

It's About Forgiveness

By Albi Gorn

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MYRNA, a suburban housewife in her sixties (or older)

HERMAN, her husband.

MYRNA: You have some nerve showing up here after what you did to me.

HERMAN: Where was I gonna go?

MYRNA: That's another thing which I fail to understand —

HERMAN: I had to see you, Myrna. Where was I gonna go?

MYRNA: — how you even got here.

HERMAN: What, Myrna, you're gonna hold onto this forever?

MYRNA: Forever's a long time, Herman, as you'll soon find out.

HERMAN: And what, it's so hard to move on?

MYRNA: Oh, Jesus, Herman. Just listen to yourself.

HERMAN: No, you listen, Myrna. I admit it, it was a mistake.

MYRNA: Mistake!!?

HERMAN: Not a mistake, you know, poor judgment. It was a terrible thing to do to you, I admit, but like you always said, I can be somewhat impulsive and I —

MYRNA: Somewhat impulsive? You killed me, Herman. You ended my life. That's somewhat impulsive by you?

HERMAN: Well —

MYRNA: The Hummer, that was impulsive. The six gazillion cubic foot refrigerator, that was impulsive. But what you did to me, that was impulsive?

HERMAN: Yes. Yes, it was impulsive. And let me explain why.

MYRNA: Oh, please.

HERMAN: Just let me have my say, Myrna. Okay? The last time you let me have my say was when I said I do. After that, it was —

MYRNA: I don't understand. That's what made it impulsive?

HERMAN: No.

MYRNA: Oh, that's what justified what you did.

HERMAN: No. Let me get this out. See, you're doing it again.

MYRNA: Doing what again?

HERMAN: Not letting me say what I have to say.

MYRNA: Well, you certainly found a way to put an end to that, didn't you?

HERMAN: That's part of it, Myrna. That's definitely part of it. But my point is, what made what I did impulsive — see, impulsive is when you do something and you don't think about what comes after. Well, right after, yeah, you know what comes right after. But it's what comes after that, that you don't think of.

MYRNA: Like the monthly payments on that tank? Look, I don't know what you're babbling on about, but what made the Hummer impulsive was how you did it. Did you compare prices, did you look in Consumers, did you ask me? No. Oh, the ashtray's filled in the Buick, I need a new car that can seat the Philharmonic. And then you put on that dopey hat, cruising around Bethpage, and every time you stopped for a light, some kid would come running up asking for a creamsicle.

HERMAN: OkayOkayOkay, I admit it was impulsive.

MYRNA: Oh, sure, now.

HERMAN: But so was what I did to you. I didn't think what it really meant. I just did it.

MYRNA: You just did it. Like when Rachel was six years old. Why did you write on the walls, sweetheart? I don't know. I just did it.

HERMAN: Well, sort of.

MYRNA: Herman, you had to get the pills from somewhere. You had to figure out how to slip them in my food. You waited for our anniversary so you could give me that cock and bull about wanting to cook a romantic dinner. That by you is impulsive?

HERMAN: I have long impulses.

MYRNA: Face it, Herman. You killed me. I don't know why. If I thought your dick worked anymore, or that any woman under sixty would look twice at you, I'd suspect an affair. But frankly, I'm dumbfounded. Can you explain it to me? I think at the very least you owe me an explanation.

HERMAN: I'm trying. It's hard to explain.

MYRNA: Typical. (Beat) Let me ask you, I'm just curious, did you at least go to jail?

HERMAN: You don't know?

MYRNA: You can't get any news up here. I had to go to six departments just to find out what happened to me.

HERMAN: Oh. No, uh, I, um, I didn't go to jail.

MYRNA: Did you get arrested?

HERMAN: No. They, um, they wrote it up as a suicide.

MYRNA: Suicide!!? Are you serious? You told them it was a suicide?

HERMAN: Yeah. What am I supposed to do, confess? What'd be the point of that?

MYRNA: Suicide? And they bought it? What did Rachel say?

HERMAN: She said: "I always suspected mom would do this."

MYRNA: What?

HERMAN: She did blame herself, though, if that's any consolation. For a couple of days, anyway.

MYRNA: I knew sending her to Bennington was a mistake.

HERMAN: She was very sad. Everyone was, really.

