

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!

VERONICA: Yes! David was wonderful. He isn't quite as wealthy as Joe but it didn't matter. At a time like that, the most important thing is that someone is—

RAY: There for you.

VERONICA: Right! How did you know I was going to say that?

RAY: Just a lucky guess.

VERONICA: David and I had a good life until two years ago when his health started to fail. His prognosis was very bad.

RAY: I know. I mean oh? I'm sorry to hear that.

VERONICA: Don't be. I just spoke to his doctor. He changed his prognosis. He said David's condition has greatly improved. He's going to live!

RAY: For how long?

VERONICA: The doctor said twenty years.

RAY: Is he sure?

VERONICA: I guess so. Do you know what David and I are going to do?

RAY: Get a second opinion?

VERONICA: No! We're taking a trip to Europe to celebrate. We'll see all the sights and buy anything and everything we want. Money will be no object. We'll spend it like it's going out of style.

RAY: Don't you think you should save some?

VERONICA: Why? Life is too short. I say, enjoy it while you can. *(pause)* This has been such a wonderful day. First, I learn my husband is going to live and then I meet you after all these years.

RAY: I'm so happy for you.

VERONICA: Thank you. Ray, I've thought of you often especially over the last few years. I've been lonely. David and I haven't been together if you know what I mean. I even considered contacting you if he passed on. I never forgot you. After all, you were my first. *(RAY sobs)* Are you okay?

RAY: Yes. I've gotten more sentimental as I have gotten older, especially when I hear such a heart-warming story.

VERONICA: You're so sweet.

RAY: I've been told that before.

VERONICA: I'm sorry but I must leave now. We'll talk again when David and I get back from Europe. I'll send you a postcard from Paris. *(RAY and VERONICA stand and hug)* Goodbye. *(VERONICA exits as RAY sits and stares)*

JESSE: *(enters)* How did it go?

RAY: Terrible! Her husband is going to live!

JESSE: But the prognosis said--

RAY: It changed. *(pause)* It seems you can't trust lawyers and doctors! My life has been a series of missed opportunities. Jesse, promise me if I die before you, you'll have my tombstone engraved, "Here lies Ray Romeo. He almost made it!"

JESSE: Pull yourself together. My Joanie will be here any minute.

(RAY and JESSE go to the piano. RAY looks at some music sheets as JESSE sits. JOANIE and TAMI enter each holding cocktails and sit at a table. JOANIE puts her purse on the table.)

JOANIE: Tami, you're such a good friend. Inviting me to join you here is perfect. A drink is just what I need.

TAMI: Is Walter being difficult again?

JOANIE: Walter is being Walter. But, it's rough on him too.

RAY: *(to PATRONS)* Hi, everyone. Perhaps some of you remember this song. *(sings)*
Some people dream of money
While others dream of fame.
Most people's dreams of happiness
Are, more or less, the same.

*But no amount of money
Could thrill me like you do.
All I ever dream about is you.*

*The things some people hope for
Are often things they need,
To reach a goal, achieved by few,
In order to succeed.
The only thing I hope for
Is that you love me too.
All I ever dream about is you.*

*JOANIE: (stands and sings)
Though others count their treasures
And dream of adding more.
For me, the only treasure
Is the love of the one I adore.
The love that some are feeling
Will waver through the years.
For faithful love to stay alive,
It must survive the tears.*

*The love that I am feeling
Forever will be true.
My hopes and dreams are all about you.
Can't imagine life without you.
All I ever dream about is you.*

JOANIE: (applauds and then quickly approaches RAY) Excuse me. Are you Ray Romeo?

RAY: Yes, and you're Joan Czarnowski.

JOANIE: My married name is Torrington. I haven't heard that song in over forty years.

JESSE: (standing) Forty-five years to be exact.

JOANIE: Jesse! I can't believe this! It only happens in movies. (JOANIE and JESSE embrace)

JESSE: It's called being in the right place at the right time.

RAY: I'm sure you two have a lot to talk about. I'll keep your friend company.

JOANIE: Her name is Tami Dondiego. I warn you. She's quiet until she gets to know you.

RAY: I think I can handle her. *(RAY goes to TAMI)* Hi, Tami. I'm Ray Romeo. Our friends would like a little privacy. Why don't we have a drink at the bar?

TAMI: Okay. *(JESSE and JOANIE sit as RAY and TAMI exit)*

JESSE: Joanie, I can't believe I'm here talking to you. Tell me, have you had a good life?

JOANIE: Walter and I just celebrated our forty-fifth anniversary. But, the last three years have been rough. He's been ill. How about you?

JESSE: I never married. You were a tough act to follow. I never made it big as a songwriter either. Only one of my songs was successful and it wasn't even our song.

JOANIE: I recognized it immediately. You wrote that for me when we were only twenty years old. You were very romantic and charming then.

JESSE: So, why did you marry Walter? Forgive me for being blunt.

JOANIE: It's hard to explain. I thought I was in love with you when I met him. But, about a month later, something just clicked between us. We both knew right away that we were in love. Can you understand that?

JESSE: Yes. It's the reason I never married. I never felt that moment of love with anyone else.

JOANIE: *(Her cell phone rings. She takes it from her purse.)* Jesse, excuse me. I need to take this call. *(answers the call)* Hello. *(long pause)* I understand. I'll leave right away. *(she puts the phone away)* Jesse, I'm sorry but I must leave. Walter is having a bad day. But, let's continue our reunion this weekend. If you and Ray are free, I'd like you to be my house guests. *(she takes a pen from her purse and writes on a napkin)* This is my cell phone number. Phone me.

