

the beginning of

THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN OF FORGIVENESS

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(from **SMALL WONDERS**)

Time: Late one night

Place: Their living room

Characters: HE and SHE, a happily married a couple, or are they?
(They're probably in their 40's, but could be younger or older.)

A tastefully decorated living room, showing the good taste of a couple who live nicely but not ostentatiously. On the coffee table, or somewhere, is a bottle of champagne in a champagne bucket with ice. Nearby are two champagne glasses and some nice snacks.

As the play begins, HE is seated, reading a book. SHE enters quietly. She looks like she's had an emotionally difficult evening. He hasn't. (She tends towards melodrama and extreme responses. He doesn't.)

HE

Good evening, sweetheart.

SHE

(startled to see him:)

What are you doing up so late?!

HE

I put out a little spread for you.

SHE

A *little* spread? Champagne?
Caviar? Free-range hummus?

HE

Well, you said your bridge club was having a special tournament tonight, so I thought I'd put out a little victory spread because I was just so sure you'd win. Did you win?

SHE

Oh, um, no. I don't think so.

HE

Did you come close to winning?
I know how much you like to win.

SHE

No, I... I...

HE

What's wrong?

SHE

I... I...

HE

What is it?

SHE

(a very tearful admission:)

I – I can't do this anymore. There is no bridge club. There never was a bridge club. For the last three years, every Wednesday, I've been having an affair.

HE

(casually)

I know.

SHE

(shifting immediately to annoyance:)

What do you mean, "I know"?

HE

I know that for that the last three years, every Wednesday night you've been having an affair.

SHE

How could you know?

HE

Well for one thing, very few bridge clubs go till two in the morning.

SHE

Yes, but –

HE

Also, I never saw you read a bridge book. When I suggested you host a bridge night here, you declined. When I offered to take up bridge, you didn't encourage me. And the one time we played gin, you kept calling the clubs *clovers*.

SHE

So for three years you've known about my affair –

HE

Well it did take a few weeks to figure out.

SHE

- and all this time you pretended you didn't know?!

HE

That's right.

SHE

You sneaky bastard! And to think I trusted you!

HE

Bon bon –

SHE

Why didn't you ever say anything?

HE

Well, if having an affair with Charley made you happy –

SHE

What makes you so sure it was Charley?

HE

Because whenever you and I were at the health club and bumped into Charley, both of you suddenly developed that shy, slightly uncomfortable and sweetly poignant look of two people who are secretly fucking their brains out.

SHE

All these years I innocently believed you were ignorant of what was going on, and you, you *lied* to me.

HE

I didn't lie exactly.

SHE

You pretended you didn't know. You *lied*. To me, to your wife, when all these years I've been completely faithful to you six nights out of seven.

HE

Sugar –

SHE

How could you not tell me?

HE

Why should I? Our sex life was still good.
Our marriage was good. The affair seemed
to bring you happiness. And anything that
makes *you* happy makes *me* happy.

SHE

(with disgust:)

What kind of man are you?

HE

Hasn't the affair made you happy?

SHE

Of course it has. Except for the lying. And the
sneaking around. And the guilt. All of which would've
been unnecessary if you had just been honest with me!

HE

Sweetie –

SHE

I don't know who you are anymore.

HE

Honey –

SHE

All these years I counted on you being oblivious,
but when down deep, you're actually... *perceptive*.
(quite melodramatically:)
Our entire marriage is based on a fraud.

HE

High fructose corn syrup –

SHE

Is there anything else you've been hiding from me?

HE

Well, I did know that after you said you gave
up smoking, you still smoked for six months.

SHE

How dare you accuse me of that!

HE

You kept offering to walk our neighbors' poodle.
Eight or nine times a day.

SHE

She needed exercise! She loved when I cuddled her.

HE

It's one thing that your clothes smelled like smoke.
Our neighbors complained so did their poodle.

SHE

Okay, so I snuck a few cigarettes.
What else have you been hiding?

HE

Not much.

SHE

Oh, you think I can believe you *now*,
after you lied to me about my affair?!

HE

Well, I did hide knowing about one other thing.

SHE

What?!

HE

Well, I have noticed that besides the affair, and
our sex life – which really has been so wonderful
that I was reluctant to do anything that might affect it –

SHE

Stop trying to justify what you did!
(then:)
So?

HE

So I've also noticed that when we watch reruns
of LAW AND ORDER, you like to go to the
bathroom during commercials and pretend
you're having a quickie with Sam Waterson.

SHE

(accusingly)

And what makes you say that?

HE

Most people don't moan when they're peeing.

SHE

You're just imagining things.

HE

Once I heard you breathing heavier and heavier,
until you screamed "ca-chung!"*

(*This should sound like the famous two-beat LAW AND ORDER sound.)

SHE

(embarrassed)

Well...

HE

And then you came out of the bathroom looking like
you had just had great sex, and you immediately went
out to walk our neighbor's dog and have a smoke.

SHE

When you proposed to me, if I had known
you were, you were *observant* –

HE

Look, artificial sweetener, I'm, I'm... I'm sorry
if I misled you. I really am. I love you.

SHE

Oh, don't come crawling back to me now.

HE

Honeybun. Gluten-free poundcake.

SHE

Wait a second. Have *you* been cheating on *me*?

HE

No. Of course not.

SHE

Oh, really? Or is this another one of your lies, like
"I know you'll have fun at the bridge club tonight!"...
or "I never knew you had such a weak bladder."

HE

There is *one* thing I've never understood.

SHE

Only one?!

HE

Why Charley?

SHE

What's wrong with Charley?

HE

He's not the brightest bulb.

SHE

He's bright enough.

HE

He once told me he thought a *seismologist*
was someone who measured things.

And the play continues.