

Interfaith Exorcism

by

Vanessa Bloom

Interfaith Exorcism

FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A neighborhood of plain houses in a typical suburban cul-de-sac. One house sits empty, a FOR SALE sign swinging in the breeze. A tired minivan chugs into the driveway of the house next door.

INT./EXT. MINIVAN - CONTINUOUS

DINAH O'CONNELL (60, Ashkenazi Jewish, haggard) drives while RON O'CONNELL (62, Irish Catholic, flabby) scrolls Facebook on his jumbo smartphone. Middle age has hit them hard and they're stuck.

RON

(not looking up)

I'm going for the marble casket.

DINAH

Those cost over ten thousand dollars. You gonna be buried with your gold and jewels, too?

RON

Like excavating Ancient Rome, they'll dig me up in 2,000 years and marvel at my sarcophagus.

Dinah turns off the car, looks out the window to the for-sale sign.

DINAH

Think that house'll ever sell?

RON

Probably scared off by the tremors.

DINAH

It's California, earthquakes are expected. And this is a nice neighborhood.

RON

Used to be nicer.

DINAH

Oh, of course, it could've been nicer.

RON

Whaddya want me to say?

DINAH

Something besides a complaint. All you did was say the plot was too small, it had too many trees, the headstone wasn't big enough...

The pair get out of the car, still arguing.

RON

I think I have the right to be picky about my gravesite. I'll only be there the rest of my afterlife!

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INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER

It's a boring middle-class interior with 1970s fixtures and worn carpets. Dinah and Ron are getting ready for bed, moving through their routine mindlessly, still quarreling.

DINAH

Did you take your medication?

RON

You always ask me, and the answer is always the same! The doctor said I'll be fine. I am fine!

DINAH

Just making sure! You're the one who wanted to go look at cemeteries today, for God's sake.

Ron waves his hand dismissively.

DINAH (CONT'D)

The kids and I need you. Above ground.

RON

Speaking of, I thought we were living in California for the kids. Didn't plan to be buried here too.

DINAH

(slightly sarcastic)
Where should we be buried?
Next to your mom in
Boston? Or your dad in Des
Moines?

RON

I never pictured eternity
in Orange County,
California. That's all.

DINAH

Better than Orange County,
Florida, which is where I
schlep to see my parents'
graves. This'll be easier,
California's a tourist
destination. The kids'll
visit the cemetery.

RON

We're alive in California
now and they don't visit.

DINAH

Rach's been busy with grad
school. You know that. And
Peter-

RON

Comes when he needs money.

DINAH

Exactly. He can raid your
marble tomb for gold
amulets.

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She gets into her side of the bed and Ron gets into his. Dinah puts on her C-Pap machine. They turn out the light.

LATER

Dinah's C-pap machine whirs. Ron's asleep with earplugs in, phone still in hand.

Thud! A bump from the attic above. The bed where Dinah and Ron sleep shakes. A DEMONIC GREEN LIGHT radiates on the ceiling, coiling like a snake before disappearing. Dinah bolts up, struggling with the C-Pap machine.

DINAH

(muffled by the C-Pap)

Did ya hear that?

She yanks off the mask. Ron's still asleep. Dinah punches him in the arm.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Ron, wake up!

Ron jolts awake, grabbing his arm.

RON

(yelling)

WHAT?

DINAH

Shh!

Ron takes out his earplugs.

RON

Why'd you hit me?

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DINAH

You need to wake up!

RON

Goddamnit, what is it?

DINAH

I heard something.

Ron rolls his eyes.

RON

Your breathing machine's
on.

He goes to put his earplugs back, but Dinah stops him.

DINAH

Something else. And the
bed moved!

RON

It's probably just another
quake.

(quoting Dinah from
earlier)

"It's California,
earthquakes are expected."

DINAH

Fine. Sorry I woke you.

They both roll away from each other and pull the covers up. Another thud and the light returns briefly, slipping through the cracks from the attic above. This time both Dinah and Ron see it.

