

**The Marlboro Connection**

By

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The first thing he did was scream out loud! Then he laughed. His brother was sitting there looking at him like he'd lost his mind... maybe two. "What the hell's gotten into you, Frank?"

"What dy'a mean?" said the man with greasy slick black hair and a gold chain around his neck who had pretended that every woman in the waiting room wanted him badly... now, in fact.

"I mean... there's people in here you idiot," said Jimmy trying not to say it too loudly. The last time he embarrassed Frank was still giving him a slight limp.

Frank Beauchamp was an asshole. That's all you had to know about him to understand someone who would beat up his own brother for fun. Not as teenagers, but as young men approaching their thirties!

Frank was the oldest and he was twenty nine. Every year since his first birthday, their father Andy had hoped for a cat to suckle his breath away or for Crib Death Syndrome or something. Jimmy remembered once when they were playing outside; his Dad had tried to hit Frank with the car on his way in the driveway from work. At least, that's how Mom saw it. She said he did it deliberately.

Jimmy often wondered how his own life might have progressed without Frank around. Frank got all the girls, even though Jimmy couldn't understand why. Frank got the cars, even though they didn't last but three months tops! Frank got all the money, even though he never held down a job for more than two weeks. *How can people like this get by so easy?*

"Charm," as Dad used to say. "Charm is the secret. You know how to talk to people and they'll listen to you. They'll even give you the shirt off their back!" Jimmy hoped that the ugly black and white striped shirt his father was wearing at that moment did, in fact belong to someone else. "Mark my words, boy! It's charm!"

At that moment, his Dad took out a pack of cigarettes, thumped it hard and took out one, sliding it between his lips. Using a big, metal Zippo lighter, he flicked it open and lit up. Andy Beauchamp was a chain smoker from way back. The hacking cough and perpetual flu bug were but simple "benefits" of his malicious habit.

It was malicious because it was killing them all! Jimmy hated the smell and wished he'd quit. But, that would be like asking a fallen Humpty Dumpty not to spill his guts.

Frank was the same and Andy hated him. A woman in the waiting room wearing a purple spandex dress and heavy lipstick was winking at Frank from the corner near the ashtray. Between her puffy red lips was a cigarette, billowing smoke away from her face and into the nostrils of the other patients in the room. A couple near her were occasionally choking from the noxious fumes. Her bleach blonde hair was piled high in a bouffant hairdo that made her look like something from another world.

Of course, Frank was fascinated. She was skuzzy and he liked her lack of taste. The pack of cigarettes she pulled from her purse just in time to catch the last draft of the cigarette in her mouth was Marlboro. It figured. Just like Dad. Just like Frank. As if on cue, Frank pulled out his Marlboros and smiled at her. Winking at her seemed to clue in to her clueless nature. *Here we go again!*

Frank was up and across the room. Leaning against the wall with one hand, he licked his lips in characteristic loser fashion and lit up another cigarette. The slutty bitch just giggled. Holding out his Zippo, he lit another one and put it between her lips. Her eyes told the story and Jimmy was well beyond disgusted.

As usual, Frank reached over and touched her shoulder first. Then, Jimmy watched as he grabbed her breast. At first, she looked upset, pulling back. But, it wasn't long before he had her back to him and was gripping her ass.

Jimmy was waiting patiently. He would just ignore them.

Thankfully, a nurse opened the door and called the woman's name. Something like "Delafoy" or something like that. Frank took one more squeeze just before she picked up her purse and walked away from Frank and through the door to the clinic.

Oh, was he proud of himself! And now he would be insufferably arrogant. Frank couldn't resist, either. On his way back to his chair, he groped another woman who jumped nervously as Frank laughed. Then he sat down. "Hey, Jimmy boy! You like that?"

Jimmy closed his eyes. *Go away, Frank... just go away;* he tried to wish him away with thoughts. Opening his eyes he noticed it hadn't worked. Well, it was the only thing he felt that he could try. Frank laughed at him.

A middle-aged woman came out of the door that the nurse had just come through. She was overweight slightly with ragged, leathery skin and a huge fake looking blonde wig. As soon as she stepped through the door, her hand went into her purse and pulled out a cigarette. A Marlboro. Frank's eyes lit up as the woman wobbled on high heels over to them. "My boys! That damned doctor don't know shit! He says I need to quit smoking. What does he know anyway. Smoking keeps the bacteria out! 'Sides, it keeps the mosquitoes off your ass!" Then she cackled a harsh laugh, punctuated with hacking bouts of coughing.

Jimmy closed his eyes again.

"Come on boys, we gotta go find that dick you call Dad," she said as she wobbled toward the door. Frank got up to follow her out, even held the door for her. He'd never do that for anyone else.

"Thank you, Frankie... you're such a good boy! Not like your piece of shit father!"

Jimmy couldn't believe it! He heard it every day, that comparison between Frank and his father. They were exactly alike! No one in his family used reason. They didn't know the meaning of the word. They didn't know what fresh air smelled like. For that matter, neither did he!

"Oh, what the hell," said Jimmy, striking up a cigarette on the way out of the Newhaven Gynecology Clinic.