

FORGIVE ME FATHER

By Harrison Zeiberg

THE PLAWRIGHT SPEAKS: *Forgive me Father was inspired by the Rob Reiner film, Oh, God. In this film God shows up, and uses a grocery store clerk to spread his message to the people around him. The original idea for this play was what if God and the Devil were a comedy duo, and once this idea was abandoned the final product quickly took its place. Special thanks must go out to my sister who came up with the bit about the sheep, and for the rest of my family for always making me laugh. Forgive me Father wanted to examine how two people who are lonely, and just want someone to talk to can find each other even in the oddest of places, and how people tend to come into each other's lives at just the right moment.*

Forgive me Father was workshopped at the Massachusetts Youth Playwriting Program in 2018.

(Spacing is playwright's own).

Forgive Me Father

By Harrison Zeiberg

Sinner- Twenty something. Nervous, and a bit weird, but very likeable.

Father- A priest. Twenty something. Inexperienced as a Priest, but really wants to do well. He just isn't sure how to do well.

The Sinner and Father are sitting next to each other in chairs with something separating them.

They can't see each other, but can hear each other.

Sinner: Forgive me father for I have sinned.

Father: Speak to me my child. Tell me your sins.

Sinner: Father, it's been four days since my last confession, and I've done horrible things. I know you're not my regular priest, but you know some things you just can't tell your priest. So here it goes, four days ago I was walking home. And then this cop car pulled up next to me. I knew the cop it was my friend Robert, and we said hi and all, and when he walked away, well, I licked his car.

Father: I'm sorry, you what?

Sinner: Forgive me Father.

Father: What did you say?

Sinner: I licked a cop car.

Father: You licked a cop car? (beat) Why?

Sinner: Are you allowed to ask that?

Father: Well, no. But, why?

Sinner: You won't like this answer.

Father: Oh God.

Sinner: Father!

Father: I'm sorry my child. But why did you lick the cop car?

Sinner: Well. Have you ever seen a cop car? It's all blue and white. It looks like a blue and white snow cone. And I love snow cones, so much. So, I, uh, licked it.

Father: Did it taste like a snow cone?

Sinner: You wouldn't understand father.

Father: I'd hope not.

Sinner: It's like nickels after they've been rained on after a warm August afternoon.

Father: You lick nickels too?

Sinner: No Father. I'm not a monster.

Father: Well, I would give you penance, but you didn't really commit a sin.

Sinner: What do you mean?

Father: Well licking a car isn't really a sin. So I can't give you penance for doing something that technically isn't wrong, biblically speaking.

Sinner: (prolonged beat) So I have to go?

Father: I'm afraid so, yes.

Sinner: But... if I have a sin I can talk to you, right?

Father: Well I guess-

Sinner: I'll be right back Father.

The Sinner leaves quickly. Blackout. The Sinner comes back, out of breath.

Sinner: (*Kneeling, crossing self*) Forgive me Father for I have sinned. It has been twenty minutes since my last confession.

Father: Oh? You know you don't have to come back here so often.

Sinner: Father-

Father: Speak, child.

Sinner: Father, in the past twenty minutes I have done horrible things. I hope God can forgive me for what I have done.

Father: What have you done, my child?

Sinner: After my last confession, I went to the Starbucks around the corner. I bought a small tea. And I took two hundred and seven packets of sugar.

Father: You stole two hundred and seven packets of sugar?

Sinner: Yes Father. Oh Lord forgive me.

Father: Did you put any in your tea?

Sinner: I put all of it in my tea.

Father: You put two hundred and seven packets of sugar in your tea?

Sinner: Yes.

Father: Did you drink it?

Sinner: It's more of a solid now.

Father: I would give you penance, but again, technically that's not a sin.

Sinner: But I stole two hundred and seven packets of sugar!

Father: I understand what you did, but you bought a small tea. So technically again it's not stealing.

Sinner: But I stole. Thou shall not steal.

