

BRUSHED REVOLUTION

A Radio Play

C. Scott Ananian

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[The sterile clean sound of an almost empty photography studio.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[To EMORY.]* Smile again, please.

EMORY: Cleaner, whiter, better!

[We pan to the rebel forces, left side stereo. Headquarters. Martial drums in the distant background.]

MAXWELL: *[To CAPTAIN EMORY.]* Good, good. Your campaign has thus far been a great success.

[A knock.]

Sit there a second, Captain. There's someone to see me.

[Door opens. Hurried footsteps.]

A PRIVATE: *[To GENERAL MAXWELL. Slightly out of breath.]* An urgent message from the front, General, sir. *[Snaps to attention and salutes, with a sound like "Hup."]*

MAXWELL: Call me General Maxwell.

A PRIVATE: Very good, General Maxwell, sir!

MAXWELL: And let me see your teeth. Very nice. Fingernails? Approved, Private. You may go.

A PRIVATE: Thank you, Sir! *[Snaps to attention. Leaves crisply. Door closes.]*

MAXWELL: Our source on the other side has been doing excellent work. *[To CAPTAIN EMORY.]* Captain?

EMORY: Yes, sir.

MAXWELL: Double your squadron immediately. Draft whom you must. The enemy seems determined to sully our troops.

EMORY: Yes, sir.

MAXWELL: "Sir" is so impersonal. Call me Comrade Truth! You know your duty: *[Music begins, and he sings:]*

Onward to victory
Our proud troops march
Oppressing the oppressor
With our collars starched!

[Pan to the opposing government forces, right side stereo. The drum background of the rebel forces becomes the soft clattering tippity-tippity of typewriters behind closed doors.]

GOV'T GENERAL 1: *[To SAM THE SPY.]* What response to our flanking maneuver?

SAM THE SPY: The rebel troops are bathing, sir.

GOV'T GENERAL 2: Curses! Bathing!

GOV'T GENERAL 1: They're doing *what?*!

GOV'T GENERAL 2: Our troops will be filthy at the end of their march. We've been vanquished!

GOV'T GENERAL 1: Do they not realize we've completely cut off their resupply route?

SAM THE SPY: They don't seem to care, sir. They've drafted recruits and are continuing their campaign. Spotlessly clean.

[Back the the sterile empty sound of the photography studio.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[To EMORY.]* Smile again, please.

EMORY: Cleaner, whiter, brighter!

[And we immediately fall back into the rebel camp. Pan left.]

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: *[To CAPTAIN EMORY.]* The posters are up, sir.

EMORY: Marvelous! In all three languages?

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: Four, sir.

EMORY: Fantastic. Preparations are complete for my public address?

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: Yes, sir.

EMORY: And the demonstration?

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: They are filling the tub, sir.

EMORY: Fine work, lieutenant.

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[From a distance, to EMORY.]* Smile and speak. Roll camera.

EMORY: Everyone wants happy and productive lives. A new car, a big house, three-point-four kids. But bad oral hygiene can destroy these dreams. That's why I represent RebelFresh. Their patented tooth-whiteners will help you transcend petty capitalism and the evils of the...

[Drums interrupted by the photographer's clean sound.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: Stick to the script, please.

[And back to the rebel camp.]

EMORY: ... bourgeoisie ruling class. Long live the revolution!

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: Long live the revolution!

[Cheers and drums swell until...]

[We are interrupted by the photographer's clean sound.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: Very funny, Mr. Emory.

EMORY: *Mr. Dental!* Not Mr. Emory. Like Mr. Clean. Not Bald.

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[Becoming more distant.]* Hilarious. Smile again, please.

EMORY: I'm smiling! I'm smiling because *[Drums fade up and pan.]* on this day the proletariat will be freed. Freed from the tyranny of bad oral hygiene. I'm smiling because an enemy of the people will this day be denounced. Because on this day I will lead the people into sanitary bathing conditions!

SAM THE SPY: Urgent news from the front, Captain.

EMORY: Captain *Dental*, soldier!

SAM THE SPY: Yes, sir, Captain *Dental*, sir.

EMORY: Your message?

SAM THE SPY: Government troops have cut off our resupply route!

EMORY: Have we still soap for all?

SAM THE SPY: Soap is manufactured locally, sir.

EMORY: Then we shall not worry. Dismissed, soldier.

SAM THE SPY: The supply route—

EMORY: Trouble yourself not. You are dismissed.

SAM THE SPY: Yes, sir.

EMORY: Wait. Stay. I have my suspicions of your loyalty, soldier, but stay to watch the lecture and demonstration.

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[Distantly, drums fading.]* I wish you'd keep your mind on your work. Smile again, please.

EMORY: Cleaner, fresher, best-er!

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[The drums stop.]* That's not the motto for this shoot.

EMORY: Sorry. Cleaning, freshening, re-freshening!

[And abruptly we're back in the government headquarters, panned right. The typewriters click in the background.]

GOV'T GENERAL 1: *[Panned right.]* Still no response from the rebels?

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned right.]* They're at a moral and hygiene lecture, sir.

