

---

# Numbskull

Written by Clint Hutzulak

Directed by Sean Cowie

Set Design by Sue Brodie

Starring Amanda Lisman, Jenn Stein, David Crone

Music and sound effects by Todd Hutzulak

Characters:

Joanne, a dentist,

Maria, a dental hygienist

Gordon, a patient

Props:

A reclining chair with armrests

A wheeled steno chair

A small table for equipment

Straps for tying patient's wrists to chair

Various dental tools, picks etc as available

A couple straws for mouth suction

A sponge suitable for insertion into patient's mouth

Two pairs latex gloves

A small hand towel

A folder with a chart paperclipped to it

Small flashlight

Nail clippers

Electric drill or screwdriver

Scotch mints, to act as teeth

A calculator

A small money tin

A pie plate

A hammer and piece of wood wrapped in cloth

Setting:

A dentist's office. Gordon is laying supine in the reclining chair. He is dressed in a suit. One of his arms is already tied to the chair. Maria struggles to tie his other wrist to the chair.

Joanne enters.

Maria: Um, doctor, could you give me a hand? Gordon is....

Joanne smoothly takes Gordon's arm and holds it down as Maria applies the wrist strap.

Joanne: Hello, Gordon. We haven't seen you here in – how long has it been?

Joanne: (picks up the chart, glances at it)

Maria: We're working on tooth 7, Quadrant 3. It's been six months.

Joanne: I see you had a root canal a few weeks ago. I imagine the specialist told you all about his new yacht? He was having some work done on the hull, wasn't he?

Maria: If you want to take a look...

Joanne trades places with Maria, who pinches Gordon's nose, forcing him to open his mouth.

Maria: His Gold Card is on the table. The other Visa was maxed so I took the Gold Card out of his wallet.

Joanne: Gordon, it seems to me we've had this same problem before, and I just want to clear things up before we get into any really expensive procedures.

Maria: I already called his banking centre in the Bahamas and they told me most of his accounts are frozen because of the HydroGate hearings.

Joanne: Now, we've already started work on you today, so I'm not going to just stop midway through, but we may have to sharpen our pencils and see if there are any ways we can cut costs.

Joanne pulls on gloves, snaps the latex ominously, smiling at Gordon, who looks fearfully up at her.

Joanne (to Maria, while holding Gordon's gaze): Has Gordon requested a needle, hypnosis, or a sharp blow to the head?

Gordon struggles futilely against his bonds.

Joanne puts her fingers into Gordon's mouth and stretches open his lips, peering into his mouth.

Maria: I don't see any preference ticked on his chart. I think he opted for the hammer last time, at a saving of about \$27.

Joanne, leaning close to Gordon's face, suddenly wrinkles her nose as if getting a whiff of something stinky. She holds up her free hand and breathes against the palm of her hand, checking her own breath. She nods in approval.

Joanne: What did I have for lunch? Roasted garlic again? (She pinches Gordon's mouth shut.) All right, Gordon – you're in good hands. Maria will prep you and I'll be back in a few minutes.

Joanne goes to leave. Suddenly the lights go off as she crosses the stage.

Joanne: Damn! Maria, when did you plug the meter?

Maria: Sorry — I must have forgotten.

Joanne takes flashlight from pocket, along with some coins, drops coins one by one into a small can attached to the wall, and the lights come on again.

Maria (to Gordon): I'm sure you understand. Ever since hydro was privatized, we have to plug the meter every 20 minutes to keep the power on.

Maria snaps on her own latex gloves.

Maria: Open wide. I'm just going to see if there are any exposed nerves or tender spots. (Examining Gordon's mouth) Mmmmm, someone has been neglecting his gums. Look how easy it is to draw blood. We'll have to pay extra special attention to this inflamed area right... here.

Gordon's head jerks back as if in pain.

Maria: Keep your mouth open... that's it... and I'll just slip the cleaning pad into your mouth. We have Triple Berry Gum Gum, Mr. Kleen Lemon, and Golden...Shower.

Gordon: makes muffled noise that could be interpreted as "Golden Shower!?"

Maria: Golden Shower? All right, Gordon, you naughty, naughty man. It's a brand new flavour for us, so you'll have to let me know if it's as tangy as it promises on the package.

Maria crams a sponge into Gordon's mouth.

Maria: Now, I'm going to leave this in for about a half hour, while I clean the fish tank in the lobby. Just remember to bite down on the suction straw, and it'll remove any fluid that collects in your mouth. It's very simple. Bite down whenever you want to clear your mouth.

<Sucking sounds>

Maria leaves. Gordon turns his head to stare abjectly at the audience. Wait one full minute, with only Gordon's bulging eyes searching the audience for help.

<Desperate sucking sounds>

Maria enters, wipes Gordon's jaw: How are we doing? The straw working? Just a little bit of drool there, have we?

Maria sits in the chair and pulls out a pair of nail clippers. She adjusts the sponge and then props one elbow on Gordon's chin, against the sponge in Gordon's mouth, raises her fingers to clip them. She trims her nails as she talks.

Maria: You know, Gordon, one day I want to go back to school and upgrade my skills. It's a knowledge economy, right? The more you learn, the more you earn. I only got to Grade Four before I had to drop out and get a full-time job to help support my mom. All us kids called her "Redundant", and it drove her crazy. We'd get home from work and dance around the living room – we had this little sequence – very cute – and sing our Redundant song. She'd sit on the sofa drinking and we'd do a little can-can thingy in front of her. She never did find work again, god rest her soul.

