

The Change

[Opens with a 30 or 40 year old standing over the sink in his prison cell, in front of the mirror; his back is to the audience and stays that way; he's in his boxers and wifebeater, talking to a tube of toothpaste; the disembodied male voice is that of an enthusiastic commercial voiceover.]

Guy: *You're* new. What happened to the other guy?

Voice: I'm his replacement.

G: But, why?

V: It was time for a change.

G: "Time for a change"?! That's it? That's the best you can do?!

V: I guess so.

G: Well, that's just fuckin' great.

V: So, are we going to brush or are you going to resort to salt on your finger?

G: That's melodramatic. I could always borrow a different kind of toothpaste from someone.

V: "Borrow"? That's rich. Who's gonna lend you their toothpaste?

G: You'd be surprised.

V: Okay, assuming someone lends you their tube, you're telling me you're gonna use it? How about if there's gooey squeezes of paste caked around the nozzle? The germs and—

G: Alriiight, enough! I'm gonna throw up.

V: Stupid question—why'd you buy me?

G: I didn't. On my order sheet I filled in the space next to 'Toothpaste/B.soda' like I've been doing for the past five years. And for the past five years, I've been getting Colgate.

V: Riiight?

G: I've been baited with Colgate and switched to Ultrabrite. Fuckers.

V: I'm sure stuff like this happens all the time.

G: There're laws against it on the street, but, yeah, Inside...you pays your money and you takes your chance.

V: So, where does that leave us?

G: What is this pitch called, the passive-aggressive sell?

V: A rational appeal.

G: Bullshit.

V: Listen, you're starting to hurt my feelings. Scientists took time formulating me; the marketing department designed my packaging, set my pricing, promotion and placement, and positioned me accordingly. I'm not junk.

G: *Waa, waa.* I was raised by a Jewish mother, I'm inoculated against all but the most rabid guilt trip.

V: No one's trying to make you feel bad. C'mon, sport, let's brush.

G: Fair enough. But not because of your pitch, because I'm bored with this fuckin back and forth.

[He begins brushing, the manic instrumental within Steppenwolf's "Magic Carpet Ride" plays and overpowers the sound of brushing; lights go out; lights slowly come up, simulating sunrise; he gets out of bed, brushes his teeth, has a piss, gets dressed and leaves; bright daylight slowly changes to artificial light at night; he appears in boxers and wifebeater, over the sink.]

G: I don't like you.

V: Why not?

G: Because you suck.
 V: I freshen breath.
 G: Fuck you.
 V: I fight cavities.
 G: Whatever.
 V: I whiten teeth *and* fight tartar.
 G: Fuck you, FUCK YOU! You're no Colgate.
 V: I'm a comparable offering. Were you even paying attention to my attributes?
 G: What's with the screw-off top? Whaddare we in—1991?
 V: What's wrong with my top?
 G: It's not flip top.
 V: You're kidding, right?
 G: No. Screwing off a top, finding a place to put the cap, the shit's annoying.
 V: Hey, you haven't emptied your trash in a couple of days.
 G: So?
 V: So, go get the old Colgate, remove the flip top, and exchange it for my screw off top.
 G: Maybe later.
 V: If it were such a big deal, you'd take care of it now.
 G: You taste like shit.
 V: I'm cool mint.
 G: Your mint is *less* than cool.
 V: That's just in your head.
 G: Is not. You taste like black licorice.
 V: Even if I do, and I'm not conceding that, what's wrong with black licorice?
 G: Everything's wrong with black licorice.
 V: I'm sorry you feel that way, but I'm cool mint, not black licorice.
 G: I've been misled by product packaging before.
 V: No one's trying to mislead you.
 G: Just shut up, please. I'm trying to rationalize away the post-purchase angst.

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G: Ultrabrite, you bright turquoise-packaged faker!
 V: It's nice to see you, too. What are you talking about?
 G: You know damn well.
 V: No, I don't. Why don't you enlighten me?
 G: OK. Stop me when this sounds familiar. You're not a new offering at all; you've been around for, like, ever.
 V: Who told you such a thing?
 G: So you admit it?
 V: I admit nothing.
 G: I was complaining about you to my Dad, he said that he used Ultrabrite when he was a kid.
 V: He must be confused.
 G: Nice try. I described you fully; he didn't think you were even *made* anymore.
 V: [Dejected sigh] Yup, I'm still around.

G: I knew something was amiss.

V: [Now using his real voice, NY-ese, grandfatherly] So what now?

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G: It all makes sense now.

V: What's that?

G: Your packaging. You're distributed by Colgate-Palmolive, but there's no French on your label.

V: Meaning?

G: Meaning that if Colgate was marketing you towards Canadians, there'd be some French on your label.

V: Where are we?

G: Uh, close enough to the Canadian border that it's not out of the norm to occasionally get some products with French on the label.

V: That's an answer?

G: Look, it doesn't really matter. I wanna apologize for how I spoke to you those first coupla days.

V: Water under the bridge.

G: You're an old man.

V: Rub it in, you'll be that way too some day.

G: No, I'm not trying to break balls. I'm just saying is all, you're like a grandfather.

V: I don't have any grandkids.

G: Both my grandfathers have passed away.

V: I'm sorry to hear that.

G: Yeah...

V: Penny for your thoughts.

G: I'm thinkinnng...thaaaat...you can be my new grandfather and I can call you 'Poppy' and you can wax nostalgic to me over some hot cocoa.

V: Only if you explain the appeal of this *fehkakta* rap music.

G: Done. And you can vow to begin a memoir and I can promise to help you with it.

V: And we'll both never—

G: —see it through!

V:&G: [Laughing]

V: Whadda I call you, champ?

G: You can call me Bobby.

V: That sounds good, *Bobby*.

[He begins brushing, the touching lyrics of Neil Young's "Old Man" play and overpowers the sound of brushing; lights go out.]

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