



FRESH BLOOD SELECTS

THE MADDENING FILTH

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INT. BUDAPEST ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE - DAY

TITLE CARD: 1865. BUDAPEST.

An ORDERLY wheels a young female MENTAL PATIENT, head shaved and body bruised, down the hallway on a gurney. The young patient is full-term pregnant. Screams with labor pains.

MENTAL PATIENT

No! Please! Not in there! Not in there!

She scratches her nails in resistance against the side of the wall as she passes.

MENTAL PATIENT (CONT'D)

No!

IGNAZ SEMMELWEIS, 47, a fellow mental patient with a shaved head and dressed in rags, winces at the sight of her passing by him.

He gets up from his rocking chair and follows the gurney into an "operating room" consisting of a blood-stained table.

An ASYLUM DOCTOR stands waiting impatiently, as the woman is wheeled in. His hands are stained as is his white coat with blood and pus.

The orderly and doctor throw the screaming, struggling patient on top of the filthy table.

She tries to fight them off. Tries to get up. The doctor holds her down and the orderly violently locks her in restraints.

She screams in agony and frustration. She struggles against the restraints.

Simmelweis shudders at the screams. He hovers, unseen, just over the shoulders of the doctor and orderly. Wipes his hands on his ragged hospital gown.

He eyes the greenish gold pus encrusted, rusted instruments on the side table next to the operating table. Wipes his hands again. Sweats.

DOCTOR

Okay, miss. Calm down. Just let me see how-

SEMMELWEIS

E-e-e-e-excuse me, Doctor.

ORDERLY

Be good now, miss. That baby will be coming whether you want it to or not.

SEMMELOWEIS

D-d-d-doctor. You need to- chloride solution. Chlorina Liquida. Anything to kill the germs.

ORDERLY

(To Semmelweis)

You're not supposed to be in here.

SEMMELOWEIS

B-b-b-before you- They must be clean. They must be clean. Don't- the germs-

The doctor reaches for the rusty, crusty instruments.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

NO!

Semmelweis pounces on the doctor.

DOCTOR

Someone get him out of here!

Semmelweis tries to wrestle the instruments out of his hands.

SEMMELOWEIS

They must be clean! You're killing-

The doctor rips the instruments from Semmelweis' grip. Semmelweis staggers back, holding up his bleeding hand.

Two other orderlies come in. They drag him out.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

No! I'm a doctor! I am a doctor!
Let me-

They drag him, he tries to fight them.

Drags his hand across the wall in the struggle. The wall is smeared with blood.

INT. VIENNA LYING-IN WARD HALLWAY- DAY

TITLE CARD: 1845. VIENNA.

A TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN is being wheeled in by nurses in a wheelchair.

TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN

No! Please.

She screams in labor pain.

TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN (CONT'D)

Not the lying-in. Please not the lying-in.

Nurse pats her on the shoulder.

NURSE

You want to deliver in the hallway like a streetwalker?

TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN

No. Please! I don't wanna die. Please...

NURSE

Oh stop. It's perfectly safe.

Semmelweis, a younger version of the elderly mental patient, wearing a white coat, watches the patient being wheeled by him.

He trails the screaming patient.

The patient gets up from the wheelchair. Attempts to run in the other direction, and runs straight into Semmelweis. He grabs her. The nurse grabs her other arm.

TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN

Please. The midwives. Take me to the midwives. I'll do anything.

Semmelweis and the nurse drag the teenage girl down the remainder of the hallway.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

Medical students file into the room.

The teenage pregnant woman lies on a bed. One of the nurses dabs her forehead with a cloth.

She screams out in labor pains.

The obstetrics attending, DR. KLEIN, enters the room. He is in his fifties, extremely short, with a large white mustache.

KLEIN
Well now. What have we here?

The teenage mother screams in agony.

TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN
Get me out of here. Get me out. Get
me out. Get me out!

NURSE
Calm down now, Miss.

KLEIN
Rest assured, miss. All will be
well in no time.

TEENAGE PREGNANT WOMAN
Please let me go to the midwives. I
can't stay here. I can't-

She screams. She tries to get up to leave, but Dr. Klein and
two of the medical students force her back into the bed.

KLEIN
Lie down. Now.

NURSE
There we go.

The nurse restrains her.

KLEIN
Now. Is she dilated?

NURSE
Yes, Doctor.

KLEIN
Come closer, gentlemen. You will
notice that this is the exact same
technique we practiced earlier this
morning...

The gaggle of medical students crowd closer to the woman's
open legs.

INT. THE MORGUE - MORNING

48 hours later.

That same patient lies dead on the a slab in the morgue.

Dr. Klein and the same group of medical students are crowded around the corpse.

Some of the students hold handkerchiefs to their faces.

Klein holds a scalpel.

KLEIN

Now watch closely when we open up
the abdomen...

Klein makes an incision vertically from the belly button downward.

The students groan. They hold their noses.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

You will get used to the smell. But
do notice it's specific smell. It
is fairly unique, and consistent
with the pathology.

One student vomits. Another medical student passes out.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

So the cause of death in this case
is puerperal fever. It's an
epidemic that has ravaged the
hospital for a while now. Quite
commonplace among the medical
institutions throughout Europe.

Semmelweis frowns.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

Something the matter, Dr.
Semmelweis?

Semmelweis shrugs.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, this is Dr. Semmelweis.
He is my Chief resident. He's a
brilliant young man. You can go to
him with any additional questions.

SEMMELOWEIS

I have one, Dr. Klein.

KLEIN

Do you now?

SEMMELOWEIS

I'm unclear as to how this
"epidemic" as you put it-

KLEIN

It *is* an epidemic.

SEMMELOWEIS

Fine. How does this epidemic get
transmitted from patient to
patient?

KLEIN

There are many theories-

SEMMELOWEIS

Such as?

KLEIN

(To the students)

This will not be on your
examination. But this shows you, or
at least it should, the importance
of post-mortem dissection. Think of
a corpse as a treasure trove of
enlightenment.

The medical students, most looking green, nod in agreement.

Klein goes back to the corpse.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

Now-

SEMMELOWEIS

Dr. Klein, you never answered my
question.

KLEIN

Dr. Semmelweis, if you're so
fascinated with the subject, why
don't you do some work and try to
find out for yourself? Instead of
wasting my time looking for answers
that don't exist.

SEMMELOWEIS

Perhaps I will.

KLEIN

Good.

Klein turns back to the corpse. He spreads her tissue further
apart.

The students groan and choke on the stench.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

The morgue is empty, except for Semmelweis.

Another young mother lies on a slab in the empty morgue. She is naked. Her face drained of color. Her swollen abdomen is cut open.

Dr. Semmelweis stands over her. He takes the clamp in his hand and spreads the tissue open even further. He holds the candle closer to the dead woman's abdomen.

The abdomen has a putrid, shaggy lining to it. There is a sac-like structure in the exposed cavity.

He punctures the sac with a scalpel. Thick, green/yellow pus seeps out of it. It's tinged with blood.

He goes to his ledger. Writes "Abscesses formed."

He returns to the body. He spreads her legs apart. Holds a handkerchief to his nose. Grimaces. Examines her genitalia. Shakes his head. Closes her legs.

He goes back to the ledger. Writes: "Infection throughout her" He stops. Crosses out the word "her." Stares for a few moments. Looks back at the body. Stares. Writes "the patient."

He pushes back from the ledger. Sighs. Wipes his brow. Exhales deeply.

He carries a lamp over to her face. He leans over her. Examines her lips.

HER EYES BOLT OPEN.

Dr. Semmelweis gasps as he picks his head off of his desk from his sleep. Panics in the completely dark room. He lights a match and lights the candle. There are beads of sweat on his brow.

He walks over to the young woman. Her eyes are closed. Leans in. Still closed.

He looks down the row of tables, all filled with corpses of young dead mothers.

SEMMELOWEIS

Christ.

INT. MIDWIFE CLINIC - DAY

Semmelweis steps through the glass door entrance of the hospital's midwife clinic.

There are nurses and female midwifery students everywhere. Some giggle at the sight of Semmelweis. A wrinkled HEAD MIDWIFE approaches him.

HEAD MIDWIFE
Are you lost, Doctor?

SEMMELOWEIS
No. I-uh-um- I-

HEAD MIDWIFE
Yes?

SEMMELOWEIS
Oh. (Beat) May I ask a question?
How- how-

HEAD MIDWIFE
Spit it out if you please, doctor.
We're a busy lot. We've got every
bed with mothers just about to
burst.

SEMMELOWEIS
What's the mortality rate of
mothers from puerperal fever in
this clinic?

HEAD MIDWIFE
Low.

SEMMELOWEIS
How low is low exactly?

She pauses for a moment.

HEAD MIDWIFE
Uh... Twelve.

SEMMELOWEIS
Percent?

HEAD MIDWIFE
Patients.

Semmelweis' jaw drops.

SEMMELOWEIS
That's the number of dead over the
past year?!?

HEAD MIDWIFE
No.

SEMMELOWEIS
(Relieved)
Oh... That wouldn't have made sense-

HEAD MIDWIFE
Over the last two years.

SEMMELOWEIS
WHAT? Wow. Wow!

HEAD MIDWIFE
Glad to help. Now if you don't
mind...

She begins to walk down the hall.

SEMMELOWEIS
Can I follow you?

She turns.

HEAD MIDWIFE
Beg your pardon?

SEMMELOWEIS
Just for rounds. To get a firm
grasp of what your procedures are.

HEAD MIDWIFE
As long as that's the only thing
your grasping.

The midwifery students giggle. Semmelweis squints in
confusion.

SEMMELOWEIS
Huh?

HEAD MIDWIFE
Never you mind. Come along.

INT. MIDWIFE EXAMINATION ROOM-DAY

Semmelweis tiptoes behind a pack of midwives in training with
a very large ledger.

The women giggle at his presence. His face reddens.

He observes the midwifery students delivering women on their sides.

He makes a note in his ledger. It's titled: "Midwife Technique Checklist."

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - NIGHT

Semmelweis opens the windows in the delivery rooms by a couple of inches.

He goes to his notepad. Crosses "Increased Ventilation" off of his checklist.

Smiles.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - DAY

Semmelweis wheels a mother back to the recovery room.

Two interns pass by him. They snicker to each other.

INTERN 1

There goes the Nurse.

The other doctor laughs.

Semmelweis ignores them and continues on his way.

He stops for a moment, checks off "Wheeling Patients Back" on his checklist.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Semmelweis walks up and down the row of slabs. They are all filled with bodies.

He has his checklist from the previous scene. Examines it.

Looks at the row of bodies.

He tears up the checklist. Walks out.

INT. KLEIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Klein sits at his desk. He pours himself a glass of whiskey.

Semmelweis knocks softly. Pops his head in the doorway.

SEMMELOWEIS
You wanted to see me?

KLEIN
Sit.

Semmelweis sits.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
We have a problem.

SEMMELOWEIS
Oh?

KLEIN
I've heard some disturbing reports.

SEMMELOWEIS
Yes, four more patients have died
in the clinic. Within hours of each
other.

KLEIN
I don't care about that.

Semmelweis raises an eyebrow.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
I mean, I care about that, but that
is not what we are discussing
today. Well, it is in relation to
that I suppose.

SEMMELOWEIS
Yes?

KLEIN
These... unorthodox practices you
have been implementing over the
past couple of weeks...

SEMMELOWEIS
You mean the ones used on the other
side of this hospital by the
midwife clinic?

KLEIN
Yes. Those are not department
sanctioned.

SEMMELOWEIS
But the midwives are allowed to use
them.

KLEIN

Doctor Semmelweis, we make it a point to practice the most advanced techniques in medicine. We're not frivolous women-

SEMMELOWEIS

Who deliver roughly the same amount of children as we do in a given year.

KLEIN

However, we do not kotow to ancient superstitions like putting a knife under a pillow to cut the patient's pain.

SEMMELOWEIS

I've never seen any of the midwives do anything of the sort.

KLEIN

Regardless, you cannot bring those techniques into this ward. After all, we are a teaching institution.

SEMMELOWEIS

I know that.

KLEIN

Then you should know that this institution is filled with impressionable medical students, and we do not want to promote contradicting protocols to them. Do you understand what I'm saying?

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes, Doctor.

KLEIN

How would that look?

SEMMELOWEIS

You're right, Dr. Klein. It would reflect poorly on you.

KLEIN

And of course, it could pose a risk on the safety of our patients.

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes, Dr. Klein. I can tell that is very important to you.

(MORE)

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

(Beat) Now if you'll excuse me, I
have work to do.

Semmelweis exits.

