

AFTER

by Glenn Alterman

Copyright © MMXIX by Glenn Alterman, All rights reserved.

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Heuer Publishing LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Heuer Publishing LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Heuer Publishing LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Heuer Publishing LLC.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Heuer Publishing LLC.

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

AFTER**by Glenn Alterman**

SYNOPSIS: Terry's husband has recently died. She is at the funeral home. After the memorial she stops Tom in the lobby to tell him how moved she was by what he said at the memorial. As they talk they both realize they have a lot in common.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(1 female, 1 male)*

TERRY (f) A middle aged woman. She is down to earth, good hearted, and full of life. *(44 lines)*

TOM (m)..... An attractive man, in his thirties or forties, polite, reserved, sensitive and soft-spoken. *(43 lines)*

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: A small family room, right outside the funeral parlor in a Jewish synagogue.

AT START: *The waiting room of a funeral parlor. TERRY walks over to TOM.*

TERRY: My God, that was...!

TOM: What?

TERRY: Eloquent!

TOM: Really?

TERRY: I just had to tell you!

TOM: Thank you.

TERRY: Before you left, I needed you to know, I was... so touched.

TOM: Really?

TERRY: You had his wife in tears.

TOM: I did?

TERRY: Everyone in there was so moved.

TOM: They were?

TERRY: How did you know him?

TOM: Hank?

TERRY: Yeah.

TOM: I... Well actually I hardly knew him at all, just from the gym.

TERRY: The gym?

TOM: Yeah, one time when I was working out with weights, he spotted me.

TERRY: Spotted?

TOM: Yeah, stood there for support, to make sure I didn't drop the weights.

TERRY: Oh.

TOM: So I really hardly knew him at all.

TERRY: But what you said up there just now; way you talked about him. Was like... was like you really knew him, like you were *brothers*.

TOM: No, hardly. ...How did you know Hank?

TERRY: Me? Well, to be honest I didn't really know him at all.

TOM: No?

TERRY: See, I do volunteer work here at the synagogue. I was just helping out this morning, saw the crowd and kind of moseyed in. Stood in the back, and heard you talking and was *mesmerized* by what you had to say. It was so insightful, so kind.

TOM: So you really didn't know him that well either?

TERRY: No, not at all. But certainly seems like he was popular.

TOM: Yeah, lot of people here. ...Well, was nice talking to you.

TERRY: Aren't you going to go to the shiva call at his home.

TOM: Shiva? No, I'm not Jewish, so...

TERRY: Oh that doesn't matter, come.

TOM: I've got to get back to work. You're going to go?

TERRY: I think so.

TOM: But you just said you hardly...

TERRY: Okay, alright, little confession. This isn't the first time I've gone to a funeral of a person I didn't really know. Do it all the time.

TOM: You crash people's funerals?

TERRY: Well I wouldn't exactly call it crash. But well, yeah, sometimes. It's just... Well, my husband died last year and we had his service here and... I don't know, I just keep coming back. And if there's a funeral, like today, I sometimes just—stop in. Generally, people don't ask who I am. And I get to share some sorrow with them, to commiserate. If they do ask, I just tell them I knew the deceased from the synagogue. S'just a little lie. Anyway, I really like going to funerals.

TOM: You do?

TERRY: Oh God, yes! You learn so much, and not only about the deceased. People at funerals are, I don't know, so open, honest, *alive*. All their feelings are right there at their finger tips. No pretense, phoniness. Kinda ironic, huh? People being so alive at a funeral. ...So you said you really didn't know Hank that well.

TOM: (*A little uncomfortable.*) No, I never really said very much to him.

TERRY: But you know his wife?

TOM: No.

TERRY: (*Looks at TOM.*) Can I ask you something?

TOM: Sure.

TERRY: (*Softly, a confidence.*) Were you his... *friend*?

TOM: Friend?

TERRY: Maybe I'm way out of line here, but I think you know what I mean by his *friend*.

TOM: If what I think you're saying... no, no, I wasn't his *friend*.

TERRY: I'm sorry, I didn't mean...

TOM: I should go.

TERRY: (*Stopping him.*) But you're gay, right?

TOM: What? Yeah, so? What if I am?

TERRY: My husband, he was gay too.

TOM: Really?

TERRY: (*Smiling.*) Yeah, gay, gay, gay. Gay as a goose—whatever that means. And we were married, Sidney and me, nearly thirty-two years. And let me tell you, you couldn't ask for a better husband.

TOM: Hm.

