

The Forbidden Heart

by

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2007

BLACK

The sound of CHILDREN PLAYING.

FADE UP:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Two LITTLE GIRLS play with each other; tag, chase, and maybe a game of paddy-cake. Across the way is a

PARK BENCH - SAME.

NATHAN ALEXANDER sits here, watching the girls; 50's, educated, haunted eyes. He hears VOICES in his head.

NATHAN(O.S.)
Big girl. Daddy's big, big girl.

LITTLE GIRL(O.S.)
I love you, daddy.

NATHAN(O.S.)
I love you, too.

He reaches inside his coat, removes a GUN, sticks the barrel in his mouth. POW! Blows his brains out. Nathan's lifeless corpse lies slumped over on the bench. A SHADOW falls over him.

MAN'S VOICE(O.S.)
Nathan? NATHAN!

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY - SAME.

NATHAN'S EYES pop open, startled. It was just a violent hallucination. He seems to get them frequently.

MAN'S VOICE(O.S.)
Earth to Nathan...you awake, old man?

Nathan massages his temples.

NATHAN
Hello, Michael. And...yes, I'm awake.

BLACK

TITLE:

NATHAN

FADE UP:

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY - SAME.

MICHAEL WILLIAMS takes a seat next to Nathan; 30's, blue collar, the khaki dress of an average working Joe.

MICHAEL

I'm going to get right down to it.
It's about Joy, she's...sick. In
the hospital.

Nathan is silent, thinking.

MICHAEL

Well, say something.

NATHAN

What do you want me to say?

MICHAEL

I just told you that your
daughter's sick. Do you even care?

NATHAN

I care. What kind of pastor
wouldn't care for his own child?

Silence from Michael. Finally;

MICHAEL

She's dying, Nathan.

NATHAN

Dying...

MICHAEL

That's right. Dying.

NATHAN

I'll pray for her...I always do.

Michael LAUGHS.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

It's not your prayers that Joy needs, old man. She needs your blood.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT.

A YOUNG WOMAN sits on the bed; 20's, attractive. Currently she is crouched on her bed, hugging a teddy bear to her chest, CRYING and cowering in terror like a little girl.

The room is dark, shadowy, eerie. The young woman keeps staring at the

BEDROOM CLOSET

The door is opened a crack; is there someone or *something* watching her from inside? It's hard to tell.

YOUNG WOMAN

(terrified)

Please...I'll be good. I promise.

The tension builds, and builds until; the closet door CREAKS open, revealing...NOTHING. It's empty. Then an empty LIQUOR BOTTLE comes rolling out. It stops at the young woman's bed.

She hesitates, then leans over to pick up the bottle, when, out of nowhere, a MAN'S HAND reaches from under the bed and grabs the young woman's wrist. She SCREAMS.

A jolt; BROWN EYES flick open, waking...in brightness. Clean, antiseptic, brightness...

INT. HOSPITAL, JOY'S ROOM - DAY.

The eyes belong to a sickly, thin young woman's face. JOY WILLIAMS, 20'S. A DOCTOR sits staring at her. The hospital room is brightly lit. Get-well cards and balloons decorate the surroundings.

DOCTOR

Nightmares?

JOY

yes.

DOCTOR

Are you OK?

(CONTINUED)

JOY
I'm dying, doc. What do you think?

BLACK

TITLE:

JOY

INT. HOSPITAL, EXAM ROOM - DAY - LATER.

A NEEDLE is injected into an arm, blood is drawn up into a syringe.

DOCTOR(O.S.)
I'm sorry, Joy. I know how much you
hate this.

The doctor retracts the syringe. Joy sits on an exam table, sucking her thumb and looking exhausted.

JOY
Did you find a blood match?

DOCTOR
Yes...looks like.

JOY
How long?

DOCTOR
Before we know for certain? Few
hours, max.

Joy COUGHS. She is very sick. The doctor gives her a drink of water. She drinks, BURPS, drinks some more.

JOY
Thanks.

DOCTOR
Get dressed. I'll see you in a few
hours with the results.

He leaves, closing the door behind him. Joy removes the hospital gown and is slipping on her pajamas when the overhead lights begin to FLICKER. She stops and stares at the lights, "What the hell?"

(CONTINUED)

IN THE REAR OF THE EXAM ROOM is a drawn curtain. Something SHIFTS behind it. Joy turns, just in time to see that empty liquor bottle from her nightmare; it ROLLS along the floor and stops at her bare feet. She looks down, staring at the bottle, tears flowing down her face.

A KNOCK; at the door startles her. The lights stop flickering. Joy looks down at the floor - of course, there is no bottle. She wipes her wet face, pulls it together and opens the door, revealing,

MICHAEL

Hey you!

