

SPILT MILK

by Glenn Alterman

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ISBN: 978-1-61588-456-0

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SYNOPSIS: It's three in the morning. Edna Kaplan is sitting by the window drinking tea. Her husband, Murry, wakes up and sees her sitting there. The more he inquires why she's up so early, the more annoyed she gets. Finally, frustrated, Murry gets up, makes some tea for himself, returns and decides to confront her. Secrets are revealed that may threaten their relationship.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

EDNA KAPLAN (f)Late 60's to 80's. Although at times Edna can be a real pain in the neck, she is by nature good hearted and full of life. *(102 lines)*

MURRY KAPLAN (m)Late 60's to 80's. He is a hard worker and a lovingly, devoted husband to Edna. *(102 lines)*

DURATION: 15-20 minutes.

TIME: 4 A.M. on a warm June morning.

SETTING: The Kaplan's one bedroom apartment in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

SOUND EFFECTS: Tea kettle whistle.

AT START: 4 A.M. a summer evening. EDNA is seated quietly in a chair, drinking some tea, looking out the opened bedroom window. The room is quiet, dark. Some early morning street noise. MURRY, her husband, still in bed, wakes up, sees EDNA, watches her for a couple of moments.

MURRY: (Softly.) What are you doin'?

EDNA: (Slightly startled, turning to MURRY.) Hm? Wha'? Nothing.

MURRY: (Softly.) What do you mean, nothing?

EDNA: I'm sitting.

MURRY: I see your sitting, but what are you doing over there?

EDNA: (Slightly annoyed.) Nothing, sitting. Can't a person sit by a window by herself?

MURRY: (Turns a small lamp on by the bed, looks at the clock.) It's four in the morning.

EDNA: So?

MURRY: So what are you doin' up, what's the matter?

EDNA: Nothing's the matter! Leave me alone, turn off the light.

MURRY: (He doesn't.) What are you...?

EDNA: D'you mind, huh?! You mind if I have a quiet cup of tea by myself?!

MURRY: Four in the morning ya felt like having tea?

EDNA: That's right! Now you know, go back to sleep.

MURRY: (Starting to get up.) What are you kiddin' me?

EDNA: Murry, please, forget I'm here, go back to bed!

MURRY: (Stretching, throws the blankets off of him.) Eh, I'm up, what's the difference?

EDNA: MUR-RY!

MURRY: What?

EDNA: You gotta get up soon, open the store.

MURRY: Well I'm up now, and I'll open the store later.

EDNA: You know how you get. You'll be tired all day, complaining how you don't feel good; your heart.

MURRY: My heart'll be fine.

EDNA: Murry, please!

MURRY: (Sitting up.) What are you carrying on about?!

EDNA: (A new tact, softly.) Please, just do me a favor, turn around, go back to bed.

MURRY: (*Smiling, standing.*) Why? I'm up, see? Up!

EDNA: (*Exasperated.*) DID YOU EVER?!!

MURRY: What's the matter with you?

EDNA: (*Losing it.*) Look at this man! Look how he don't leave me alone! Never!! For over fifty years, s'always Murry here, Murry there! Everytime I turn around—you're there. Murry-Murry-Murry! Behind me, on top of me! S'like clockwork how you haunt me! I can't BREATHE without you always on top of me all the time! NOW GO BACK TO BED SO I CAN BREATHE!!

MURRY: (*After a beat, softly.*) Is the kettle still hot?

EDNA: What?!

MURRY: The water in the kettle, is it still hot?

EDNA: (*Exhausted.*) I don't know.

MURRY: You're very nervous lately Edna, you know that?

EDNA: You, you make me nervous! You make me a nervous wreck in a snake pit!

MURRY: Couldn't the doctor give you something? Go take some aspirin or something.

EDNA: Go to hell!

MURRY: (*Starts to go to the kitchen.*) Did'cha eat all the donuts?
(*EDNA doesn't respond. Stopping.*) Ed-na?

EDNA: (*Turning to him.*) What?!

MURRY: The donuts, did'cha leave me any?

EDNA: You got eyes, look for yourself!

MURRY: (*Going to the kitchen.*) Eh, you and your moods.

EDNA: (*Calling to him.*) An' don't make me no crumbs in there, I just cleaned up. We don't need no roaches.

MURRY: (*Calling back to her.*) I'll wear gloves!

EDNA: (*Calling to him.*) Don't be such a smarty pants. Save your comedy for the Catskills! (*Turns back towards the window, looks out again and takes a sip of her tea.*)

MURRY: (*After a moment, calling from inside.*) So where are they?
(*EDNA doesn't respond, a little louder.*) Edna, where are they?