EMORY: *[Drums rising. Panned left.]* What's that whispering?

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned left.]* Nothing.

GOV'T GENERAL 2: *[Panned right.]* Who are you whispering to?

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned right.]* No one.

EMORY: *[Panned left.]* I have my suspicions, soldier.

GOV'T GENERAL 2: *[Panned right.]* The rebels have been one scrub cleaner than us for a long time, and I think I'm beginning to understand why.

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned center.]* I'm a double. They think I'm spying for them.

EMORY: *[Panned left.]* Oh.

GOV'T GENERAL 2: *[Panned right.]* Oh.

GOV'T GENERAL 1: *[Distracted, as left side fades. Panned right.]* Eh? No matter.

[Abruptly, the typewriters and drums halt, and we are in the studio.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: Very nice. The demonstration.

EMORY: *[As drums fade up slowly and his voice pans to the left.]* I want some black beans. Black beans or asparagus. Then we can start.

MAXWELL: Private! Come in. How's the assault on Fresca?

A PRIVATE: The Captain is preparing to indoctrinate the proletariat.

MAXWELL: Wonderful! Has he eaten his candy?

A PRIVATE: He claims a craving for... black licorice.

EMORY: Black beans, actually. They leave the most wonderful black crud between your teeth. Far more effective than hard candy. Who can ever see the sticky build-up of tartar without a dental mirror, anyway?

MAXWELL: Private, that man is doing fine work. You can tell him I said that.

EMORY: Actually, I've got a craving for asparagus. Don't tell the general.

A PRIVATE: Heroically, Captain Dental is resisting his vegetable urges to pursue the common good. He really would like some asparagus, though.

EMORY: You weren't supposed to say!

A PRIVATE: He's eating black beans.

EMORY: Could I have some asparagus, if my mission is successful?

MAXWELL: No.

EMORY: If my mission is successful — sir?

MAXWELL: Of course. A purple heart and stalks of asparagus.

EMORY: Thank you, sir.

MAXWELL: Tell him that.

A PRIVATE: Yes, sir.

[The drums fade up as we move outdoors to the demonstration. Men's voices under.]

EMORY: *[Calling to his helper:]* Lieutenant! Are my teeth filthy?

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[Distantly.]* Smile for the "before" shot, please.

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: *[Approaching.]* Absolutely filthy. Will you demonstrate now?

EMORY: Is the bath hot?

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned center.]* The bath is hot.

GOV'T GENERAL 2: *[Over typewriters, panned right.]* No, no, no. It can't be hot. It can't be hot. I am ruined! *[Typewriters fade.]*

EMORY: *[Panned left.]* Thank you, soldier. People of the town of Fresca!

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: Recruits! Attention to the Captain!

EMORY: Do you see my teeth? This is what your teeth look like. Your filthy teeth. We, the Rebels of Fresh...

[The empty sound of the studio and voice of the photographer intrude sharply.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: RebelFresh. You keep stumbling over the sponsor.

[Emory shakes it off. The drums begin again.]

EMORY: ... have fought the enemies of cleanliness to lead you on the golden path to oral hygiene! Observe as I immerse myself in this tub of sudsy water before you. Watch the dirt disappear. Simultaneously, I use this implement — a toothbrush! The first of its kind in the province! But not the last — to scrub my teeth. Watch the black bean crud melt away. Look at the whiteness of my gleaming teeth! The capitalistic ideals of home, family, and fantastic wealth are now mine for the taking, freed of the bonds of uncleanness. Pardon me. I always get emotional at this part.

EMORY'S LIEUTENANT: The tears of the Captain have made us free! The toothpaste of the country fights against government oppression!

EMORY: Come join our just cause! The government's efforts to squelch your dreams in mire and muck are overcome by soap and water. Come forward, soldiers. Take hold of a bar of soap and take hold of liberty. Each tube of RebelFresh makes you happier, more attractive, healthier, and wealthier. Buy Rebel-fresh. I do.

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[Distant, over. Drums softer but present.]* Very nice. A final smile, to cap it off.

[Typewriters on the right. The drums remain. Building.]

GOV'T GENERAL 1: *[Panned right.]* That is the most ludicrous thing I've heard.

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned right.]* General, sir!

GOV'T GENERAL 1: Report, soldier.

SAM THE SPY: While you were laughing, the rebels walked with their bar soap straight through your blockade. The government soldiers couldn't identify the rebels: they were all wearing J. Crew and sporting gleaming teeth and BMWs!

GOV'T GENERAL 2: I knew it.

GOV'T GENERAL 1: That's terrible.

[Pan left, drums louder, typewriters out. Still building.]

SAM THE SPY: *[Panned left.]* Captain, sir!

EMORY: I know, soldier. It's wonderful.

PHOTOGRAPHER: *[Far off.]* Smile again, and cut. It's a wrap.

EMORY: *[Rapping to the drums.]*

RebelFresh, the one for you
Cleans your teeth, with every chew.
Increase your earnings, net revenue;
No more tartar, plaque, mildew.

[The drums end abruptly. In the clear empty silence:]

PHOTOGRAPHER: That's not the rap I meant.