

# Teeth Interrogation

A short play

**Written and translated from Hebrew by: Ido Setter**

**Contact Info:**

**Mail:** [ido.setter@gmail.com](mailto:ido.setter@gmail.com)

**Cell:** 972-54-5445094

**Home:** 972-3-5712686



A room. Behind a table sits the INTERROGATOR. On his table – a set of pliers and a small tape recorder. Lights on the SUSPECT, who stands near the chair in front of the table.

**INT.:** You may sit down.

The SUSPECT sits down.

**INT.:** Thank you.

A pause.

**INT.:** Open your mouth.

The SUSPECT opens his mouth. Closes it after a few seconds.

**INT.:** I didn't say you could close it.

The SUSPECT opens his mouth. After a few seconds the INTERROGATOR stands up, gets closer to the SUSPECT and looks into his mouth.

**INT.:** You may close it now.

The SUSPECT closes his mouth.

**INT.:** Thank you.

I really hate to tell you this, but your teeth are in a horrible shape.

Did you know that?

You have so much plaque there.

Why don't you clean your teeth?

You were well educated.

The SUSPECT does not respond.

**INT.:** Stand up.

The SUSPECT stands up.

**INT.:** Sit down.

The SUSPECT sits down.

**INT.:** Thank you.

A pause.

**INT.:** Would like me to brush your teeth for you?

So you can feel like a human being again, if only for a few seconds?

Here (takes out of his pocket a tooth brush and tooth paste). You just need to ask.

Just answer me.

That's all I'm asking you to do.

When did you first think about doing it?

The INTERROGATOR presses on the tape. A pause.

**INT.:** (takes back the tooth brush and paste, stops the tape) Forgive me. My fault.

I tried to make a few shortcuts with you, and it can be shocking. That's a fact.

I got carried away in the heat of our conversation.

Anyway, about your teeth.

How long has it been since you had them cleaned?

Very long?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Do you remember that great feeling you have after the dentist is finished cleaning your teeth?

Are you able to remember that?

I'm not talking about knowing that this inconvenience is over.

No, not that.

I'm talking about going out to the street for the first time after it's over.

My dentist's office was located right downtown.

One of the filthiest streets this city has to offer, I'm telling you.

And the minute I'd walk out of the dental clean I'd get all the stench with some cars' smoke (laughs). But you know what – I was clean. For that brief time frame, an hour or two until you shove something into your mouth – I was clean. Such a great feeling... And the first spit? There is nothing like the first spit after you had your teeth cleaned, trust me. It's better than sex. Your saliva is thick, and has a drop of blood in the middle. Spit here on the table.

The SUSPECT hesitates, looks at the INTERROGATOR.

**INT.:** Spit. Spit. Don't be shy. You can stand up if you need a better angle for it.

The SUSPECT stands up, spits on the table. Looks at the INTERROGATOR.

**INT.:** Exactly. Sit down (the SUSPECT sits down). Thank you.

Look at your saliva. A completely standard saliva.

You don't even have a beginning of personality in this saliva.

You can't do anything with that saliva. Anything.

Did you know there were ancient tribes who claimed you could see the man's soul in his teeth? What does it say on your soul, if your teeth look the way they do? Eh?

A Pause.

**INT.:** Did you know that the plaque is actually good for the tooth?

I swear. Don't you think it's kinda funny?

That the same very substance everyone tries to get off the tooth is actually good for it?

It's a question of balance, of course. If you have too much of it – you are lost. Your gums begin to deteriorate and what will be the end of it?

But if you have too little... if you have too little of it it's just as dangerous!  
That's the whole point! You are completely defenseless. Your tooth may come off – open your mouth for a sec (the SUSPECT opens his mouth. The INTERROGATOR touches one of his teeth with his finger) just like that. Did it hurt?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** I'm sorry. Do you forgive me?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Thank you.

So what do you say? (presses on the tape)

How did you get out of there?

A pause.

**INT.:** Say, are you getting what I'm telling you here? (a short pause. Stops the tape)

Are you getting the irony?

The minute you are certain that your teeth are absolutely clean and you can do whatever you feel like, in that exact moment you are so defenseless.

It's funny, isn't it? Laugh.

The SUSPECT laughs.

**INT.:** Thank you.

Open your mouth.

The SUSPECT opens his mouth.

**INT.:** I'm telling you, the way your mouth looks, you'd be better off if I pulled all your teeth out, one by one. (stands up with the pliers in his hand. Stands in

front of the SUSPECT for a few seconds). It would be painful, trust me, but you wouldn't need all those treatments and doctors.

