANI CABBIE #2
Well, we have to do something!

EXT. HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT
The taxi comes to a screeching halt in front of the hospital entrance.

The two cabbies jump out and pop open the trunk. They haul out a dazed and confused Francis, and throw him on the asphalt.

They then jump back inside.

PAKISTANI CABBIE #2
Go! Go! Go!

And the car fishtails down the road.

Francis lies on the pavement for some time. Nothing happens. No doctors, nurses or paramedics show up.

He then slowly gets up himself and looks around. He looks at the time, 6:47, and staggers, drunkenly away.

INT. 7-11
Francis marches inside the store, disoriented, but determined. He grabs some pastry and gets in line.

The line, which is remarkably long this time of day, doesn’t move. The female clerk chats up a handsome young man by the register.

Francis looks again to his watch. 6:50, then looks around. He places a 10 dollar bill on the display case and rests his gaze on the exit.

Suddenly he strides for the door as he tries to looks as inconspicuous as possible.

7-11 CLERK
Hey! You have to pay for that!
Francis picks up the pace and storms out the door. The handsome young guy sets after him in pursuit.

EXT. INNER CITY STREET.

Francis paces down the avenue, with the guy right behind him.

HANDSOME GUY
Come back here!

FRANCIS
I paid for it! I paid for it!

Francis cuts left into an alley, and jumps into an open garbage container.

The handsome man runs right by him.

Francis lies absolutely still for some time, then gets up as he coughs at the smell of garbage. He jumps down on the ground again, but lands into another deep puddle of water.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - ELEVATOR

Francis stands alongside other patrons in the elevator. He’s a mess. Completely soaked, bruised and battered, and covered with filth. All the passengers have scooted away from him.

Francis’s eyes just don’t care anymore. He looks once again at his watch. The time is 7:02.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - CUBICLES

The doors open and Francis shuffles inside the office, indifferent to the stares of his few colleagues who’s there.

INT. BOSS’ OFFICE

Francis knocks on the door and enters.

A man in his 40’s, in a shirt and tie like Francis, sits by his desk. He’s got a wide grin, and an anchorman hairdo.

BOSS
Ah, Francis! Good morning! I see you brought the Danish; excellent!

Francis hands him the pastry.
FRANCIS
So what was the important thing that couldn’t wait?

The boss stares blankly at him, then remembers.

BOSS
Uhm... yeah, I need you to... uh, make sure we have enough... staplers in supply. You know, for the meeting!

Francis just glares at him.

BOSS
Wow, Francis, you really look terrible. Ya sure you’re feeling okay? Maybe you should take the rest of the day off.

FRANCIS
(bites his tongue)
Okay.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE

Francis drags his beat body through the door, his jacket over his shoulder. A young girl stands behind the counter.

FRANCIS
Give me a pack of tic-tacs, a mountain dew and a Hershey bar.

She quickly turns around and places the items on the counter.

CLERK
I'm sorry, we're all out of Hershey bars.

Francis stares in disbelief.

FRANCIS
What?

CLERK
I said we’re-

Francis throws the tic-tacs on the floor in fury.

FRANCIS
OH COME ON!!! What kind of sick joke is this!?

The clerk jolts back in terror.
Francis throws his jacket to the floor and stomps on it repeatedly. His arms flail all over the place.

FRANCIS
Give me a fucking break! This sort of thing just doesn’t happen!!!

Francis stares to the ceiling.

FRANCIS
Is this your work? Huh, God? Am I being punished? All I wanted was one lousy fucking Hershey bar, chocolate-chocolate with a chewy center! Is that too much to ask?!

FRANCIS
(to the clerk)
Is it!?

She shakes her head frantically.

FRANCIS
FUCK! FUCK! FUCK! Why must life be so hard!?

He stomps furiously on the tic-tacs, grinding them to bits.

FRANCIS
I hate...this place...so...much!

The clerk and the other customers stare in stunned silence at him.

He calms down, breathes easier, exhausted from yelling.

A beat.

The clerk cranes a bit forward, still frightened. She makes a slight gulp.

CLERK
(stutters)
Uhm, we have Zagnut...?

FADE OUT.

THE END