

THE CLEANER S2

'THE CLOWN'

06/07/22

Written by

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Based on "Der Tatortreiniger" by Mizzi Meyer

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**EXT. THEATRE. CAR PARK - DAY**

Wicky pulls up outside a small provincial theatre. A disinterested girl, SELINA (20s) sits outside the front door chewing gum. Wicky unpacks his things (very obviously cleaning things) and approaches her.

SELINA

You the cleaner?

He is gently sarcastic.

WICKY

No, I'm former American president  
Bill Clinton.

SELINA

Oh right, I've been told to wait  
for a cleaner.

WICKY

I'm the cleaner.

She looks immediately irritated. Her social skills are zero.

WICKY (CONT'D)

After the whole president thing I  
needed a hobby.

She walks away full of stroppy youthful contempt, he follows.

**EXT. THEATRE. BACK STAGE DOOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

The girl points down a corridor. Wicky nods and walks in. The grumpy, disinterested girl follows. Wicky finds himself behind a very low door. He opens it and consciously DUCKS UNDER THE FRAME to enter a space.

**INT. THEATRE. STAGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

From behind Wicky we see he has stepped onto a stage. A spotlight is dramatically pointed at him and he squints to see... The audience area below him is chaos. Chairs are turned upside down and there is blood everywhere.

WICKY

Woah!

A warm voice from the darkness on stage startles him.

MR ABAHASSINE

Quite a mess isn't it? Welcome.

Out of nowhere, MR ABAHASSINE (60s) has appeared next to him. He is a small, friendly looking man. Essentially dressed as the shop keeper from Mr Ben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WICKY

What the hell happened?!

MR ABAHASSINE

A rather large and out of control  
crowd fight, I fear.

WICKY

A crowd fight? At a play? What play  
was it...(he stops; can't think of  
one; after a lifetime of  
thinking)

Rocky? Was that a play first?

(beat)

Do you know, I've just realised I  
don't know one play!

MR ABAHASSINE

Would that it were a play they were  
watching, dear fellow.

He nods to the backdrop behind Wicky. We realise for the first time that his head is below a giant mural of a man's crotch. The name of last night's entertainment emblazoned above it: 'The donkey boyz'.

WICKY

Strippers? What you doing having  
strippers on at 'the theatre'?

MR ABAHASSINE

One does what one must to ensure  
the survival of 'the theatre.'

WICKY

Got it. Like my mate who owns the  
chip shop. He doesn't want to sell  
saveloy but he says it brings 'the  
grey pound.'

Selina has appeared behind Wicky.

MR ABAHASSINE

Selina, pop and turn the espresso  
machine on, please. I'm sure our  
guest will be parched.

SELINA

The what?

MR ABAHASSINE

The hissy steamy machine that you  
burnt your finger on yesterday.

SELINA

Kills.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

3

Selina holds up a finger with a plaster on it and then disappears.

MR ABAHASSINE

Hard to find staff out here in the sticks.

WICKY

I'm not one to judge but she does seem like...

(beat)

A miserable shit.

MR ABAHASSINE

I think she has yet to develop a passion for the arts, or indeed anything at all. But who's to say where our place is in this great tapestry of life.

WICKY

Yeah, when I was her age I was sure I was going to be a kung-fu master.

MR ABAHASSINE

I myself was not born to tread the boards, but to curate a space for those who have the gift. We all find our place eventually.

WICKY

Just to be clear, I still hope to become a kung-fu master.

Mr Abahassine chuckles.

MR ABBRASINE

Do what you can, being who you are, shine like a glow worm, if you can't be a star...

Wicky smiles.

WICKY

I like that!

(beat)

That's very good, gives me a bit of motivation to clean up this...

Fight? What happened?

MR ABAHASSINE

I think the donkey boyz raised the temperature just a little too much. Ten minutes in; and we had forty women brawl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WICKY

The theatre is probably the wrong place to announce that that turns me on a little bit?

MR ABAHASSINE

Well, it isn't Alan Bennett.

WICKY

My penis?

The two men stare at each other for a very long beat.

MR ABAHASSINE

I'll leave you to it.

WICKY

(quickly in)

Yep.

**INT. THEATRE. STAGE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

A Wicky cleaning montage. During it, he comes and goes through the LOW DOOR at the back of the stage. He always remembers to duck last minute. He also pisses about trying on elements from the donkey boyz costume rail.