EDNA: (*Calling to MURRY.*) Who?!

MURRY: (*Calling.*) The donuts, where'd you hide 'em?

EDNA: They're there! Open your eyes, look!

MURRY: (*A beat.*) Where?

EDNA: (*Becoming agitated again.*) Think Einstein, where would donuts be?!

MURRY: (*A beat, softer.*) I can't find 'em. (*Then, calling.*) Ed-na.

EDNA: (*Slams her cup of tea on the window sill.*) GOD DAMN IT! LOOK HOW I CAN'T...! (*Stomps into the kitchen, yelling.*) What are you a stranger here?! You can't find donuts now?!

MURRY: (*Inside the kitchen.*) I looked.

EDNA: (*Inside the kitchen.*) HERE! RIGHT HERE, SEE?!

MURRY: (*Softly.*) Oh, there they are.

EDNA: Right in front of your eyes! HERE'S YOUR GOD-DAMN DONUTS! (*The sound of a box of donuts slamming on the counter.*)

MURRY: (*Softly.*) Thank you.

EDNA: (*Entering the bedroom, still in a rage.*) Man's helpless! Can't find a thing by himself! If I weren't here, he'd starve! A crippled, blind person, can find things better. How long he's lived and the man can't find a god-damned box of donuts in his own house! Imagine, a donut! (*Sits back at the window, grabs her cup of tea spills some on herself.*) Damn it!

MURRY slowly walks back into the bedroom, a donut on a plate. He looks at EDNA. She scowls at him.

EDNA: A plate! You hadda use a plate?! Napkins weren't good enough?! More dishes I gotta wash?!

MURRY: (*Losing it.*) SHUT UP ALREADY! Stop with your yelling! You startin' to sound like a fish wife! Look, I don't know what's buggin' you. Wish I did, but I don't. But whatever it is, don't take it out on me! I'm-not-in-the-mood. S'too early for this crap! Just wanna sit here in peace and eat my donut. In peace, understand?!

EDNA turns back to the window, fixes her robe, looks out, and resumes drinking what's left of her tea. MURRY sits on the edge of the bed. The room is quiet. The only sounds we hear are some early morning street noise, perhaps a car passing. MURRY takes a couple of bites of his donut, watches EDNA. Then softly...

MURRY: So now, calmly, tell me, what is it? What's wrong? (*EDNA ignores him. Then sweetly, cooing.*) Ed-na. (*EDNA doesn't respond. Even more playfully.*) Eeed-na.

EDNA: (*Not turning around, but softly.*) What?

MURRY: I'm talking to you.

EDNA: (*Giving in a little, a softer edge.*) Eat'cha donut. And don't make me no crumbs on the bed.

MURRY takes a few more bites of his donut while watching her. The room is quiet again.

MURRY: Did ya see your sister today?

EDNA: (*Not turning.*) Martha? Of course I did.

MURRY: How is she?

EDNA: (*Quickly turning to him.*) How is she?! What kina...?! (*Stopping herself, then.*) Don't ask.

MURRY: Tell me.

EDNA: The same. Same as always. Same as yesterday, day before. No better, no worse. Just stares up at the ceiling. Lies there in that hospital bed an' talks... Talks to I don't know who. Angels on the ceiling or something. Who the hell knows who she talks to anymore. Who can even understand her? Just babbles like a baby. Maybe she's preparing, who knows, gettin' ready to go. Just talks an' talks in like baby talk. A conversation to nobody, thin air.

MURRY: Hm, shame. She know you today?

EDNA: Nah, she don't know nobody no more. But I'll tell you Murry, there was a second today, just a second, where from the corner of her eye I saw like a glimmer, y'know? She gave me a look and it was just like old times. For just one moment I thought maybe she's gonna snap out of it. Maybe a miracle, Murry. Say, "I was just pretendin' Edna, foolin' around. S'gonna be okay again." Just like old times. And she'd throw the blankets back, jump outta bed, say, "Come on Edna, let's go shopping!" And we'd grab our bags and run downtown like we used to. But was just a look. Meant nothin' at all.

MURRY: What does the doctor say?

EDNA: Usually he never says anything. But today he did. Touched me on the shoulder while I was sitting there. Said, "Soon, Edna". S'all he said; "Soon." ...Remember how stunning she was?

MURRY: Sure, some doll. Who could forget? Both a ya's, knockouts. Jean Harlow look-a-likes.

EDNA: (*Slightly coy.*) I don't know about...