MYRNA: Why would I commit suicide? Why would anybody think I would kill myself?

HERMAN: Well, Myrna, I don't think you realize how you come across. You never looked happy. Always upset about one thing or the other, always complaining.

MYRNA: (*Beat*) And?

HERMAN: There is no and. People figured you just had enough.

MYRNA: And I killed myself.

HERMAN: That's what they think.

MYRNA: By overdosing on Frog pot roast.

HERMAN: Boeuf bourguignon.

MYRNA: And you did nothing to discourage this line of thought.

HERMAN: Well—

MYRNA: How could you embarrass me like that? Really, Herman, how could you? How am I ever going to show my face again?

HERMAN: Uh, that wouldn't seem to be much of an issue right now. I mean, I don't mean to be crude but —

MYRNA: Well, I'm sitting here, thinking it can't get any worse than this, but you did it, Herman, you just made it worse.

HERMAN: What do you mean "can't get any worse?" You're in Heaven, for God's sake, Myrna. You're even complaining about Heaven?

MYRNA: Don't be so naïve, Herman. Remember those brochures for that stinkhole in the Caribbean you dragged me to.

HERMAN: I didn't —

MYRNA: It's not what they make it out to be, that's all I'm saying. There's absolutely no planning, no thinking. It's bland institutional food, that stupid Mel Gibson movie at every theater, you never see a cloud. But mostly, there's no now here. Everything is sort of happening at the same time, you know what I mean. It's not like living.

HERMAN: Well, I'm sorry, Myrna. But believe me, it beats the alternative.

MYRNA: Speaking of beating the alternative, what are you doing here, anyway? You're a murderer. They let murderers in?

HERMAN: Well, see, that's what I need to talk to you about.

(Pause)

MYRNA: I'm waiting.

HERMAN: This isn't easy, Myrna, believe me. Look, I was talking to the guy at intake —

MYRNA: What guy at intake? I didn't see any guy, I didn't go to intake.

HERMAN: It's a little different in the other place. Anyway, bottom line is, I mean, they're not as judgmental here as you would think, there's a certain amount of leeway, and I —

MYRNA: Leeway? Like they allow you a certain number of murders? There's a body count?

HERMAN: No, but they look at the whole man, you know what I'm saying.

MYRNA: *(Beat)* How did that help you?

HERMAN: Nice, Myrna. It helped, believe me; it helped a lot. But I'm right on the borderline, so to speak, and, uh, I need, um, I need —

MYRNA: What?

HERMAN: *(Beat)* It's about forgiveness. If I wanna stay, I need your forgiveness, your understanding.

MYRNA: *(A beat of total disbelief, followed by an irrepressible laugh)* You need what!?

HERMAN: I need —

MYRNA: You killed me. You had enough of me and you gave me an overdose of whatever that was, and bye-bye Myrna. What's to understand? Forgive you? Herman, are you nuts? Go back to "the other place" and if you can find a snowball there, I'll forgive you.

HERMAN: Now, Myrna, hear me out. You're doing it again —

MYRNA: You had your chance, Herman. And I don't know where you get this business of I never let you talk. You could have talked to me as much as you wanted. God knows how many times I tried to talk to you while you sunk deeper into that ridiculous Shopping Channel recliner, and never a peep, not one peep.

HERMAN: That by you is conversation? This needs fixing, your best friend's a schmuck, your daughter dresses like a slut, Cosmo is boring, you didn't like The Producers, for God's sake. What am I supposed to say to that?

MYRNA: Oh, please, Herman. When we were first married, you cared. There were things that needed attention, Herman, that's the way the world is. And you cared, and you tried to help.

HERMAN: Exactly. And what happened? Whatever I would fix would just free you to complain about something else. It was endless. But that wasn't the real problem.

(Beat) That wasn't the real problem.

MYRNA: I'm listening. Go on.

HERMAN: I became increasingly convinced that whatever you were complaining about, you were really complaining about me. That none of this stuff would matter, if I was a better husband, a better friend.

MYRNA: When did I ever say that?

HERMAN: It was the only way I could make sense of it, Myrna. And what did I do to you, what was my crime? You know, thirty-seven years I never touched another woman.

MYRNA: For most of those thirty-seven years you never touched me.

HERMAN: Like you cared.

MYRNA: Of course I cared.

