

Medical Divorce

written by

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INT. HOME - DAY

Travel pictures propped up on a mahogany chest showcase a couple enjoying life, leading up to a wedding portrait labeled "Noah + Barbara".

BARBARA, 70, pushes a phone against her white curly hair as she paces about in her black dress, trying to express herself.

BARBARA

Michael, the lot fills up quickly.
Michael. Michael, listen! Try to
park in front of the bagel shop,
Michael.

INT. LIVING ROOM

In the living room, NOAH, 73, balances loose suspenders while finagling with his tie, his attention instead fixed on the TV weather forecast.

BARBARA (O.S.)

Will Anna be there?
(voice goes unsteady)
Michael, I have to go. Love you.

Barbara steps through the doorway and coughs hoarsely. Noah's face strains.

NOAH

Hey Barb? You okay, my little cuppa
coughie?

A groan precedes the claps of heeled shoes approaching.

BARBARA

Uy, you should worry more about
that tie. Let me get it. Just stop.
Stop!

Noah relents, staring upward as Barbara takes over.

NOAH

Danny always seemed like a hermit.
He should have found someone.

BARBARA

He probably didn't want to share a
bathroom. Ah, there we go.

Barbara tightens the tie knot.

NOAH

Nah, ya just need strong bladder.

BARBARA

Or a diaper! HA!

The two share a laugh, until Barbara suffers another fit of coughing. Noah's smile falters. His eyes cast about, lost, but then land on a black suit jacket on the back of a chair. He grabs it and slides his arm through its sleeve.

NOAH

You don't sound too good. I'll schedule another appointment.

BARBARA

No, it's fine.

NOAH

No it isn't. You won't let me make just one appointment. That's all I'm asking.

BARBARA

Oh stop your kvetching, Noah. We can't afford the insurance deductible, and it's chronic. I can't see a doctor every time I cough.

Noah spins to protest but Barbara cuts him off.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Now c'mon, we're going to be late. Got your yarmulka?

Noah pats his head then hurries away.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Clouds drearily hang over a small gathering amidst headstones decorated with faded Hebrew and six-pointed stars. The drone of the RABBI's prayers is occasionally punctuated with an "Amen".

Noah and Barbara take their place behind the stocky, visibly uncomfortable MICHAEL, 42, and the wide-eyed, taller HANNAH, 48. Barbara leans over Michael's shoulder and they whisper.

BARBARA

What happened to Anna?

MICHAEL
We broke up.

Hannah turns and whispers a greeting

HANNAH
Hi, I'm Hannah.

BARBARA
No, you're not Anna.

HANNAH
I'm *Hannah*.

A nearby attendee makes a "shhhh" sound but backs off when Barbara coughs into her hand. Barbara's coughs again, more fiercely, and again, and again. The rabbi goes silent. Most turn to watch. Noah glares and moves to support his wife. He waves off a concerned Michael and guides her away.

The ceremony resumes, but Michael and Hannah continue to Barbara in concern. Noah again waves off their concern from a distance. Michael touches Hannah's arm and they turn back toward the ceremony.

Barbara calms and pulls her hand away, revealing a spatter of blood on her fingers.

NOAH
I don't care about the money. We're going to a hospital.

Another couple from the funeral, SAMUEL, 65 and RACHEL, 60 approach, maintaining a respectful distance.

BARBARA
I'm sure it'll get better. I don't want us to lose the house over a cough.

NOAH
I don't give a damn about the house, Barb.

BARBARA
Well I do. It's like we're supposed to get divorced or something. At least I'd get Medicaid.

RACHEL
That's what we did.

Barbara and Noah turn around, startled.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Sorry, we wanted to make sure you
were okay.

BARBARA
Thanks for checking, but it's just
a cough.

She notices Rachel eyeing the blood on her hand and hides it.

SAMUEL
Divorce doesn't have to change your
life, you know, other than that
sweet, sweet Medicaid.

RACHEL
I can refer you to the attorney we
used. He offered us a commission.

Noah darkens and confronts the two.

NOAH
I don't give a crap about your
profiteering. We are not ending our
fifty year marriage over some
medical bills!

Barbara moves to take Noah's hand, but he only sees red.

NOAH (CONT'D)
That's what this asinine world has
come to. This country is run by
idiots who think...

BARBARA
What's the process like?

Noah does a double-take. Rachel realizes she's been asked a
question.

RACHEL
Oh, well, it'd be uncontested, so
it only takes a few months. He's
even offering a package deal if
you'd also like to refinance your
mortgage or update your will.

BARBARA
Oh, our house is paid off, but
(beat)
It would be nice if Michael's
inheritance was better protected
from this new Anna.
(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)
I'd like to put it all in a trust
for grandkids, but that's never
going to happen since he likes
older women.

Barbara finds Noah's unmoving eyes. Rachel stealthily slips a
business card into Barbara's purse.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Look, Noah, I don't want to leave
you with nothing. It's the only
answer we have!

Noah slowly shakes his head and scoffs as he pulls away.
Barbara leans to follow, but succumbs to more coughing. Noah
hurries back to hold her. He scowls at Samuel and Rachel and
they back away.

NOAH
Give up my wife for what, money?
You got some chutzpah -- that's for
sure.

Samuel raises his palms in acquiescence. As Barbara calms,
Noah points at Michael.

NOAH (CONT'D)
What would our son think?

BARBARA
He doesn't have to know! No one
does. And you'll have a home. It's
just paperwork!

NOAH
No, it's nonsense.

Noah shakes his head dismissively and tries to lead Barbara
further away, searching.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Now where's that damn car?

Barbara plants her feet and steels her voice.

BARBARA
We're going to do this.

Noah's eyes linger on his wedding band, long and hard, then
up at Barbara.

NOAH
50 years...

Noah blinks his eyes, his lips tightening.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Remember that song at our wedding?

Barbara's eyes unfocus as she recalls the memory, then returns to meet his once more.

BARBARA
How could I not?

NOAH
That was the only time I serenaded
you.

Noah's nostrils flare as he inhales sharply, then exhales slowly. Another deep breath, and an exhale.

Barbara coughs loudly, startling him. She holds up a finger, coughs one more time, then nods. Still wrought with nerves, Noah takes a third deep breath, and sings.

NOAH (CONT'D)
I love you like a bumblebee loves
honey...

I love you like a panda loves
bamboo...

Noah covers his mouth to calm himself. Barbara softens. Noah reluctantly drops his hand.

NOAH (CONT'D)
I will love you and hope you find
me funny...
(voice cracking)
Let's have our honeymoon in Malibu.

Noah's knees give out and he sits on the ground, sobbing. Barbara rushes to hold him, soothing him gently.

BARBARA
It'll be okay. It'll be okay. It
will be okay.

Barbara leans her head on Noah's shoulder.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Well, maybe not your singing.

They burst out laughing, long and hard, both crying, but now with happiness.

NOAH
One question?

Barbara nods.

BARBARA
Anything.

NOAH
Does this mean I can see other
women?

FADE OUT.