JESSE: *(JOANIE exits. JESSE looks at the napkin and scratches his head.)* Ray must be a genius. She even said, "Phone me."

RAY: (*enters in a hurry*) Jesse, how did it go?

JESSE: It went fine. She left because her husband is ill.

RAY: That's wonderful! What else?

JESSE: She said the last three years have been rough due to her husband's illness.

RAY: Great! Go on.

JESSE: She invited us to spend the weekend at her home.

RAY: Jackpot! This is a dream come true. Jesse, you really came through big time. (*hugs JESSE*) Forget what I said about the tombstone. Anything else?

JESSE: She said, "Phone me."

RAY: She said that? (*pause*) Jesse, please tell me you're not making this whole thing up just to get back at me for those bad investments. That would be cruel.

JESSE: No. She really said it.

RAY: (*clutching his hands and looking skyward*) Thank you. Thank you.

JESSE: Ray, are you sure we're doing the right thing? What if—

RAY: Jesse, please try to be more optimistic! (*sings*)
If on the day when she's no longer married,
Won't it be you that she turns to?

Jesse (*sings*)
What if in due time she says that she's mine,
What else can I say but I love you?

Jesse and Ray (*sing*)
What if it happens that way?
Say, what if it happens that way?

ACT ONE Scene 4

Setting: *The living area of the Torrington home the following Saturday.*

At Rise: *JOANIE is tidying up the area.*

JOANIE: *(RAY, JESSE and TAMI enter)* Jesse, Ray, I'm so glad you could come. My granddaughter, Karen, is here. She is staying with me while my daughter, Eleanor, and her husband are vacationing in Paris. *(KAREN enters)* Here she is now. This is my beautiful granddaughter, Karen. She attends the university. Karen, these are the people I told you about. This is Jesse Logan and Ray Romeo.

KAREN: You're my grandmother's old boyfriend, aren't you?

JOANIE: Karen! *(pause)* Jesse, I warn you. My granddaughter is a bit outspoken.

JESSE: I don't mind. Karen, that's true. But that was a long time ago. Do you have any other questions?

KAREN: Not now, but I might...later.

(MICHELLE enters)

JOANIE: Michelle, please meet my guests, Jesse Logan and Ray Romeo. Michelle is my chef. I hope you guys like French cuisine.

RAY: Who doesn't? Michelle, I am happy to know you.

MICHELLE: Bonjour, Messieurs. *(pause)* Monsieur Romeo, it is my pleasure to meet a handsome man with a most appropriate name.

JOANIE: Michelle, don't you have something to do in the kitchen?

MICHELLE: Oui, Madame. *(MICHELLE exits)*

JOANIE: I want you both to meet Walter. He's in his room. However, the doctor has limited the number of visitors. Jesse, you can visit him first.

(JESSE, JOANIE and KAREN exit)

RAY: Joanie has a lovely home.

TAMI: Yes.

RAY: Let's sit down. (*RAY and TAMI sit on a sofa*) It's a beautiful day.

TAMI: Yes, it is.

RAY: Have you known Joanie very long?

TAMI: Oh, yes. (*pause*) Your last name, Romeo, is somewhat unique. Were you ever kidded about it?

RAY: Only in high school. You know how teenagers are. Everyone had a nickname. It embarrasses me to even think about it.

TAMI: I'm curious. What was it?

RAY: I couldn't. (*chuckling to himself*) It's too stupid.

TAMI: C'mon. We're both past the age of being embarrassed.

RAY: All right. It was 'Romeo the Stud.'

TAMI: Are you?

RAY: Am I what?

TAMI: A stud?

RAY: Uh, did you have a nickname in high school?

TAMI: Oh, yes. Mine was 'Tami the Tease.' Would you like to know why?

RAY: Nope!

TAMI: Can you guess what my late husband's nickname was? It should be obvious with a last name like Dondiego.

RAY: Dondiego? Wasn't that Zorro's name? Is that what you called him?

TAMI: Yes. *(pause)* He's been gone a year now and I really miss it.

RAY: It? You mean him, don't you?

TAMI: Oh, him too but mostly it. He passed away in the sack.

RAY: You mean--

TAMI: Yes. We were doing it.

RAY: It's getting a bit warm in here, don't you think?

TAMI: It was quite a shock. He was fine the first five times. Halfway through the sixth, he quit without saying a word.

RAY: He was probably out of breath from all the exhaling. Too bad, six is a nice round number.

TAMI: Yes, it is. Of course, it's not even close to our record.

RAY: Some records are made not to be broken.

TAMI: I suppose so. Though technically, I could still break it. Of course, it wouldn't be with Zorro. *(TAMI moves closer to RAY)*

RAY: No. I'm afraid Zorro has cracked his last whip, made his last 'Z,' that sort of thing. Do you hear someone coming?

TAMI: I have a question. Ray Romeo, are you a "Romeo?" *(TAMI kisses RAY passionately. RAY pushes her away.)*

RAY: I think it might be time to visit Mr. Torrington. *(RAY attempts to stand up but TAMI pushes him back down)*

TAMI: Not just yet! *(sings)*
I get this funny feeling.
It happens night or day.
And often it will linger
And just not go away.
I don't know when it started.

