



## FORGIVE THYSELF

by John Busser

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**FORGIVE THYSELF**  
By John Busser

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**John Busser** is an actor/writer in the Cleveland area. He is a regular cast member of *Flanagan's Wake*, which celebrated its eleventh season in 2020. His plays have been performed in Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio in various festivals and Blank Canvas Theatre presented *Children's Letters to Satan (and Other Horrible Scribblings)*, a collection of 7 of his original short plays. He also helps run a monthly writer's workshop at Cleveland Public Theatre called *The Dark Room*, which encourages playwrights, poets and other performing artists to test drive new work by holding cold readings of their scripts for an audience.

Cast of Characters

FATHER ALTMAN:  
WOMAN:

Male, 30's – 40's  
Female, 30's – 50's

Place

A Church

Time

Afternoon

**FORGIVE THYSELF**

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*At lights up, FATHER ALTMAN comes out of the center compartment of a Confessional. He is about to make his way to the Rectory, when he is approached by a modestly dressed, middle-aged woman.*

**WOMAN**

Excuse me, Father?

**FATHER**

Yes, can I help you?

**WOMAN**

I hope so. I was wondering if you're still hearing confession today.

**FATHER**

I'm afraid I've just finished for the day. I'm sorry.

**WOMAN**

*(Under her breath)* Shit. *(Speaking to FATHER again)* Are you sure? I wouldn't be long. And I've travelled quite a ways to get here today.

**FATHER**

I'm very sorry. I wish I could help but I have Mass at 4pm and I need to prepare. Perhaps tomorrow...?

**WOMAN**

I'm from out of town. I was passing through and hoped I could see someone. I'll be moving on soon.

**FATHER**

To or from...?

**WOMAN**

I don't understand.

**FATHER**

Are you going TO somewhere, or going home FROM somewhere?

**WOMAN**

I'm not really sure. I'm kind of winging it right now.

**FATHER**

Do you have a home, Miss?

**WOMAN**

Oh I do, Padre. I just don't feel like I belong in it very much these days.

**FATHER**

Everybody belongs somewhere.

**WOMAN**

I've been feeling very unwelcome in a lot of places lately.

**FATHER**

You have a home here, with God. You're always welcome in His house.

**WOMAN**

*(Looking around)* IS this His house? Hmmph. I thought it'd be bigger. And maybe down by the lake.

**FATHER**

*(He smiles at the joke)* It's not the trappings. It's what it represents.

**WOMAN**

What DOES it represent?

**FATHER**

A connection with the Creator. A place where anyone may have a discussion with God and not be—

**WOMAN**

Judged?

**FATHER**

Afraid.

**WOMAN**

Why is that? Why do so many people have the “fear of God” in them?

**FATHER**

I suppose many people think they ARE being judged, as you said before. And many are found wanting, in their own minds. That makes them afraid.

**WOMAN**

Well that sucks balls, Padre. Sorry about that. I get a little salty when my Irish is up.

**FATHER**

*(An uncomfortable moment passes between them. FATHER looks at his watch)* You know, I think I have a little time before I have to go. I get the feeling you could use someone to talk to. Please... *(He indicates the pew. The WOMAN and FATHER sit)* So, you're a colleen, are you?

**WOMAN**

Not by birth, no. I'm kind of a mix. A mutt.

**FATHER**

*(He smiles)* Far from a mutt, young lady.

**WOMAN**

No, it's true. I have a little bit of everybody in me, but you're kind.

**FATHER**

So, you came here with a need to unburden yourself...?

**WOMAN**

Yeah... well, yes and no. I do have a lot to get off my chest but I don't think I can shirk this. It's my burden to bear.

**FATHER**

Well, if we can't relieve you of your problems, perhaps we can lighten your load a bit. God has a way of helping those who need it.

**WOMAN**

And who helps God when God's taken on the world's problems?

**FATHER**

The Lord has the strength to bear any weight. He doesn't need our help. He endures. And is still able to help His creations.

**WOMAN**

You believe that, Padre?

**FATHER**

I do.

**WOMAN**

That's nice to hear. It's reassuring.

**FATHER**

So, do you wish to talk face-to-face, or would you prefer I open up the Confessional again?

**WOMAN**

I'd prefer the face-to-face. Going in there puts a barrier between us. I'd rather there weren't any.

**FATHER**

Certainly. My name, by the way, is Father Altman. Daniel. I figure, since we're being informal and in the spirit of not raising any barriers, let's be friends first and priest and penitent second.

**WOMAN**

*(She shakes his hand)* Thanks Daniel... Father Dan. I like it. A good name.

**FATHER**

And you are...?

*The WOMAN hesitates.*

**FATHER**

It's all right. There's no pressure for yo--

**WOMAN**

God.

**FATHER**

I'm sorry?

**WOMAN**

I'm... I'm God.

**FATHER**

Is this a joke?

**WOMAN**

No Father, it's not.

**FATHER**

I agreed to talk to you in good faith. You seemed like you needed help.

**WOMAN**

I do need help.

**FATHER**

Miss, I--

**WOMAN**

I know how this sounds.

**FATHER**

I know how this sounds too. Like you're having a laugh at my expense. *(He gets up)*

**WOMAN**

You don't believe me.