JOY

Hey.

They hug, kiss. A beat; Michael studies her face.

MICHAEL

What is it?

JOY

N-Nothing. I'm tired, Mike. That's all.

She moves past him, in a hurry. Michael lingers in the room, thinking. After a beat, he follows after her.

INT. HOSPITAL, JOY'S ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS.

Joy and Michael enter. She climbs into bed and sucks her thumb. Michael sits at the foot of the bed and massages Joy's feet.

MICHAEL

How you feeling?

JOY

Like I'm dying.

MICHAEL

Well, you're not going to die. I promise you that, sweetie.

JOY

How do you know that, Mike? I'm getting worse. I'm having bad dreams, I see blood whenever I use the bathroom...

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

You're not going to die, baby.

JOY

Do you know something I don't?

MICHAEL

Yeah - I just maybe might.

JOY

Tell me.

MICHAEL

Nope.

Joy playfully kicks him with her foot.

JOY

Mike, quit playing and tell me!

MICHAEL

No can do, boo. It's a secret.

Joy lies back, defeated. She fumes at Michael.

JOY

You're an asshole.

Michael rises, kisses her forehead.

MICHAEL

That I am, lover...that I am.

Joy sucks her thumb, pouting.

MICHAEL

Do you need anything?

she shakes her head. "No."

MICHAEL

I have to go and check on something. I'll be back in a few minutes, OK?

She nods. "OK."

Michael exits. Joy goes into the drawer on the side of her bed. She removes a nail file kit and begins to do her toes.

BLACK

TITLE:

MICHAEL

FADE UP:

INT. HOSPITAL, NATHAN'S ROOM - DAY - LATER.

Michael comes in, stops, sees; on the bed, Nathan, GUZZLING booze from a very familiar liquor bottle. There is a visible bandage on one of his arms. Michael is instantly pissed.

MICHAEL

What the hell are you doing?

NATHAN

What does it look like, Mikey?

Michael STORMS across the room and snatches the bottle.

MICHAEL

You wanted to help joy, here's your chance. But you ain't going to do it shit-faced!

Nathan rises casually from the bed. He gets in Michael's face.

NATHAN

The bottle, son.

Nathan holds out his hand.

MICHAEL

Jesus, man, you're a preacher.

NATHAN

Yeah...the bottle.

MICHAEL

Fuck you! You're supposed to be here for Joy, not your damn self.

Nathan BREATHES a deep SIGH.

(CONTINUED)

NATHAN

Michael, give me back that bottle
and I won't go down to my
daughter's room and explain to her
about your little covert plan to
save her life.

Michael glares at the old man.

NATHAN

How do you think she'd feel if she
knew both you and the doctor were
lying to her?

Michael thinks. Unsure. Finally, he hands over the bottle.

NATHAN

Thank you.

Michael sits on the bed, looking weary.

MICHAEL

Why does she hate you so much,
Nathan? Is it because you really
are nothing more than a stinking
lush?

Nathan LAUGHS, drinks and turns to face Michael.

NATHAN

You haven't got a clue, boy.

MICHAEL

Then give me one, old man.

NATHAN

I love my daughter. That's the only
reason I went along with this
stupidity. If this was the only way
I could help her, then so be it.

The old man drinks deep. Looks at Michael.

NATHAN

But if Joy's never aired out the
dirty laundry to you, then I got to
figure that maybe she doesn't
really want you to know, son.

Michael opens his mouth to respond, then decides to let it
go.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
I talked to the doctor.

NATHAN
Am I a match?

MICHAEL
Won't know for a few hours.

NATHAN
If Joy ever found out that you lied
to her--

MICHAEL
She won't.

NATHAN
If she did--

MICHAEL
SHE WON'T.

Nathan puts up his hands in surrender.

NATHAN
Fair enough.

MICHAEL
If you are a match and Joy has the
transfusion, I want you gone when
it's over. I'm serious. I don't
want you to try and contact
her...EVER.

Nathan drinks the bottle until it's empty.

NATHAN
(grim)
Don't have to worry about me, kid.
Trust me on this. If it's up to me,
nobody will ever be bothered with
old Nathan ever again.

MICHAEL
(could care less)
Good.

Michael rises to leave.

MICHAEL
I got to get back to Joy.

He heads for the door, when Nathan calls him. Michael looks
back.

(CONTINUED)

NATHAN
(sincere)
Thank you...

MICHAEL
Just...remember what I told you.

Michael leaves. After he is gone, Nathan breaks down into tears.

INT. HOSPITAL, JOY'S ROOM - DAY - LATER.