*It seems so long ago.
At first I was bewildered
Though soon I came to know
I get this funny little feeling
When I'm ready for love.*

*I don't know when I'll get it.
It comes on suddenly.
One moment I don't have it.
The next, it's hitting me.
I really can't describe it
No matter how I try.
It's something like a tingle
That I must satisfy.
I get this funny little feeling
When I'm ready for love.*

*It doesn't matter where I am
Or who's nearby.
I could be home
Or with a friend.
Then, all at once I'll feel that urge
And breathe a sigh
And tell myself
It's happening again.*

*I wonder if this feeling
Will disappear someday.*

*I wonder if I want that
Though maybe it should stay.
It really doesn't matter.
There's nothing I can do.
I'll just enjoy those moments
And share my love with you.
I get this funny little feeling
When I'm ready for love.
I get this funny little feeling
When I'm ready for love.*

TAMI: (*gets very close to RAY*) So, Ray the Stud, do you understand?

RAY: (*standing up*) Yes! I understand why you are called 'Tami the Tease.'

(*JESSE and JOANIE enter*)

JOANIE: How are you two doing? Ray, getting along?

RAY: It shows? (*glances momentarily at his lap*) Uh, fine. The Tease, I mean, Tami was telling me some funny stories about Zorro. It was very enjoyable.

JOANIE: That's nice. You can visit Walter now, if you like.

RAY: I like.

TAMI: I'll go with you. (*TAMI follows RAY as he hurriedly exits*)

JESSE: What was that all about?

JOANIE: I think Ray is getting to know Tami better. (*pause*) Jesse, give me your honest opinion of Walter.

JESSE: I think he's a first-class snob. Did you notice he kept reminding me to call him Walter, not Walt, and to make sure I addressed you as Joan and not Joanie?

JOANIE: Do you think he was being jealous?

JESSE: Maybe. Frankly, I don't understand what you two have in common. The moment you had together years ago must have been more like a lightning bolt than a click as you put it. (*pause*) I'm sorry. It's none of my business.

JOANIE: I understand. (*pause*) Jesse, I'd like you to get to know Karen better. Her birth father was killed in an accident and Eleanor's second husband, Robert, hasn't spent much time with Karen ever since he and Eleanor were married five years ago. She needs a man's influence and she doesn't get along with Walter.

JESSE: Sure, I'll speak with her.

JOANIE: Thanks. *(pause)* There's something else. I want you to know that I have thought about you from time to time over the years. I even bought the recording of "Bet Your Bottom Dollar."

JESSE: You did?

JOANIE: Yes. I'm very happy we accidentally met again. What are the odds of that happening?

JESSE: Perhaps not as high as you might imagine. *(pause)* I'm glad you didn't forget me.

JOANIE: How could I? After all, you were my first.

JESSE: Oh boy!

JOANIE: Surely, you knew that at the time.

JESSE: Maybe I should have but I didn't think about it and I didn't have any experience. It was my first time too.

JOANIE: *(she pauses, then laughs)* Talk about the blind leading the blind. I wondered why you were so nervous. I assumed you were having difficulty with, you know, the protection.

JESSE: What protection?

JOANIE: Oh boy!

JESSE: I thought you knew. We were lucky that you didn't--

JOANIE: Yes, we were. *(pause)* I've often wondered how different our lives might have been. *(sings)*

Imagine it if you can.

Suppose we had never parted

And stayed with the life we started?

Imagine it if you can.

Through years that we might have shared,

The love that we had kept growing.

Although there's no way of knowing,

Imagine it if you can.

*Remember the hopes and dreams we knew
When our hearts were young and bold.
Imagine the chance to start anew
Even though we are growing old.
Might yesterday's reminisce
Be foolish and lead to sorrow
Or might love return tomorrow?
Imagine it if you can.*

Jesse, I'm . . . sorry. (JOANIE exits)

JESSE: (*sings*)
*I can't help but reminisce
Although it has led to sorrow.
But, love might return tomorrow.
Imagine it if you can.
Imagine it if you can.*

ACT ONE Scene 5

Setting: *The Torrington patio on Saturday afternoon.*

At Rise: KAREN is having a drink.

JESSE: (*enters*) Do you mind some company?

KAREN: No. Help yourself to a drink. There's scotch and vodka.

JESSE: It's a bit early in the day for me. Isn't it early for you too?

KAREN: If you're concerned that I might have a drinking problem, don't be. I just felt like having one now.

JESSE: I just thought--

KAREN: You're not going to lecture me, are you?

JESSE: No, I'm not. (*pause*) Do you have any other questions you'd like to ask me?

KAREN: Yes. *(pause)* Did you ever have sex with Grandmother?

JESSE: I think I will join you in a drink after all. *(he pours a glass of vodka and gulps it down)* The fast answer is yes. We fooled around quite a bit but we had sex only once. It was the night your grandmother told me that she loved someone else and was getting married. I tried to persuade her she was mistaken. It was very emotional for both of us. We had a few drinks and it happened just that one time. I never saw her again until a few days ago.

KAREN: Are you still in love with her?

JESSE: Let's just say you never forget your first love.

KAREN: You didn't answer my question.

JESSE: I asked if you had any. I never said I'd answer them all. *(pause)* Romantically speaking, do you care about someone?

KAREN: No, although I met someone recently. His name is Zachary David Joyner. He's nice but it wasn't love at first sight.

JESSE: I see. *(pause)* Of course, 'love at first sight' may not mean you fall in love the first time you meet someone.

KAREN: What else could it mean?

JESSE: You see someone you've already met in a new light that seems to shine from above and it happens suddenly.

KAREN: One moment you're not in love and the next you are?

JESSE: Yes. I happen to believe that's how people truly fall in love.