Klein returns to his whiskey.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

JAKOB, a fellow gangly resident, walks briskly down the hallway. He passes an attractive nurse walking in the opposite direction.

They smile at each other. He turns around to see her behind.

He still looks behind him as he bumps straight into Semmelweis.

Semmelweis falls backwards. He steadies himself against the wall of the hallway, next to Klein's office.

JAKOB

Ignaz!

SEMMELOWEIS

Hello, Jakob.

JAKOB

What happened?

Semmelweis sighs.

SEMMELOWEIS

It's stupid.

JAKOB

Get another hiding from Klein?

Semmelweis shrugs his shoulders.

SEMMELOWEIS

He's being unreasonable. Protocols.
What good are protocols if they're
killing people?

JAKOB

He runs the ward. They are as good
as he sees fit. (Beat) Why not let
him have it his way for now? Until
retires. Or dies...

SEMMELOWEIS

It'll be too late.

JAKOB
You're too dark, Ignaz.

SEMMELOWEIS
Dark or not. I need figure out how
to fix this. (Beat) I should go.

He starts to leave.

JAKOB
Where are you going?

SEMMELOWEIS
The morgue.

JAKOB
Not tonight you're not. Tonight,
you're coming with me. I'm not
taking no as an answer.

Jakob playfully shoves Semmelweis. Semmelweis smiles.

JAKOB (CONT'D)
Come on.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

A seedy, smoke-filled tavern.

Jakob and Semmelweis enter. They peer down the rows of
tables.

Jakob eyes two empty seats on the far left side of the
tavern.

He darts through the inebriated crowd, and quickly claims the
seats.

Semmelweis looks over the crowd for his friend. Nervous.

Jakob beckons Semmelweis over to the seat next to him.

Semmelweis breathes a sigh of relief and makes his way over,
careful not to bump into any other patrons.

SEMMELOWEIS
This is... earthy.

Semmelweis dusts off his seat with a handkerchief.

JAKOB

For someone who spends a majority of their time in the morgue, you are quite squeamish.

SEMMELOWEIS

Actually, I don't spend all my time there.

JAKOB

You know, if you don't spend more time with the living, you'll start to go mad.

SEMMELOWEIS

Is that your professional diagnosis, Jakob?

A TAVERN WENCH walks by. All cleavage. She smiles at them.

Semmelweis follows her with his eyes. Jakob notices.

JAKOB

(Calls out to her)

Excuse me, miss! Two pints, please.

She smiles and nods.

Jakob smirks at Semmelweis. He gets up from the table.

SEMMELOWEIS

Where are you-

Jakob follows the wench over to the bar.

He whispers into her ear. She looks back over at Semmelweis and nods.

Jakob puts a few coins in her hand. He takes the beers from her.

He walks back over. Hands a beer to Semmelweis.

JAKOB

Here we are.

SEMMELOWEIS

Thank you. Damned nice of you.

JAKOB

Of course. When people get to know you better, they tend to find out that you're a damned good doctor, maybe even a decent man.

SEMMELOWEIS
Tell that to the rest of the
hospital.

JAKOB
They'll figure it out.

Jakob raises his pint. Semmelweis raises his.

JAKOB (CONT'D)
To living.

SEMMELOWEIS
To living.

They clink glasses.

JAKOB
I got you a little present.

The tavern wench comes over. Smiles at him.

SEMMELOWEIS
Oh? I- uh...

Jakob slaps him on the back.

JAKOB
Live a little.

Semmelweis gulps.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is completely empty and dark.

A key turns in the lock.

Klein enters. He holds a candle. He looks around.

He lights the lamp on Semmelweis' desk.

He examines the papers on Semmelweis' desk.

KLEIN
(To himself)
What in God's name is he up to?

He pulls out a sheet of paper from the pile on Semmelweis' desk.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

(Reading)

The same number of deliveries took place in each of the hospitals 2 obstetrical divisions. The deliveries in the division lead by doctors resulted in 600-800 deaths in a given year. In the Midwife Clinic, there were far less.

Klein pulls up a letter.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

(Reading)

My darling husband Ignaz, I have not heard from you for several months. How have I- (Stops Reading)
Oh for God's sake!

Klein tears the letter up, and puts it in the bin. He pulls another sheet off of the desk.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

(Reading)

No such evidence of an epidemic of childbed fever occurred outside the walls of the hospital. Furthermore, decades of hospital statistics indicate that puerperal fever was not evidenced by the weather, as most epidemics often are.

Klein finds the ledger labeled HOSPITAL MORTALITY STATISTICS. He goes through a couple of pages.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

How did he get a hold of these, the fool?

He takes the ledger. Blows out the lamp.

INT. UPSTAIRS TAVERN ROOM - NIGHT

The tavern wench leads him into a sparse, mostly dark room.

She pushes Semmelweis into a chair.

SEMMELWEIS

Oh. Okay...

TAVERN WENCH

Your friend tells me you're doctor...

She straddles him in the chair. He squirms. Nervous.

SEMMELOWEIS

Uh. I am. Yes, you know- I'm- I'm not sure if he told you that I'm married-

She kisses him.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

And if that's something you're not-

She kisses him again. He starts to kiss her back.

TAVERN WENCH

So, Doctor, I need your expert medical opinion.

She begins to remove her clothes. She unbuckles his belt. Reaches into his pants. He gasps.

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh?

She unbuttons her dress. She removes her corset, exposing her breasts.

TAVERN WENCH

Anything wrong with them?

She places his hands on her breasts. With her encouragement, he starts to massage them.

SEMMELOWEIS

No... uh... They're... they're very nice.

He kisses her.

She starts grinding her hips against him. He closes his eyes tight. He moans softly. As her movements quicken, his moaning grows louder.

He opens his eyes to see her abdomen cut open- all of its contents covered in pus.

He screams and throws her off of him.

TAVERN WENCH

What? What?

He looks again. Her abdomen is intact.

SEMMELOWEIS

I-I-I I'm so terribly sorry.

Sweat runs down his forehead.

TAVERN WENCH

What? What is it?

He buttons up his pants.

SEMMELOWEIS

I-I-I- I have to go.

He runs out of the room.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Semmelweis sits at a long table in the library. Every inch of the table is stacked with books.

He opens one book. Skims it. Shakes his head. Closes it. Drops it on the floor. He does this several more times.

He opens another one. Skims it.

SEMMELOWEIS

(To himself)

Greater degrees of trauma during delivery appear to increase the likelihood that the mother would develop puerperal fever.

He searches for another book. Skims. Tosses it.

He takes out his ledger and begins to write notes. They read: "Direct contact between individuals exposed to puerperal fever could be a cause?"

He rubs his eyes. Yawns.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Oh to hell with it.

He closes the ledger. Gets up from the table.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - DAY

He sits by the bedside of MARTA, a patient. She sweats and her teeth chatter. Her whole body shakes. Her skin is pale. Black colored blood seeps through the sheets covering the lower half of her body.

Semmelweis sits in a chair at her bedside. He holds her hand.

MARTA
Will I die?

He pats her hand.

SEMMELOWEIS
I can't answer that.

Tears form in her eyes.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
(Softly)
Don't cry. Don't cry, Marta. (Beat)
Is there anything I can do to make
you more comfortable?

She shakes her head. Tears stream down her face.

Semmelweis wipes them away with his handkerchief.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
Close your eyes. Try to rest.

She nods. Yawns. Closes her eyes.

He lets go of her hand. Semmelweis puts his head in his hands. Inhales sharply. Exhales.

He pulls out his ledger from under his chair. He makes notes.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Semmelweis performs an autopsy on Marta. Her inner-thighs are swollen, and bruised- like they've been beaten with a club.

He looks up at her face. Shakes his head.

As he examines her genitalia, he grimaces at its swollen and reddish condition. He grabs a speculum. He is unable to insert it.

He slams his instruments down. He looks upward.

SEMMELOWEIS
Why another one? Why?

He takes a deep breath and returns to his work.

INT. SEMMELWEIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Notes on notes on notes accumulate on the floor of his room.

He sits on the floor. He neatly organizes them into piles. He stops to read one of the papers.

Jakob knocks then quickly walks through the door.

JAKOB

Whew! Thank God! I thought I was disturbing you with a woman.

SEMMELWEIS

(Not listening)

Uh huh. Of course.

JAKOB

Feel like grabbing another pint with me? Or are you too busy?

SEMMELWEIS

(Distracted)

Uh huh.

Jakob waves his hand to get Semmelweis's attention.

JAKOB

Well, I suppose this is progress. Your papers stink far less than your patients.

When there is no response, he knocks a pile of books off of Semmelweis' dresser. Semmelweis looks up.

SEMMELWEIS

That's not funny, Jakob.

JAKOB

Oh stop! You're too serious, Ignaz.

SEMMELWEIS

They're dying, Jakob. All those women.

JAKOB

I know.

SEMMELWEIS

So? Doesn't that make you sick?

JAKOB

It upsets me, but I don't let it get to me.

SEMMELOWEIS

Well, perhaps you should. Maybe it would make you a better doctor.

JAKOB

Ignaz, there's nothing to be done about it.

SEMMELOWEIS

Why not?

JAKOB

Because that's the way it is, my friend. That is the science. End of story. I wish there was a way-

SEMMELOWEIS

I know there is. And I'm going to find it.

JAKOB

Be careful.

SEMMELOWEIS

Careful. Of what?

JAKOB

If you do find something-

SEMMELOWEIS

When.

JAKOB

Fine. *When* you share your findings, be careful. People- people have a hard time accepting new theories. Look at what happened to Galileo.

Semmelweis snorts laughter.

SEMMELOWEIS

Are you trying to scare me off?

JAKOB

I'm trying to be your friend. There are consequences. If you do find something, don't- just make *sure* you're sure. Okay? I would want you to ruin your-

SEMMELOWEIS

I should really get back to this.

JAKOB

Fine.

He leaves.

Semmelweis returns to organizing his papers.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - DAY

Klein walks through the clinic with a group of medical students behind him, each carrying notepads and pencils. SKODA, another young and rather good-looking resident, trails behind making notes as he walks.

KLEIN

So we have had 18 deaths over the last two months. The majority of them can be attributed to...

MEDICAL STUDENT #1

Puerperal Fever?

KLEIN

Good. And that is?

MEDICAL STUDENT #2

An epidemic.

KLEIN

Yes. This is the most likely theory. And certainly this is the cause of the death in some of our poor patients.

Klein and the medical students hover over a sweaty, sallow patient.

Semmelweis walks through. Spots Skoda standing along the back wall.

He walks over to Skoda. Puts his back up against the wall. Folds his arms.

SEMMELWEIS

(Quietly)

Do you get some sick pleasure from hearing our Fearless Ruler pontificate?

He gestures to Klein.

KLEIN

Now, one of the theories as to the causes of puerperal fever is? Anyone?

The students exchange glances in silence. None of the students respond.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

One is the suppression of free discharge of the lochia. Which is...

MEDICAL STUDENT #2

Fluid from the uterus that is released after delivery.

KLEIN

Good. Very good.

Medical Student #2 beams.

Semmelweis rolls his eyes.

SEMMELOWEIS

Seriously, what are you doing recording this drivel?

SKODA

It's for Klein.

Semmelweis scoffs.

SKODA (CONT'D)

Well, I need to get on his good side somehow. This should help. And it wouldn't hurt if you did the same.

SEMMELOWEIS

God. You're such a lapdog...

SKODA

Thank you, my friend. You should try it some time. That would mean being more friendly than-

SEMMELOWEIS

I *am* friendly.

Skoda shoots him a look.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Fine. (Beat) Just trying to stay objective that's all. (Beat) Okay... Maybe I'm just a little reclusive-

SKODA

And hell is just a bath house...

KLEIN

Another has to do with impurities in the blood accumulated over the 9 months of gestation. This causes the uterus to be enlarged and putting pressure on the intestines. This phenomenon causes stasis of fecal matter, and its poisons are absorbed into the veins-

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh God...

SKODA

And just like God he holds our fates in his hand.

KLEIN

Now some other theories bandied about are more external factors. (Beat) Can anyone think of any?

MEDICAL STUDENT #2

Diet?

KLEIN

Sure. Any others? What about you?

MEDICAL STUDENT #3

Uh... Trauma induced by moving the patient too early after giving birth.

KLEIN

Okay. One more?

MEDICAL STUDENT #1

Catching a chill?

SEMMELOWEIS

(Muttering)

Oh for the love of God.

Skoda nudges him.

KLEIN

Sure. And the reason why all of these are acceptable is because each case of puerperal fever should be considered unique, just like every person is unique.

Semmelweis rolls his eyes.