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DINAH (CONT'D)

What's that!?

RON

Jesus Mary and Joseph!

They both clutch each other on the bed, Dinah's breath fogging her C-Pap mask. The light winds its way across the ceiling before disappearing again.

RON (CONT'D)

I got it.

He reaches behind the headboard, pulling out a handgun, aiming at the ceiling. He fires one shot, which puts a bullet hole in the ceiling and the green light spills through. Ron fires and reloads again, and another, until-

DINAH

Are you outta your mind?!

Dinah grabs his arm, trying to wrestle the gun away.

RON

Let go of me, woman!

DINAH

You're ruining the drywall!

RON

I'm scaring it! I got it!

The green light hasn't moved. He reloads and pulls the trigger again -- only for the gun to be empty. Ron opens his nightstand.

RON (CONT'D)

Where's my ammo?!

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He dumps the drawer on the floor. Lots of junk and knick-knacks, but only an empty box of ammo.

DINAH

You promised me you'd
gotten rid of that gun.

RON

It's for protection.

DINAH

Fat lot of good it's doing
now!

They both look at the green light. Ron aims the gun and desperately pulls the trigger, only for it to click pathetically. The light swirls, turning red.

DINAH (CONT'D)

You made it mad!

RON

It's a demon! They're
always mad!

Ron throws the gun down.

RON (CONT'D)

We need to call a priest.

DINAH

For what?

RON

An exorcism!

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DINAH

You hated going to mass.
Since when have you
believed all of that
stuff?

RON

Since there's a demon on
my ceiling!

Ron begins to pray quickly, trying to recall the words:

RON (CONT'D)

*Our Father, who... who are
in heaven, hallowed be thy
name. Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done...uh, I
have a gun...No, Wait.
Please forget? Forgive!
Forgive those who trespass
against us; and lead us
not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil.
AMEN!*

He crosses himself and looks back at the ceiling.
The light flickers. Ron grabs his phone and
begins frantically scrolling his contacts.

RON (CONT'D)

Shit! I don't have a
contact saved. Father
Graham? Gorman? Dinah,
what's the name of that
priest I used to go to?

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DINAH

The one who advised us not
to marry?

Ron furiously puts his hands over Dinah's mouth.

RON

Shhhh!!!!

(to the demon)

God, please forgive me. I
know I called myself a
lapsed Catholic, I don't
go to mass, I take the
name of the Lord in vain,
and I once went to a
Presbyterian church just
to see what it was like,
but I'll do anything you
want just please remove
the demon from my attic.
Amen.

The light flickers but still glows. Ron looks at
his overturned drawer.

RON (CONT'D)

Do you have my rosary?

DINAH

You're asking a Jewish
woman for a cross?

RON

Maybe it's in your drawer!

He tries to crawl over Dinah to get to her
nightstand.

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DINAH

It's not there!

RON

Just look! Please!

Dinah quickly digs through her drawer. Nothing but chapstick, C-Pap parts, and a limp dildo.

DINAH

I told you. When's the last time you saw it? It had to be before we were married because I never saw you pray.

RON

I know! I should've prayed harder!

He continues to cross himself. The light swirls in place, not leaving.

RON (CONT'D)

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned-

Ron grabs Dinah's hand.

RON (CONT'D)

You gotta do it to. C'mon.

DINAH

Have you forgotten? I'm not Catholic!

RON

When's the last time you've been to synagogue?

DINAH

Once a Jew, always a Jew.

RON

You think a demon is gonna
make an exception if
you're Jewish?

DINAH

We've had enough earthly
suffering. It'd be nice to
have a break for a change.

The ceiling creaks. Both Ron and Dinah huddle
closer in bed.

