

ON EDGE

1

FADE IN:

1. INT. NIGHTCLUB. NIGHT

Grinding INDUSTRIAL MUSIC blares out.

A small crowd dances to the music. They wear fetish clothes and have pierced faces.

Through the STROBE LIGHTS and SMOKE, we see a lone figure sitting at the bar bathed in cool blue light. We can't make out his features.

CUT TO:

(OPENING TITLES)

2. INT. DENTIST'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

A slow PAN around the room reveals chirpy posters advocating dental health and regular brushing techniques.

PETER THURLOW sits in the waiting room uncomfortably. His mouth is bruised and inflamed. He is clearly in a lot of pain. He frowns in disgust at one of the posters.

He rises and stomps over to the Reception ~~window~~. *desk* .  
*desk*

3. INT. DENTIST'S RECEPTION ~~WINDOW~~. DAY

PETER

(struggling to speak)

When am I going to be seen? I've been waiting for hours... I'm a private patient you know... I demand to see Doctor Samuelson immediately...

RECEPTIONIST

(cutting in)

I'm afraid Doctor Samuelson is away on holiday at the moment... Patients with appointments have to be seen first...  
...So if I can ask you to be patient and wait your turn...  
You *will* be seen...

Peter is already walking away down the corridor.

4. INT. CORRIDOR - DENTIST'S. DAY

He stops short of the exit, distracted by the sound of drilling  
(O.S.)  
He follows the sound to a SURGERY ROOM.

He peers inside...

5. INT. SURGERY ROOM. DAY *Peter's POV.*

Odd-ball salsa music plays in the background.  
A DENTIST leans over a FAT LADY.  
He is drilling her teeth.  
Her legs hang over the sides of the dentist's chair.  
The scene looks like some bizarre sexual encounter.  
~~Peter moves away from the door and moves along to the next room.~~  
~~The door is ajar and he inches forward to take a look inside...~~

6. INT. CORRIDOR - DENTIST'S. DAY

MATTHEWS (OS)  
(very well-spoken)  
You're not supposed to be back here,  
you know...

Peter turns to see DR MATTHEWS watching him crossly.

Matthews is a ~~young~~, clean cut man, immaculately dressed beneath his white dentist's coat.

PETER  
I... I've been waiting for...  
nearly an hour...

MATTHEWS  
And you are?

PETER  
Mr Thurlow. Peter Thurlow. Broken  
tooth. I was eating a brazil nut  
and...

MATTHEWS  
Let's not discuss it in the corridor.  
You'd better come ~~in~~ *up to the surgery.*

## ON EDGE

Matthews steps into a PRIVATE SURGERY ROOM.  
Peter follows him.

*Matthews closed the door behind him.*  
He looks relieved that he is to be seen at last.

7. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

The surgery is pristine, brilliantly white.  
A huge ~~red~~ leather dentist's chair takes centre stage.  
A TV screen sits on an ~~an~~ robotic arm attached to the ceiling above the chair. Tables with dental instruments line the walls.  
Strips of daylight illuminate the room through the slits of a blind hanging over a single large window.

Dr Matthews sits at a desk in the corner using a computer terminal?

Peter stands next to the dentist's chair expectantly.

PETER

(looking around)

I normally have Dr Samuelson...

MATTHEWS

I'm afraid he's not here, he's...

PETER

On holiday, I know. All right for some...

(he winces, his  
tooth hurts)

MATTHEWS

(smiling)

I'm Dr Matthews.

Dr Matthews taps at the keyboard then looks up at the screen.

MATTHEWS

We haven't seen you for a check-up  
in... oh, well over a year.

PETER

(climbing onto  
the chair)

Not for a check-up, no.

MATTHEWS

So you haven't seen the hygienist  
for a while?

PETER

(impatient)

And I don't need to see one now.  
Are you on commission or something?

Dr Matthews ignores this remark and smiles reassuringly.  
He approaches the chair and fastens a paper bib around Peter's neck.

Peter makes himself comfortable.

*Matthews sits on  
dentist's stool.*

PETER

Don't you have an assistant?

MATTHEWS

(smiles)

No need for one Mr Thurlow. Not  
with all this modern technology...

Dr Matthews presses a control pad with his foot and a tray of dental instruments appears on a robotic arm above Peter's chest. Matthews presses another button to adjust the position of the chair.

Another button activates the TV screen which flickers with static and glides into Peter's view.

MATTHEWS

(selecting instruments  
from the tray)

One of the benefits of being a private patient, for those who can afford it... What do you do for a living Mr Thurlow, if you don't mind me asking?

A CAR ADVERTISEMENT appears on the TV screen.