We cut to real-time as he drags some glittered bunting and turns to leave when --

BAM! He walks into the low door.

He is knocked flat on his back or, more dramatically, off the stage. A stage flat falls on top of him -- the donkey boyz crotch one. A hilarious physical comedy.

Wicky looks up from whatever funny position he's landed in and...

WICKY

Piss it.

\*

From the back of the room comes a slow and hearty hand clap.

THE CLOWN

Bravo!

Wicky looks into the hazy darkness and makes out a figure approaching him from the shadows.

THE CLOWN (CONT'D)

Perfect! Bravo! Encore.

WICKY

Hello?

THE CLOWN  
The perfect (prat) fall. What a gift!

WICKY  
Who are you?

From the shadows.

THE CLOWN  
Me? I am...

He steps out of the shadows and reveals himself. A 40-year-old man, dressed pretentiously with a big scarf on and a holdall over his shoulder. He pops a red nose on as he steps forward. This is THE CLOWN/STRAZZAMO.

THE CLOWN (CONT'D)  
I am Strazzamo!

The moment of high drama is punctuated by Wicky.

WICKY  
Who?

THE CLOWN  
What time are you on? I'd love to see the whole show.

WICKY  
What? Help me! Can you not see I'm trapped under a donkey dick?

Strazzamo rushes over and helps Wicky to his feet.

STRAZZAMO  
The timing was perfection, the sound of impact went through me, the landing almost grotesque. I thought you had genuinely hurt yourself.

WICKY  
I have genuinely hurt myself.

Strazzamo is not listening, he continues with impatient enthusiasm.

STRAZZAMO  
My guess is, you flat-palmed the ground just before impact to create the illusion of a heavy fall... How do you draw the audience eye? With your other hand, POV?

WICKY

Mate. Are you listening to me? I've  
hurt myself, I think my tooth is  
loose! I've got a loose tooth!

Wicky pushes Strazzamo back. At last, Strazzamo comes online  
and realises Wicky isn't joking.

STRAZZAMO

It wasn't a deliberate fall?

WICKY

To quote the farmers from my home  
town: why not wring a turkey's neck  
with both hands.

\*  
\*

STRAZZAMO

But your costume? The look is  
iconic.

Wicky looks down at his soco suit.

WICKY

This isn't a costume! I'm not a  
clown!

STRAZZAMO

Then... Who are you?

WICKY

I'm here to clean up! I presume  
you'd like all that cleaned up?!

STRAZZAMO

You're just a cleaner?!

WICKY

A crime scene cleaner.

STRAZZAMO

What a waste of such natural  
attributes. Freakishly tall,  
hilariously fat...

He prods Wicky's stomach. Wicky's getting wound up.

WICKY

You poke me one more time and you  
won't need a fake red nose.

STRAZZAMO

Strazzamo doesn't wear a fake red  
nose, the nose is part of  
Strazzamo!

WICKY

I'm going to find you quite tiring  
I think.

Before Wicky can do anything, a door at the back of the room opens and Selina comes in with Wicky's coffee.

SELINA

Where do you want this?

STRAZZAMO

Is that an espresso! Delightful!  
Could I... (have one)

**INT. THEATRE. AUDIENCE AREA - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Wicky takes a sip of coffee and points at a pile of the Clown's props on the floor.

WICKY

You're going to have to move all that.

STRAZZAMO

Where?

WICKY

I don't care, but you don't want this stuff on your costume, it destroys the central nervous system.

Wicky gets to work as the Clown starts moving his gear onto a nearby table.

STRAZZAMO

And this is a soc...?

WICKY

Soco suit, scene of crime.

STRAZZAMO

It's wonderful, I could really do something with it. Something... soviet Era... bay of pigs... Cuban missile crisis.

His hands paint out the imaginary strap line to the show.

STRAZZAMO (CONT'D)

Strazzamo takes on the extinction of humanity against the background of the cold war with Soviet Russia.

Wicky has calmed down from his fall.

WICKY

What do you call a Soviet with three balls?

Strazzamo isn't listening.

5 CONTINUED:

5

STRAZZAMO

The lonely clown juxtaposed against  
the threat of nuclear winter...  
What?