RON

(crossing himself,
showing Dinah)

I think I got it this
time:

RON (CONT'D)

*Our Father, who art in
heaven, hallowed be
thy name. Thy kingdom
come, thy will be
done, on earth, as it
is in heaven. Give us
this day our daily
bread and forgive us
our trespasses as we
forgive those who
trespass against us;
and lead us not into
temptation, but
deliver us from evil.*

DINAH

*Our Father, who art in
heaven, hallowed be
thy name. Thy kingdom
come, thy will be
done, on earth, as it
is in heaven. Give us
this day our daily
bread and forgive us
our trespasses as we
forgive those who
trespass against us;
and lead us not into
temptation, but
deliver us from evil.*

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They cross their chests then stare at the ceiling. Dinah coughs.

DINAH (CONT'D)
Do you think it's happy?
(to the demon)
Sir, did you like the
prayer?
(to Ron)
Is that how it's done?

The DEMON above hisses, light winding across the ceiling. The bed rattles.

RON
No. No, I think it's even
angrier!

DINAH
Probably because a Jewish
woman said a Catholic
prayer!

Ron makes the sign of the cross with his hands.

RON
Get back! The power of
Christ repels you!

The hissing increases and Ron and Dinah pull the covers over their heads.

UNDER THE COVERS

RON (CONT'D)
I'm too young to die! (a
beat) This is because I
considered being buried in
an Episcopalian cemetery.

DINAH

(hurt)

You know I can't be buried
with you in a Catholic
cemetery!

RON

Well, clearly, God isn't
happy with me!

DINAH

So he's unhappy with me?
Because you married a
Jewish woman you're being
punished?

RON

Well... no, I don't think
so, but the Priest said we
shouldn't marry-

DINAH

Because I was a
chainsmoking hippie! He
didn't know I was Jewish.

Dinah breaks out wheezing, grasping her chest.

DINAH (CONT'D)

My inhaler- It's in the
kitchen-

Ron grabs Dinah's hands.

RON

Okay, okay, just try and
breathe...

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DINAH

If I die, where are you
gonna bury me?

RON

I dunno? I always figured
I'd go first!

DINAH

You will. But if I *do* die
before you, you're not
gonna leave me alone in
some hole in the ground
while you gallivant off to
the Catholic cemetery?

RON

No. NO! Of course not.
Deep breath, one, two,
three...

Dinah's breath finally slows.

DINAH

You don't think it was a
mistake we married?

RON

(ashamed)

Of course not.

He grabs Dinah's hand.

RON (CONT'D)

Are there things in
Judaism that could repel
spirits? Are there Jewish
ghosts? Jhosts? Heh.

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Dinah elbows him.

DINAH

There aren't prayers to
get rid of ghosts. We
aren't like you, with your
exorcisms.

RON

Then what do we do? Call a
Rabbi? Give the ghost a
Bar mitzvah?

Dinah shoots him an "are you serious" look.

RON (CONT'D)

Maybe the ghost is 13
years old! I'm just
throwing stuff out here.

Ron wrings his hands. The two slowly peep out
from the covers. The entire room is darker now,
with a thick, blood-like substance dripping down
the walls. The door is now blocked by thick,
oozing blood.

DINAH

We just painted.

They share a desperate glance.

DINAH (CONT'D)

I only remember a few
blessings.

RON

Quick! Which ones?

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DINAH

The blessing over bread.

RON

Bread?

DINAH

There's one for wine too.

RON

WINE? This is a grade-A demonic being! We need hardcore Judaism. Where's the prayer for vanquishing your enemies?

DINAH

We have a song for protection. You sing it when you're going to sleep.

RON

We're gonna sing to the demon to sleep?

DINAH

What choice do we have?

Ron clears his throat.

RON

Okay. Let's sing that song.

DINAH

(singing)

*Hashkiveinu Adonai
Eloheinu l' shalom /
v'ha'amideinu malkeinu
l'khayim tovim ul'
shalom...*

RON

Okay. I'm gonna need it
again.

They sing the song again. The light twists,
agitated. Growling and hissing from the ceiling
above. More blood drips on the bed now.

RON (CONT'D)

It doesn't like that
either. Oh, God, we're
gonna die. And I'm going
to hell for being a
heretic. Since before the
kids, before I met you.
You're the best thing
that's ever happened to
me. I'm just a sinner.