PETER

Car salesman...

MATTHEWS

(jolly)

Ah, then you know *all* about modern technology... Man and machine in perfect harmony, eh Mr Thurlow? Airbags save lives, fillings save teeth. Braces improve dental alignment, chrome spoilers make a car look cool... It's all the same thing really isn't it?

Peter is more relaxed.

He attempts a smile.

MATTHEWS

Now then, let's take a look at you.  
Mouth open please.

Peter opens his mouth wide.

PETER'S POV: The light from a dental penlight fills Peter's vision.

8. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY - ~~FX SEQUENCE~~ Probe Video Sequence r Screen

The camera follows a hooked dental probe into Peter's mouth.

~~CLOSE UP:~~

~~(FX) The BROKEN TOOTH inside Peter's mouth.~~

Cuts to:  
↓

9. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

Matthews is examining Peter's mouth with a penlight and hooked probe.

Suddenly, Peter convulses.

MATTHEWS

(dryly)

I think we can safely say we've located the problem area.

Matthews activates an overhead light which automatically lowers to illuminate Peter's mouth.

Spittle begins to escape from Peter's mouth.

Matthews places the penlight in the instrument tray.

He takes a spit-pump and puts it in the corner of Peter's mouth.

MATTHEWS

That's pretty nasty. Wouldn't be so bad if it was an incisor, of course. It's split all the way from the crown to the root. The gum is starting to swell and redden, so I imagine it's infected. I'm afraid I'll have to cut part of it away...

Peter tries to speak.

He can't.

He pulls the spit-pump from the corner of his mouth.

PETER

Please, no gory details...

Matthews pops the pump back into Peter's mouth.

Peter lies back and closes his eyes.

MATTHEWS

Fine, I'll give you a jab and we'll get started.

Matthews prepares a syringe.

He inserts the needle into the lower part of Peter's left gum.

MATTHEWS

As you're squeamish, I'll give you an additional valium shot. Then I can work without upsetting you.

Matthews rolls back Peter's sleeve and inserts another syringe.

CLOSE UP:

The syringe empties, slowly, as Matthews continues speaking.

MATTHEWS (O.S.)

It's funny when you think of it, considering all the food that has to be cut and crushed by your deciduous and permanent canines, incisors and molars, it's a miracle there's anything left in your mouth at all. Of course, humans have comparatively tiny teeth. It's a sign of our superiority over the animals.

**10. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY - TV SCREEN**

PETER'S POV: On the TV screen, a gleaming new car brakes in a country lane.

A small bunny rabbit hops to safety.

**11. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY**

ALL FROM PETER'S POV:

Matthews is humming a tune, off-screen (he comes in and out of view as he continues his work).

## ON EDGE

Peter's vision is at times blurred, distorted.  
When he blinks, his vision turns red due to the light shining  
through his eyelids.

MATTHEWS

I don't think there'll be enough  
left to cap. The one next to it  
is cracked pretty badly too.  
What the hell was in that nut?

There is a drilling sound, followed by a sharp crack.  
The drilling stops.

Matthews holds up the tooth for Peter to see.

First one half, then the other.

MATTHEWS

Want this as a souvenir?

(a beat)

Thought not... Now to do this  
properly I should really clear  
out your root canal and drive a  
metal post into the gum. It's  
quite a long process, but  
really it's the best thing for  
you. It'll save you a lot of  
bother in the long run...

PETER'S POV:

Peter's vision is red.  
His vision clears to reveal Matthews at work again.  
There is a fuzzy drilling sound.

MATTHEWS

That's better. I can see daylight  
through the hole. Now that we have  
room to manoeuvre let's bring in  
the big guns and get things in  
place for you...

The TV screen moves into view on its robotic arm.  
The screen shows an idyllic countryside scene.  
A family picnic outside a cottage in a sunny garden.  
Animals play in the grass.

Peter's vision turns red again.

PETER'S POV: His vision red again.

MATTHEWS (O.S.)

You know, we had a nasty case of tooth

squeeze in here last week, ever hear of that?

Peter's vision clears.

Matthews is smiling at him as he works.  
Peter's vision flickers and fades in and out as Matthews speaks.

Images of nature are glimpsed occasionally on the TV screen, which bobs spasmodically on its robotic arm.

MATTHEWS

Sorry... Of course you can't answer me right now... Anyway, he was an airline pilot. His plane depressurised and it turned out he had an air bubble trapped beneath a filling. When the cabin atmosphere decreased, the air expanded. His tooth literally blew up in his mouth. Bits were embedded in his tongue. What a mess.

Peter groans in protest.

Matthews' face comes closer.