MEDICAL STUDENT #3

And how can you prevent this, Dr. Klein?

KLEIN

You can't. Sadly. Now, if you follow me...

Klein and the medical students move on.

Semmelweis takes Skoda's notes and tears them up.

SKODA

Hey!

INT. HOSPITAL RECORDS OFFICE - NIGHT

An elderly CLERK checks the clock on the wall. It reads 6:30. He packs up his things.

He draws the shades.

Semmelweis enters, slamming the door.

The clerk jumps at the sound.

CLERK

We're closed.

SEMMELOWEIS

Your door is still open.

CLERK

I said we're closed.

SEMMELOWEIS

I have a few questions about the records you have over the last couple of years.

CLERK

You'll have to come back tomorrow.

SEMMELOWEIS
But you're here now.

CLERK
I'm going home.

Clerk tries to move past him. Semmelweis steps in front of him.

SEMMELOWEIS
But you're here now.

Clerk tries to side step him. Semmelweis moves with him.

CLERK
Fine. What do you need? Make it quick.

SEMMELOWEIS
It's about the puerperal fever deaths.

Clerk hands him a pile of papers.

CLERK
Here.

Clerk turns to leave. Semmelweis grabs him.

SEMMELOWEIS
Also I need to know if they spike in certain seasons or during certain weather conditions.

CLERK
No.

SEMMELOWEIS
No? No you won't tell me?

CLERK
No as in there's no correlation. And saying please wouldn't kill you...

Clerk slams a ledger down.

CLERK (CONT'D)
These are the weather conditions and these are the total dead by symptoms.

SEMMELOWEIS
So...

CLERK

So no. There is relationship based on our records. You know, you should be better with people. You doctors think that you're the smartest people in the-

SEMMELOWEIS

Can I borrow these?

Clerk rolls his eyes.

CLERK

Yes. Just make sure to bring them-

Semmelweis runs out the door. The door slams shut.

CLERK (CONT'D)

(To himself)

You're welcome.

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

Semmelweis begins to mount the steps to the hospital. A guard stops him.

GUARD

No one is allowed to enter.

SEMMELOWEIS

But I'm a doctor. I have patients-

GUARD

Did you not hear what I just said?

JAKOB (O.C.)

Relax. There was some sort of explosion. Half the ward's gone.

Semmelweis turns around. Jakob is behind him without his white coat on.

SEMMELOWEIS

Klein wasn't inside was he?

JAKOB

You wish.

SEMMELOWEIS

Well...

Jakob and Semmelweis laughs.

JAKOB

Well, the hospital's closed down for a week. All our patients have been shoved off elsewhere. Some of us were thinking about heading to the tavern in Stephenplatz in a bit. Care to join?

SEMMELOWEIS

Maybe. I have to take care of something first. Then I'll be down.

JAKOB

Good. Good. You know, once the other lads get to know you better, you'll have a less difficult time with everyone. But you have to try and act like a person.

SEMMELOWEIS

Uhuh.

Semmelweis abruptly exits.

JAKOB

Well... See you later then.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A shabby apartment bedroom in Vienna. MARY, a new mother, lies on a bed, holding a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Semmelweis appears in the doorway. He knocks.

Mary turns to see him. Smiles.

SEMMELOWEIS

The midwife gave me a report, but I-uh- I just wanted to check. See how you are feeling.

MARY

That's very kind, Doctor. (Beat)
You can move a bit closer. Or at least out of the doorway.

Semmelweis removes his hat and moves closer towards the bed. He puts his hand on her forehead.

SEMMELOWEIS

Any fever? Chills?

MARY

I don't think so.

He lifts up the sheets. Pauses awkwardly.

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh. Um. Apologies. May I?

She nods.

He lifts up the sheets. Spreading her legs to examine her.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Fine. Fine. Everything looks fine.

MARY

Good.

SEMMELOWEIS

And again, I apologize that our ward has been closed.

MARY

Well, thanks for even coming down here to check on me. That was well sweet of you.

He smiles. Takes out a list from his pocket. Crosses her name off with a pencil.

MARY (CONT'D)

What's that?

Semmelweis smiles.

SEMMELOWEIS

It's nothing. Just... All my patients have delivered and survived outside the hospital.

MARY

Well, we're all very lucky ladies then. To have a doctor such as you looking after us.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Sheepish)

Oh... well...

MARY

Sit. Sit you down. Have some tea.

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh I musn't.

MARY

Please. It's the least I can do.

Semmelweis sits. Stares at her for a few moments with a forced smile.

Silence.

Semmelweis bolts up.

SEMMELWEIS

That was lovely, but I really must be going.

He awkwardly leaves. He turns back.

MARY

Thank you.

SEMMELWEIS

I am glad you're doing well.

He closes the door behind him.

INT. DEMEL CAFE- DAY

Semmelweis stares down the linen table loaded with plates of Sachertorte, Annatorte, Katzensungen, candied violets, Nusskaffeeorte, and marzipan Lippizzaner.

Jakob sits across from him- eyes on the Demelinerinnen waitresses in their black frocks and white collars.

JAKOB

When was the last time you ate something?

Semmelweis' eyes dart from plate to plate.

SEMMELWEIS

Well... definitely yesterday.

Keeping his eyes fixed on a curvy waitress, Jakob attempts to lump cream onto his hot chocolate, but misses the cup.

JAKOB

Uh huh.

SEMMELWEIS

Ahem! Jakob? What's the occasion?

JAKOB
 Can't two colleagues have a
 leisurely day out?

One of the waitresses floats over.

WAITRESS
 Will the gentlemen require anything
 else today?

Jakob holds a hand to his chest.

JAKOB
 Please put all of this on Dr.
 Klein's account. Number 4313. Along
 with a box of tea biscuits please.

She smiles and nods.

SEMMELOWEIS
 Ah.

JAKOB
 Eat up.

SEMMELOWEIS
 With pleasure.

Smirking, Semmelweis pulls the Sacher torte plate towards him. Using his fork, he shovels half of it into his mouth.

JAKOB
 How is it?

Semmelweis swallows loudly and licks cake off of the corner of his mouth.

SEMMELOWEIS
 Now that I know Klein's paying for
 it? Best I've ever had.

Semmelweis catches the attention of one of the waitresses. He gestures to the plate.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
 Two more please?

Semmelweis and Jakob chuckle as they dig in.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Semmelweis and Skoda sit in front of a slab in the morgue. Skoda stares at him with incredulity.

SKODA
But you can't!

SEMMELOWEIS
Why not?

Skoda looks down at the dead newborn lying on the slab.

SKODA
It's a sin.

SEMMELOWEIS
Where?

SKODA
It hasn't been baptized. You can't-

SEMMELOWEIS
I may not be much of a church going man, but from the looks of this I think the greater sin is that the child died in the first place.

SKODA
I'm starting to think there is something seriously wrong with you, my friend. I don't understand your morbid fascination with-

SEMMELOWEIS
I'm not fascinated with-

SKODA
And what does *this* look like to you then?

Skoda gestures to the dead infant.

SEMMELOWEIS
I just- I have to figure this out. If it's transferring from mother to infant post-delivery, then-

SKODA
Well, I want no part in this.

Skoda turns to leave. Semmelweis grabs his arm.

SEMMELOWEIS
You're the one who did the autopsy on the mother. Now, tell me-

SKODA
This is obsession!

SEMMELOWEIS
This is science!

Silence.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
What if you were the father?
Wouldn't you want to know why?

Skoda sighs. Stares at the dead infant.

SKODA
Pass me the damn scalpel.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' ROOM - NIGHT

He rolls over on his bed, there is a dead infant lying next to him.

It starts to wail. It crawls towards his side of the bed.

He wakes up from the nightmare covered in sweat. Screaming.

INT. MORGUE- NIGHT

Semmelweis runs to the morgue.

SEMMELOWEIS
(Calls out)
Jakob? Jakob! Jacob!

There is a naked male body lying on the slab on the far side of the morgue. GEORG, a blond medical student, stands over the corpse.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
Georg? Georg, is that you?

GEORG
Yes, sir. Over here, sir.

Semmelweis starts walking over.

SEMMELOWEIS
I'm looking for Dr. Kolletschka-

He stops as he looks at the body. It is Jakob- all color drained from his face. His eyes are fixed and open.

Semmelweis stands with his mouth agape.

Georg has a scalpel in his left hand. He is about to cut into his chest. Semmelweis stops him.

GEORG

Sir?

SEMMELOWEIS

When did this happen?

GEORG

It's unclear. His maid found him this morning. We picked him up a few hours ago.

SEMMELOWEIS

I saw him. I saw him only a few-

GEORG

My apologies, sir. How rude of me. Would you like to do the honors?

He extends the scalpel to Semmelweis. Semmelweis recoils.

SEMMELOWEIS

No. I-I-I can't. No.

GEORG

I'm only here because I wanted to get more practice in. (Beat) I would say he died in the last 48 hours or so. Am I close, Dr. Semmelweis?

SEMMELOWEIS

I don't understand. He was fine. He was perfectly fine. A few days ago, he was fine.

GEORG

I'm still trying to determine, cause of death, sir.

SEMMELOWEIS

So, you have nothing yet? Nothing? Jesus-

Georg holds up Jakob's left hand. It is swollen and putrefied. There is a long cut along his hand.

GEORG

Not to be disrespectful, but I feel that this has something to do with it.

SEMMELOWEIS

Huh.

GEORG

It looks like a cut from a scalpel, sir. Do you agree? I'm only making that assumption because there are no jagged edges. And well...

SEMMELOWEIS

Well? Well what?

Georg gestures to around the room.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Ah. Yes.

GEORG

It is the external injury I can find, sir.

Semmelweis picks up Jakob's hand and pulls it close to his eyes.

GEORG (CONT'D)

From the looks of it, he suffered some sort of organ system failure. There's evidence of severe dehydration, as if he had some kind of... I'm not sure.

SEMMELOWEIS

Fever. Those are the symptoms of infection. Like... my last three patients.

GEORG

I'm not sure about that, Doctor. Perhaps you are seeing what you want to see.

Georg puts his hand on Semmelweis' shoulder.

GEORG (CONT'D)

I know that you and Dr. Kolletschka were close.

Semmelweis stares at Georg's hand. He shrugs it off.

SEMMELOWEIS

Finish up. I expect a full autopsy report on my desk in the morning.

GEORG

Yes, Doctor. And again, I'm so sorry for your loss.

SEMMELOWEIS

Uh. Yes. Well. Thank you...

Semmelweis turns and walks back to the door. There are tears in his eyes.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Semmelweis paces in his room.

He goes to his desk. Rummages through the drawers. He pulls out a piece of white chalk.

He approaches one of his walls. He writes "Puerperal Fever" on the wall. Underlines it.

He goes back to his desk. Pulls up some notes. Reads them.

He goes over to another wall. He writes "Jakob" on it. Underlines it.

He returns to reading the papers.

He goes back to the first wall. Beneath "Puerperal Fever," he writes "Sunken eyes, hyperventilation, altered mental status, edema, pus/discharge, organ failure starting with reproductive organs" in a column beneath it.

He examines the papers.

He goes to the other wall. Writes in a column "Edema, pus, jaundice, altered mental status, hyperventilation, possible organ failure."

He stares at the wall. Looks back at the other. Looks back.

SEMMELOWEIS

What's the connection? How the hell did he get that?

He looks back at the papers. Rolls the chalk in between his hands. Stares at the wall.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Nothing. There's nothing.

He tosses the papers. Begins to wipe down the walls with his hands in a fit.

He looks at his waistcoat, covered in chalk. He tries to brush it off with his hands, but even more chalk builds up on it.

He examines his hands- half chalky, half caked in blood, especially around the fingers.

He sniffs his hands, grimacing at their smell.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

(Musing)

Hands. What if-

He washes his hands vigorously. Inspects them.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Huh.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - DAY

Klein is walking past patients lying in bed. He is trailed by various medical students, interns, and residents. Semmelweis lurks in the back.

KLEIN

Kranz! Grand rounds started 30 minutes ago.

KRANZ, a baby-faced medical student, runs to join the pack.

KRANZ

Sorry, Doctor Klein. Won't happen again, sir.

KLEIN

Well since you are refreshed from your afternoon nap. Perhaps you can tell all of us what this post-delivery patient is suffering from?

KRANZ

Uh... Child... Bed... Fever?

KLEIN

Good God, Kranz. If you ever want to be a proper doctor when you grow up, you may want to start using the proper terminology. Puerperal Fever.

KRANZ

Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.

KLEIN

Grow up, Kranz. No need to be embarrassed. I'm merely trying to educate you. (Beat) Now, does anyone have any questions before we proceed?