TERRY: We never really talked about it, but, well, he knew I knew. A *wink* every once in a while. Times were different back then, there was no need to talk about things like that. 'Sides why ruin a good thing, right? And let me tell ya, I loved being his wife. Every day with Sidney was a blessing. He was a good, caring man. Anyway, I feel people talk too much today. Talking's overrated. I hated Oprah and all those stupid talk shows today. People always needing to reveal every... Sometimes what really matters... It's the *not saying*, y'know? The things people don't need to say to each other. The, I don't know, *unspoken*, that's most meaningful.

TOM: You really miss him, don't you?

TERRY: (*Sincerely, a slight sadness.*) More than you can imagine. Sidney was my... He was more than just my husband, he was my *companion*. Friends and lovers, eh, they come and go. But a *companion*, that's someone so special, someone who's always there for you. We went everywhere together, traveled, did everything. We loved being in each other's company, made each other laugh. Incredible, lucky, love. (*A beat, smiling.*) Y'know, for someone who just said talking's overrated, I'm going on like we're old beer buddies, blah-blah-blah. Sorry, told you, funerals. (*Shaking TOM'S hand.*) Anyway, I won't take up anymore of your time, was very nice talking to you...?

TOM: Tom.

TERRY: Terry. You seem like a very nice man, a good listener.

TOM: (*A beat.*) There was a steam room at our gym.

TERRY: What?

TOM: Where Hank and I worked out. Wasn't very well lit, this steam room, and it was always filled with, well, steam. And one time, was right after that time he helped me with the weights.

TERRY: (*Smiling.*) When he *spotted* you?

TOM: (*Smiling.*) When he spotted me, yeah. After, after I finished my set I said something like “Thank you, appreciate it”. He smiled and I left, went to the locker room. Then, a little later we sort of bumped into each other...

TERRY: ...in the steam room.

TOM: Right. Accidentally, we accidentally brushed up against each other. Told you it wasn't very well lit in there. And we both stood there, just.... Didn't move, didn't say anything. Just looked at each other and... Then, almost at the same time, we touched. Just... touched each other. My hand on his shoulder, his hand on my chest. We stood there, touching, staring at each other. Didn't say anything. Was just silence, except for the sound of the steam. —Jesus, I have no idea why I'm telling you

TERRY: Go on, please. And so, after?

TOM: After? Nothing, we just touched some more, face, hips, everything. Slowly, gently. And that was it, that was all. We left, without saying a word. But... well, eventually it became a regular... The steam room, we'd meet there and... I know this might sound crazy, but every time we met it was more meaningful. The touches, more caring, sensitive. Then kisses, caresses, embraces. Then holding, just holding each other. He... Hank was a very loving man. He had a lot of love in him. I know that sounds... Especially since we never really said anything except “Hi” and “Bye”. But I knew it, could feel it; I *knew* him. And sure, sometimes we did have sex but...

TERRY: (*Smiling, knowingly.*) The sex wasn't important.

TOM: No, not at all.

TERRY: Didn't anybody ever walk in?

TOM: We both worked out at off hours, hardly anybody else at the gym. I guess there was always the danger. Maybe that was part of it.

TERRY: How long did this...?

TOM: I don't know, a long time, every week. And I always looked forward... But it always seemed so strange to me how little I really knew about him; I mean about his life.

TERRY: Sounds like you both knew more about each other without words, than a lot of people I know who talk all the time.

TOM: Well I didn't know he was married.

TERRY: *(A smile, softly.)* You miss him, don't you?

TOM: *(Softly, sadly.)* More than you can imagine. More than anyone I've ever known. I miss our meetings so much. —I quit the gym. *(A moment of awkwardness. He looks at TERRY, then looking around.)* Well, looks like people are starting to leave. I really should get back to work.

TERRY: I should go too, yeah. Tom, what you said about him up there today touched a lot of people in that room, especially his wife, believe me. Just that you got up there in front of all those strangers... Was very brave.

TOM: I just... I felt like I needed to come here today, that I had to. I certainly didn't plan on talking. But it's like something just lifted me out of my chair and next thing I knew...

TERRY: Well, if nothing else, you got to meet me, the loony lady that crashes funerals. ...I should let you go. Hey, if you're ever in the neighborhood, stop by. I'm here at the synagogue, between nine and twelve every day. *(Smiling.)* Who knows, maybe you and me we can catch a nice funeral together.

TOM: Yeah, sure, maybe. That would be nice. I enjoyed meeting you Terry, I mean it. *(Smiling.)* You're a good listener.

TERRY: I hope to see you again soon. We have something, well, someone, in common. We're sort of like *family* you could say. ...Stop by sometime. —Be well.

TOM politely shakes TERRY'S hand. She smiles, leans in, gently kisses him on the cheek. He looks at her, smiles, and leaves. She stands there, watches him leave, then turns, looks back at the funeral parlor. As the lights slowly fade.

THE END