

the beginning of

CAN THIS MARRIAGE BE SAVED? (from **OY!**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

(**OY!** is published and licensed by Playscripts, Inc. www.playscripts.com)

(**CAN THIS MARRIAGE BE SAVED?** is also in Playscripts' anthology **NOTHING SERIOUS.**)

Place: A courtroom
Time: The present
Characters: THE JUDGE (an older woman)
THE BAILIFF
THE DEFENDANT (male)
THE PLAINTIFF (female)

As the play begins, the DEFENDANT and the PLAINTIFF take their places in the courtroom as the BAILIFF addresses the audience:

BAILIFF

Order, order in the courtroom please.
Court is now in session. All rise for
the judge... All rise...

(if necessary:)

This play is going to take a long time
unless we *all* rise.

Everyone rises as the JUDGE enters. When she sits:

BAILIFF (cont'd)

You may be seated.

(to the judge:)

Your honor, on the docket today is the divorce
case of the Entire Human Race versus God.

JUDGE

Are both sides present?

GOD (THE DEFENDANT)

I want it on record that I'm here under protest.

JUDGE

And you are?

GOD

I am who I am.

JUDGE

Just give me a straight answer.

GOD

I am beyond explanation and description.

JUDGE

Give me a straight answer or I'll hold you in contempt.

GOD

How dare you! I am the creator and ruler of the universe, and you dare to judge *me*?!

JUDGE

(to the human:)

Well, I can see why you'd want a divorce.

HUMAN (THE PLAINTIFF)

Thank you, your hon—

JUDGE

Whether or not there should be one, that's another question. Bailiff, will you swear in both parties?

The Bailiff walks up to God with a Bible. He puts his hand on it.

BAILIFF

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help yourself?

GOD

I do.

The Bailiff walks up to the Human with a Bible. She puts her hand on it.

BAILIFF

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

HUMAN

I'm not comfortable with "so help you God".

GOD

It's because you're arrogant.

HUMAN

It's because I'm sick of asking for help
and not getting it.

JUDGE

Bailiff, cut "so help you God".

BAILIFF

(clears throat, then:)

Do you swear to tell the truth,
the whole truth, and –

(turning to God:)

You're not going to smite me if I
leave out "so help you God", are you?

GOD

I haven't smitten in years.

BAILIFF

(turning back to the human:)

And nothing but the truth – question mark.

HUMAN

I do.

JUDGE

Now I see by the papers filed that the
human being is suing God for divorce
on the grounds of alienation of affection,
neglect and abandonment.

GOD

These complaints have no merit! I'm
being scapegoated for the human's –

JUDGE

You'll get your chance. Now how long
have the two of you been married?

GOD

When I revealed the Torah to Moses on
Mount Sinai, and he brought it down to earth,
it was compared to a ketubah, a marriage
contract between me and the people Israel.

JUDGE

So that was about –

GOD

Three thousand years ago.

JUDGE

And how many of those years have been good ones?

HUMAN

Twelve.

GOD

Twelve?!

HUMAN

Maybe fifteen.

GOD

What about the Renaissance?

HUMAN

The Renaissance was nice.

JUDGE

God, why did you want a marriage contract between you and the human?

GOD

Of all the creatures on earth, none mean so much to me as the human being. Yes, I admit we've had some difficult times –

HUMAN

The Dark Ages, two hundred years without a decent thing to wear.

GOD

But my main feeling towards the human being has always been – love.

HUMAN

I've had one-night stands that were more loving.

GOD

Not the ones I've seen.

HUMAN

(gasps, then:)

You pervert.

GOD

I'm all-seeing; I can't help it.

JUDGE

(to the human:)

And do you feel any love towards God?

HUMAN

On rare occasion, like when I get good news,
or when something terrible happens to
somebody else instead of me.

JUDGE

Well, if your love is that infrequent,
why did you agree to a marriage
contract with him?

HUMAN

Well, at the time, I was stuck in
the desert, and I was hungry, and
I thought he'd be a good provider.

JUDGE

And has he been?

HUMAN

On and off.

GOD

On. 100% on.

HUMAN

Throughout history, you let your people starve.

GOD

She's blaming again. Most of the
starving is due to their own inability
to get along with each other.

HUMAN

It's your climate, and you keep
moving the good farm land.

GOD

I gave you the most advanced brain
on Earth. It's not my fault it took
you centuries to figure out irrigation.

HUMAN

You wiped out entire –

GOD

If you started taking responsi—

The judge pounds her gavel.

JUDGE

Quiet! You two are going to give me
a heart attack.

GOD

Do you exercise regularly and eat enough fiber?

JUDGE

Shut up. So when did the troubles
between you two start?

HUMAN

From Day One, he's criticized everything I've done.

GOD

From Day One, you've deserved it.

HUMAN

On Day One I was adorable.

GOD

Every day I see you commit wars in my name.
I see you mangle my words to justify
cruelty beyond my own imagination.

HUMAN

If these things bother you so much, how come
you're always rewarding sinful behavior?

GOD

I *never* do that.

HUMAN

It seems to me a lot of the most selfish
and evil people on earth have it pretty good.

GOD

They won't in the afterlife.

HUMAN

The afterlife, the afterlife. I'm not dead
yet! Who cares if the weather's great
in Florida if you're living in New Jersey?