Semmelweis raises his hand.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

Well, let's continue-

SEMMELOWEIS

Excuse me, Dr. Klein. I had a question.

KLEIN

Oh this will be good...

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes. I think it would be illuminating for everyone. Are you aware of any theories about the spread of puerperal fever through direct contact?

KLEIN

No.

SEMMELOWEIS

No?

KLEIN

There is no such theory in an medical journal throughout Europe. (Beat) Anyone else care to contradict me?

Silence.

KLEIN (CONT'D)

Are you insinuating I'm somehow to blame for this?

SEMMELOWEIS

Forgive me, sir. I- I- I wasn't contradicting you. But isn't it at least *plausible* that direct contact could-

KLEIN

Direct contact. And what exactly do you mean by direct contact?

SEMMELOWEIS
 Passing it through the hands.

Klein laughs.

KLEIN
 A gentleman's hands are never
 dirty. Or at least an Austrian's
 hands.

Everyone laughs.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Semmelweis walks in as a gaggle of medical students leave.

He paces the morgue. Arms folded. Brows furrowed. Wrinkles his nose. Grimaces. Covers his nose with his hand.

Two elderly women who are members of the cleaning staff enter with a trolley filled with rags and basins of water.

They grab the instruments. They grimace. Dump them in the basin.

SEMMELOWEIS
 What- what- what are you doing?

CLEANING STAFF 1
 Washing 'em.

SEMMELOWEIS
 With what?

CLEANING STAFF 1
 Well, we can't just use water.
 Doctors can still smell the stink
 on 'em if we just use water. If
 they can't abide using 'em next
 day, we get sacked.

SEMMELOWEIS
 Well, what does it *do*?

CLEANING STAFF 1
 Makes 'em stink less. Obviously.

INT. ORDERLY SUPPLY DEPOT - NIGHT

Semmelweis runs in from the hall to the orderly supply depot, where an obese orderly sits on a stool.

SUPPLY ORDERLY
Can I help you?

SEMMELOWEIS
(Panting)
Chloride solution.

SUPPLY ORDERLY
If you have an issue with cleaning,
you have to take that up with the
caretakers.

SEMMELOWEIS
No. I need chloride solution. As
much of it as you can give me.

SUPPLY ORDERLY
Well, you'll need to fill out a
requisition form-

Semmelweis runs to the back of the room and into the closet.
He runs back out with a massive jug.

SEMMELOWEIS
(Excited)
You can bill me later!

He runs out.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' CELL - DAY

TITLE CARD: 1865.

Semmelweis, once again a mental patient, paces the room.
Sweats. Breathes rapidly. His hand is severely swollen,
rotting, and dark in pigmentation.

SEMMELOWEIS
Please. Let me wash. Please!
Anybody! HELLO?

He bangs on the wall with his good hand.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
Anybody!

Two orderlies enter with medication. Approach him.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
P-p-please. Soap. Water. Chlorine.
Please. She died. Didn't she? The
mother from two days ago? She died.
She died. I knew it.

The orderlies stop in their tracks. They dump out his medication onto the floor.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

F-f-f-for the love of God-

They punch Semmelweis. Kick him when he falls. They throw him back down onto his bed.

They leave.

He lies on the bed. Breathing labored.

He stares up at his hand. Tries to wipe it. Screams in agony. Tries again. Screams even louder.

Beads of sweat drip down his forehead.

CLANG. The cell door shuts.

INT. LYING-IN WARD ENTRANCE - DAY

TITLE CARD: 1849. Vienna Hospital.

An immaculate white basin filled with soapy solution rests on a table in the middle of the door way.

A medical student attempts to walk by the basin. Dr. Semmelweis' hand grabs his arm and forces him to the table.

SEMMELOWEIS (O.C.)

Absolutely not. Wash.

MEDICAL STUDENT

But I'll be late for rounds.

SEMMELOWEIS

Wash.

MEDICAL STUDENT

But-

SEMMELOWEIS

Wash.

The medical student scrubs his hands under the water.

MEDICAL STUDENT

Doesn't smell like soap.

SEMMELOWEIS

It's actually Chloride solution.
Wash.

MEDICAL STUDENT
Phew! Strong.

SEMMELOWEIS
How observant. You can go.

A nurse tries to side-step the basin. Semmelweis blocks her.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
Hold it. (Beat) Wash.

Nurse sighs.

A line has started to form behind her.

INT. KLEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Klein sits examining some papers.

A MEDICAL STUDENT bursts in.

KLEIN
My office hours aren't until 4, and
you aren't doing yourself any
favors by barging into my office
without knocking.

MEDICAL STUDENT
Dr. Klein-

KLEIN
God, can't you see I'm busy?

MEDICAL STUDENT
There's something you need to see,
sir.

KLEIN
Oh?

MEDICAL STUDENT
We can't get into the ward.

KLEIN
Oh for God's sake!

He slams down the papers in his hand.

Leaps out of his chair. Shoves the medical student out of his way, and bounds out the door.

The nervous medical student trails behind him.

INT. WARD ENTRANCE - DAY

Klein pushes past the long line of medical personnel. He stomps over to Semmelweis.

KLEIN
I demand an explanation!

SEMMELOWEIS
Well, sir-

KLEIN
Holding up the majority of my staff? Clogging the halls? Tell me?

SEMMELOWEIS
It's to prevent further contamination. It may slow the death rate-

KLEIN
Contamination?

SEMMELOWEIS
The mothers. The dead mothers.

KLEIN
Dr. Semmelweis, you fret like a woman. It's an epidemic for God's sake!

Klein sniffs the air. He puts his hand across the surface of the basin next to Semmelweis.

SEMMELOWEIS
It's chloride solution. They use it on the putrid instruments. And it's not an epidemic-

KLEIN
So you plan to do what? Kill every other mother who doesn't succumb to puerperal fever by the strength of the solution.

Klein flips the basin over.

INT. WARD ENTRANCE - DAY

The next day.

There is a far longer line into the ward filled with impatient doctors and nurses.

Klein rushes past them.

KLEIN
(Muttering)
Damned Hungarians. Worse than the
damned Jews.

A Doctor with his back to Klein blocks Klein's way. He shoves him.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
Excuse me!

Klein rushes to the front of the line, where Semmelweis stands over a basin with his pocketwatch.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
Is your German not so great or are
all Hungarians slightly stupid?

The line laughs.

Semmelweis puts down his watch. Frowns.

SEMMELWEIS
I'm sorry?

KLEIN
I don't know how it's done in
Budapest, but in *this* country, in
this hospital, residents-

Points to Semmelweis.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
Follow the directions that their
attendings-

Points to himself.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
Give them. (Beat) Or perhaps I
should speak more slowly?

The line chuckles.

SEMMELWEIS
(Coolly)
Yes, Dr. Klein.
(MORE)

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Even simple-minded Hungarians like myself can follow directions. And I have complied with your previous request.

Klein holds up the basin.

KLEIN

And what, pray tell, is this then? Because to my eyes and nose it looks like chloride solution.

Semmelweis folds his arms and smiles.

SEMMELOWEIS

Actually, it's Chlorina Liquida.

KLEIN

I'm sorry. What?

SEMMELOWEIS

Chlorina Liquida. It's a cheaper, and more diluted form. But of course, it is quite difficult to make that determination even with the eyes of my knowing attending. (Beat) Now is there anything else I can help you with?

The line speaks in shocked, hushed whispers.

Klein stiffens.

KLEIN

Well, I'm unclear as to how this will do anything beneficial.

SEMMELOWEIS

It can't hurt, can it?

He walks off.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

So, if we can just have the next person in line-

Some doctors follow Klein out.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Wait-

After ten people or so walk.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

(Screams)

Everyone stop! Wash your damn hands. Or so help me God-

Semmelweis stops himself. He looks around.

The staff on the line stare at him. Some look at him like he is crazy.

INT. HOSPITAL RECORDS OFFICE - NIGHT

Semmelweis sits on the floor of the office, surrounded by papers.

Semmelweis pours over the hospital records book. It's spine reads "Ward Mortality Rate."

He traces the columns with his finger. One column reads: "Puerperal fever. Ward mortality rates: October- 48, November- 50, December- 38."

He puts the paper down. Rubs his eyes. Checks again. Circles the number 38 on the page with a pencil.

Smiles. He nods.

INT. WARD ENTRANCE - DAY

There is a line of doctors waiting to enter the wards, backed up down the hallway.

Semmelweis stands behind a table with a basin on it. He holds a pocket watch.

A Doctor stands of the basin scrubbing his hands. He stops.

SEMMELOWEIS

That was only 6 seconds. Go on.

Doctor groans. He continues washing.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

On your way.

The Doctor takes his hands out of the basin. Flicks the water off of them into Semmelweis's face, and walks off.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Next!

The next doctor in line steps up to the basin. He starts to scrub his hands.

DOCTOR

You know, Dr. Semmelweis, I think this might be working.

Semmelweis looks up and smiles at him.

SEMMELOWEIS

Thank you. Really.

The doctor nods and walks past him.

Klein stomps over.

KLEIN

Stop this! Stop this at once!

SEMMELOWEIS

Why? I did what you asked. It's diluted.

KLEIN

At what cost?

He grabs the basin from Semmelweis.

SEMMELOWEIS

The cost of the lives of our patients?

Semmelweis tries to pull the basin back.

KLEIN

This little exercise, which is pointless by the way, is far too costly. And you're mad if you think I will let this go on any longer.

Semmelweis notices everyone staring at him. His face reddens. Semmelweis lets go of his side of the basin- its contents spill over Klein.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - DAY

Semmelweis walks by a row of dying women. Their eyes are sunken. Their breathing labored.

Medical students pass by, doing their rounds. They are led by an attending physician.

ATTENDING PHYSICIAN
 Now another epidemic of childbed
 fever as torn through the ward. So
 far-

SEMMELOWEIS
 Excuse me, doctor. Epidemic is
 actually a misnomer-

ATTENDING PHYSICIAN
 I wasn't speaking to you. Now,
 let's continue.

SEMMELOWEIS
 (Loud)
 Yes, but you are disseminating
 incorrect information to these
 students. To the peril of-

ATTENDING PHYSICIAN
 Hungarians are always so neurotic.
 If they see their own shadow, they
 assume it's Doomsday.

Everyone laughs.

SEMMELOWEIS
 (Shouting)
 I'm not neurotic! You're just
 wrong!

ATTENDING PHYSICIAN
 See?

The students laugh.

INT. WARD ENTRANCE - DAY

Two days later.

The lines of doctors return once again.

At the basin, a nurse washes her hands. Semmelweis hands her
 a small scrub brush.

She looks at him in confusion.

SEMMELOWEIS
 Nails.

She holds up the brush. She scrubs along the tops of her
 nails.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
No underneath. Get rid of that
dirt, underneath the nails.

She sighs. Complies. He waved her on.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
Thank you! Next!

A doctor rolls his eyes and steps forward toward the basin.
He dips his hands in the water. Starts to scrub.

Klein comes over. He sighs.

Semmelweis lets the doctor washing his hands pass.

KLEIN
When the Chief Administrator asks
me why my budget is grossly over
its allotment, I have to now tell
him it's because one of my
residents wants my staff to have a
manicure!

Semmelweis hands him a few papers. Klein flips through. The
papers consist of a balance sheet, charts, and graphs.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
I don't have time for this. What is
this?

SEMMELOWEIS
For your next meeting with the
Chief Administrator. It's for a new
solution.

Klein laughs.

KLEIN
Another one! Does it look like I'm
Father Christmas, Semmelweis?

SEMMELOWEIS
If you closely, it's a cost-benefit
analysis of a cheaper solution.

KLEIN
(Reading)
Chloride of lime. You want HOW
much?

SEMMELOWEIS

Feel free to explain to the Administrator that if you buy it in a much larger quantity-

KLEIN

Now you're telling me how to do both my job and his?

SEMMELOWEIS

I'm not-

KLEIN

You may be doing it with charts and graphs, but you are.

SEMMELOWEIS

I'm merely suggesting-

KLEIN

That you can do a better job than I can.

SEMMELOWEIS

No-

KLEIN

Well, you couldn't. And everyone here knows it.

SEMMELOWEIS

Just listen. If you buy it in a large enough quantity both our staff and the cleaning staff can both use it and it saves the hospital a good deal of money.

KLEIN

Saves money. Wastes our time. But as long as you get what you want to soothe your vanity-

SEMMELOWEIS

(Shouts)

I want to stop delivering babies that will be orphans! What's vain about that?

The line murmurs.