KAREN: I always thought...Now, I'm confused. *(sings)*
When does love begin?
When does that feeling appear, deep within,
That says you've fallen in love?
A gradual thing or the moment of love?

*How is love revealed?
Are you aware, over time, how you feel?
Or does the wonder of love
Begin to take wing with the light from above?*

*Is survival of true love so rare,
It depends on how it starts?
Is that moment something two must share
To avoid one broken heart?*

*If I ever find
The love I long for that's been on my mind,
I wonder when it will be
And who will join me in our moment of love.*

(JESSE holds out his arms to KAREN and they dance)

KAREN: *(sings)*
*If I ever find
The love I long for that's been on my mind,
I wonder when it will be
And who will join me in our moment of love?
Oh, who will join me in our moment of love?*

JESSE: That was lovely. You have a beautiful voice.

KAREN: Thank you. How is it that you know so much about love?

JESSE: I'm a songwriter. Mostly, I write love songs.

KAREN: That's so cool. *(pause)* I'm going to tell you a secret but you must swear not to tell anyone, especially Grandfather. He and I have never gotten along mostly because he treats me like a child.

JESSE: Cross my heart and hope to...let's leave it at that.

KAREN: My dream is to be a blues singer. Everyone thinks I'm studying dramatic acting in school but I'm not. I've been performing in school and occasionally in cabarets.

JESSE: Haven't you told your mother and grandmother?

KAREN: No, it wouldn't bother them. But, Grandfather would lose total control of himself. I don't know what to do about him. He's always telling me what to do. Sometimes, Mom does it too but that's because she's under his influence.

JESSE: If I were you, I would say...(sings)
*I'll live my life with or without you,
Live my life. You're not about to
Tell me what or what I shouldn't do.
I'm old enough to have my own say,
Bold enough to go my own way.
You have yours. I'll live my own life too.*

KAREN: (sings)
*I never shall forget just how it used to be.
While I was in my teens, it always bothered me
To hear him lecture me. It happened ev'ry day
But I have had enough, so this is what I'll say:*

JESSE and KAREN: (sing)
*I'll live my life with or without you,
Live my life. You're not about to
Tell me what or what I shouldn't do.
I'm old enough to have my own say,
Bold enough to go my own way.
You have yours. I'll live my own life too.*

KAREN: (sings)
*I just don't understand. He often teases me.
Though I am past my teens, he just won't let me be
The person that I am. He has to have his way.
But I have had enough, so this is what I'll say:*

JESSE and KAREN: (sing)
*I'll live my life with or without you,
Live my life. You're not about to
Tell me what or what I shouldn't do.
I'm old enough to have my own say,
Bold enough to go my own way.
You live yours. I'll live my own life too.*

KAREN: (*hugs JESSE*) That's wonderful advice. I can't wait to tell him.

JESSE: This may not be the proper time. I'll let you know when.

KAREN: That sounds like a plan to me.

JESSE: That's just what I need, another plan.

ACT ONE Scene 6

Setting: *The Torrington patio, late Saturday afternoon.*

At Rise: RAY is having a drink.

(MICHELLE enters)

RAY: Hello. Are you on a cooking break?

MICHELLE: Oui. I have a roast in the oven. It's not quite ready. Do you mind if I join you?

RAY: Not at all. Would you like a drink?

MICHELLE: Madam has very strict rules about drinking while I am working. (*pause*) Monsieur Romeo, I am fascinated by your name. Were you ever teased about it when you were young?

RAY: You mean, did I have a nickname?

MICHELLE: Oui.

RAY: I don't recall. Did you have one?

MICHELLE: I was Belle Michelle.

RAY: Belle. Isn't that a name given to charming and beautiful women?

MICHELLE: Oui. That is very good. (*pause*) Madam told me that she, Monsieur Logan and you were in high school together.

RAY: (*puts his glass on the table*) That's right. We went our separate ways after graduation. I took some odd jobs, for two years, although I knew I wanted to be in show business. But, my professional experience was limited. Then, an army recruiter told me I could gain experience by entertaining troops.

MICHELLE: You joined the military?

RAY: Yes. That's where I met Jesse again. We formed an act and toured the camps. After we got out, we thought we would set the show business world on fire. But we soon learned that you need more luck than talent to make it big.

MICHELLE: Isn't that true about being successful in any business?

RAY: I guess so.

MICHELLE: When you were touring, did you ever go to Paris?

RAY: Yes. It's a beautiful city with wonderfully warm people and a romantic charm. What more I can say? I love it.

MICHELLE: I love it too. Paris is very special. Of course, many people say that and more. Tourists and even Parisians try to describe the vintage charm of Paris but the best they can say are nothing more than tired clichés. (*sings*)

*What more can you say about Paris,
Pretty Paris on the Seine?
The Champs Elysées, romantic cafes,
This city of lights
Turns her nights into days.
The wonderful thing about Paris
That's above all, c'est amoré.
What more can you say about Paris
That hasn't been mentioned before?*

RAY: (*sings*)

*What more can you say about Paris,
April's Paris glows in rain.
The Notre Dame chimes, those boulevard mimes
Perform for a tip
While you sip your champagne.*

MICHELLE and RAY: *(sing)*
The wonderful thing about Paris
That's above all, c'est amoré.
What more can you say about Paris
That hasn't been mentioned before?
What more can you say about Paris
That hasn't been mentioned before?

(MICHELLE and RAY kiss passionately as a light from above shines on them)

MICHELLE: I better see how my roast is doing.

RAY: Yes. The oven may get too hot and burn it.

