

**FORGIVING, ATONING**  
**Drama for before the sermon**  
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DAVID: You've heard about bad neighbors, right? You've heard about people who are crappy to live next to? Well, let me tell you, you haven't heard anything until you have heard what happened to *me*. My neighbor—he ran over my dog and wouldn't even apologize and now I have to see him every day and he just gives me this little sneer. I would like to...well, I can't even *say* what I'd like to do to him.....

MELISSA: I have this partner you see, well, I *had* this partner. We were together for eight years, eight years, and then she decided, after all we had been through, that her work was more important than me. This job came along and she knew I couldn't move and she went ahead and took the job. She said it would be just for a while, she knew I couldn't move. I couldn't leave the practice I developed all these years. And she just left. Two weeks later she is gone, half the home we made together was three states away...Just like that. She asked me to visit, she said she would come back, but no...NO.

DAVID: I get up in the night and I think about him—Donnie, that's my neighbor's name. Sometimes I turn off the lights and I pull up the blinds and I just watch his house. I think about what it would be like to throw something across those few feet and break one of his windows. One night I even went out to see if I could let the air out of the tires of his car, his car that ran over Jerry, my Irish Setter. His car was in the garage—but I keep watching, I'm up nights watching.

MELISSA She said that we could keep being a couple. but it would just be different. Maybe not forever, but different —lots of couples live across distance she said. But that wasn't what I wanted. In my mind, if you are a couple, you live in the same place, in the same house, in the same community and this is the one I have been in for ten years. She knew that, she knew I wasn't going to leave.

DAVID: This guy, this Donnie, he ruined my life. Not only did he kill my poor old dog who was blind as a bat and just so gentle, but he also has ruined my health. I am up watching, as I said, and I just don't get any sleep. And even if I did, I think I dream about him because when I wake up, I've been clenching my jaw. I mean, if you think this guy hasn't just killed me, my dentist says I cracked two teeth.....

MELISSA She said we never talked about it, said she never made the commitment to stay here forever, but she knew me and she knew that wasn't something I would ever change. All my roots are here. And then she just pulls up and leaves. It was so unfair. It was like she couldn't see what I needed at all.....

DAVID: People say I should forgive him but I never will.

MELISSA: My friends say it is time to move on, but how can I “move on.” She took half my life with her. I am supposed to just “get over” that?

DAVID: My blood pressure is in the watch-out-for-a-stroke zone now—of course we all know that pets are good for reducing stress and dear old Donnie took care of that, didn't he?

MELISSA: I don't even go out anymore. The friends we used to have as a couple, I don't even want to see anymore.

DAVID: He ruined my life. He keeps ruining it every day.

MELISSA: My friends say I should forgive her, that this is hurting me more than it is hurting her. Which might be true since she has a new partner. It's only been two years and she has just moved on. And then they say I can use this to look at what my part was in causing our breakup. I didn't have a part. I was just the victim when she moved on....

DAVID: I'm just going to keep watching and remembering. They think I should forgive—and condone what he did?

MELISSA: Forgive so we can "be friends" again and pretend she didn't rip my heart out? I don't think so.

DAVID: Why should *I* give *him* the satisfaction of forgiving him?