KLEIN

Are you raising your voice to me, Dr. Semmelweis?

SEMMELOWEIS
(Subdued)
No. Uh... I'm sorry, sir.

Semmelweis lowers his eyes. Klein walks past. He drops the papers into the basin.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - DAY

Semmelweis scrubs under his nails.

A Nurse enters.

NURSE
Dr. Semmelweis, your patient is waiting.

SEMMELOWEIS
In a moment.

He finishes scrubbing his nails. Examines them closely.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - NIGHT

It is late at night. The hospital is quiet. Semmelweis walks by a long row of sleeping patients in recovery.

He examines each of them, careful not to wake them. Takes their pulses. Feels their foreheads. He watches over them as they sleep. Makes notes.

One of the patients opens her eyes for a moment. Smiles at him. He smiles back.

SEMMELOWEIS
You're doing well. Go back to sleep.

She nods. Smiles again.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Semmelweis rolls over in his bed. There are large bags under his eyes. He rolls over again. Growls a little.

He gets up from the bed. Goes to the window and draws the curtain. It is still dark out.

He lights another candle. Goes to the basin of water on the dresser. He picks up the soap and nail brush to the side of the basin. He begins to wash his hands.

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC- DAY

A pregnant woman lies on an operating table. She is in labor.

Dr. Klein and some medical students stand around her.

DR. KLEIN

Now if you look, the cervix is
dilated-

Semmelweis bursts in.

SEMMELOWEIS

1.3%! Dr. Klein! 1.3%!

Klein ignores him.

DR. KLEIN

The cervix is a muscle that-

Semmelweis shoves a paper in his face.

SEMMELOWEIS

Dr. Klein, the mortality rate fell
to 1.3% We've matched the 2nd ward!
My experiment worked!

Klein waves him off.

DR. KLEIN

It could also be the recently
installed enhanced ventilation
system as the true cause of
improvement.

SEMMELOWEIS

I have to disagree, Dr. Klein.

DR. KLEIN

That's fine, Dr. Semmelweis. That
doesn't mean you're right.

SEMMELOWEIS

Can I at least make my policy
mandatory throughout the hospital?

Klein laughs him off.

Everyone stares at Semmelweis.

Semmelweis makes a quick exit.

DR. KLEIN

Now that the fantasy section of our session is over, let's deliver this baby.

The medical students laugh.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

A patient gets wheeled in by two nurses, NURSE FRIDA and NURSE MAGDA. She is in labor and has a massively swollen left knee four times the size of her other one.

NURSE FRIDA

What the hell is that?

NURSE MAGDA

Dunno. It's an odd one.

NURSE FRIDA

Get Doctor Oddball then.

Nurse Magda breaks away from the other nurse and the patient, and walks...

DOWN THE HALLWAY.

Nurse grabs Semmelweis by the arm.

NURSE MAGDA

Doctor. Come with me. We have... an unusual patient. She's in labor-

SEMMELOWEIS

That is hardly unusual.

NURSE MAGDA

Come on.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

Nurse shows him in. The patient again is writhing in pain. Nurse Frida is unable to get the patient into the birthing position due to the swollen knee.

Semmelweis comes in. Places his hand on the knee. It is red and swollen.

SEMMELOWEIS

(To himself)

Hot... Huh. (To Nurse Magda)
Scalpel.

She hands him a scalpel.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
This might hurt a bit, Miss.

He makes a small incision on the knee. She screams in pain. Yellow pus oozes out.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)
Bizarre...

He's fixated on her knee.

NURSE MAGDA
Doctor. Doctor? Doctor!

Semmelweis snaps to attention.

SEMMELOWEIS
What?

NURSE MAGDA
The baby's coming.

SEMMELOWEIS
Ah. Yes. Of-of course. You, drain the knee, and then you may assist in the delivery.

He goes to a basin and washes his hands.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Three days later.

The patient with the swollen knee and ten other women lay on tables in the morgue.

Semmelweis stands over them with his assistant HEBRA, a slight man in his early twenties.

Semmelweis throws his hands up in the air.

SEMMELOWEIS
I don't understand it, Hebra!
Really, I don't.

HEBRA
It makes no sense, Doctor.

SEMMELOWEIS
(To himself)
Was this all in my head?

Hebra flips through notes in a ledger.

HEBRA

I've been keeping a record of the hand washings. Every single person who entered the ward from the morgue washed their hands-

SEMMELOWEIS

Starting when? From when that patient came in?

HEBRA

Ada. Her name was Ada.

SEMMELOWEIS

Who?

HEBRA

The one with the knee.

Klein walks in. Semmelweis rolls his eyes.

Klein inspects the corpses. Sighs.

KLEIN

You musn't feel too bad, Semmelweis. This was bound to happen. As it often does with *epidemics*. All you've done is wasted everyone's time with your ineffective protocols.

SEMMELOWEIS

At- at least I am trying to save lives.

KLEIN

Trying and failing, Semmelweis. Trying and failing. (Beat) All these useless protocols stop tomorrow.

SEMMELOWEIS

But-

KLEIN

But nothing.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Late at night.

Semmelweis goes through a set of double doors. He wears a vacant expression.

Semmelweis wanders the hallways alone. There are huge bags under his eyes. He walks like he is sleepwalking.

He sees the night nurses move about the ward. They move between patient to patient. Focuses on their hands. Even from far away they are filthy.

SEMMELWEIS

Damn it.

He runs over to one of them.

He grabs one of them, JANA, by the hand. She yelps. He looks closely at her hands. Sniffs them. Grimaces.

SEMMELWEIS (CONT'D)

(Sighs)

I'm free of it.

INT. KLEIN'S OFFICE- DAY

Klein sits reading a newspaper. He takes a sip from his cup of coffee.

He drags Jana into Klein's office.

Klein groans and puts down his cup.

KLEIN

You know at this point, Semmelweis.
I should start to anticipate these
outbursts.

Semmelweis shoves Jana in front of Klein.

SEMMELWEIS

Tell him. Go on. If you won't tell
me, you damn will tell him.

JANA

Dr. Klein, I'm-

SEMMELWEIS

Tell him. When was the last time
you washed your hands during your
rounds?

JANA

I-I-I-

He jerks her arm.

JANA (CONT'D)

Ow!

KLEIN

Semmelweis! Enough!

She starts to cry.

SEMMELWEIS

The night rotation hasn't been following my protocols. At all. The night nurses transmitted the infected particles of the patient with the knee infection to the other patients!

KLEIN

And you're grasping this theory because?

SEMMELWEIS

All the other patients died in order of when the nurses treated them.

KLEIN

Pssh. So?

SEMMELWEIS

After they treated her.

KLEIN

Is that what you call proof?

SEMMELWEIS

What else would you call it?

KLEIN

Obsession. (To Jana) You may go.

She exits.

SEMMELWEIS

I'm not obsessed. I'm just-

KLEIN

Not allowed to set foot in this hospital until you have actual proof to show me about the transmission of puerperal fever. Not one foot-

SEMMELOWEIS

I'm right. You know I'm right.
You're just- you're just...

KLEIN

Prove it. (Beat) You may go.

Semmelweis turns. Leaves. Slams the door.

Klein goes back to his newspaper.

INT. SPANISH RIDING SCHOOL - NIGHT

Semmelweis, sitting between Skoda and Hebra, stares off into space. Strauss' "Elisen-Polka, Op.151" plays as softly in the rosy glow of candlelight.

He focuses in on the hooves of the Lippizzaner in their School Quadrille, mouth agape: the hoofbeats match the ringing of Semmelweis' own heartbeat in his ears.

Skoda nudges him. Semmelweis jolts to attention.

HEBRA

(Whispers)

She reminds me of Dr. Klein's wife.

Their gaze tracks to a particularly toothy mare on the side.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Normal volume)

No. The nag is far more handsome.

The trio chortle. An elegantly dressed couple seated in front shush them, causing the three men to laugh louder.

INT. SPANISH RIDING SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

The men stumble down the baroque, chandelier-clad hallway.

SEMMELOWEIS

I actually had a lovely evening.

SKODA

Good to hear. Thought you could use it.

Hebra drags his feet.

HEBRA

No matter how much I scrape these boots after I leave here, they still stink of horse. Why is that?

SEMMELOWEIS

Hard to say. I've never noticed before. Usually you smell worse.

Hebra gives Semmelweis a playful shove. Skoda groans as he peers to the exit.

SKODA

God above, it's pissing rain again, isn't it?

They look down the warm glow of the hallway into the dark. Ladies' gowns are immediately drenched once they cross the threshold.

HEBRA

There's a decent tavern near here. Might be a good place to wait out the rain.

SEMMELOWEIS

I-I should get back to work.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' ROOM- NIGHT

A soaked Semmelweis trudges through the front door.

He sinks down on his bed. He picks up a few papers arranged on the surface of his bed. He puts them on his night table and examines his fingers, black with smudged ink.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' ROOM - DAWN

An unsettling amount of dead, dissected rabbits lie on Semmelweis' dinner table in his apartment. They lie in several neat piles.

The piles are labeled which ones died of puerperal fever after contamination. It works out to be one in three.

He stares at them. Groans.

He throws the rabbit carcasses to the floor.

He takes his notes and tosses them into the air. They fall like snowflakes.

Hebra knocks and enters.

HEBRA

Doctor Semmelweis? Sorry it was open.

Semmelweis stares into space.

HEBRA (CONT'D)

How are you? I haven't seen you since we all went out...

Semmelweis folds his arms and shakes his head.

HEBRA (CONT'D)

It's been a few weeks.

Semmelweis keeps shaking his head.

HEBRA (CONT'D)

I didn't if you were ill or not. So... I thought I'd... check.

Semmelweis doesn't make eye contact with Hebra.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Muttering)

Maybe it's for nothing. Maybe everyone's right. Maybe Klein is right. I don't know. I don't know anymore. It's not real. My theory. My theory is...

HEBRA

Dr. Semmelweis.

Hebra puts a comforting hand on Semmelweis' shoulder.

SEMMELOWEIS

Uh...

HEBRA

I'm not just saying this because you're my boss, but I think you have something. I know you haven't shared everything with me, but from what I know...

Semmelweis removes his hand with his index and thumb.

SEMMELOWEIS

I should... I should toss out the rabbits.

Hebra, left alone, packs up the scattered the pages.

He kneels down. He reads them to himself. He raises his eyebrows.

HEBRA

Wow...

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

A group of doctors read pamphlets, and the title reads: "The Semmelweis Theory: On the Causes of the Endemic Puerperal Fever of Vienna."

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Two nurses read the same pamphlet.

Klein storms down the hallway.

KLEIN

God damn it.

He snatches the pamphlets from them.

They gasp.

INT. KLEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Klein enters the office. He slams the door.

He takes the armful of pamphlets. Throws them in the wastepaper basket.

He takes out a match. Lights the contents of the bin on fire.

EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

A group of doctors stare at Semmelweis as he climbs up the stairs to the entrance. They start to whisper.

Hebra runs up behind him.

HEBRA

Dr. Semmelweis! Dr. Semmelweis!

SEMMELOWEIS

Hebra!

HEBRA

We did it!

He embraces Semmelweis.

SEMMELOWEIS

Hebra, what have you done?

HEBRA

Everyone in Vienna is reading it! I published it, and then several other medical periodicals have-

SEMMELOWEIS

I never asked you to do this.

HEBRA

Everyone is talking about it. You're going to be a sensation.

SEMMELOWEIS

How could you?

HEBRA

I was only doing what you wanted. I thought.

Semmelweis holds up the pamphlet.

SEMMELOWEIS

This is not what I wanted. This is never what I wanted.

HEBRA

But-

SEMMELOWEIS

People are going to misunderstand. This is what everyone is going to think of me.

HEBRA

But they'll finally listen to you-

SEMMELOWEIS

To the wrong things, Hebra! You damned idiot.

HEBRA

I copied all of your notes, Doctor-

SEMMELOWEIS

(Groans)

Not all of it was written down, you imbecile! Why would you do this to me?

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Semmelweis' head is on the table surrounded by four mugs of ale.

Skoda grabs him by the hair and lifts his face off the table.

Semmelweis groans.

SKODA

Didn't expect you in this state this early.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Slurring)

What time is it?

SKODA

It's about 5:30 in the afternoon.

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh...

SKODA

Come on...

Semmelweis doesn't move.

SKODA (CONT'D)

Ignaz, come on.

Nothing.

Skoda shakes him.

Nothing.

Skoda grabs a pitcher of water. Dumps it on Semmelweis' head.

Semmelweis groans and wipes the water from his eyes.

SKODA (CONT'D)

Come on.