WICKY

A Russian with three balls? What do  
you call him?

STRAZZAMO

I don't know, and I'm not sure I  
want to know.

WICKY

(he suppresses a giggle in  
anticipation of his joke)  
Hoodunicka Bollockov. You can use  
that in your show.

He looks at the baffled clown.

STRAZZAMO

What?

WICKY

Who-did-you-nick-a-bollock-off.

STRAZZAMO

I heard you the first time.

Selina re-enters the room with a coffee for Strazzamo.

SELINA

He says you can have this one for  
free, but you'll have to pay for  
any others.

WICKY

Like my jokes. Wait, you'll like  
this...

SELINA

Eh?

WICKY

What do you call a Russian with  
three balls?

STRAZZAMO

She won't know it, she's too  
young...

WICKY

Yeah she will, it's famous.

STRAZZAMO

In the playground. In 1985.

(CONTINUED)

WICKY  
Hoodunicka Bollockov.

STRAZZAMO  
It's nonsense.

SELINA  
What?

WICKY  
Bloody hell mate, that's good  
material. For a clown, you're not  
very on it.

He looks at them both expectantly.

STRAZZAMO  
I get it.

SELINA  
I don't.

WICKY  
Tough crowd.

Wicky gets back to cleaning.

Wicky is cleaning whilst Strazzamo prepares his act. Wicky notices INTERESTING PROPS are coming out and can't resist. He goes over to a clothes rack that's on stage.

WICKY  
What part of the show is this?

When the camera finds Wicky, he is wearing a leather hat with chains on it.

STRAZZAMO  
It's not...

WICKY  
This?

Reveal Wicky is wearing a cowboy hat. Off Strazzamo's expression, he swaps it for a construction workers hat.

WICKY (CONT'D)  
These are the donkey boyz props,  
aren't they?

STRAZZAMO  
Clearly!

WICKY

Has there ever been a sexy clown?  
Could be a whole new market for you  
there.

STRAZZAMO

I tend to steer away from lowest  
common denominator titillation.

WICKY

Yeah? It's a favourite on my sat  
nav.

Strazzamo checks a swanee whistle and stretches a balloon out.

WICKY (CONT'D)

How do you even become a clown? My  
careers officer would have laughed  
you out of the room. He told Dave  
Edgerton's parents he was probably  
gay because he wanted to be a chef.

STRAZZAMO

I got the calling late in life.

WICKY

Did a circus come to town? They can  
be quite seductive; my cousin got  
up the duff from 'one of the  
beautiful smokey-eyed boys that  
tend their horses'. Her words.

\*

STRAZZAMO

We'd booked a clown for my son's  
second birthday and last minute he  
called in sick. I just knew I  
couldn't let the kids down...

WICKY

Did he say what was wrong with him?

STRAZZAMO

What difference does that make?

WICKY

I just like detail in stories.

STRAZZAMO

I think he said he had arthritis.

WICKY

Yeah, because arthritis famously  
comes on overnight doesn't it? He  
was hungover. Grow up. Sorry, go  
on. You hired a pissed clown.

(CONTINUED)

STRAZZAMO

I found some balloons, and some of  
my wife's make up, and my mum had  
left an old wig round the house...

WICKY

From when she had cancer? So brave.

STRAZZAMO

What... no?? From a fancy-dress  
party.

Wicky indicates there will be no more interruptions.

STRAZZAMO (CONT'D)

I don't know what happened then, I  
just started to perform. It just  
seemed to... come out of me... flow  
from somewhere... I... just became  
the clown and they laughed. They  
laughed and laughed! I was a  
triumph. The character just seemed  
to inhabit me. I had no idea  
laughter was a gift that was mine  
to give.

WICKY

Yeah, because two-year-olds are  
famously hard to make laugh, aren't  
they. My nephew laughs at the word  
'pancake'. Pisses himself. Boy's a  
moron.

Strazzamo is lost in his own memory.

STRAZZAMO

And I knew there and then that I  
had... it seems very grand...  
stumbled upon my destiny.

(beat)

I resigned the next day.

WICKY

From what? Reality?

STRAZZAMO

I was a corporate financial  
adviser, just about to be made a  
partner actually.

There is a long beat.

WICKY

You're not joking are you?

