

# **THE TRUTH AND A LIE**

## **AN INTERFAITH DILEMMA**

**a ten-minute play**



**GORDON BLIT**

*STAN, a forty-year-old man with blonde hair and blue eyes is sitting at a table with his wife ELLEN, a brunette.*

STAN

You people are privileged. I see it every day at work. Greedy. Always holding on to every dollar.

ELLEN

What? What do you mean by *you people*? You sound like one of those antisemites. But you're *Jewish*! You *are* one of those people.

STAN

. . . No, I'm not.

ELLEN

What you mean? 'No, I'm not.'

STAN

I'm *not* Jewish.

ELLEN

What? What are you talking about? That's nonsense! Are you just trying to get back at me for what I did? It's what you always *told* me. That's how we got married. You go to High Holiday services, and you want your children to get bar and bat mitzvah. Everyone *knows* that you're Jewish. My parents *especially* knew that. You must be joking about this!

STAN

Why would I joke about something so serious? No, I'm just tired of being something I'm not. I mean, you're finally admitting to me a secret that *you've* held onto since before we were married. So . . .you're making me want to come clean, too.

ELLEN

This is much worse! Pretending to be *Jewish*? How can you live with

yourself? And I didn't lie to you about having an abortion. You never asked me, and I didn't share it with you.

STAN

But don't you understand, Ellen? I did it for you. For your parents. I loved you, and I knew that if I wasn't Jewish, your parents would have never let you marry me. Judaism is in your blood. And now you are such a hypocrite. What *you* did was a sin.

ELLEN

A sin?

STAN

What do you call aborting a baby and never telling *me*, the father? And then lying to me about not being able to have children. That you were infertile! It was because of that damn abortion, wasn't it?

ELLEN

Stop it; it was my body, my choice!

STAN

Don't give me that bullshit!

ELLEN

You stood in a temple with a rabbi giving us a blessing while all along you were *Catholic*? You lied to everyone! Pretending to be *Jewish*! Do you really want me to believe that because my parents might not let me get married to you that I had no say in the matter? That I wouldn't go against my parents? This is like a soap opera!

STAN

Ellen, I want to know exactly what was going on in your mind when you did what *you* did. Maybe it will help me understand.

ELLEN

If I tell all, you better do the same.

STAN

Okay! Yes!

ELLEN

Funny, I knew almost right away, when we were dating, that you had gotten me pregnant. I missed my period, felt nauseous and started gaining weight. So it was no surprise when I took the pregnancy test. None of this bothered me. I just thought, 'things happen.' I didn't want to let this accident define my life. I didn't want you to think that I was forcing you to marry me. So, it was a quick decision. Better to not tell anyone because they would want to talk me out of it. Found a doctor and told him I wanted an abortion. And it was done. No regrets. I guess as a future therapist, I could counsel *myself*. I didn't see any reason why I should tell you, Stan. I mean, I toyed with the idea, and periodically I would say to myself, 'Maybe I should have told Stan. It would then have been a joint decision.' But I'm not one to dwell on things. And then with Roe vs. Wade getting overturned, I was becoming haunted. What would have happened if I *couldn't* have gotten an abortion?

STAN

I don't know. I want to believe everything you're saying. I wish I could understand and just say, 'I forgive you.'

ELLEN

Now that I've bared my soul, I want to know exactly how you fooled everyone into thinking you were Jewish. Maybe if I forgive you, then you can forgive me.

STAN

You have to understand, I stopped believing in God when my mother died. I was never that religious. Hardly went to church. And when I met you, Ellen, and saw how much love and support you got from not only your parents but from the community of friends you had at the synagogue, I thought pretending to be Jewish might get it to rub off on me. In the back of my mind, I considered converting. But it was never about believing in God or the rituals you followed. I just couldn't buy that. And when you told me how adamant your parents were about only letting you marry a Jewish man, I felt cornered. When I saw how narrow-minded they were and how their religious beliefs ruled their lives, it told me that I could *never* convert. That would be going too far. Still, I would do anything for you. I knew you had this strong relationship with your parents. In a way you should be glad I never tried to convert; that, at least, I was true to myself about being an atheist, even though I would never admit that to you.

ELLEN

What was it like being in the synagogue? I see now why you seemed a little lost during the Passover seder. You always had me run it.

STAN

I think one of the most difficult aspects of my pretending had to do with the counseling we had with the rabbi before we got married. I felt so guilty when he talked about keeping a Jewish home.

ELLEN

And you never even considered converting?

STAN

I already told you how I felt about converting. It would have been too much of a commitment. And it's not quick. Don't you have to wait at least a year after you've gone through all the holidays and experience all the life cycle events? Plus, I didn't even know if your parents would have accepted me as a convert; not born Jewish. I heard rumblings at the synagogue that scared me. Things like, 'Well, he's not *really* Jewish!'

ELLEN

In my mind, whoever said that isn't truly Jewish themselves. They're closed-minded. The converted congregants that I know practice the Jewish religion fully in their lives. I wish you'd have been brave enough to talk to me about this.

STAN

I was a fool.

ELLEN

And now what are we going to do? What will our children and our neighbors think?

STAN

If we do this together, I can imagine that it will all work out.

ELLEN

What about me? Is there something you want *me* to do? Some kind of atonement?

STAN

I want to make something clear. I believe a woman should have the right to choose. Abortion should always be an option. It's just that in your case; it should have been a *joint* decision. But I guess you could say it's history. It can't be undone. I'm just being pig-headed about it. It just *hurts*!

ELLEN

It hurts me too.

*ELLEN and STAN stand up and hug one another and say at the same time.*

STAN AND ELLEN

I forgive you!