Skoda picks him up by the shoulders.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Skoda carries Semmelweis through the street.

Semmelweis can barely walk. He staggers around.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Mumbling)

They think I'm bonkers, Skoda.

SKODA

Almost there. Stay awake, my friend.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Slurring)

God, you're so bossy. You're like my wife...

SKODA

You're married?

SEMMELOWEIS

It's complicated...

SKODA

I'd says so. She's invisible!

SEMMELOWEIS

She's in Budapest.

SKODA

What? Did you forget to bring her?

SEMMELOWEIS

It's not funny, Skoda.

SKODA

Yes it is. Ask anyone.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Slurring)

I can't. They think I'm crazy. And unoriginal? How am I soooooo lucky to be both, Skoda?

SKODA

You're a very lucky man. Come on now, Semmelweis. Use those feet. There we go...

SEMMELWEIS

(Slurring)

Maybe I should just jump in the river. And just... end it all...

Skoda pushes Semmelweis up against a wall. Skoda grabs his face. Semmelweis cannot meet his eye.

SKODA

Oh stop it. You want to fix this?

SEMMELWEIS

Yes...

SKODA

So fix it. Publish the correct version. Set the record straight.

SEMMELWEIS

No. It's not worth it. No one believes me.

SKODA

I do. I'll help you.

SEMMELWEIS

I don't know...

SKODA

What do you have to lose, Ignaz?

SEMMELWEIS

Aside from everything?

SKODA

That's the spirit. Now let's get you home, so you can at least clean the vomit off your shoes.

INT. HOSPITAL RECORDS OFFICE - NIGHT

The next night.

Skoda goes to the records office.

SKODA

Why did Klein have the office locked?

SEMMELWEIS

For this exact reason?

Skoda playfully shoves Semmelweis.

SKODA

Good thing I nicked that key.

SEMMELOWEIS

You would have made a great criminal in another life, my friend.

They look through some files.

SKODA

Why thank you. Either that or a butcher. You know, I'm glad you decided to at least decided to come up with a more cohesive draft for Klein.

SEMMELOWEIS

I just want him to understand.

SKODA

Good for you.

SEMMELOWEIS

I still don't it getting around.

SKODA

I completely respect that. At least you deserve Klein to hear your version. Maybe he will leave you alone. Finally.

Semmelweis picks up one file.

SEMMELOWEIS

Here it is. Let's go.

They turn out the lights.

INT. PRINTER'S SHOP - DAY

Skoda walks in.

The printer stands smoking.

Skoda carries a manuscript. He tosses it on the printers desk.

The title reads: "Germ Theory by Ignaz Semmelweis."

The printer grabs it. Reads the title page. Raises his eyebrows.

Skoda places some coins on top of the manuscript.

The printer nods.

Skoda nods.

He turns and exits.

INT. SEMMELWEIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Thirty corpses of former patients lie still on top of Semmelweis' bed in a pile. Their eyes are fixed and open, but tears drip down their cheeks.

After a few seconds, a hand makes its way up through the pile and into the air. Then another hand.

Semmelweis climbs out from beneath the pile of bodies. He gasps for air.

Semmelweis' EYES BOLT OPEN.

He feels around his bed. There is nothing there but sheets.

INT. KLEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Semmelweis waits in the doorway. He picks the dirt under his nails.

He wipes his hands on the sides of his jacket.

KLEIN (O.C.)
Semmelweis. Get in here.

Semmelweis enters. Klein

Klein smiles. He holds a pamphlet in his hand.

KLEIN (CONT'D)
Are you a fan of literature, Dr. Semmelweis?

SEMMELWEIS
Uh. Well...

KLEIN
Because I just read a piece of rather interesting fiction.

SEMMELWEIS
Sir, I did not intend for that to be published-

KLEIN

In medical journals throughout Europe?!?

SEMMELOWEIS

No. Ahem. No, sir.

KLEIN

Do you understand that your fanciful theories of these "germs," as you put it, have jeopardized the reputation of this ward and the entire hospital?

SEMMELOWEIS

Sir, I realize that this makes you look bad, but if you read the third page-- this is cobbled together from my original findings, but it shows that there is a possibility of even more that we can do--

KLEIN

We? We will do nothing. Because you? You will no longer be working here.

SEMMELOWEIS

What?

KLEIN

Your residency is at an end. And as the attending physician of this ward, I refuse to renew it.

SEMMELOWEIS

Sir, I am one of the best obstetricians in this hospital. No. The best.

KLEIN

Yes. And good luck finding a place at any other hospital here in Vienna. Now, get out before I have you thrown out.

Semmelweis leaves, shoulders drooped.

Klein tears up the paper in his hand and tosses the pieces into his wastebasket.

INT. SEMMELWEIS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Semmelweis stands in the middle of his office. He puts papers and a miniature portrait of a woman into a box.

He hangs his head.

He looks at his windows. Pasted on to them are papers of his publication that read "Germ Theory by Ignaz Semmelweis." Some of them have "NURSE" and "HUNGARIAN DOG" handwritten on them.

His face reddens. He tears them all down.

INT. SEMMELWEIS' ROOM - NIGHT

Skoda enters Semmelweis' apartment. There are neat piles of papers everywhere.

SKODA

Dear God.

Semmelweis sits at his desk. He rearranges his papers. Head down.

SEMMELWEIS

I'm busy.

SKODA

You're not that busy.

Semmelweis looks up from his work.

SEMMELWEIS

I could kill you.

SKODA

So kill me.

Semmelweis looks up from his papers and shoots him a look.

SEMMELWEIS

That's not the point.

SKODA

So what's the point?

SEMMELWEIS

I knew. I knew this would happen. I told you-

SKODA

That's because-

SEMMELOWEIS

This is your fault. I got sacked because of you. And your... encouragement.

SKODA

Because I know you're right. I wanted everyone to know you were right. And just so you know, if anyone found out I was involved in this, I would have been sacked too.

SEMMELOWEIS

Fine. Great. Fantastic. Thank you.

SKODA

What I really came here to say is: good luck on your appeal. If you stay calm, you'll be fine. The Dean of Medicine is a fairly understanding man.

Semmelweis grunts. Goes back to his paperwork.

Skoda shakes his head and exits.

SKODA (CONT'D)

Fine.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Semmelweis stares at the door of the Dean's office. He wipes the sweat from his brow with a perfectly folded handkerchief. Checks under his fingernails. Straightens his tie.

He hears laughter of two men coming from behind the door.

He cocks his head in confusion. Frowns. Clears his throat and opens the door.

INT. HOSPITAL DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Semmelweis opens the door. He finds the DEAN, a bespectacled octogenarian, sitting with Dr. Klein, laughing and smoking cigars. They stop once they see Semmelweis.

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh. Ahem. Pardon me. I thought I had an appointment with you.

Semmelweis eyes Klein. Klein smugly smiles and stubs out his cigar, without breaking eye contact with Semmelweis.

DEAN

No. You do, my boy. I was going over your file and appeal, when Dr. Klein decided to pop in.

SEMMELOWEIS

How thoughtful of him...

Dr. Klein smirks.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Sir, if I may, can I just say that my measures in my department.

DR. KLEIN

"My department?" See, Fritz-

SEMMELOWEIS

If you let me finish, Dr. Klein. I-

DR. KLEIN

(Mocking)

I-I-I-me-me-

SEMMELOWEIS

I-I-I WASN'T FINISHED!

The Dean raises his eyebrows.

DR. KLEIN

This is the sort of autocratic behavior I was mentioning...

DEAN

I see.

SEMMELOWEIS

No-

DEAN

Be calm, Dr. Semmelweis.

SEMMELOWEIS

I've saved more lives in the past year than he has-

DEAN

Please! No one will deny that you are a good doctor.

Dr. Klein scoffs.

DEAN (CONT'D)

However, I've decided to deny your appeal.

SEMMELOWEIS

Wha-what? So because he hates me-

DR. KLEIN

Me-me-me...

DEAN

This is not a popularity contest. I have to make decisions based on what will benefit the hospital and this... friction between you and Dr. Klein will only harm all the progress the two of you have made.

Dr. Klein stands up. Turns to Semmelweis. Pats him on shoulder.

DR. KLEIN

I hope you don't have too much trouble packing. (To the Dean)
Thanks for cigar, Fritz.

Klein exits.

Semmelweis stands. Mouth agape. Silent.

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

A train whistles.

Semmelweis stares out the window at the passing landscape.

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Nurse!

KLEIN (V.O.)

Obsession.

ATTENDING PHYSICIAN (V.O.)

Neurotic Hungarian.

He clutches his head in his hands. Rocks back and forth a bit. Plugs his ears with his fingers for a few moments.

SEMMELOWEIS

Stop! Stop it! Stop it!

The sounds of those negative voices fade.

Semmelweis unplugs his ear and straightens up. Looks around.
Everyone else in the train car stares at Semmelweis.

INT. SEMMELWEIS' CELL - DAY

TITLE CARD: 1865.

Semmelweis lies on a cot. His skin is yellow. His breathing is labored. Beads of sweat roll down his face. He shakes uncontrollably. He is visibly near death.

SEMMELWEIS
Someone! Someone help me.

Nothing.

INT. SEMMELWEIS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

TITLE CARD: 1861.

Semmelweis opens the door. He looks around. Frowns.

IN THE SITTING ROOM

Semmelweis' house in Budapest is run down. The room is mostly bare- no tables, two ratty-looking chairs. The curtains are in tatters. The carpets are dusty, and the tassels look like they have been chewed off by mice.

Semmelweis hears creaking on the stairs. It's MARIE, his homely wife. Her dress is worn.

MARIE
Ignaz? What are you doing here?

SEMMELWEIS
They let me go.

Marie looks around.

MARIE
You could have written. I would have tried... to make this more... presentable.

SEMMELWEIS
What happened? Where are Jozsef and Zoltan?

MARIE
We ran into a little... difficulty.

SEMMELOWEIS

A little difficulty? Where in God's name did the damn furniture go?

MARIE

Your brothers- they were arrested. Accused of sedition or something.

SEMMELOWEIS

Sedition?

MARIE

They were carted off so quickly I couldn't understand. With them gone, I couldn't afford- and I started selling the furniture, and it still wasn't enough... (Breaks down) Ignaz, I'm so sorry.

SEMMELOWEIS

You should have told me. I would have sent you more money.

She stiffens.

MARIE

Ignaz, you haven't written anything in over two years, let alone send me any money.

SEMMELOWEIS

I did. I could swear I did.

MARIE

I haven't had a single word from you. And my letters started getting returned. Did you move?

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh.

Marie cries so hard she shakes. Semmelweis does not move to comfort her.

MARIE

(Sniffling)

That is all you can say to me?

SEMMELOWEIS

There's a lot we have to be sorry for, Marie.

MARIE

Now that you're here. Can we- can we just... try and have a fresh start?

Silence.

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes. If you want...

They awkwardly embrace.

MARIE

I am glad you're here. It's been so long since we...

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes. Yes it has.

EXT. ST. ROCHUS HOSPITAL OF BUDAPEST - DAY

Semmelweis turns the street corner. He looks up.

St. Rochus Hospital stands before him in fading granite. This hospital looks far more run down than the Vienna hospital. A statue of St. Rochus stands on a weathered pillar ominously between him and the front door.

He stares for a moment. Looks down. Wipes his hands with a handkerchief. Examines his nails. Takes a deep breath.

He walks through the front doors.

INT. ST. ROCHUS HOSPITAL OF BUDAPEST - CONTINUOUS

Semmelweis looks around.

He sees a swarthy tall man in his late 40's bounding toward him. This is the hospital's Chief of Surgery, DR. CSONKA.

DR. CSONKA

You look lost. You must be Semmelweis then.

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes... You are?

Dr. Csonka extends his hand. Shakes Semmelweis' hand vigorously.

DR. CSONKA
Emile Csonka. Chief of Surgery.
This way.

SEMMELOWEIS
Oh. Uh... okay...

Dr. Csonka leads Semmelweis down a hallway.

DR. CSONKA
We know all about you, Dr.
Semmelweis.

SEMMELOWEIS
Oh?

DR. CSONKA
Read your work. Interesting...

SEMMELOWEIS
Thank you, Dr. Csonka.

They walk into the...

SURGICAL UNIT

Doctors are performing amputations.

Semmelweis looks confused.

DR. CSONKA
So... everyone starts their
mornings in surgery, which is here.
Mainly it's the run of the mill-
amputations, abscesses, and the
like. Occasionally we do get some
interesting cases.

SEMMELOWEIS
Excuse me, Dr. Csonka? I was
actually here to meet the head of
Obstetrics?