STRAZZAMO

Within a month I had used my savings to enrol in the Marcel Marceau school of mime in Paris.

WICKY

In France?!

STRAZZAMO

Paris, yes.

WICKY

Because you made some toddlers laugh in your mum's wig??

STRAZZAMO

I tapped into the reason. The reason I am here.

(beat; high emotion)

I found my higher purpose.

He breathes in the importance of the moment. Then realises he may have been self-absorbed.

STRAZZAMO (CONT'D)

How did you become a crime scene cleaner?

Wicky is suddenly sheepish. He thinks for a moment.

WICKY

My mate said there was a job going. Cleaning, but for crime scenes. I applied. I got the job.

STRAZZAMO

And you love it?

WICKY

I better get on.

Wicky walks away. Then turns back.

WICKY (CONT'D)

You're married then?

STRAZZAMO

Yes.

WICKY

And how did your wife feel about you blowing your savings on a clown course?

STRAZZAMO

Well. She supports my dreams. That was six years ago. She's still with me. We have a son.

(CONTINUED)

WICKY

And this supports you all?  
Financially.

STRAZZAMO

Well, Tara had to take a part time  
job when I started but... she would  
have anyway...

Wicky smiles knowingly. This has made him feel better.

WICKY

I see.

Wicky nods and smiles. He's clearly judging Strazzamo but he  
smiles and walks away. Strazzamo frowns and watches him  
leave.

Wicky is using a piece of specialist equipment on the floor.  
Strazzamo has blown up a giant a balloon. Wicky side-eyes  
him.

WICKY

Did you learn that in Paris?

Strazzamo comes over and sits on the stage.

STRAZZAMO

What's that supposed to mean?

WICKY

No need to be defensive, mate. I  
just wondered if blowing up a big  
balloon was part of the 'training'?

STRAZZAMO

Was 'get a cleaning cloth out of a  
bag' part of your training?

Wicky looks back at him. That was part of his training.

WICKY

Yes.

Strazzamo

I developed this act myself. I  
learned the discipline in Paris.  
The art is all my own.

WICKY (CONT'D)

So they didn't teach you how to run  
in those big, long shoes...

7  
CONTINUED:

7

STRAZZAMO

No! Paris was a mime course. Are you actually interested?

Wicky stops and rests on the equipment/broom.

WICKY

I really am.

STRAZZAMO

On one day of the course... and I mean for the whole day. We just...

Strazzamo leans forward and is lost in an imagined image. He gently reaches out his hand.

STRAZZAMO (CONT'D)

We just picked a single imaginary daisy.

His fingers seem to brush the daisy and he is transfixed.

WICKY

What on earth do you mean?

Strazzamo does not break his gaze.

STRAZZAMO

Do you know what, after the 4th hour I swear I could see that flower. Every delicate petal of it. The dust dancing off the stamens, caught in the dying summer light...

WICKY

And how much did Marcel charge you for that?

Strazzamo looks up angrily.

STRAZZAMO

Always about money! Why don't you say what you mean, you clearly have a problem with what I do...

WICKY

I don't, I just think it must have been a boring day!

STRAZZAMO

Nowhere near as fascinating as mopping up some stains, I'm sure!

WICKY

I don't use a mop!

A fire alarm goes off. Both men look up and then at each other. Selina stumbles into the room.

(CONTINUED)

SELINA

He says we have to evacuate or  
whatever.

8

**EXT. THEATRE. CAR PARK - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

8

Wicky vapes sitting on the side of his van. Next to the van, we see Strazzamo's car. It is a battered old wreck with Strazzamo painted on the side.

Selina scrolls through texts and Strazzamo practices a mime. Wicky watches him and smiles. He can't resist another dig.

WICKY

Worried you'll lose your giant  
shoes in a fire?

Strazzamo smiles sardonically.

CLOWN

For the second time... I don't have  
any giant shoes.

WICKY

What? How come? How are you going  
to do that funny walk clowns do?

CLOWN

Whatever you think a clown is, I'm  
not that.

WICKY

Well you've got one of those cars  
that fall apart.

He indicates Strazzamo's wreck and does a mock clown horn.

WICKY (CONT'D)

Clown's a clown mate.

CLOWN

A clown is most certainly not a  
clown!

Selina comes online for the first time and looks up from her phone.

SELINA

Clowns are shit.