HERMAN: What, I was depriving you of yet some other thing to complain about?

MYRNA: What are you talking about? I mean let's face it, I don't particularly care about sex one way or the other. But it did seem to be the one way you could tell me you loved me. That's what I missed.

HERMAN: That's what you missed? That's the one thing you didn't complain about.

MYRNA: *(Beat)* You don't really know me at all, do you?

HERMAN: And you don't think I love you?

MYRNA: Herman, whatever I thought then, what am I supposed to think now? You killed me, Herman. What subtle message am I missing?

HERMAN: *Yet each man kills the thing he loves*

By each let this be heard.

MYRNA: (*Beat*) What?

HERMAN: *Yet each man* —

MYRNA: I heard what you said. What is that supposed to mean?

HERMAN: It's a poem.

MYRNA: Oh, well, poetry; that really moves the ball forward. Doesn't mean anything, but it sounds great.

HERMAN: What do you mean it doesn't mean anything? It means something to me.

MYRNA: You kill the thing you love, what could that possibly mean to real people, not poets, real people.

HERMAN: It means — I don't know what it means, but I know it's the key to this.

MYRNA: What, you couldn't stand to see me suffer any more so you put me out of my misery? Bethpage has its own Dr. Kevorkian.

HERMAN: No, it's not that. (*Beat*) I moved out of Bethpage, by the way.

MYRNA: What, you sold the house?

HERMAN: Yeah.

MYRNA: Where did you move?

HERMAN: Tribeca.

MYRNA: What!!!? Now you move to Manhattan? All right, Herman, here's your chance. Kill me again, because I can't stand to hear any more of this. Kill the thing you love, Herman.

HERMAN: It's not that great, Myrna, believe me.

MYRNA: All those years I practically begged you —

HERMAN: The grass isn't any greener, Myrna. You said it yourself, that mosquito farm in Aruba, here even. It always looks good in the brochures. Once you're there, Myrna, you know what. You're still you; I'm still me. That's what makes a vacation; that's what makes a home. Who you are. Who we were.

MYRNA: (*Beat*) Is that another poem, Herman? Sounds good, doesn't mean squat.

HERMAN: Oh, Myrna, I think it means everything.

(*There is a silence*)

MYRNA: How did you die, anyway?

HERMAN: I had some pills left over

MYRNA: Oh, Herman. Why?

HERMAN: The brochures can be misleading. I thought with you out of the way, my life...but, I was still me. (*Beat*) So?

(*MYRNA is silent but troubled*)

MYRNA: Herman, I —

HERMAN: It's about forgiveness, Myrna.

MYRNA: Herman, please. There are some things that...(*Beat*) I got to hand it to you, Herman. You always had that way about you, you could always be charming, but really, I never even forgave you for that speech you made at the wedding, you think I'm going to forgive you for killing me? It's not me, Herman. I don't know what you thought was going to happen when you came here, but you had to know that that's just not who I am...wherever I am.

HERMAN: No, I understand. It was a long shot. And I guess I deserve this.

(HERMAN *starts to leave*)

MYRNA: What's it like?

HERMAN: Huh?

MYRNA: Where you're going, what's it like?

HERMAN: Just like here.

MYRNA: Then what's so terrible?

HERMAN: You're not there. That's what makes it Hell. (*After a beat, HERMAN starts to leave again*) Give my love to Rachel when she shows up.

MYRNA: (*Just before HERMAN leaves*) She still seeing that bond dealer?

HERMAN: Tony, yeah.

MYRNA: Where did we go wrong?

HERMAN: Oh, Myrna, he's a nice kid.

MYRNA: He's boring, he's a Republican —

HERMAN: Where did you get that from? Actually, I think he voted for —

MYRNA: You want a cup of coffee?

HERMAN: Uh, yeah, sure.

MYRNA: And I got pound cake.

HERMAN: Pound cake? No rugelach?

MYRNA: This is Heaven, Herman, not Bethpage.

HERMAN: Just the coffee.

MYRNA: Okay. (*Going off*) Suicide, really Herman. (*Stopping*) And you know what the worst thing about it is? It means my mother was right about you, and now I have to live with her rubbing it in.

HERMAN: Your mother? How did she get in here?

MYRNA: Don't start. (*Exits*)

(*End of play*)