MICHELLE: That would be bad. *(pause)* The roast can wait another moment.
(MICHELLE and RAY kiss) I must go now. Au revoir.

RAY: Au revoir. *(As RAY watches MICHELLE exit, he sings a cappella)*
What more can you say about Paris—

TAMI: *(voice only)* Romeo, where art thou? *(TAMI enters wearing an eye mask, a sheathed sword and a whip and speaks with a Spanish accent)* Señor, it is time to play the game. *(she cracks the whip several times causing RAY to do jig-like dance movements)* Come to Zorro.

RAY: No games! No games!

TAMI: You must do la danza del virgenes, the dance of the virgins.

RAY: I'm not qualified!

TAMI: *(unsheathing her sword)* You are to me! *(making a thrusting motion with the sword)*
Olé!

ACT ONE Scene 7

Setting: *The living area of the Torrington home, early Saturday evening.*

At Rise: JESSE, wearing a jacket and tie, is seated and writing on a piece of paper.

JESSE: *(calling out)* Ray, I'm ready wherever you are. *(JESSE puts the paper and pen in his pocket)*

RAY: *(enters wearing a jacket and tie)* How do I look?

JESSE: Fine. It's a good thing we brought these clothes with us. Joanie just told me Walter likes to dress for dinner.

RAY: We're lucky he didn't want us to wear a tux. What kind of a guy is he?

JESSE: Didn't you meet him this morning?

RAY: No. He was asleep when I went up to see him.

JESSE: Then, there's something you should know. Don't--

TAMI: *(enters)* Romeo, there you are. *(TAMI stands close to him)* Have you been hiding from me?

RAY: Why would I do that? *(pause)* You're not feeling anything right now, are you?

TAMI: Not right this second but sooner or later I will. I'll tell you when.

JESSE: What are you two talking about?

RAY: Oh, nothing.

(JOANIE and WALTER enter. She is pushing him in a wheelchair.)

JOANIE: Ray, I don't believe you met my husband yet. Walter, this is Ray Romeo, an old high school friend.

RAY: It's nice to meet you, Wally. You're a lucky guy to have a wife like Joanie.

WALTER: My name is not Wally.

RAY: You prefer Walt?

WALTER: That won't do either. My name is Walter. My wife's name is Joan. Henceforth, kindly address us that way.

RAY: Walter, I beg your pardon. Henceforth, I shall comply with your wishes. (*speaking to JESSE*) This is going to be a fun evening.

WALTER: What did you say?

RAY: I said I expect to have a lot of fun this evening.

WALTER: Yes, indeed. In fact, I get quite a kick thinking about your surname. Your high school friends must have had a field day with Romeo. I'll wager they called you "Stud." (*he laughs raucously*)

RAY: Oh, yes. A fun evening.

TAMI: (*stroking RAY's back*) Now!

RAY: Now what? Oh! (*RAY quickly moves away from TAMI*)

JOANIE: Walter, Ray and Jesse are the entertainers I spoke of.

WALTER: Jesse, I'm told that you had what is regarded in some circles as a hit song. Is that right?

JESSE: Yes. It was entitled "Bet Your Bottom Dollar." It was the only hit song I ever composed.

WALTER: I guess that makes you a cousin of 'Johnny One Note,' only you're 'Jesse One Song.' Get it? (*he laughs raucously*)

JESSE: I get it. (*speaking to RAY*) I'd like to give it to him except I can't tell if he's laughing or in pain.

WALTER: What's that you said? Will you stop mumbling to one another? It's very annoying.

RAY: Do you know what's truly annoying? It's--

TAMI: Having an itch in a place where you need someone else to scratch it and no one's around?

RAY: (*speaking to TAMI*) Thanks. I almost lost it. I owe you one.

TAMI: I'm thinking five or six.

WALTER: Why is everyone mumbling? Where are your manners?

MICHELLE: (*enters*) Dinner is ready. I made Chateau Briand with Béarnaise sauce.

WALTER: That's not one of my favorites. Who wanted that?

RAY: (*raises his hand*) I did. Henceforth, I shall ask your permission.

JOANIE: Walter, I asked Michelle to prepare a favorite dish for our guests. Wasn't that the polite thing to do?

WALTER: I suppose.

JOANIE: Michelle, please take Mr. Torrington to the dining room and tell Karen that dinner is ready.

(*MICHELLE and WALTER exit*)

JOANIE: I'm terribly sorry about Walter's rudeness. He is not having a good day. Let's go to dinner.

JESSE: Ray and I will be along in a few minutes.

(*JOANIE and TAMI exit*)

RAY: Not having a good day! People in comas have better days than he does. (*pause*) What in the world did Joanie ever see in this guy? How is it possible she picked him over you?

JESSE: Ray, love isn't logical. It's the—

RAY: Jesse, you told me about the light. Maybe the light came from somebody shining a flashlight in Joanie's face that momentarily blinded her causing her brain to malfunction.

JESSE: Come on.

RAY: Okay, okay. That was a stupid thing to say. But, if there's one thing in life I know, it's that I'll never understand women. You pursue them and nothing happens. But when you do nothing, bingo, they're all over you, like Tami. She must have an internal light with a rechargeable battery.

JESSE: Ray, this may not be the best time to tell you but I'm still in love with Joanie.

RAY: That's great. When the time comes, you won't have to pretend.

JESSE: You don't understand. I can't go through with the plan. I can't deceive her anymore.