WICKY

Sharper than she looks.

Before Strazzamo can react, Mr Abahassine arrives looking flustered.

(CONTINUED)

MR ABAHASSINE

I do apologise. The alarm is rather outdated and has to be reset remotely by the fire department. I would have it replaced but it's rather expensive. Chef has arrived, if anyone would enjoy lunch?

Strazzamo raises his eyebrows.

STRAZZAMO

Lovely!

9

INT. THEATRE. RESTAURANT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

9

Strazzamo slurps his way through soup. He was clearly very hungry. He also hoofs down bread. Wicky eats a sandwich slowly and watches the strange man intrigued.

STRAZZAMO

How does it pay?

WICKY

Mm?

STRAZZAMO

Crime scene cleaning?

WICKY

Ah, it's fine.

He caresses his belly.

WICKY (CONT'D)

All bought and paid for.

STRAZZAMO

You're a sole trader, right?

WICKY

Eh?

STRAZZAMO

You work for a company or yourself?

WICKY

Oh the company; Lausen.

STRAZZAMO

You should go self-employed. Start a company and let them contract you as a freelancer. Beneficial tax and VAT outcomes.

\*

WICKY

There! You see. Now *that's* useful.

(CONTINUED)

STRAZZAMO  
(following the logic)  
So what...?

WICKY  
You sure you followed the right  
calling?

Strazzamo smiles and reaches over the table at Wicky. He shows him an empty hand. Moves it around in front of his face and -- POOP! He pops a red nose on Wicky's nose. Wicky is frozen by the strangeness of the act.

STRAZZAMO  
I want to be extraordinary, Wicky.

Selina comes over and puts the bill down. Strazzamo is instantly sheepish. He glances at it and then smiles at Selina.

STRAZZAMO (CONT'D)  
I presume mine is comped?

SELINA  
Eh?

STRAZZAMO  
Because I'm performing.

SELINA  
He said you'd say that and he says  
it's not free. 'Tell the clown it's  
not free.'

CLOWN  
No problem. I'll pay you from  
receipts after the show.

Selina shrugs and starts to walk away.

CLOWN (CONT'D)  
How many have I sold?

SELINA  
So far, four.

CLOWN  
Four?!

SELINA  
So far.

She leaves. Wicky looks at the desperate clown and a wave of sympathy comes over him. He takes his wallet out and counts some cash out.

CLOWN  
Oh. Well, that's very kind.

(CONTINUED)

WICKY

How often do you play to four  
people?

Strazzamo drops his head.

CLOWN

More often than not.

WICKY

And you never regretted it?  
Thought, 'If I don't find success,  
I'll go back to my well-paid job,  
telling people how to avoid paying  
tax?'

CLOWN

I have success!

Wicky gives the Clown an unconvinced look.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

Granted, I don't earn much, but I  
do what feels right. Tell stories.  
My stories.

Wicky doesn't look convinced.

CLOWN (CONT'D)

I admit, I wish I was playing in  
front of 400 people, rather than  
four. But Steven Spielberg wishes  
that he had 30 million rather than  
20 million viewers. What's the  
difference?

WICKY

Fucking massive?

CLOWN

Yes, but there's never a time when  
you can objectively say 'after this  
many people you're a success'. You  
become team leader, you want to  
become manager. You become manager,  
you want to become executive. You  
never arrive, Wicky. It's about  
touching people, regardless of 5 or  
5 million.

WICKY

I've touched lots of people.

(beat)

About 12.

(beat)

So, what if no-one turns up?

CLOWN

I'd still perform. Otherwise I'd feel the world were deciding whether I can perform my art.

WICKY

And you wouldn't find that massively depressing?

CLOWN

No.

(beat)

Do you not enjoy your work?

WICKY

Come on, work is work. Who really enjoys their job?

CLOWN

In these moments, I realise how privileged I am.

The Clown's patronising tone is starting to wind Wicky up.

WICKY

I enjoy leaving a place clean -- never leave a spot of blood -- but enjoying every moment? That's bullshit. You think miners used to enjoy what they did? Their work was tough, but they had good lives. Job satisfaction. Community.

CLOWN

Black lung.

WICKY

That's a separate issue. It's called work for a reason, mate.

CLOWN

Just get it done?

WICKY

Exactly.