You'd get used to false teeth and that's it.

But I don't have the heart to do it. (sits down and puts down the pliers)

A lot of blood will come out of your mouth. That's the way it is, underneath all these teeth and plaque and germs – there's a lot of blood.

And I – what can I do – I can't see this thing. Blood. I can hardly say the word.

What about you?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** You also?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** So you know exactly what I'm talking about.

There's nothing to be ashamed of.

Blood is a difficult thing to see.

When they taught us at school that there's blood underneath the skin I didn't sleep for a week, I'm telling you. I couldn't fall asleep.

The SUSPECT hesitantly laughs. The INTERROGATOR looks at him and also laughs.

**INT.:** That's OK. Laugh away. I'm not offended. Laugh away.

They both laugh. The INTERROGATOR takes out the tooth brush and paste out of his pocket and gives them to the SUSPECT. The SUSPECT hesitates.

**INT.:** Don't be shy. There's nothing like brushing your teeth after such a good, healthy laugh.

The SUSPECT looks at the INTERROGATOR. Still hesitates.

**INT.:** I'll let you brush yourself. Don't worry.

The SUSPECT takes the tooth brush and paste and starts brushing his teeth.

**INT.:** Feeling better? (the SUSPECT nods) of course.

By the way, I think it's totally human,  
that blood part. Right?

The SUSPECT nods. He hands back the brush and paste to the INTERROGATOR.

**INT.:** You are probably wondering how I got to where I got with that... problem.

Tell you the truth? You don't see a lot of blood here. I swear.

You go from one room to another.

You don't see a thing. Maybe smell a little bit.

I think it even, I'd say it even charmed the lady who interviewed me for this job. I swear. She wasn't a cunt. No. She was one of the delicate ones. Tell you the truth? I get along best with those. They immediately fall for me. No, they don't fall for me. They trust me. I give them a straight look right in the eyes and they think they got themselves some sort of a tough guy.

I needed the job. I needed any job, urgently. I didn't have any money. It was during the recession, you probably remember. Remember?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Sure. So I was sitting in front of this woman and tried to win her. And nothing worked! I swear, nothing was working. I was trying to be polite – and it didn't work. I was trying to be a little bit rough – and nothing. Did you ever have that? And how those things always happen when you must get the job...

The SUSPECT nods, his eyes fixed on the INTERROGATOR.

**INT.:** Until she asked me what I thought could interrupt me in this kind of work.

Like they ask in every interview, you know. I tried to think and couldn't really come up with an answer. Until I had this flash of genius, I'm telling you, I

almost had a stupid smile all over my face. I took a second and told her, with a straight look – "I can't stand the sight of blood". That was that. I saw her melt. In a second. She told me they would call me within a week, but we both knew it was bullshit. She gave me a call the same day and told me I got the job. I was sitting with my friends at the pub, just finished telling them this story, and she called. I asked them to be quiet for a sec and asked her – "But what will I do with the blood? What will I do with the blood?"

They both laugh.

**INT.:** You get that? My friends were also laughing their asses off. But I was dead serious with her. And she tried to calm me down, don't worry, she said, we have a lot of people working for us and they also have this problem. "Really?" I kept going, "and it doesn't affect their managerial horizon?" (the SUSPECT is still laughing) My friends didn't know what to do with themselves. They almost broke all the glasses in the place laughing. But I was still holding my serious tone of voice. And she kept going and said no way, it doesn't affect at all. On the contrary, even. I'm telling you, I could have told her to come to the pub right then and fuck her hard on one of the tables in front of everyone, and she wouldn't care, even though she was a forty years old woman who had 2 kids and a cat. But I didn't want to act like a pig, so I told her, politely, that we would see each other tomorrow. I haven't seen her since, now that I think about it. What a story, eh?

The SUSPECT smiles and nods.

**INT.:** Thank you.

Did you ever have the chance to fuck the shit outta someone like that? Like a pig?

A pause.

**INT.:** Does it disgust you to hear me talking like this?

Well, of course. You are well educated. The elite.

You don't use these kind of words.

You do forgive me, right?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Thank you.

Or maybe you are thinking about your wife?

Thinking about what I could have done to her?

Don't think about her too much. Don't think too much in general.

It will get you nowhere, trust me.

Did you notice how people tend to say "it won't get you nowhere", when it's really a double negative? What they are actually saying is "it will get you everywhere". I'm very strict with this double negative business.