RAY: Are you saying that you're quitting when we're on the brink of success? Please don't. (*sings*)

*Just once in my life I would like
To be the best of all.
To be the top gun and the one
Left standing tall.*

*Will there be a day when I'll hear
Some say he's number one?
Will I ever get to take
My place in the sun?
When will I see that golden ray?
Oh, how I long to win someday.
Fate holds the key. I've never won.
When will I earn my place in the sun?*

*Is it my fate to try the most
And never win, yet come so close?
Is it too late to make a run
To fin'lly take my place in the sun?*

JESSE: Ray, forget what I just said. Let's do it!

RAY: That's my buddy. Now, let's see if we can get through dinner with 'Wally Warlock' without throwing up.

ACT ONE Scene 8

Setting: *The S.O.S. Investigations office, three hours later.*

At Rise: SAMMIE is bending over her desk reviewing a picture with a magnifying glass as JESSE and RAY enter.

SAMMIE: Hi, guys. Thanks for coming on such short notice.

RAY: What's the important news that can't wait and why couldn't you tell it to us over the phone?

SAMMIE: You need to see it for yourselves. But, first I must ask you something. This information I gathered for you isn't being used in a scam, is it?

JESSE: No. I'm in love with Joanie Torrington and have been for forty-five years.

RAY: I'm with him.

SAMMIE: What does that mean?

RAY: It means I'm in love too.

JESSE: Tami the Tease?

RAY: No, not Tami the...How did you know her nickname?

JESSE: Joanie told me.

RAY: I should have guessed. No, it isn't Tami the Tease. I'm in love with Michelle DuPont.

SAMMIE: Who is she?

RAY: The Torrington's French chef.

SAMMIE: *(weeping)* You are both so sweet. Give me a hug. *(SAMMIE hugs JESSE and RAY as they stare at each other)*

JESSE: Please just show us the information.

SAMMIE: *(gives the photo and magnifying glass to JESSE)* Look at this.

JESSE: *(studies the photo)* It's Walter. He's standing with...Oh, boy! *(hands the photo and magnifying glass to RAY)* Ray, I'm sorry.

RAY: *(studying the photo)* That's Michelle holding his hand! *(RAY puts the photo and magnifying glass on the desk)* Sammie, when did you take this?

SAMMIE: I didn't. It was taken about three years ago by another private detective Joan had hired to investigate Walter. I met him recently. When I mentioned her name, he said he had a photo of Walter and gave it to me.

JESSE: Why did she hire him?

SAMMIE: She suspected Walter of cheating on her. My colleague had this photo and more incriminating evidence. But, she terminated his services before he could turn it over to her. She said she had no interest in seeing his reports and told him to destroy any pictures he had. Walter got sick about that same time.

RAY: Do you believe there's a connection?

SAMMIE: Yes. I think Walter learned he was being investigated and was afraid it would eventually lead to a divorce so he preyed on Joan's sympathy by pretending to be a terminally ill invalid. He knew that would keep her from leaving him. This guy is a master manipulator.

RAY: But, why not just get a divorce? I'm sure he can afford the alimony.

SAMMIE: No, he can't. I made a few phone calls and found out most of the money they have comes from an inherited trust fund that only she can access. Without her, he's broke.

JESSE: I wish we had better proof that he's faking his illness.

RAY: What about this picture? Sammie, are you sure there aren't more?

SAMMIE: This is the only one left. It had been misplaced. The others and all negatives were destroyed.

RAY: We can still show it to Joanie.

JESSE: Ray, we can't show up after forty-five years with one undated photo and expect her to leave Walter. He's too slick for that. He'll convince her he's being framed.

RAY: What about Michelle holding his hand?

JESSE: He'll claim he was trying to walk and she was keeping him from falling. *(pause)*
I'm sorry about Michelle's involvement.

SAMMIE: Jesse is right. In Joan's state of mind, the only way she'll be convinced he's a fraud is if she sees it with her own eyes.

RAY: You mean he needs to get up out of his wheelchair and walk right in front of her. How is that going to happen?

SAMMIE: Somehow we must figure out a way to make him do just that. Maybe we could use a technique that's often used in those old mystery movies, getting the suspect to show his hand and confess when there isn't enough solid evidence for an arrest.

JESSE: That's an idea. *(sings)*
What if he thinks that we do not suspect him?
What if we feed him baloney?
While we're being kind, what if we can find
A way that will prove he's a phony.

RAY: *(sings)*
What if we look for a flaw or a weakness?
What if we use it to trap him?
He thinks he is smart. He has a cold heart
And acts like you'd just love to rap him.

JESSE, RAY and SAMMIE *(sing)*
What if we set up a sly situation,
One that will damage his ego.

*While losing his cool, he'll show he's a fool.
What if it happens that way?
Say, what if it happens that way?*

ACT TWO Scene 1

Setting: *The Torrington home, Sunday morning.*

At Rise: *JOANIE and VERONICA are seated. VERONICA is crying.*

JOANIE: Veronica, please try to calm down and tell me what's wrong.

VERONICA: Something terrible has happened.

(JESSE and RAY enter)

RAY: What's the matter?

(JOANIE and VERONICA rise)

VERONICA: Oh, Ray. I was hoping you would still be here.

JOANIE: How did you know Ray might be here in the first place?

VERONICA: I accidentally bumped into him on Wednesday afternoon at the Crystal Lounge. I called the manager last night after it happened. He told me Ray could be reached here.

RAY: After what happened? *(pause)* I thought you were going to Paris.

VERONICA: It's David. He's gone.

RAY: He left you?

VERONICA: So to speak. This is so embarrassing. *(pause)* He uh expired...while we were doing it. *(bursts into tears again, then composes herself)* One moment he was fine and the next he was gone.