CLOWN

Work to live, don't live to work.

WICKY

You got it.

CLOWN

Just do what you're told.

WICKY

What?

CLOWN

Take your orders, like a good  
little worker. Yes, sir, no sir,  
three bags full.

WICKY

Wait, you...

CLOWN

Trust me, I know how it feels.  
(beat)  
Now I'm my own boss. I don't answer  
to anyone. That's true freedom,  
Wicky.

WICKY

And in the meantime a cleaner has  
had to pay for your lunch.

CLOWN

I could have stayed in finance but  
I looked across the room one day  
and saw 100 suits. And I was just  
another one. Now my colleagues are  
Grimaldi, Marceau, Chaplin and  
Keaton. Now I am in the company of  
those that would uplift humanity.

WICKY

Yeah and my auntie potters around  
the garden so she's best mates with  
Monty Don.

(beat)

She actually does think that, we  
should probably get her piss  
checked.

Strazzamo's eyes brighten suddenly and he reaches across the table to Wicky.

CLOWN

Let me show you my act.

WICKY

No, you're all right.

CLOWN

Please! Just a section of it. It  
can be payback for the lunch... I  
want you to understand my passion.  
Please.

Wicky shrugs. Why not.

10

**INT. THEATRE. STAGE/AUDIENCE AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

10

A single on Wicky. The camera stays with him as OOV Strazzamo's act is being played out. We occasionally hear bells being set off, balloons popping, strange whirring noises, and a swanee whistle.

Wicky's face goes through a full range of emotions until, with a long protracted OOV fart noise, the act has clearly come to an end.

We cut to an out of breath Strazzamo, who sits on the edge of the stage and looks at Wicky expectantly.

STRAZZAMO

There.

WICKY

Wow.

STRAZZAMO

Just wow?

WICKY

Just wow!

STRAZZAMO

You liked?

WICKY

That would be too simplistic a review.

STRAZZAMO

So?

WICKY

I've got to get on anyway. Well done, you must be exhausted. I thought you were going to give yourself a prolapse doing that balloon thing. Good stuff. Now then, this place won't clean itself.

STRAZZAMO

What did you think?

WICKY

I've told you!

STRAZZAMO

You haven't!

WICKY

Look mate, what do you want from me?

(CONTINUED)

STRAZZAMO

The truth.

Wicky shouts.

WICKY

You can't handle the truth!

(beat)

Always wanted to say that line.

Seriously, I don't think I  
should...

STRAZZAMO

Please! Wicky! I want your honest  
opinion. Honest, unvarnished  
opinion from the common man.

After a long beat and Wicky facially trying to work out how to get out of this, his expression settles to resolve.

WICKY

Shit.

Strazzamo is incredulous.

STRAZZAMO

Sorry what?

WICKY

I thought your act was shit.

STRAZZAMO

I think... I think you didn't  
understand some of the imagery...

WICKY

I did, I just found it all shit.  
I'm sorry. Maybe I'm just the wrong  
audience but I found 'Strazzamo'...  
annoying?

Strazzamo is furious.

STRAZZAMO

But the pathos...

WICKY

Mate. Clowns are supposed to be  
funny!

STRAZZAMO

Says who?

WICKY

Says everyone! That was about as  
funny as Brian Coyle.

STRAZZAMO

Who?

WICKY

Bloke down my local. Not funny.

CLOWN

You just sat there, with this expectation, 'come on, entertain me, make me laugh'.

WICKY

That is the idea of a clown, isn't it?

CLOWN

Yes, but you have to bring a certain willingness.

WICKY

No, I think that's your job to make me laugh. My job is to clean up mess. Your job is to take the minds of people like me off their jobs by making us laugh. Because if I have to bring my own laughter to a clown show, then I might as well go home and tickle myself. And I don't mean a special tickle.

STRAZZAMO

Not all comedy is measured in decibels. Sometimes a smile is more valuable than a laugh.

WICKY

Oh yeah when I watch a good comedy I tell people I 'smiled my head off'.

STRAZZAMO

I am here for la poésie! I bring la poésie!

WICKY

Pottery? What?

CLOWN

I wouldn't expect a cleaner to recognise poetry when he sees it.

WICKY

Poetry, sure. I'd like to have it that easy. 'Yeh, sorry I left those streaks of blood up your wall.