He crosses himself frantically.

DINAH

If it makes you feel
better, Jewish people
don't believe in hell.

RON

No hell? What about
heaven?

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DINAH

Nah.

RON

Wow. That's...kinda nifty,
actually. How did I never
know this?

DINAH

We never talked about it.
Anything religious,
really.

RON

I guess that's why our
kids are atheists who
don't visit us.

(a long beat)

Maybe we should've talked
about it.

DINAH

If the Buddhists are right
about reincarnation, we
can do it in our next
lives.

They stare in silence at the dripping blood. Some of it lands on Dinah's head. Ron wipes it off. By now, the blood is soaking the sheets.

DINAH (CONT'D)

The kids'll be okay without
us. Right. Right?

RON

Of course. Rachel'd force
Peter to actually get a real
job.

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DINAH

And Peter'd make sure she
wasn't working too hard.

They share a laugh. The red light grows brighter.

RON

I guess we're gonna see
whose religion is right
about death.

DINAH

See you there.

They look at the ceiling and grasp hands. By
coincidence, they begin to pray at the same time.

RON

*Our Father, who art in
heaven, hallowed be
thy name. Thy kingdom
come, thy will be
done-*

DINAH (CONT'D)

(singing)
*Hashkiveinu Adonai
Eloheinu l' shalom /
v'ha'amideinu malkeinu
l'khayim-*

Suddenly, the demon hisses. The light retreats
momentarily. Dinah and Ron stop.

RON (CONT'D)

Do you see that?

The light grows again.

RON (CONT'D)

It didn't like our prayer.

They look at each other and begin to recite in
earnest. As they recite their respective prayers,

Interfaith Exorcism

the blood begins to retract into the walls, light dimming.

RON (CONT'D)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

DINAH

Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l' shalom / v'ha'amideinu malkeinu l'khayim tovim ul' shalom / uf'ros aleinu sukat sh'lomekha / v'takneinu b'eitzah tovah milfane'kha v'hoshi'einu / m'heirah l'ma'an sh'mekha.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Again!

RON

(corny DJ voice)

TIME FOR THE REMIX!

RON (CONT'D)

Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu l' shalom / v'ha'amideinu malkeinu l'khayim tovim ul' shalom / uf'ros aleinu sukat sh'lomekha / v'takneinu b'eitzah

DINAH

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily

(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)
*tovah milfane'kha
v'hoshi'einu /
m'heirah l'ma'an
sh'mekha.*

DINAH
*bread and forgive us
our trespasses as we
forgive those who
trespass against us;
and lead us not into
temptation, but
deliver us from evil.*

As they finish the final word, the demonic spirit lifts. The room returns to normal, as though nothing had ever touched it. Even the bullet holes have somehow disappeared.

DINAH (CONT'D)
We did it!

Ron and Dinah embrace. They get out of bed, inspecting the walls, the sheets, the ceiling. Dinah pulls back the curtains to the window.

DINAH (CONT'D)
Look, Ron!

She points out the window. In the house for sale next door, the attic gleams with green light.

RON
Oh, that house'll never
sell.

INT/EXT. MINIVAN - EVENING - LATER

Ron and Dinah's minivan chugs up their driveway.

DINAH
We finally figured it out.

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Ron leans over to kiss Dinah on the cheek.

RON

Thank you for letting me
get the gold-plated marble
casket.

DINAH

If there is heaven and
hell, God will judge you
for that monstrosity.

RON

But you'll be there to help
me out. Because we're going
next to each other in the
nondenominational cemetery.

A U-Haul pulls into the driveway next door. Ron and Dinah look over to see a "SOLD" sign on the now-possessed house.

RON (CONT'D)

Oh no.

A YOUNG COUPLE (20s) get out of the U-Haul. She's Muslim with a hijab and he's Buddhist with mala beads around his neck.

MUSLIM WOMAN

Hello! We're your new
neighbors.

DINAH

We have a lot to talk about.

CUT TO BLACK.