MURRY: You kiddin' me? All the guys on Dumont Avenue, whenever you'd pass, they'd say, "Here they come. Here come the gorgeous girls."

EDNA: They said that, really?

MURRY: All the time. I remember when you two come into Tommy Ryans that day. How all them heads turned, like the Queen had entered.

EDNA: Who can remember?

MURRY: I do. Every guy did an about face, all of 'em looking just at you.

EDNA: Yeah? All I remember was how scared I was. And how it stunk in there. Old beer and cigarettes. Place needed a good cleaning.

MURRY: Was a bar, Edna, what do you want?

EDNA: My knees were shaking I was so scared.

MURRY: Scared or not I couldn't take my eyes off a ya. You were some beauty.

EDNA: Hm. What about Martha?

MURRY: What about her?

EDNA: What'd you think of her?

MURRY: Martha? Eh, like a watered down version of you.

EDNA: Well she don't look like Jean Harlow now. She's all skin and bones. S'nothing left. I just sit there Murry, and....

MURRY: Why do you go so often?

EDNA: What?

MURRY: Why do you put yourself through that every day?

EDNA: You gotta ask?! She's my sister, what do you think! What kina question...?! What am I supposed to do, desert her?!

MURRY: No, but...

EDNA: (*Getting herself worked up again.*) Who else she got, huh?! Who Murry, who?! Who else she got in this world? Neighbors?! Nurses?! Who she got, except me?! What kina question's that to ask?!

MURRY: I was just tryin'...

EDNA: Well just stop, okay?! I know how you feel about her. S'no secret you never liked her.

MURRY: Who says?

EDNA: (*Looking directly at him.*) MUR-RY!

MURRY: What?!

EDNA: Just stop!

MURRY: Stop what?! (*Louder.*) Don't put words in my mouth!

EDNA: (*Indicating the opened window.*) Shh!! Stop your yellin'! We got neighbors, y'know! (*Loudly whispering.*) You ever once lifted a finger to help her, huh?! You ever visit her?!

MURRY: Hey, I gotta business to run. Gotta put food on this table.

EDNA: MUR-RY! I know how you feel, I always did.

MURRY: What are you...?

EDNA: Stop your acting! I know everything.

MURRY: What, everything, what are you talkin' about?

EDNA: (*Looks at MURRY.*) Martha told me. (*Turns and looks out the window again.*)

MURRY: Told you what? What'd she say?! (*EDNA doesn't respond.*)
WHAT DID SHE SAY?!!

EDNA: (*Slamming the window down, loudly whispering.*) Will you stop your yelling?! Everybody gotta know my business here?!

MURRY: What did...?

EDNA: Nothing, okay?! Forget about it.

MURRY: Don't give me your nothing, forget about it! What?!

EDNA: Eat'cha donut.

MURRY: (*Puts the plate on the bed, rushes over to her.*) What did Martha say?!

EDNA: What's the difference? S'ancient history.

MURRY: I want to know!

EDNA: You wanna know?!

MURRY: Yeah!

EDNA: Alright, was that time at Rosemonts, okay?

MURRY: Rosemonts? Rosemonts gotta be, what, forty years ago?

EDNA: So?

MURRY: So what happened there?

EDNA: Ya don't remember?

MURRY: Remember what?! I don't remember what happened in my store yesterday. How am I supposed to remember what happened in some bungalow colony, over forty years ago?

EDNA: Well I do, I remember.

SFX: tea kettle whistles in the kitchen.

EDNA: Go get'cha tea.

MURRY: What...?

EDNA: Go get'cha tea!

MURRY: (*Storming off.*) Jesus!

EDNA watches him leave. She anxiously takes a sip of her tea, looks out the window. MURRY comes rushing back in carrying his tea.

EDNA: (*Turning, looking at MURRY.*) Did you put the tea bags back?

MURRY: S'all put away! Now what did Martha tell you happened up there at Rosemonts?

EDNA: We were starting supper. Herbie was settin' the table, I was in the kitchen makin' some nice potato pancakes,...

MURRY: (*Rushing her along.*) Yeah, yeah!

EDNA: And you and Martha both went off to the woods to pick some blueberries for desert.

MURRY: (*Hurrying her.*) Yeah, and?!

EDNA: (*Slyly.*) Remember what happened in the woods that day, with you and Martha?

MURRY: Oh I remember; I remember good!

EDNA: Well Martha told me everything.

MURRY: Oh did she?

EDNA: Yeah.

MURRY: And just what did your sister Martha say?

EDNA: You know exact...

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