<clarinet plays a fragment of an old show tune>

(In a Scottish accent): Aye, it was a hard life for us poor folk in the New Order, for the maim and the halt.... My wee brother was shipped off to Saskatchewan at age seven, to work in a potash mine, he was. (In a normal voice): +  
We really were shat upon, weren't we?

Maria brushes the nail clippings off Gordon's stomach as Joanne enters.

Joanne: Well, Gordon, your Gold Card hemorrhaged, but it did cough up a little bit. Enough to proceed for another few minutes, anyway.

<clarinet continues to play>

Joanna and Maria dance a few steps together in celebration.

Maria removes the sponge and sucks out Gordon's mouth with the straw.

<Sucking sounds>

Maria: Ready when you are, Doctor.

<Sucking sounds>

Joanne: Maria, let's see if we can do this without anaesthetic, in the interest of saving time. Drill, please.

Maria (handing her the drill): Drill.

<sound of dental drill>

Joanne and Maria lean over Gordon and pry his mouth open.

<sound of drill>

Gordon's body thrashes.

Joanne: Is that all the power we've got?

Maria: You're at Warp Nine, captain.

Joanne: Wipe the sweat off his head... my hand just slipped. I think I went through the roof of his mouth. Maybe put another suction up his nostril.

Maria (patting Gordon's forehead with towel): I think you've found a nerve there.

Joanne: I believe I have. Let's see if we can drill a bit deeper into it.

<sound of drill>

Maria slaps Gordon's face lightly, as if trying to revive him.

Maria: I think he's passed out.

Joanne: Let's take five. We can wait until he wakes up before we go in again.

Joanne drops a tooth into a pie tin on the table.

The lights go off.

Joanne: There's a flashlight in my pocket.

Maria takes flashlight and shines it into Gordon's mouth, illuminating his mouth from inside so the skin glows.

Maria: I love the glow of the light.

Joanne: It reminds me of medical school. For awhile we had an operating room in one of my professor's garages, after all the funding at the hospital was cut. It was like that TV show, MASH, except we were in a garage, not a tent.... Real Third World conditions. Remember that tracheotomy that Father Mulcahy did with his pen knife? I always wanted to do that someday. That was so cool. He did what he had to do without hesitation.

<clarinet plays music from MASH>

Maria: You never know your luck. If your hand slips again, you could end up giving Gordon here a tracheotomy.

Joanne: It's not in the budget.

Maria: I think he's coming around.

Joanne: Put some more money in the meter and let's get back to work.

Maria walks to money box and drops some coins in. Lights come back on.

<sound of sucking, and then drill>

Gordon suddenly breaks into song. Stunned, Joanne releases one of his ties, and Gordon frees himself and gets up from the chair and walks to edge of the stage, singing part of an opera aria to the audience with great emotion. Then, as suddenly, he returns passively to the chair and is strapped in again.

Maria: Do you want me to put the sponge back in his mouth?

Joanne covers Gordon's ears with her hands.

Joanne (whispering to Maria): I think I may actually have gone too far with the drill. I was joking before, but now I'm a bit worried.

Maria (looking into Gordon's mouth): It looks OK.

Joanne reaches into Gordon's mouth and pulls something out. Together she and Maria examine the object.

Joanne: I'm not sure if I was supposed to take this one out. Let's look at the chart.

Maria covers Gordon's eyes with her hand as they look at the chart.

Maria: I mean, how many teeth does one person really need? It'll be a cost saving in the long run – it's just one less to worry about. There are definitely excess teeth in there. Some of them have hardly any wear on them. They're obviously performing below par and just taking up space in his mouth. They're totally redundant. Check it out.

Joanne: Are you sure? I haven't really looked at the X-rays too closely.

Maria: Oh, for sure. Do the math. Each tooth is costing him, what? Twice a year he comes in for a check-up, so that's \$150 each time — \$300 a year.

Joanne: Thank god they took the cap off fees when they killed BC Medical.

Maria: Add in X-rays as often as we can – two each side, another \$60 a year. Plus each tooth is a potential root canal with crown, about \$2500 per. How many teeth are there?

Joanne: Could be up to 32. But in his case, a few less.

Maria (tapping it out on the calculator): Thirty two teeth at \$2500 each is (whistles) \$80 grand. So every year he spends (Maria calculates) \$11.25 per tooth, plus the risk of up to \$80,000 of dental work. Every tooth is really a liability. We'd be doing him a favour by pulling them all out.

Joanne: The root canals are one-time costs.

Maria: Not if we screw up with the crowns, like we usually do. We can go back at those a few times if we want.

Joanne: All right. Get me the hammer.

Maria: Close your eyes, Gordon. This will only hurt for a short time, but the bottom line is, you're going to be saving a lot of money in the long run. I'm sure you'll be able to eat solid foods in a few months. We're going to help you get rid of troublesome teeth that are just not as productive as they could be.

Joanne: Really, this is going to hurt our bottom line more than it is yours, Mr. Campbell.

<sucking sounds>

Maria: Is it elective surgery if WE want to do it to the patient? I think we get to charge a premium for elective surgery....

Joanne: I think so. Why don't you email our new MLA in Malaysia at BC-gov.com and see what the provincial policy is on that. We should have an answer by the time we're ready to bill for this procedure.

Gordon sings a few bars of aria before he is muffled by the towel.

Lights out.

<sound of hammer hitting something soft/hard>