MATTHEWS

(whispering secretively)

It happens to deep sea divers, too, only their teeth implode. And I've seen worse. There was this one kid... poor kid... who rollerskated face-first into a drinking fountain and...

Peter lets out a mixture of guttural gurgle and whining moan.

Matthews stops in mid sentence and moves back.

Matthews is a blur.

MATTHEWS

No gory details, right?  
I'm sorry Mr Thurlow...

(a beat)

Tell you what. I'd better put you under while I finish off. That way I can work without disturbing you.  
Okay?

Peter's vision flashes bright, like lightning...

Spiraling into red again...

12. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

No longer PETER'S POV, but we don't see exactly what Matthews is doing.

Matthews prepares a syringe.

MATTHEWS

Don't worry, when you wake up I'll have finished. You'll be as good as new. I think you've been through enough for one day, so I'll give you a temporary filling for now, and we'll do that root canal on your next appointment.

Matthews injects Peter.

MATTHEWS

You know, I always wanted to be an artist really... I took the exam at school... I'm afraid I was a bit of a... stropky child...

CLOSE UP: on MATTHEWS

Matthews mixes dental cement in a bowl.

13. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

CLOSE UP: on MATTHEWS

MATTHEWS

(to himself,  
quietly, thoughtfully)

Yes, they took me out of circulation for a while...

Matthews puts the bowl of dental cement down and sighs.

MATTHEWS

This is no good, no good at all...  
I need something else. Something modern, something... technological...

He fishes around under the computer desk.

He pulls out a large brown leather satchel.

14. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

PETER'S POV: Vision Blackout

MATTHEWS

Ah, that last batch seems to have done the trick... Now, I have some finishing off to do...

CLOSE UP: on Matthews

We remain close to Matthews as he works.

We do not see Peter's face.

Matthews pulls a bizarre dental instrument from his satchel. The sound of metal clanking suggests there are more objects inside.

The dental instrument is like a Swiss Army knife which has been constructed by a criminally insane metalworker.

It is part claw-hammer, part razor blade, part laser drill.

The sound of metal on enamel.

MATTHEWS

You're a very lucky man, Mr Thurlow. Not many people get to have this baby in their mouths...

The sound of laser drilling.

MATTHEWS

One day, all dentistry will be performed by laser. Just think of it. Precision. Artistry. Oh what fun we'll have.

A violent squishing, spurting sound.

MATTHEWS

Shit... My fault. Wasn't watching what I was doing... No problem...

The squishing stops.

MATTHEWS

Of course, they were wrong to boot me out like that... But all they did was nurture and reinforce a great talent... My talent... It's

a vocation with me... A calling...  
I know what I'm doing is right.  
I'm simply ahead of my time...

Matthews adjusts the instrument.

A small circular saw pops out, whirring.

The sound of sawing.

MATTHEWS

You have been a brave boy Mr  
Thurlow... You know, a hundred  
years ago this would have been  
a horribly painful experience,  
performed without an anaesthetic.  
Thanks to modern techniques I'll  
have you finished in just a few  
more hours. Ha ha. Just  
kidding...

The sawing sound reaches a new intensity, becoming a high pitched  
squeal...

15. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

PETER'S POV:

The sound of ringing in Peter's ears gradually fades.

Peter's vision FADES IN from black, to red.

MATTHEWS (O.S.)

Oh good. Back in the land of the  
living. For a minute there I  
thought I'd overdosed you. Ha ha.  
We're just waiting for the last  
bit to dry.

Peter's vision becomes a watery blur.

Suddenly his vision shifts from side to side as if Peter is  
shaking his head violently.

A desperate heaving, choking sound emanates from Peter's throat.

MATTHEWS (O.S.)

Wait a minute. Wait, wait, I know  
what that is...

Through the blur, we can just make out Matthews reaching into

Peter's mouth with his hand.

There is a weird unplugging sound.

We hear Peter taking sharp deep, but rattling, breaths.

The violent shifting of his vision stops.

Blurred, we see Matthews discard something he has pulled out of Peter's throat.

There is a metallic plop as something lands in a dish.

16. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

PETER'S POV:

Peter lurches forward.

His milky vision reveals Matthews pushing him back into the chair.

MATTHEWS

You shouldn't be up and about yet,  
I'm not quite finished.

Peter gurgles.

Something like a ratchet screwdriver enters his mouth.

MATTHEWS

(ratcheting away)

The final touches... Ah, I know  
what to do with this bit...

Peter tries to speak.

Horrible rasps and exhalations come out instead of words.

Matthews seems to understand Peter, though.

MATTHEWS

You're right. I'm no dentist. I  
really wanted to be one, but I  
couldn't pass my exams...