RAY: I never heard of that before.

JESSE: Didn't you tell me that was--

RAY: Not the worst way to go. That's what you were about to say, isn't that right?

JESSE: Uh, yes. You took the words right out of my mouth. (*pause*) Joanie, let's leave Ray and Veronica alone for a while.

RAY: No! Don't go. I mean, there's no reason you have--

JOANIE: Ray, it's best you comfort her. Jesse, I want to hear more about this accidental meeting.

(*RAY tries to prevent JESSE from leaving but he pulls away. JESSE and JOANIE exit.*)

RAY: Veronica, I'm truly sorry about David.

VERONICA: Thank you. On the way over here, I couldn't help thinking this must be kismet.

RAY: Why kismet?

VERONICA: Think about it. I don't see you, my first love, for over forty-five years and now here you are in my hour of need.

RAY: How lucky for me...and you.

VERONICA: That's why I call it kismet. This must be part of a great master plan.

RAY: Kismet or not, things will get better for you...in time.

(*VERONICA hugs RAY. TAMI enters.*)

TAMI: Excuse me. I hope I'm not interrupting something.

VERONICA: You're not. I just told Ray that David passed away last night.

TAMI: I'm so sorry. How did it happen?

RAY: I don't think that now is the time to go into details.

VERONICA: You're probably right. The important thing is that you're here to comfort me. *(she kisses RAY passionately)*

TAMI: Ray, it appears that you comfort very well.

RAY: I'm sure that's Veronica's way of letting go of her grief.

TAMI: We should all be so lucky to have you nearby when tragedy strikes.

VERONICA: Excuse me. Do I sense a hint of jealousy?

TAMI: A hint? *(pause)* If you must know, Ray and I have an understanding.

RAY: *(quickly)* No understanding. No understanding.

VERONICA: He doesn't think so. What might your understanding be?

TAMI: That's between Ray and me. He's just trying to be polite.

VERONICA: Ray, is that right?

MICHELLE: *(enters)* Is what right?

RAY: Michelle, last night, Veronica's husband expired while they were doing it. Tami's husband expired the same way. In each case I'm stuck, I mean, it's my good luck to be there for comforting.

MICHELLE: Madams, I am so sorry. It happened to my brother-in-law that way too and he was only forty-five!

RAY: I must have entered the twilight zone where women don't need guns to kill men. Their bodies are lethal weapons.

MICHELLE: Ray, I don't know what you're talking about. Getting back to my question, what or who is right?

VERONICA: I say that Ray's being here at my hour of need is a sign that we are meant for each. Tami erroneously believes that she and Ray have an understanding. I ask you. Which one of us is right?

MICHELLE: Neither. Ray cares for me.

RAY: Ladies, do you really think this is the time to--

TAMI: Ray, this is between Veronica and Michelle and me.

RAY: The plan was simple. How did it go so wrong?

TAMI: Ray, shut up and sit down!

RAY: I can't right now. I...must go...to the bathroom.

TAMI: Hold it! (RAY sits) Ladies, (sings)
*It seems to me we have a little problem.
We each believe that Ray is on her side.
There is a way to solve this little problem.
Let's state our tastes and then let him decide.
Italian...*

VERONICA: (sings)
...Or English...

MICHELLE: (sings)
...Or French?

MICHELLE, TAMI, and VERONICA: (sing)
*Just which one of us will it be?
Do you have a preference?
When all's said and done,
We hope that you've chosen wisely.
Michelle, Tami, and Veronica,
Lasagne or crumpets or brie?
Our menu has listed all three.
Just make your selection
But choose only one.
We promise you won't go hungry.*

TAMI: (sings)
If you like something spicy, choose Italian.

VERONICA: *(sings)*

Though English food is subtle, it's quite fine.

MICHELLE: *(sings)*

The French prepare their dishes with cheese sauces.

MICHELLE, TAMI, and VERONICA: *(sing)*

Select the one with whom you'd like to dine.

Espresso or cognac or tea.

It has to be one of those three.

There are other rules you

Should know from the start.

Whoever is chosen,

Then two have to part.

Remember our menu

Is not á la carte.

Italian or English or French?

(RAY exits quickly)

TAMI: Isn't that just like a man. They just can't hold it!

MICHELLE, TAMI, and VERONICA: *(sing)*

Italian or English or French?

ACT TWO Scene 2

Setting: The Torrington patio, one hour later. A picture lies face down on the table.

At Rise: RAY is pacing about.

(JESSE enters)

RAY: There you are. Thanks a lot, buddy.

JESSE: Is something wrong?

RAY: Yes! You left me with Veronica.

JESSE: She was part of the original plan. I thought it was an opportunity for you to be there for her.

RAY: It wasn't. After you left, Tami and Michelle came in too. They ganged up on me like I was the last man on the face of the earth. They all want me!

JESSE: That's amazing. You still got the magic after all these years.

RAY: But I don't want it with all three. Even in high school I went with only one girl at a time. At sixty-five, even if I wanted to, no way Jose. To make matters worse, you know Michelle may be part of Walter's scheme.

JESSE: What are you going to do?

RAY: I have no choice but to confront her.

JESSE: What if she is involved and she tells him?

RAY: That's a chance I'll have to take. You better go. I asked her to meet me here.

(JESSE exits. RAY paces about.)

MICHELLE: *(enters)* Ray, I'm sorry we ganged up on you. Why did you run off like that?

RAY: I really did have to go. *(pause)* There's something we need to talk about.