(MORE)

WICKY (CONT'D)

Hopefully the poetry of them will  
help you forget the awful murder  
that happened in your house.'  
Poetry my arse.

The Clown picks up a funny prop and throws it at Wicky.

STRAZZAMO

Come on then cleaner!

\*

He starts to come at Wicky

WICKY

Don't do this mate. I don't want to  
add 'beat the shit out of a clown'  
to my CV.

Strazzamo leaps off the stage and onto Wicky. The two spin around the room. As they fall, bells and a swanee whistle sound.

Strazzamo is on top of him. Wicky is reaching out and squeezing horns by accident, trying to get free. His hand plays a bongo... that sort of thing.

STRAZZAMO

You philistine! You've never tried  
to achieve anything. Just happy to  
get paid and get drunk. Another one  
of the zombie army.

He freezes as he realises that Wicky has grabbed his nose. The pain makes him stand and move away compliant to Wicky's grip.

WICKY

Why does everyone have to have a  
bloody dream? Ever considered that?

STRAZZAMO

What? Of course they do!

WICKY

No. Some people don't have the inclination. Some people are just happy to be. Don't need a fantasy. And if you stop and watch them for a while, you'll see they're often much happier than you. Some people choose to walk lightly on the earth.

The two men stare at each other. Strazzamo's nose in Wicky's grip. As Wicky gently releases it, Strazzamo's spring loaded tie flips into his face.

Wicky pauses mid rant... He has seen something. A tiny speck of blood on the back of a chair. He immediately goes over and starts to wipe it off.

STRAZZAMO

No one would have seen that.

WICKY

I'd have known.

Strazzamo looks at him confused. As he does, the fire alarm goes off and Wicky rolls his eyes.

WICKY (CONT'D)

Brilliant.

He heads toward the small door at the back of the stage.

Wicky strides across the car park, shaking his head, when suddenly he realises Mr Abahassine is standing in front of him, looking panicked.

MR ABAHASSINE

Oh dear... oh dear me.

WICKY

You want to get that sorted mate,  
if it goes off during a  
performance...

MR ABAHASSINE

Look!

Wicky turns around to see the theatre is billowing smoke. The fire is real.

WICKY

Shit!

MR ABAHASSINE

Selina is still in there!

WICKY

The clown! Zut alors!

Wicky looks around and sees the donkey boyz costume rack. He starts to strip and reaches out for the fireman's helmet.

CUT TO:

Wicky runs toward the burning building. It's like a scene from Backdraft, except with a fat 50-year-old. He enters the building, and what we see from that point is pending budget discussions. Ultimately, he emerges from the smoking theatre with Selina under one arm, and Strazzamo on his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

There is heroic music, slow-motion shots, etc., as he lays Selina down. She smiles with relief. And then, he props the smoke-covered clown against a wall, who wheezes his conversation with Wicky.

STRAZZAMO

I've inhaled too much smoke.

WICKY

You're going to be fine.

STRAZZAMO

No, not this time. Tell my family I'm sorry. For everything.

WICKY

Mate, don't be ridiculous. It's just a bit of smoke!

Strazzamo coughs a deadly sounding cough and looks hopelessly into Wicky's eyes. A voice startles them both.

DOCTOR

Perhaps I can help.

They both look up and standing there in a donkey boys doctor costume is ANOTHER WICKY! He crouches down and puts his stethoscope on Strazzamo's chest.

DOCTOR WICKY

You're going to be fine.

(to fireman Wicky)

Get that blaze under control!

FIREMAN WICKY, stands and looks at the burning theatre.

MR ABAHASSINE

Please. Can you help?

A voice behind them draws their look.

PILOT WICKY

I could buzz the fire in my jet and hope it blows it out?

Before they can respond, CONSTRUCTION WORKER WICKY steps into shot.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER WICKY

I'll place explosives around the worst hit part of the building. Blow the fire out -- literally.

FIREMAN WICKY

Guys, we just need a hose!

CAVE MAN WICKY

We can use elephant!

A CAVE MAN stands next to a CGI'd elephant that PARPS with joy. The camera finds Fireman Wicky, whose face is crumpled in confusion. WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON? His gaze is drawn by Strazzamo, who is smiling up at him from the floor.

STRAZZAMO

I told you.