DR. CSONKA
That's me.

SEMMELOWEIS
I'm sorry?

DR. CSONKA
Obstetrics is under my purview. I'm
afraid we're a smaller ship than
you're used to in Vienna.

(MORE)

DR. CSONKA (CONT'D)
 Believe you me, it's a lot, but we
 have to do our best with what we
 are given.

SEMMELOWEIS
 Oh. That's... surprising...

Dr. Csonka pushes through a set of double doors to...

MATERNITY WARD

Pregnant women lie in beds. They are attended by nurses and
 doctors.

DR. CSONKA
 Eventually, surgeons end up here at
 the end of their daily rotation.

SEMMELOWEIS
 So you're telling me that your
 doctors go from draining abscesses
 to delivering babies in the same
 day?

DR. CSONKA
 Yes. And here our maternity ward-

SEMMELOWEIS
 What is the rate of puerperal fever
 in this hospital? Do you have any
 of the proper protocols in place?

DR. CSONKA
 And what are the proper protocols?
 Yours?

SEMMELOWEIS
 Forgive me, Dr. Csonka. I only
 meant-

DR. CSONKA
 You know, Dr. Semmelweis. I only
 agreed to show you around because
 your wife is a friend of my wife.
 There isn't even a position
 available- come to think of it.

SEMMELOWEIS
 (Blurts out)
 You don't have to pay me!

DR. CSONKA
 I'm sorry?

SEMMELOWEIS

If you make me a Obstetrics
Director of the maternity clinic, I
won't take a salary. Just allow me
a little freedom to do what's best
for the clinic.

Dr. Csonka pauses.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

You have more free time, and you
won't be spending any money on new
staff. I guarantee I can drop the
mortality rate in Obstetrics. What
do you have to lose?

Dr. Csonka nods.

DR. CSONKA

Just get me some results.

Semmelweis smiles and shakes Dr. Csonka's hand. He then
covertly wipes that same hand off with his handkerchief.

INT. CLINIC MAIN ROOM - DAY

The entire staff of the clinic crowds into the main room.
They wait. There is a low hum of whispering.

Semmelweis stands along the back wall of the main room of the
clinic, which is lined with long windows.

Semmelweis looks out the Ward window, which opens up onto a
cemetery. Outside it rains.

He scans the names of the first row of names on the grave
headstones: "MARTA- ANNA- CLARA- LIESEL..." All women.

He stares for another moment. He clears his throat. Turns
around.

SEMMELOWEIS

Hello. I am the new Obstetrics
Director, Dr. Semmelweis. I'm here
to start a new chapter here at the
hospital. There will be no more
deaths in this clinic.

A hum of incredulity passes through the crowd.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Of puerperal fever. I mean. Ahem. I can guarantee that if you follow the guidelines I plan on implementing here, you won't see another woman perish at the hand of childbed fever. And that starts today.

He walks through crowd, posts a list labeled "Guidelines" on the door before he walks out.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS FAMILY HOME - DAY

Semmelweis sits at a dining room table with a full breakfast laid out before him. He reads the Austrian Medical Journal.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Without looking up)

Pass me the marmalade, dear.

He extends his hand, gets the jar. He smiles. He finally looks out from behind his paper.

The corpse of a dead pregnant woman sits across from him. He lets out a little shriek.

He rubs his eyes and looks again. The woman is gone.

Marie's hand pats his shoulder. He jumps.

MARIE

Everything alright, dear?

SEMMELOWEIS

Fine. Fine. Fine. (Beat) I have to wash.

MARIE

But-

Semmelweis gets in her face.

SEMMELOWEIS

Damn it, Marie. I HAVE TO WASH.

He gets up from the table and runs out.

MARIE

But what about your tea?

Sounds of footsteps going up stairs.

Marie frowns.

INT. CLINIC MAIN ROOM - DAY

Semmelweis washes the blood off of his hands and forearms as MRS. STAHL, a new mother, is wheeled past him.

SEMMELOWEIS
 Congratulations, Mrs. Stahl. You
 have a perfectly healthy set of
 twins.

MRS. STAHL
 (Exhausted)
 Thank you, doctor. Bless you.

SEMMELOWEIS
 They're being brought to the
 nursery right now.

He smiles. She smiles back at him as she's wheeled through a set of double doors.

Semmelweis returns to scrubbing at the basin with a smile on his face.

Dr. Csonka approaches him. Semmelweis sees him out of the corner of his eye. Semmelweis sighs deeply. As Dr. Csonka gets closer, Csonka starts to applaud.

DR. CSONKA
 Bravo!

SEMMELOWEIS
 (Confused)
 Sorry, sir?

DR. CSONKA
 I just received a report, and there
 hasn't been a single death in
 Obstetrics from puerperal fever.
 (Louder) Ladies and gentleman,
 let's hear it for our Director!

A smattering of applause. The rest of the staff just stares.

SEMMELOWEIS
 (Embarrassed)
 Thank you, Dr. Csonka. Really.

DR. CSONKA
 I am recommending you for a salary
 to the Chief Administrator.

SEMMELOWEIS

Wow. Thank you, sir.

Dr. Csonka pats him on the shoulder.

DR. CSONKA

Keep it up, Semmelweis.

Dr. Csonka walks off.

Semmelweis breaks out into a huge smile.

INT. CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A few months later.

Semmelweis sits across the desk of the Hospital CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR. The Chief is a lanky man with a well-groomed salt and pepper mustache.

Semmelweis looks like he hasn't slept in a month- large, dark bags under his eyes. His clothes, with the exception of his white coat, are unkempt.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Semmelweis, this is not Vienna.
We just don't have the resources.

SEMMELOWEIS

I understand that, sir.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

And your instruments work perfectly fine.

SEMMELOWEIS

We just need more of them. Ones that are not rusted. Enough so that doctors don't have to share them when examining patients at the same time.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

While I do appreciate all the good work you've done at the hospital-

SEMMELOWEIS

Sir, there were 514 births during the my tenure as director. Out of those, there were only 2 deaths related to puerperal fever.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

I am perfectly aware of-

SEMMELOWEIS

So whatever you think I am doing
that is excessive, or expensive-

The Chief Administrator throws an periodical on the desk. The
Chief Administrator points to a paragraph.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

It's from a medical journal based
in your old stomping grounds.
(Reads) The experience and the
statistical evidence of most of the
obstetrics institutions protest the
opinion of Semmelweis: it would be
well that the readers should not
allow themselves to be misled by
this theory.

SEMMELOWEIS

Please... This is punitive nonsense
from my former employer.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Well, Doctor... it's fairly
widespread nonsense.

SEMMELOWEIS

The people who read that trash are
lemmings and sheep. Lemmings and
sheep.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

You know who also reads these?
Trustees.

SEMMELOWEIS

I- I- I don't understand the
relevance. This is a hospital.
Trustees are... are...

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

The ones who come up with the money
for the new instruments and massive
amounts of cleaning solutions and
God knows what else you will want
later on. And they do not
appreciate being associated with
the negative reaction brought about
when you brandishing about your
theories.

Silence.

SEMMELOWEIS

So you're informing me what? What? You're going to let me go? You're going to let me go too? Because of- because of- because of this?!? These lies. This conspiracy against my truth.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Calm down.

SEMMELOWEIS

I will not calm down.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Semmelweis. Calm down.

Semmelweis shakes.

SEMMELOWEIS

I will not calm down for the likes of you or any of the rest of them. You are going to toss me out, and nothing about that fact will ever make me calm.

Chief Administrator grabs Semmelweis' shaking hand.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

You are not going to be fired. Not will Dr. Csonka still breathes on this earth.

SEMMELOWEIS

What? What?

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

You may stay. In order for you to do so, you must keep a low profile. Do you think you will be able to do that?

SEMMELOWEIS

Yes, sir.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Aside from that, continue doing what you're doing.

SEMMELOWEIS

Thank you, sir. I will.

Semmelweis smiles.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

16 bodies lie in the morgue.

Semmelweis paces up and down clutching his ledger in his hands. He goes down the row of bodies.

SEMMELOWEIS

Puerperal fever. Puerperal fever.
 Puerperal fever. Puerperal fever.

He throws his ledger against the wall. Papers fly everywhere.

He slumps down against the wall. Puts his head in his hands. Closes his eyes.

One of the bodies closest to him sits straight up. She turns her head towards him .

BODY #1

The experience and the statistical
 evidence-

Another body sits up and turns her head to him.

BODY #2

Of most of the obstetrics
 institutions-

Semmelweis looks up in horror.

A third body sits up and turns her head to him.

BODY #3

Protest the opinion of Semmelweis.

Another follows.

He presses himself up against the wall hard. Beads of sweat form on his brow.

BODY #4

It would be well that the readers-

SEMMELOWEIS

No!

Another rises and turns.

BODY #5

Should not allow themselves to be misled by this theory.

Semmelweis gets up and runs down the row of bodies. Each of the corpses sits up and echoes the criticisms against Semmelweis until all sixteen are speaking.

Semmelweis runs out and slams the door.

INT. MORGUE - MOMENTS LATER

A medical student opens the door to the morgue.

All 16 bodies lie perfectly still.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Semmelweis roves the hospital going down his checklist.

SEMMELOWEIS

Hand washing. Check. Instrument cleaning. Check. What in God's name is it?

INT. LYING-IN CLINIC - NIGHT

He sits with a patient. She looks perfectly healthy. She sleeps.

Semmelweis checks her vitals. Pulse. Temperature. He leans in to retake her pulse.

He sniffs. Wrinkles his nose. He picks up the corner of her blanket. Sniffs again. Makes a gags a little.

He inspects them closely. They are stained with various reddish yellowish stains.

SEMMELOWEIS

No...

He moves over to another unoccupied, bed- pulls the covers down.

There is dried blood on the sheets that flakes off when Semmelweis runs his hand over it.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Damn it.

Semmelweis gathers up the sheets and carries them off.

INT. CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE - DAY

He throws the ball of sheets on the Chief's desk.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Can I help you?

SEMMELOWEIS

I know what's killing the mothers.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Shouldn't you be taking this up with Dr. Csonka?

SEMMELOWEIS

Not when it's your fault.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

I beg your pardon?

SEMMELOWEIS

Smell them.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

I'm not going to-

SEMMELOWEIS

Do it.

The Chief leans in a bit and inhales sharply. He groans and covers his nose.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Ugh!

Semmelweis holds the sheets closer to the Chief's face, right up to his line of vision.

SEMMELOWEIS

That? That's blood. See that? That's dried pus? That? That's lochia... See all of this? That's your fault.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
I'm not following. And get that
thing out of my face.

SEMMELOWEIS
The head nurse was accepting linens
so dirty that they reeked of
decomposing discharge of former
patients.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
I'm sorry?

SEMMELOWEIS
Your head nurse was accepting
linens from the cleaning staff that
were barely laundered, or perhaps
not even laundered at all.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
That is a fairly serious
accusation, Dr. Semmelweis.

Semmelweis holds up the linens.

SEMMELOWEIS
Is this not proof enough?!? Fine.
Sir, would you be so kind as to
come with me? Perhaps this will
make a difference.

INT. MAIN CLINIC AREA - DAY

Semmelweis storms in followed by the Chief.

Semmelweis scans the room.

His eyes lock on the Head Nurse who stands in the corner. She
chats with an orderly.

Semmelweis walks over and grabs her arm.

HEAD NURSE
Hey!

Semmelweis drags her over to the Chief. Gives her a little
shove.

SEMMELOWEIS
Explain!

HEAD NURSE
What?

SEMMELOWEIS

(Shouting)

Tell him. Tell him what you did.

The entire rest of the room goes silent. Everyone stares.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Semmelweis, there's no need for such a public display.

HEAD NURSE

Sir, I have no idea what he's talking about.

SEMMELOWEIS

(Growling)

Let me refresh your memory.

Semmelweis shoves the filthy sheets in her face.

Muffled screams. The Chief pulls Semmelweis off of her.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Semmelweis, control yourself!

She groans. Throws up.

SEMMELOWEIS

Imagine delivering a child on that! Tell him. Tell him you allowed these "clean" sheets to be on the beds in the ward the other day.

She starts to cry.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Semmelweis-

SEMMELOWEIS

Tell him. Tell him how you are responsible for the murder of 16 innocent women. TELL HIM.

HEAD NURSE

I'm so sorry, sir. I was trying to come under budget, like you-

SEMMELOWEIS

What?!?

Chief looks around the room. Notices everyone is staring.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

(Cautious)

Dr. Semmelweis, it may be a good idea for you to get out of the hospital for a bit.

SEMMELOWEIS

I'm sorry?

