

There For You

David Conforte





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THERE FOR YOU

By David Conforte

CAST

JESSE LOGAN: A romantically sensitive 65-year old songwriter.
RAY ROMEO: A 65-year old pop singer who gambles on many levels.
JOAN "JOANIE" TORRINGTON: Jesse's 65-year old former high school sweetheart.
KAREN WYLER: Joanie's outspoken 20-year old granddaughter.
TAMI DONDIEGO: Joanie's 65-year old friend who has an unusual problem.
MICHELLE DUPONT: The Torrington's flirtatious 40-year old chef.
SAMANTHA "SAMMIE" SPADE: A private detective over 30.
VERONICA MARTIN: Ray's 65-year old former high school sweetheart.
ZACHARY DAVID "ZACH" JOYNER: Karen's 22-year old would-be boyfriend.
ELEANOR ROSS: Karen's 45-year old mother.
WALTER J. TORRINGTON: Joanie's 65-year old husband.
PAT CARPENTER: A customer over 40.
COCKTAIL LOUNGE PATRONS: Male and female as required (optional).

Place

Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Time

16 weeks during the summer.

ACT ONE Scene 1

Setting: The Golden Oldies cocktail lounge in Miami Beach in June.

At Rise: JESSE sits at a piano. RAY stands nearby holding a hand microphone. PAT sits at a table. PATRONS occupy all other tables A/R.

RAY: (sings while JESSE plays)

You can bet your bottom dollar

I'm in love with you.

Bet your bottom dollar

It's true.

You will have my love as your cover

When your chips are few.

*And I'm betting you will discover
That you love me too.*

*Love's a great big gamble
And the stakes are high.
When the winner takes all,
Then all losers cry.
There's no doubt. My love is a sure thing
And your love is too.
Bet your bottom dollar.
Listen to me holler.
Bet your bottom dollar,
I love you.*

(PAT and PATRONS applaud)

RAY: Thank you. This is Ray Romeo and Jesse Logan saying, "Don't go away. We'll be back after a short break. *(RAY puts the mic on the piano. As he and JESSE go to PAT's table, she stands up)* Hello, Pat. Did you enjoy our show?

PAT: I loved it. I want to hire you for my high school class reunion party. My cousin Helen was right about you two. You performed at her 50th class reunion party last June. She was the sour-faced lady.

JESSE: I don't recall her. We meet so many, uh, sour-faced ladies.

PAT: She told me she kept saying over and over, "Why am I here?"

RAY: Oh, that sour-faced lady. How is she?

PAT: She is doing wonderfully now. She didn't want to be there because she had been recently widowed. But, I and many of her friends insisted it would do her good and we were right. That night she met her old high school sweetheart who had never married. He helped her through her sorrow and four months later they were married. Now, she smiles all the time.

JESSE: That's some story.

PAT: Can you imagine falling in love for the second time at age sixty-eight? It proves you're never too old for love.

JESSE: I guess not.

PAT: Thank you again. I have your agent's card. I'll call him to make the arrangements.
Goodbye. *(she exits)*

RAY: Did you hear that?

JESSE: Yes, I did. A sixty-eight-year-old sour-faced lady met her high school sweetheart, married him and now she smiles all day long. I wonder why. So, what?

RAY: So, that gave me a terrific idea.

JESSE: Don't tell me you have another 'get rich quick' plan.

RAY: This is different. Being in the right place at the right time isn't pure luck. Smart people improve their odds by positioning themselves to take advantage of lucky breaks.
(sings)

What if I look up an old high school sweetheart?

What if I find out she's wealthy?

And what if it's said the guy that she wed

Just happens to be not too healthy?

What if I meet her, let's say accident'ly?

What if she says, "You should phone me?"

Then, what if I find her guy is confined?

Say, what if she tells me she's lonely?

What if I tell her I'm ready

To help any way that I can.

What if I say, "Anytime, anywhere,

Whenever you need me, I'll always be there."

What if I'm there when her husband expires?

Wouldn't she need consolation?

Then, what should I do if she wanted to

Engage in a sweet conversation?

If on that day when she's over her sorrow,

Won't it be me that she turns to?

What if, in due time, she says that she's mine?

*What else can I say but I love you?
What if it happens that way?*

JESSE: Ray, I've been listening to your schemes since high school but this one is in a class of its own. Let's say you do find her. How do you know she'll even remember you?