On the bed, Joy shivers in her terrible sleep. The nail file and polish lie next to her. Michael stands over her, heartbroken. He wipes her sweaty brow and kisses it. He walks away to the

PRIVATE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS.

Michael comes in and shuts the door. He looks at his weathered reflection, turns on the faucet and SPLASHES cold water on his face.

OUT IN JOY'S ROOM

Nathan enters, still carrying that familiar liquor bottle - although now it is empty. He goes to Joy's bedside, staggering slightly. He looks at his dying daughter.

NATHAN
(horrified)
Oh my God...

He leans over Joy to set the bottle on the nightstand. Joy's eyes open, seeing; the infamous bottle. Her fingers close over the nail file.

As soon as Nathan sets the bottle down, he suddenly FREEZES in place, spooked for some, as yet, unseen reason.

JOY(O.S.)
What the hell are you doing here?

IN THE PRIVATE BATHROOM

Michael is now on his knees, in front of the toilet. Trying to pray. It is visibly awkward for him.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

(prayer)

I know that I've said that I don't believe in you. That I'm an...atheist. But right now if you are real and if you can hear me...then, I could really use your help.

OUT IN THE ROOM

Joy has the point of her nail file under the shelf of Nathan's chin. She looks hyper intense. Nathan is sober with fear.

NATHAN

'And said, Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee...'

JOY

Genesis, chapter twenty-four, verse twenty-three... I should kill you for coming here, Nathan!

Nathan swallows. He doesn't move a muscle.

NATHAN

If you want to do it, little girl, then do it. I deserve it.

JOY

Damn right you deserve it!

Michael emerges from the bathroom, sees the situation and reacts calmly.

MICHAEL

(to Joy)

Hey, boo? What you doing?

JOY

Nothing much...

NATHAN

Yeah, Mike, just a little father/daughter time.

Michael goes to the bedside.

MICHAEL

OK, lets just everybody chill. Lets all be happy people here. I'm happy. (to Nathan) You happy?

(CONTINUED)

NATHAN
(not)
Hysterical.

Joy is not having it, however. She is deadly serious.

JOY
Mike, this isn't my happy face.
This is my '*Daughter About To
Commit Patricide*' face. So BACK
OFF!

MICHAEL
Joy, listen to me for a minute; you
can't kill him.

JOY
Sure I can.

MICHAEL
No you can't, darlin.

JOY
Why?

Michael hesitates.

NATHAN
Better tell her, Michael. Girl's
getting real twitchy here. Besides,
she should know.

Joy is confused, and sick. She continues to COUGH. Her
condition worsening every second.

JOY
Tell me what, Mike?

MICHAEL
Nathan's the reason you're probably
not going to die.

JOY
What're you--

MICHAEL
It's his blood, boo. Nathan's blood
can probably save you.

Joy shakes her head, "No."

JOY
(not having it)
Bullshit!

NATHAN
(to Joy)
He's telling you the truth--

JOY
Shut up! You shut the hell up!

A long beat of silence. Finally, Joy lowers the file. Nathan steps away from the bed. Joy gives Michael a sever look, she's been betrayed.

JOY
You brought this *monster* here,
Michael? All this time and you've
been lying to me!

MICHAEL
It's your blood type...it's very
rare, Joy! There was no other
donors...

JOY
You son of a bitch.

MICHAEL
I'm not apologizing. I did what I
had to do. If you don't get this
transfusion, Joy, you'll--

JOY
I don't care!
(calms down)
I don't care. Michael, you have no
idea what that man did to me.

She rises from the bed, and turns away from them, COUGHING. Michael goes to her. He tries to hug her, but she puts up her hands and steps away quickly.

JOY
Don't touch me! I can't believe you
brought him here.

NATHAN
Baby, I only wanted to help save
you...

JOY

Save me?

She grabs the empty liquor bottle, THROWS it at Nathan. It hits the wall instead, SMASH!

JOY

You go to hell! I don't need a goddamn *child molester* as my savior!

There it is. It's out. Michael is stunned.

MICHAEL

(to Joy)

What did you say?

Joy turns to Michael, totally broken and in tears.

JOY

My mother died when I was a little girl. And this son of a bitch got drunk the day after her funeral, and he...he...

Michael turns to Nathan.

NATHAN

I raped her. And I've been dying inside ever since. Please believe that.

MICHAEL

You sick bastard! You *raped* your own daughter? Right after your wife just died?

Nathan is silent. What can he say?

Murder fills Michael's eyes. He has to visibly force himself to calm down. After he does, he turns to Joy.

MICHAEL

Baby, I am so sorry. I-I didn't know. Please, forgive me.

Joy can say nothing. She is too broken up.

MICHAEL

But he still might be able to help.

JOY
(looks up, stunned)
Come again?