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Since Dr. Kuzni left, we are in need of a new leader of our lecture series.

SEMMELOWEIS

But-but-but what about the patients? If I'm not here, they'll die.

The Chief frowns. He pauses to think for a moment.

Semmelweis sweats.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

(Careful)

Doctor, are you telling me that the protocols you put in place are only effective if you monitor them?

SEMMELOWEIS

Well... no.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Fantastic. I will have my secretary give you a list of dates. We can meet next week to discuss content. Thank you.

Semmelweis stands stunned.

SEMMELOWEIS

Uh. I-uh-I-well-uh...

The Chief pats him on the back.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Wonderful. I will see you next week. Thank you, Doctor. Why don't you take the rest of the day off? Yes, thank you...

Semmelweis looks around. He walks out.

INT. SEMMELWEIS FAMILY HOME - MORNING

Semmelweis sits at a table in his robe. He looks as if he hasn't slept.

Marie comes down the stairs. She stops at the sight of him.

MARIE

Ignaz?

SEMMELWEIS

Yes?

MARIE

You know... we never talked about having a family.

SEMMELWEIS

I know.

MARIE

Now, that you're back. For good. What if we-

SEMMELWEIS

Absolutely not.

MARIE

Why?

SEMMELWEIS

No.

MARIE

I think a baby would-

SEMMELWEIS

(Stern)

No. Marie.

MARIE

Please, can I just say-

SEMMELWEIS

(Shouts)

NO. NO. NO. NO. NO.

MARIE

Why are you yelling?

SEMMELWEIS

You're not having a baby. We're not having a baby. End of story.

MARIE

So I have no say in this?

SEMMELOWEIS

It's filthy. You'll be filthy and then if I couldn't make sure-

MARIE

I know you would never let anything happen to me.

SEMMELOWEIS

No.

MARIE

Ignaz, please.

SEMMELOWEIS

No! Get out. I'm not going to tolerate this inane babble.

MARIE

What?

SEMMELOWEIS

Out. Get out.

MARIE

Why are you doing this, Ignaz?

SEMMELOWEIS

Out.

Marie leaves the room in tears.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS BEDROOM - NIGHT

1864.

Marie already lies in bed asleep.

Semmelweis takes his clothes off. He gets into bed.

He closes his eyes.

He sees a dead patient hovering over him. Her infected entrails pour onto Semmelweis' face.

He jolts up from the bed.

He gets up. He starts muttering to himself.

Marie opens her eyes. Watches him for a few moments. She shakes her head and rolls over.

He starts putting on his clothes. Still mumbling.

He goes over to the basin on the dresser. He takes out soap and a nailbrush. He scrubs his hands until the skin under his fingernails starts to bleed.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

A crowd of men in suits and white coats sit in rows facing a podium. They are all talking to each other.

Dr. Csonka and Semmelweis enter and walk up the aisle to the podium.

Semmelweis sweats. He adjusts his tie.

Dr. Csonka walks up to the podium.

Semmelweis checks under his nails for dirt.

DR. CSONKA

Thank you all for coming to this conference. It is truly exciting to see Europe's finest medical minds assembled here at St. Rochus. Our next lecturer is the Director of our Obstetrics department. He will be speaking on his recent publications and will be taking questions. Dr. Semmelweis?

A smattering of applause.

Dr. Csonka steps down.

Semmelweis adjusts his tie. Walks up to the podium.

He shuffles his notes. Wipes sweat from his brow.

He looks up and sees a room full of stern men looking back at him.

SEMMELOWEIS

Ahem. Thank you, Dr. Csonka. Some of you may have read about my work. Or read the various interpretations of my work.

(MORE)

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

I started off years ago in Vienna with a question: why was it that patients who experienced street births or births at the hands of midwives less likely to die of puerperal fever than in the lying in clinic? What protected those who delivered outside the clinic from these destructive unknown endemic influences?

He straightens his notes. Coughs.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

It was my friend and colleague, Dr. Jakob Kolletschka, that lead me to exclude factors such as overcrowding, climate, and environment. Jakob died. (Pause) And his death led me to a breakthrough in my post-mortem examination of him.

He looks up. He sees most of the men looking at him incredulously.

In the corner of his eye, he thinks he sees the corpse of a patient sitting in one of the seats. He jerks his head in that direction. Blinks. Nothing.

He coughs again and looks back down at his notes.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

His autopsy revealed a pathology similar to my patients who were dying of puerperal fever. It was then that I discovered there must be a connection between cadaveric contamination and puerperal fever.

There is murmuring through the audience.

Semmelweis looks up. The corpse has returned to the seat.

Semmelweis looks down. Rubs his eyes. Looks back up. The corpse is still there, staring back at him.

Semmelweis swallows hard. He shuffles his notes.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Ahem. I-I-I-I came to the conclusion that my hospital colleagues and myself carries cadaverous particles on our hands.

More murmuring.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Now, I know that this is an
unpopular theory. But-

He looks up there are three more corpses in the front row.

He rubs his eyes harder. He wipes his brow.

He looks up again. They stand.

Semmelweis gasps a little. Goes back to his notes.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

Now it's controversial, but I have
data. Hard data. Hard data. The
midwifery ward, which doesn't have
autopsy rotations, has always had a
dramatically lower mortality rate.

He looks up. There are more corpses in the audience.

They all get up and walk toward him.

SEMMELOWEIS (CONT'D)

I-I-I-I had introduced hand washing
policies that reduced-

They head up the stairs to the podium.

He screams.

They grab at his arms.

Semmelweis continues to scream as he tries to get their hands
off of him.

The audience rumbles in confusion.

Dr. Csonka runs up the steps.

DR. CSONKA

Dr. Semmelweis! Dr. Semmelweis!

He grabs Semmelweis' arm. Semmelweis lets out a bloodcurdling
scream and runs out of the lecture hall.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

There is a knock on the door.

Marie goes down the stairs and opens the door to find Skoda and Dr. Csonka standing there.

MARIE
May I help you?

SKODA
Is Ignaz here?

MARIE
He's resting. Who are you?

DR. CSONKA
Forgive me. I'm Dr. Csonka. You're friends with my wife, Mathilde.

MARIE
Ah yes. Nice to finally meet you.

SKODA
I'm Dr. Skoda. A friend of your husband's.

Marie frowns.

MARIE
My husband doesn't have many friends.

SKODA
Believe me. I worked with him in Vienna. I helped him publish-

MARIE
He's never mentioned you.

SKODA
No. He wouldn't. Would he?

She nods.

MARIE
Would you come in?

DR. CSONKA
Thank you, Mrs. Semmelweis.

They follow her in. They look distressed at the condition of the house as they walk through it.

She shows them into the living room. There are only two chairs in the entire room.

Skoda and Dr. Csonka look at her.

MARIE

Please, sit.

Skoda awkwardly sits. Dr. Csonka remains standing.

DR. CSONKA

I am fine with standing, Mrs. Semmelweis. Please, do sit.

She sits.

MARIE

Thank you. If I knew I had people coming I would have... my husband and I aren't used to having guests. I'm sorry.

DR. CSONKA

Mrs. Semmelweis we're here because we're concerned about your husband. (Beat) Has he been acting a little... strange lately?

SKODA

More than usual?

Marie glares at Skoda.

DR. CSONKA

Mrs. Semmelweis?

MARIE

Well, his behavior has been... different since he returned from Vienna, but...

SKODA

We're concerned.

DR. CSONKA

Did he tell you about the other day?

MARIE

No. He's been asleep for two days.

Skoda and Dr. Csonka exchange glances.

DR. CSONKA

He was giving a lecture at our annual conference, and half-way through he... he-

SKODA
He apparently started
hallucinating.

Marie shifts in her seat.

MARIE
I see. (Pause) That makes sense.

SKODA
Mrs. Semmelweis, you know- you must
know that his dismissal was,
well...

MARIE
I assumed it was political. The
Austrians don't exactly make us
feel welcome.

DR. CSONKA
True as that may be, Mrs.
Semmelweis...

MARIE
It is all stress. With good reason.
When they booted him out, I always
assumed he was having a difficult
time adjusting.

SKODA
Well, it's not the case. Or,
rather, that's not entirely the
case.

Marie shoots him another look.

DR. CSONKA
He's unwell, Mrs. Semmelweis. And
we're afraid, if this continues...
he'll become a danger to himself
and others.

Tears form in Marie's eyes.

MARIE
He's a good man.

Skoda nods.

DR. CSONKA
Nevertheless, we want to talk to
you about your options.

MARIE
My options?

SKODA
About his care.

DR. CSONKA
We want to talk to you about...
well, putting him in an
institution.

MARIE
What?

DR. CSONKA
Temporarily. It sounds worse than
it is.

SKODA
I feel like he will only decline
further without the proper care. Do
you think you could manage him on
your own?

MARIE
He's my husband.

DR. CSONKA
This would only be a temporary
stay. It's really more of a health
spa, a sanitarium if you will.

SKODA
Don't you want to do what's best
for him?

MARIE
He's my *husband*.

Skoda gets up from the chair.

DR. CSONKA
Of course. All we ask of you is to
think about it.

Marie gets up. She leads them to the door.

SKODA
May I just say: your husband would
go to any lengths to save the lives
of his patients. (Pause) I just
wanted to do the same for him. I
owe him that. At least.

Marie opens the door.

MARIE

Thank you for stopping by. I will let my husband know that you came to see him.

SKODA

Don't.

She raises her eyebrows.

DR. CSONKA

It may upset him more.

She nods.

MARIE

Of course. Thank you.

They walk out. She closes the door.

INT. SEMMELWEIS FAMILY BEDROOM - NIGHT

She opens the bedroom door.

She finds her husband staring out the window. Blank expression. He rocks softly. He mumbles to himself- barely audible.

SEMMELWEIS

They live on your hands. They're so small. They live on your hands. Everything you touch. They live on your hands.

Rests her head on the door frame. She wipes the tears from her cheeks.

EXT. BUDAPEST ASYLUM FOR THE INSANE - DAY

Semmelweis is dragged in restraints past MARIE, his wife, by two muscular orderlies.

Marie cries.

MARIE

(To the orderlies)
Don't hurt him!

SEMMELWEIS

Marie!

MARIE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

SEMMELOWEIS

Oh, Marie! How could you?

MARIE

I had to!

SEMMELOWEIS

They got to you. Didn't they?
Didn't they?!?

MARIE

No one got to me. Do you remember
what happened at the Lecture Hall?

SEMMELOWEIS

How dare you betray me like this.
How dare you! All my work- my work-

Marie grabs his hands. They are red and raw.

MARIE

Look! You've scrubbed yourself raw.
You need help, my dear. (Tears up)
And I... can't... keep...

SEMMELOWEIS

I will not be silenced! Not by you.
Not by anyone.

He tries to fight the restraints. The orderlies drag him away, so his feet drag along the floor. One of his shoes comes off and is left behind.

INT. SEMMELOWEIS' CELL - NIGHT

Semmelweis lies dead on his cot in the mental institution.
His physical state is exactly like the mothers that died of puerperal fever.

A hand closes his eyes.

A sheet covers him.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - DAWN

A window opens. Blood tinged water pours out of a wooden bucket and onto the pinkish-gray cobblestones below.

The cries of a woman in agonizing labor pains reverberate off of the clean white walls.

SUPER: "IGNAZ SEMMELWEIS SAVED THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF WOMEN BEFORE HIS DEATH AT 47."

A pristine, white NURSE'S HAND thrusts a dry metal pail underneath a water pump. Clear water sparkles pink-orange in the dawn light as it flows into the pail.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM- MORNING

A baby WAILS.

Drab gray shutters fling open. Cheery church bells peal in time with the baby's cries. Sunlight spills onto the black and white tiled floor.

SUPER: "HIS FINDINGS EARNED WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, WHEN LOUIS PASTEUR CONFIRMED THE GERM THEORY AND JOSEPH LISTER OPERATED USING THE HYGENIC METHODS OF SEMMELWEIS WITH GREAT SUCCESS."

A middle aged orderly, down on her knees, dips a scrub brush into a metal pail filled with soapy water.

She scrubs the floor until it gleams gold in the sunlight.

I/E. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

A young, rosy cheeked MOTHER carries her infant down the darkened hallways of the hospital.

SUPER: "THANKS TO IGNAZ SEMMELWEIS' SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, GENERATIONS OF MOTHERS HAVE LIVED TO SEE THEIR CHILDREN GROW UP."

AT THE DOORWAY, she stops and kisses her child.

The mother and child walk through into the SUNLIGHT.

FADE TO WHITE:

END OF FILM