

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 as she fiddles with her front door's handle.

BARBARA

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

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.) (CONT'D)

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

Noah's face strains as Barbara coughs hoarsely.

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. He reaches for his black suit jacket and his hand finds a 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.

Barbara cuts off his objection.

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 away when Barbara's coughing reemerges fiercely enough to interrupt the ceremony. Noah glares as he moves to support her. He waves off a concerned Michael and guides her away.

Michael and Hannah continue to watch, but Noah continues to wave 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, having followed the two in mutual concern.

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 they actually want us to get divorced. Then Medicaid would kick in.

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 as 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. 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 as Rachel slips a business card into her 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, his iciness met with Samuel and Rachel's acquiescence.

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

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 to the 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
You mean -- that song? Of course.

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.