EXTREME CLOSE UP: On Matthews' eyeball, moving quickly as he speaks.

MATTHEWS

I just couldn't get my certificate.  
I can't pass exams. I get angry

too easily...

~~(FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)~~ CUT #17

17. INT. EXAM HALL. DAY

Quick-cut, hand-held images:

YOUNG MATTHEWS is dragged from the hall by two LECTURERS.

He clutches a pencil in his hand.

The pencil is slicked with blood.

In the distance, several STUDENTS are looking at something on the floor amidst the desks.

We SPIRAL DOWN from above to see:

A STUDENT, who lies twitching on the floor.

His desk has been smashed to bits.

His mouth has been stuffed with paper.

One of his eyes has been gouged out.

~~(END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)~~

18. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

CLOSE ON MATTHEWS:

MATTHEWS

(coming out of a daze)

Yes, they took me out of circulation for a while. Bastards. Still, every now and again, I get to try out a few of my ideas. I go to a new area and look in the Yellow Pages. Then I visit all the private dentists they list. Sometimes I find a vacant operating room... Although they're not all as nice as this...

CLOSE UP: A few spots of blood trickle down the TV screen over images of an auto wrecking yard.

CLOSE ON MATTHEWS:

MATTHEWS

Then I wait for custom... I look the part, you see. White coat, smart tie, good speaking voice. I mean, let's face it, when was the last time you asked to see a dentist's credentials? You don't give a shit, as long as you get seen first... Am I right, or am I right?

19. INT. CORRIDOR - DENTIST'S. DAY

The Receptionist knocks on the door of the Private Surgery.

RECEPTIONIST

Hello, anyone in there?

She tries the door handle. It is locked.

She looks puzzled and wanders off in the direction of the Reception.

20. INT. SURGERY ROOM. DAY

CLOSE ON MATTHEWS:

MATTHEWS

Ah, my cue to leave. Good job I locked the door, eh? Don't worry, you'll get used to your new look... They all do eventually...

He drops a circular mirror into Peter's lap.

Matthews swings his satchel over his shoulder and opens the window blind.

Bright sunlight bursts in through the window.

PETER'S POV:

Peter's vision turns white with the sudden sunlight.

BACK TO: MATTHEWS at the WINDOW

Matthews has rather a lot of blood on his white coat.

He opens the window and climbs out onto the FIRE ESCAPE. *Sniffs flower.*

As an afterthought, he pops his head through the window...

MATTHEWS

Whatever you do...  
Don't forget to floss...

Matthews leaves.

21. INT. CORRIDOR - DENTIST'S. DAY

The Receptionist returns with the keys.

22. INT. PRIVATE SURGERY. DAY

CLOSE UP:

Of the Receptionist bursting into the room.

CLOSE UP:

Receptionist's face. Pure horror at what she sees.

CLOSE UP:

Peter's hand. Trembling. Holding the mirror.

RECEPTIONIST'S POV:

The scene is bathed in the shaft of harsh white daylight from the window.

Peter's face is unrecognisable.

His lips have been cut and peeled back in fleshy strips.  
The strips of flesh are pinned to his cheeks with steel pins.

Most of his teeth have been filed into angular shapes, some pointed, others in jagged slants.

His upper gums have been opened, exposing the pale bone beneath.  
Screws have been driven into his flayed jaw and attached to cables.

The last two inches of his tongue are missing completely.

The leaking tongue stump jerks back and forth like a severed reptile.

CLOSE UP:

The TV screen displays images of machinery working.

Conveyor belts whir.  
Pistons pump violently.

RECEPTIONIST'S POV:

Around Peter's mouth, a contraption of polished steel has been fitted to function as an insane brace.  
A complex network of wires and springs, cogs and filaments.

The skin beneath his eyes is black from the pummelling his mouth has taken.

A silver handle in Peter's neck turns as he tries to open his mouth to scream.  
The springs and wires pull taut, making fresh wounds.

On its own spring, the rest of Peter's tongue flicks in and out of his ear.

His mouth is pulled into an absurd rictus of a laugh.

He drops the mirror.

It shatters.

Peter lets out a weird gushing squeal as he falls to his knees in a pool of blood.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**23. INT. NIGHTCLUB. NIGHT**

Same as opening scene. This time, intercut with CLOSE UP images of the clubber's faces, pierced with metal in a variety of ways, through the nose, eyebrows, lips, cheeks...

We TRACK towards the lone figure at the bar.  
He is watching the dancers, a little smirk on his face.  
It is MATTHEWS. He takes a sip of his drink.

**FADE OUT:**

**(END CREDITS)**

**THE END**