Father: You didn't steal. You were just a horrible customer. I hope you didn't give your real name.

Sinner: Don't worry I gave them yours.

Father: Please come back at a later time. But right now I have to hear other people. I'm sorry. But move along, please.

Sinner: I'll come back with a real sin this time!

Father: No that's not what I meant.

Sinner leaves. Blackout. Sinner comes back, days have passed.

Sinner: Forgive me Father for I have sinned.

Father: Confess to me your sins.

Sinner: It has been four days since my last confession. And I have done horrible things.

Father: Yes?

Sinner: I tickled a lot of sheep.

Father: What?

Sinner: I tickled sheep.

Father: Where?

Sinner: On the sides.

Father: I meant where did you find sheep.

Sinner: Oh, uh, the petting zoo.

Father: Did you pay to go the petting zoo?

Sinner: Of course.

Father: And you tickled all the sheep?

Sinner: Not all the sheep. Just most of them.

Father: Why not all of them?

Sinner: I didn't have the time. Besides, people start looking at you funny if you tickle sheep. After about thirty to forty five minutes, I couldn't take the attention.

Father: I would think this is a sin. But you paid. So it's more just weird than anything else. It's not technically a sin.

Sinner: But Father, you don't understand. I hath tickled sheep.

Father: I understand. Believe me it makes all of us uncomfortable. But it's not a sin for you to tickle sheep.

Sinner: So you won't talk to me?

Father: I can't. I'm very busy here. You should hear some of the sins these people have. Well you shouldn't that'd probably ruin the point of confession. But right now I have to pay attention to them, I can't be spending my time with people who are just weird.

Sinner: Well when will you be able to talk?

Father: I, I, I don't know.

Sinner: Do you have to do a confession a lot?

Father: The new guy always does.

Sinner: I'm sorry about that.

Father: I don't mind. In a few years I'll have my own parish, and then I'll make the new guy do this.

Sinner: You'd make the new guy do this?

Father: Well yeah.

Sinner: But that's not fair.

Father: What do you mean?

Sinner: Look, you'd rather be a real priest right.

Father: I am a real priest.

Sinner: Father.

Father: Go on.

Sinner: And you would make the new guy, the new person who is you, do what you don't want to do.

Father: Well yeah. Am I supposed to always do this?

Sinner: Yes.

Father: That's not fair.

Sinner: Oh no, you don't think it's fair?!

Father: Hey, watch it.

Sinner: Is getting a priest mad a sin?

Father: No.

Sinner: Come on!

Father: I'm sorry, but this isn't by the book.

Sinner: So, you really won't talk to me.

Father: I'm very busy. I'm sorry.

Sinner: Fine. I'll be back Father, and you'll have to talk to me this time.

Sinner leaves. Blackout. Sinner comes back. A significant amount of time has passed.

Sinner: Forgive me Father for I have sinned. It has been three months since my last confession.

Father: It's been a long time. What did you do?

Sinner: You'll like this one. Now you'll actually have to listen to me.

Father: What did you do?

Sinner: It's a good one.

Father: Just tell me.

Sinner: I'm the number two person in a pyramid scheme.

Father: Well, I guess that's a sin.

Sinner: Yes! Now you have to talk to me.

Father: You could have always spoken to another priest you know.

Sinner: But I wanted to talk to you. And now you can. You have to talk to me because I'm a sinner. Oh lord, forgive me! Now let's get down to business!

Father: The Lord forgives you for-

Sinner: No. That's not what I want.

Father: What?

Sinner: I want to talk to you. I want to get your forgiveness.

Father: Why do you want my forgiveness?

Sinner: Because I've had everyone else's. I want to talk to you. I want you to hear me.

Father: Go on.