Don't stare at me like that. Stand up!

The SUSPECT hesitates.

**INT.:** Stand up. I'm asking you, let's behave like civilized people here.

Stand up.

The SUSPECT stands up slowly.

**INT.:** Sit down.

The SUSPECT sits down.

**INT.:** Thank you.

A pause.

**INT.:** Still thinking about your wife?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Naturally. Naturally.

Do you want me to tell you if I know what happened to her?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** I know. Do you want me to tell you?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Only if you are willing to give me something in return. Do we have a deal?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** I killed her.

It's your turn now.

Where did you throw the knife?

The INTERROGATOR presses on the tape.

**INT.:** It wasn't personal. I never kill personally.

It's your turn now. A deal is a deal. Well?

The SUSPECT begins to sob. The INTERROGATOR stops the tape.

**INT.:** You are probably angry with me. And that's OK. Be angry.

You may not see it now, but it was the best thing to be done with her.

Do you know what they do to women around here?

Did I show you Julia's photo?

What kind of manners do I have? I'm sitting here with you for I don't know how long and don't show you a photo of my wife! Why aren't you saying anything?

The INTERROGATOR takes a photo out, approaches the SUSPECT and shows it to him. The SUSPECT won't look.

**INT.:** (comes back and sits down, disappointed) still angry.

That's OK. I can understand.

Although I'm having a hard time, I must say.

I mean, you did know about the risks when you decided to act the way you did.

So getting angry now seems a little... childish to me. Yes, a little bit childish.

But I like you. What can I do?

The SUSPECT gets up on his feet.

**INT.:** What's the matter? You want to leave?

Just tell me. That's OK. Do you want to leave?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** That's a little impolite. Very impolite, even.

I thought we were sitting here and trying to solve the problems.

I've just confessed that I liked you, and thought I was on the right track to be liked by you.

That in a minute I will be able to say that both of us like each other. And all of a sudden you want to leave. It's insulting.

(stands up) And I expect you, as a friend, not to insult me.

Sit down.

The SUSPECT sits down.

**INT.:** Thank you.

Are you sorry you wanted to leave?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** That's OK. I forgive you.

It's very important to know how to forgive. Especially to friends.

Maybe you could take look at my wife's photo now?

The INTERROGATOR goes to the SUSPECT and shows him the photo. The SUSPECT looks at it.

**INT.:** Pretty, eh? (goes back to sit in front of the SUSPECT) I can't imagine anything bad happening to her.

That is why I had your wife killed. I didn't want to imagine her suffering.

This thought would have gnawed somewhere at my brain, and it would have been awful for me. It's terrible when we are talking about a wife of someone I don't know, and had it been your wife? It would have become awful.

I think you'll be able to agree with me. You are a smart man.

That's why I took you.

I thought maybe we could... like each other.

I mean, only a few moments ago we were laughing and feeling so comfortable, no?

A pause.

**INT.:** I was at your home, you know?

I was at your home.

It's not that far away from here.

I took your key from the stuff you left here and I let myself in.

A nice place, all in all. Although I didn't really appreciate the interior design you had there, I must tell you.

I have an eye for these things, and I didn't think you put too much effort in that field.

I stayed there for a couple of days. Really. I slept there three or four nights.

I told my wife I had a special project. And although I have my reservations from its interior design, I must say that your home is very very comfortable.

I even had an interaction with one of your neighbors. Something short and not compelling, but I think it's worth mentioning.

Do you want to know what it was?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Now you are also taking part in the conversation! Excellent!

But let me ask you something beforehand. Did you use to say hello to your neighbors in the mornings? Did you have this humane custom?

The SUSPECT doesn't respond.

**INT.:** You didn't?

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Interesting.

Because I came home a little bit early from work to your apartment one evening.

I cooked a nice small dinner on your stove.

I wanted to lay back and watch something on TV.

The simple pleasures after a hard day at work, you know.

After a few minutes I heard someone knocking on the door.

I hesitated whether I should answer or not.

I thought I may have turned the TV's volume a bit too loud. It happens to me sometimes, and I feel very sorry afterwards.

Finally I thought – what the hell.

If they ask, I'll say that I'm a friend of yours who is looking after your apartment while you are away. Which is exactly how things are.

I got up and opened the door.

In front of me I saw an old lady, very well kept. She told me she was from the building committee. You probably know who I'm talking about.

The SUSPECT nods.