WICKY

What?

STRAZZAMO

Everyone has a dream.

WICKY

What are you talking about?

Wicky is lying on the floor having just knocked himself out on the door frame again. Strazzamo is crouched over him. The fire alarm is sounding.

STRAZZAMO

Some of us are just trying to make ours a reality. Don't lie to yourself, Wicky.

Wicky sits up, shakes his head and puts his hat back on.

WICKY

If all my dreams came to reality, trust me, things would get pretty weird. You're the one who's kidding yourself, mate! You talk about how privileged you are, but you can't pay for your own lunch! You just don't want to admit that your act might not be any good, that's what's going on here. Otherwise you'd set yourself a lower limit.

The Clown looks dejected. Wicky softens.

WICKY (CONT'D)

Come on, we better get outside.

Selina is now in the box office. Strazzamo is sitting on the steps looking broken.

Wicky sits by him.

WICKY

All right.

STRAZZAMO  
You're right.

WICKY  
No, ignore me, I'm a miserable git.

STRAZZAMO  
Ten. If there's not ten in tonight  
I'm going to jack it in. Go back to  
finance.

WICKY  
No, you should... Don't give up  
because of what I said.

STRAZZAMO  
My mind is made up.

WICKY  
How many have you sold?

STRAZZAMO  
Nine. Anyway. Good to meet you Mr  
Cleaner.

He shakes his hand and goes in. Wicky thinks for a beat and then approaches Selina in the ticket office.

WICKY  
How much are the tickets?

SELINA  
£15

WICKY  
Fuck me!  
(thinks)  
Go on, gimmee one then...

A voice draws Wicky round.

MR ABAHASSINE  
It's a hard line to walk, isn't it?  
Knowing whether to fan the flames  
of a dream that will never be  
realised.

Wicky looks confused.

MR ABAHASSINE (CONT'D)  
Doing what one wants and what one  
must.  
(beat)  
I must get that alarm replaced.

WICKY

You don't think I should... (buy one). 'Do what you can, being who you are...'

MR ABAHASSINE

'Shine like a glow worm if you can't be a star. Work like a pulley if you can't be a crane, grease the wheels fully if you can't drive the train.'

He looks meaningfully at Wicky and Wicky for a beat returns the gaze. In that moment, Wicky decides not to buy the ticket.

WICKY

I mean, it kind of repeats itself, but yeah, I hear you.

He picks up his bags and walks toward his van. Mr Abahassine watches him go. He turns to Selina and smiles.

MR ABAHASSINE

Selina. You're fired.

She looks so relieved.

SELINA

Thank you.

Wicky gets back to his van. He puts some bags on the floor and starts having a vape. He hears the sound of a 10-year-old BOY zooming around with a toy spaceship. He turns around and looks at him. The boy freezes.

BOY

You shouldn't smoke.

WICKY

It's vaping, they haven't shown it's bad for you yet. What are you? An alien?

He rolls his eyes.

BOY

An astronaut, silly.

WICKY

Is that what you want to be when you grow up?

BOY

Yes or Optimus Prime. Or a  
hairdresser.

WICKY

Cool.

That gets Wicky wondering -- who's his Dad? Off camera we hear a women shouting for the boy.

TARA (O.C)

Joe! Come on, I haven't bought  
tickets yet! We're late.

\*

They finish their Jerry Maguire-esque conversation.

BOY

What are you?

WICKY

I'm just a glow worm kid.

The boy shrugs and wizzes off with his toy, just as the mum catches up.

TARA

You're the cleaner?

\*

WICKY

Cri--

She's ahead of him and finishes his sentence.

TARA

Crime scene cleaner?

\*

WICKY

Oh. Yeah.

TARA

He said it was a mess in there, you  
did an amazing job.

\*

WICKY

He?

TARA

My husband. I better get in, don't  
want to miss the big balloon being  
inflated.

(she leaves)

Joe, wait for me...

\*

She rolls her eyes and they smile knowingly, as she turns and follows her son in to see the show.

Wicky throws a bag onto the back of the van and nods,  
satisfied that someone values his work.

(CONTINUED)

After a beat, he brings another bag up. The camera zooms in on it as Wicky gets into his van. Poking through the zip is the unmistakable peak of a FIREMAN'S HELMET.

**END**