Sinner: I've been lonely. I haven't had anyone to talk to so I decided hey, let's try a priest. I didn't start at this church, I'm sorry for that, but it's the truth. And every person I talked to just gave me God's forgiveness. I thanked them each time, and it felt good, but it didn't do anything. I still felt the same. Lonely. I guess I didn't really have any sins, at least not big ones. So I thought that maybe if I had more sins it'd feel better to go to confession. But I didn't want to do anything too bad, so I came here with my sins. And you didn't. You didn't forgive me. You said I hadn't actually sinned.

Father: Because you hadn't.

Sinner: I know Father. You kept sending me away, and I just wanted to talk.

Father: You could have seen another priest you know right.

Sinner: I know. But they would have just forgiven me. They would have talked at me, not spoken to me. What I needed was someone to speak to me. What I needed was someone like you. I didn't think I needed it but I did.

Father: Even though I sent you away?

Sinner: Yes. You told me that what I did wasn't so bad. So maybe I'm not so bad.

Father: I did that.

Sinner: Yeah. You gave me a reason to keep coming back. You gave me someone to talk to. No one had ever wanted to talk to me before. Everyone had just sent me away. Everyone had just said you're forgiven and that was the end of it. Everyone never wanted to see me again. But you did.

Father: Well it was my job.

Sinner: And you did it well.

Father: Thank you. Although I don't think the goal is to make you commit more sins. That may defeat the purpose.

Sinner: I've just needed someone, and you've been that person.

Father: So what do you want to talk about?

Sinner: Well, first, how do I get out of a pyramid scheme?

Father: I'd imagine reporting it to the police.

Sinner: The police don't really want to hear from me anymore.

Father: Because you keep licking their cars.

Sinner: Yeah.

Father: Understood. Is there anything else you want to talk about?

Sinner: How's your day been.

Father: Good. You know no one's ever asked me that before. No one has ever asked me how I'm doing.

Sinner: I'd imagine. Who would want to talk to a priest?

Father: You.

Sinner: But I was desperate.

Father: Thanks.

Sinner: It's not something I'm proud of. But I thought, hey who is someone who has to talk to me? Who is someone who can't leave? Who is someone who has to listen to me? Who is someone who no matter what I say has to be supportive or at least has to forgive me for what I've done?

Father: A priest.

Sinner: But not just any priest. One who is lonely, and doing confession.

Father: So that's why you wanted to talk to me?

Sinner: Yeah.

Father: Well at least you're nice. I hear some horrible people. And I've only been hearing people for a few months. You've been someone to look forward to.

Sinner: Well I'll admit having to think up of a sin to get to talk to you has been the most active I've been in weeks.

Father: You know none of these have technically been sins.

Sinner: Would you rather have me murder someone? Or rob someone? Or used the lord's name in vain? I chose these things because they're the best I could do, without actually having to do something horrible.

Father: Huh. Well I mean I haven't talked to you for long. But are you less lonely?

Sinner: Yeah. A little.

Father: So did you really do all of those things that you said you did?

Sinner: Yeah. I'm no longer allowed into that Starbucks or petting zoo.

Father: Understandable.

Sinner: Yeah I'd say so.

Father: At least you didn't do anything too bad.

Sinner: Yeah. Just spent the last few weeks trying to get a random priest to talk to me. But hey he talked to me. And now I'm a little less lonely and it was worth it.

Father: I'm glad. So would you like to-

Sinner: To what?

Father: Be forgiven.

Sinner: Yeah. I guess. I think I'm ready this time.

Father: I forgive you for your sins and the Lord forgives you for all of your sins. Go forth into the world.

Sinner: Thank you Father.

Father: When I get my own parish can I count on you to be my first parishioner?

Sinner: Sorry, I'm not very religious.

Father: Of course. Goodbye my Child.

Sinner: Goodbye Father.

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Playwright Bio: Harrison Zeiberg is currently a student at Wheaton College MA studying History and Political Science. He is from Malden, Ma and has been lucky enough to participate in several ten-minute play writing competitions, and also devised theater. He is happy for once to write a comedic play, after so writing many sad ones, and he hopes you enjoy it.*