**INT.:** Exactly. It's the same type of person in every building. In mine also. She seemed to be a very nice lady, by the way. I always held the people who took the building committee positions in great respect. It's very unrewarding, in my opinion.

Anyway, she introduced herself and examined me.

I gave her a trustworthy look and a smile.

She stuck her head inside and looked over the apartment.

I sometimes make a bit of a mess when I cook, so I felt a little uncomfortable.

And then she told me – "Don't forget to put the money for November  
December in my mailbox, Eddie".

And then she left, and I was still at the door, stunned.

I stayed standing there for a long time after she was gone.

I'm telling you, at first I thought that I got the wrong place. I swear.

That maybe this apartment, where I had already spent two nights, wasn't even  
yours. Eddie? That's not even close to your name.

Now, by the looks of your apartment you seem to be living there for a few  
years, I would say.

And yet this neighbor, who had probably been living there before you, didn't  
know your looks or your name.

A pause.

**INT.:** Do you have any idea, even a shred of an idea why she mistook me for you?  
Anything?

A pause.

**INT.:** Do you think that seeing your wife sitting in the living room had anything to  
do with that?

A pause.

**INT.:** What am I saying? I'm saying that she saw your wife sitting in the living room  
and watching television with me.

You don't believe me.

You think I'm lying.

I mean, only a few moments ago I told you she was dead.

Do you have any hope? That maybe I lied, and she isn't really dead?

No.

You always prefer to believe to the bad things.

I'm not lying. And I didn't lie to you, not even once, during this conversation.

Your wife is dead.

And she was in the apartment with me. I took her there before I killed her, not personally.

I wanted to get to know you better.

Her name was Joanne, right?

**SUS.:** J...J..oanne. Joanne.

**INT.:** Yes. Exactly. Very similar to Julia.

I never catch any of the names of the ones who are locked up here.

But I did catch hers.

I heard her crying one night and saying her name. Joanne. Joanne.

I was sure it was a good friend's name, maybe her sister's. But when I looked at her file I found out it was hers.

It thrilled me.

A woman howling her own name after a night of torture.

I think it shows a deep understanding of what is going on. I really do.

I took her to your home with me.

Don't worry.

I didn't touch her. You can be relaxed.

Are you relaxed?

Great.

I brushed her teeth. That's all.

I wanted her teeth to be clean. At least that.

I didn't let her clean herself up.

Only her teeth.

I think that all in all, she brushed her teeth maybe seventy times during the two days we spent in your apartment.

And each and every brush had its own reason.

There was the post laughter brush, like you had earlier.

And the post meal brush.

We ate together, by the way. 3 meals a day. I insisted.

And the pre sleep brush.

You know how it is. Nobody wants to go to sleep without brushing his teeth.

She slept on the couch and I slept on the bed. Although I know you count on me, as you would on a good friend, I didn't think it was appropriate for us to sleep together.

I think that all those brushes really helped her. I really do.

I asked her to spit, just before we left your apartment.

She was shy at the beginning, but then she made a very nice spitting right in the middle of the living room. She had a pretty good saliva.

The INTERROGATOR presses on the tape and gives it to the SUSPECT. The SUSPECT hesitates, then takes the tape.

**INT.:** Wait. Just one moment (takes the tape and stops it)

Stop.

Wait.

I forgot to tell you something, and I don't want it to come between us.

After all, we are friends. And there are no lies or half truths between friends.

I told you earlier I didn't touch Joanne.

That is not a lie, but it's also not the truth.

On our last night we went to sleep together.

In your bed.

In your apartment.

A short while before I fell asleep I felt her hand crawling towards me.

Absolutely towards me.

And I must admit that for a moment there I was really flattered.

And that is why I had some reflections.

Because, all in all, your wife was undeniably a very beautiful woman. And she remained a very beautiful woman even after all she's been through.

And there was such a great deal of intention in the way her hand was crawling towards me that it almost broke my heart.

What the hell was she thinking?

Do you know?

What the hell was your wife thinking?

A pause.

The SUSPECT takes the tape. Starts to cry.

**INT.:** (goes to the SUSPECT and holds him) There, there.

The INTERROGATOR goes back to sit in front of the SUSPECT. Looks at him.  
Stands up and faces the audience.

**INT.:** I wanted to get up today on 7:30, as usual.

Something was wrong with the alarm clock and it didn't work.

I got up on 8:20.

It's been a while since such a thing has happened to me.

After being awake for a few seconds I realized there was an unusual promise  
in this day.

Something big will happen today.

Blackout.