RAY: Are you kidding? Women remember their first anything. Their first date, boyfriend, kiss, make out, their first--

JESSE: I get it! *(pause)* If you want to try it, go ahead. Just don't involve me.

RAY: You must be involved! I can't look up just one girl, hope she's wealthy and has a very sick husband. We need to make up a list, do some research and select the ones that meet our specifications. If only one of us scores, the other shares in the good fortune.

JESSE: You make it sound so clinical. I'm sorry. I can't do it.

RAY: You can't do it? Let me remind you of a few things. We're both in our mid-sixties. Between us, we have ten thousand in the bank. We're playing small lounges and high school reunions. We really need to take this chance.

JESSE: You wouldn't be in this hole if you didn't gamble so much and agreed to pay alimony to your ex-wife until she got legally married.

RAY: How did I know she would just live with someone for twenty years before she married him? To this day, I curse all divorce lawyers. *(pause)* What about you? You never married but you put a lot of money into bad investments.

JESSE: You recommended them!

RAY: That's in the past. But now, a golden idea has been presented to us. We'd have to be crazy not to take advantage of it.

JESSE: Where have I heard those golden words before? I remember, the roulette betting plan. You said we could bet one color, lose seven times out of every ten and still win because theoretically, we should win half the time.

RAY: I still say it's a good plan.

JESSE: Too bad it didn't allow for 'Red' to come up twenty-two times in a row. I wanted to switch colors but you kept saying, "Black is ready." It was ready all right to put us in the red and it did! Then, there was the time--

RAY: Okay, Okay, but this one is different. It won't cost that much to try it and there is nothing illegal about it. What if it doesn't work? What do we have to lose?

JESSE: Nothing, according to you. But...(sings)
*What if you meet with an old high school sweetheart?
What if you're too optimistic?
Say, what if her guy is not gonna die?*

RAY: (sings)
Say, why are you so pessimistic?

JESSE: (sings)
*What if your gal says, "I've got lots of money"?
You could be asking for trouble.
'Cause what if you find it's all in her mind.*

RAY: (sings)
Just why are you bursting my bubble?

JESSE: (sings)
*What if she says, "Are you ready
To help any way that you can?"
What if she means if there's dough you can spare,
She'll always be grateful?*

RAY: (sings)
Then, I'm out of there.

JESSE and RAY: (sing)
*If we forget it and simply do nothing,
Will we regret it some day?
If we take a chance, we may find romance.
What if it happens that way?
Say, what if it happens that way?*

RAY: Jesse, come on. Let's do it.

JESSE: I know I'm going to regret it.

RAY: One day you'll thank me. Let's make up the list. I have four that --

JESSE: Four girls? That's incredible!

RAY: What's so incredible about it? I sang the songs you wrote to each one and bingo. How many sweethearts did you have?

JESSE: One.

RAY: One? Didn't you sing your own songs to more than one girl?

JESSE: No. I wrote one special song that I sang to just one girl. But, she fell in love with another guy.

RAY: I'm sorry. But let's add her to the list. Who knows? She might be a winner.

JESSE: Okay. *(pause)* Ray, do you really believe this plan will work?

RAY: Bet your bottom dollar.

ACT ONE Scene 2

Setting: A small office, two weeks later. A wall sign reads, 'S.O.S Investigations. We find people and objects.'

At Rise: SAMMIE sits at her desk reviewing papers.

(SAMMIE rises as JESSE and RAY enter)

RAY: Hello. I'm Ray Romeo. This is Jesse Logan. We're here to see Sammie Spade.

SAMMIE: I'm Sammie Spade. That's short for Samantha. My full name is Samantha Oscar Spade. You probably expected to see a man, right?

RAY: Quite frankly, yes.

SAMMIE: Don't let my name confuse you. I thought about it but I just couldn't call it the Spade Detective Agency.

RAY: Not Spade! Oscar!

SAMMIE: Oh, that. *(pause)* My parents wanted a boy and a girl. When they learned they could only have one child, they gave me both names. What can I say? They had a weird sense of humor. Personally, I'm thrilled Oscar is my middle name.

JESSE: Sammie, your letter said you have the information we need.

SAMMIE: Yes. You gave me a list of women. I was to find out where they live, if they are wealthy and the condition of their husbands' health. Is that correct?

JESSE: Yes. We also need each husband's prognosis.

SAMMIE: I didn't forget. Why do you need this information? Are you guys insurance agents?