MICHAEL
I know he's a piece of shit.
Regardless, whatever he did to you
it's not worth you dying, Joy. It's
not worth me losing you.

She turns away. Emotional. Sick. Confused.

NATHAN
I just...Joy, I am so--

Michael turns on him, face hard as granite rock.

MICHAEL
You apologize to her and I will
beat you to death, old man. *Get
out.*

Nathan lingers, hesitates. Finally, he just leaves.

Michael turns to Joy. The emotions are way too high for her; she starts COUGHING harshly. Michael moves to help her, Joy SPINS suddenly and SLUGS HIM IN THE MOUTH. Michael stumbles back, mouth bloody.

JOY
You're a liar! How on Earth could
you lie to *me*, Michael?

MICHAEL
I get that, boo. I get that you
really hate my guts right about
now. But Nathan is probably the
only one who can save you.

JOY
Then you know what? I'd rather *die!*

As if on cue, she starts COUGHING UP BLOOD uncontrollably. Joy is about to collapse, Michael rushes to catch her. Joy has a violent SEIZURE in his arms. Michael SCREAMS.

BLACK

FADE UP:

INT. HOSPITAL, NATHAN'S ROOM - DAY - LATER

A PULSE MONITOR BEEPS away faintly. Nathan is hooked up to the machine. Joy enters the room, carrying a brand new bottle of the now infamous liquor. She is dressed in her street clothes now, and looking stronger, more healthy. She goes to Nathan's bedside.

On the bed, Nathan sleeps. Joy stares down at him. She speaks to him in a soft voice.

JOY

Why? Why did you do it, daddy? A father is supposed to protect his little girl from monsters...not *become* one.

Tears are flowing freely down her face. Suddenly Nathan's hand gently closes over her wrist. His eyes open. He is very weak.

NATHAN

You look...much better, little girl.

Joy says nothing, face unreadable.

NATHAN

I heard what you just said. I'm sorry I don't have the answers you need.

JOY

I guess it really doesn't matter much anymore, daddy.

NATHAN

You called me a monster...

JOY

Because you are a monster. Except I really don't think it's your fault anymore...it's the drinking. As a man of God you always said that liquor was the devil's nectar.

NATHAN

And I was right, wasn't I, little girl?

(CONTINUED)

JOY

Yes...you were right, daddy.

NATHAN

Michael called me. He told me that I was a blood match. He told me you had had a...

JOY

Seizure.

NATHAN

I...rushed back over here. We did an emergency...transfusion. S-Saved you.

Silence between them. Joy holds up the bottle.

JOY

Brought you some more of the devils sweet nectar.

Nathan looks at the bottle, smiles. Joy opens it.

JOY

Thought I might have a drink with you.

She sits beside him. They share the bottle, as they talk.

JOY

I can't forgive you for what you did, daddy...I won't.

NATHAN

(fading)

I know. And it's OK. Maybe you shouldn't. Some things are best left unforgiven. Maybe in time...well, who knows. Just don't ever hate yourself, little girl. It's never worth it. *I'm* never worth it.

Joy fights tears. The liquor helps. She drinks deep. Nathan is too weak to hold the bottle, she holds it to his lips.

NATHAN

So tired now. S-Sleepy. Will you just help me, Joy?

(CONTINUED)

JOY

What do you mean 'help you'?

NATHAN

I'm tired, baby. Tired of living with the guilt of what I did to you. Help me. Help me to go to sleep...for good.

Joy is speechless.

NATHAN

If you don't want to it's OK. Maybe you could just hold my hand then. At least until I fall asleep. I have bad dreams sometimes.

JOY

Me too, daddy. I'm so tired of bad dreams.

NATHAN

I wish I could make the bad dreams go away. Will you sit with me awhile?

JOY

OK, daddy.

NATHAN

Thank you. Maybe say a little prayer. That helps with the nightmares sometimes, baby.

Nathan drifts off to sleep. Joy leans forward and plants a long, tear-filled kiss on Nathan's lips. She leans back, looks at her sleeping father.

JOY

Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand...

Joy rises as she speaks, carefully pulling one of Nathan's pillows from behind his head.

JOY

The poor comitteth himself unto thee...

She takes a long minute, CRYING hard now. Squeezing the pillow to her chest.

(CONTINUED)

JOY

Thou art the helper of the
fatherless. Psalm, ten-fourteen.

(beat)

I think I know how to make the bad
dreams go away now, daddy.

Joy lifts the pillow over Nathan's sleeping face.

WHITE OUT.

The steady *BEEP...BEEP...BEEP* of Nathan's pulse monitor is
heard until; *BEEEEP!* Nathan's pulse flat lines.

END.