RAY: No.

SAMMIE: Don't tell me. I'm a detective. *(pause)* You sell cemetery plots? No. Tombstones? Maybe. They can be pricey, but no. I got it! You sell mausoleums!

JESSE: No. It's more of a personal thing.

SAMMIE: Personal huh? Don't tell me, I'm a detective. *(she pauses, then speaks as if a revelation)* I have it! You were friends of these women years ago and you want to contact them to let them know you will be there to comfort them when their husbands pass on. Am I right?

RAY: Something like that.

SAMMIE: *(tearfully)* You guys are so sweet. Give me a hug.

(RAY and JESSE stare at each other as SAMMIE hugs them)

JESSE: Do you suppose we could move on?

SAMMIE: Yes. Ray, you gave me a total of seven names.

JESSE: Seven? Ray, that means you had six? You told me four.

RAY: I remembered two more. Don't make a big deal out of it. Sammie, Jesse has led a sheltered life. Please continue.

SAMMIE: Of the seven, two live in Texas and are middle class. The remaining five live in Florida and are wealthy.

RAY: Are there any whose husbands are so ill that doctors have little hope for their recovery? Our old friends may need to be comforted soon and we want to be there for them.

SAMMIE: (*tearfully*) You guys are so sweet. Give me a hug.

JESSE: Please, no more hugs. Can you help us?

SAMMIE: Yes. I know exactly what we need. (*sings*)

Prognosis. Prognosis.

We need a poor prognosis.

Not something that's as minor as

A case of acidosis.

There is no denying.

It would be satisfying

If we could find a doctor's note

That says, "This man is dying."

Bronchitis, colitis,

A person can endure.

We need a prognosis

That guarantees there is no cure.

An illness, horrific,

Now, that would be terrific.

If we can find the perfect guy we need

Who has a poor prognosis, we'll succeed.

Thrombosis, cirrhosis

A person can survive.

We need a prognosis

*That says, "No way he stays alive."
An illness, horrendous,
Now, that would be stupendous.
If we can find the perfect guy we need
Who has a poor prognosis, we'll...*

SAMMIE (*sings*)
Succeed.

JESSE and RAY (*sing*)
*Prognosis. Prognosis. We need a
poor prognosis.*

SAMMIE: I have two candidates that are likely soon-to-be widows. They both live in Ft. Lauderdale. The first one is Veronica Martin. She is twice married. Her husband is extremely ill. In fact, his doctor wrote on the prognosis, "It's even money this patient won't make it for another ninety days."

RAY: That's my kind of doctor! I mean, he has an unusual way of expressing himself. What about the second one?

SAMMIE: Joan Torrington. Her husband's doctor wasn't specific about the nature of his illness. But, the good news is, he's terminal.

JESSE: Ray, I feel very uncomfortable about this.

RAY: Why? We're not hoping that these guys pass away. We just want to know when that might be. Cemeteries send reminders and birthday cards to people over sixty all the time. You need to get into the spirit of things, forgive the pun. (*pause*) Sammie, these two are fine.

SAMMIE (*sings*)
*Prognoses. Prognoses.
We have two poor prognoses.
We found the perfect pair of guys we need
And that's because they're dying to...*

SAMMIE: (*sings*)
Succeed.

JESSE and RAY (*sing*)
*Prognoses. Prognoses. We have two
poor prognoses.*

ACT ONE Scene 3

Setting: The Crystal Lounge in Ft. Lauderdale, four weeks later. PATRONS occupy some tables A/R.

At Rise: RAY and VERONICA are seated at a table.

VERONICA: Ray, I can't believe we've met again after all these years.

RAY: Veronica, it's a small world. We both just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

VERONICA: How have you been?

RAY: I'm fine. I teamed up with Jesse Logan. I'm sure you remember him. Jesse writes songs and plays piano and I sing. We work here on weekdays.

VERONICA: Do you have a family?

RAY: I've been divorced for a long time. We had no children. How about you?

VERONICA: I married twice. Joe, my first husband, passed away suddenly about ten years ago.

RAY: I'm sorry to hear that.

VERONICA: Thanks. I was in shock at the time. I don't know what I would have done without the help of our best friend, David Martin. He helped me get over my sorrow and you'll never believe what happened just six months later.

RAY: I can't imagine.

VERONICA: We were married!

RAY: No! You didn't!

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!