MICHELLE: Is it about my telling Veronica and Tami the Tease about us?

RAY: You know her nickname too?

MICHELLE: Everyone does.

RAY: I see. *(pause)* Well, it's not about that. It's about this. *(He picks up the picture and hands it to MICHELLE. She looks at it and puts it back on the table.)*

MICHELLE: I can explain it. I am Monsieur Torrington's cover. He uses me to drive him to places where he secretly meets other women. Sometimes, there are men too.

RAY: Whoa! Hold on. Stop the music! Are you telling me...Are you saying that..he likes—

MICHELLE: Madames and Monsieurs.

RAY: If Joanie finds out, she'll need an army to be there for her. *(pause)* Go on.

MICHELLE: If anyone who knows the Torringtons see us together, there is no suspicion. They know I work for them. They assume I am helping him get around. I'm the only one who knows he is not ill.

RAY: Why do you do it?

MICHELLE: He sponsored my work visa. He said he would make sure I didn't get a green card unless I cooperated.

RAY: He never tried, you know, to--

MICHELLE: Of course, he did. But he didn't succeed. I am especially sorry I helped him to deceive Madam Torrington. She has been very kind to me. *(she cries and RAY comforts her)*

RAY: I understand. It isn't your fault. Don't worry about getting your green card. I'll help you.

MICHELLE: Merci. *(pause)* Now that you know what I've done, what about us? Yesterday, you must have felt something. You looked...different.

RAY: What I felt was love, but we have a problem. I'm more than just a few years older than you.

MICHELLE: I don't care. If it's not a problem for me, why should it be a problem for you? *(sings)*

*If I love you and you love me,
What difference does age make?
As far as I'm concerned,
It's a piece of cake, for me.
We can't allow one's age to be
The reason for a break.
To end our love for that
Is a big mistake. You see,*

*The world has bigger problems
Than we now face, by far.
The least of any worries
Is just what age we are.
If I love you and you love me,
It isn't worth the fuss.
It won't keep me awake.
It's a piece of cake, for me,*

MICHELLE and RAY: *(sing)*
...For us.

RAY: That's a powerful argument.

MICHELLE: I'll put it to you another way. Will it be Veronica, or Tami the Tease, or me?

RAY: *(pauses and sings)*
*The wonderful thing about Paris
That's above all, c'est amore.*

RAY and MICHELLE: *(sing)*
*What more can you say about Paris
That's hasn't been mentioned before?*

(RAY and MICHELLE embrace and kiss passionately)

MICHELLE: I must go now. Au revoir, mon cherie.

RAY: *(as MICHELLE exits)* Au revoir. *(RAY sings a cappella)* What more can you say about Paris?

JESSE: *(enters)* What did you find out?

RAY: Plenty! Warlock blackmailed her into helping him. But the big news is this. The light that shined on him was AC/DC.

JESSE: AC/DC? *(long pause)* You mean...Oh boy! If Joanie finds out, she'll need an army to be there for her.

RAY: That's what I said!

JESSE: Joanie must never find out about the men. That would be too much for her. Besides, what really matters is that he cheated at all.

ACT TWO Scene 3

Setting: *The Torrington home, Sunday at noon.*

At Rise: *JESSE is seated and writing on a pad.*

(JESSE puts the pad on a table and rises as KAREN enters)

JESSE: Hi, Karen. Do you remember our conversation about you becoming a blues singer?

KAREN: Yes.

JESSE: I'm writing a blues song for you. I'll arrange for you to sing it at the Crystal Lounge.

KAREN: That's wonderful!

JESSE: I'll help you get you an appropriate costume and have you professionally made up. Everyone will be there to see you.

KAREN: Grandfather too?

JESSE: I'll make sure Warlock, I mean, Walter is there too.

KAREN: I'm warning you. He'll lose control when he sees me perform like that. I don't know what he might do.

JESSE: I'm counting on that.

KAREN: What do you mean?

JESSE: It might be fun to see him go a little wacko. So, let's not tell him exactly what you'll be performing.

KAREN: Okay. He drives everyone else crazy. It's time he got a taste of his own medicine. Thanks for everything. You are terrific. *(pause)* Would you like to be my honorary grandfather?

JESSE: I'd love it.

KAREN: Also, do you mind if I call you Pops? It fits in with you're being a songwriter.

JESSE: I get it. How about sealing it with a big hug?

(JESSE and KAREN hug)

KAREN: You're going to meet Zach today. He should be here any minute.

JESSE: Is there anything happening between you two?

KAREN: No. But, like you said, it only takes a moment.

(JOANIE and ZACH enter)

JOANIE: Jesse, this is Karen's friend, Zachary David Joyner. Zach, this is Jesse Logan, he is—

JESSE: Karen's grandfather. You can call me Pops.

ZACH: Grandfather? I'm confused.

JOANIE: So am I.

JESSE: It's an honorary title.

ZACH: I see.

KAREN: Zach, I need to attend to something. I'll be right back.

JOANIE: I must leave too. *(JOANIE and KAREN exit)*

JESSE: It's a lovely day.

ZACH: Yes, it is. *(pause)* When did you become Karen's honorary grandfather?

JESSE: About five minutes ago. It's a long story. Perhaps, one day I'll tell you about it.
(*pause*) What do you do for a living, or are you still in school?

ZACH: I'm attending graduate school with a major in creative writing. I hope to write a great novel someday.

JESSE: I see. (*pause*) Do you date a lot?

ZACH: If you mean besides Karen, I date a little. (*pause*) No offense, Pops, but why don't you just tell me what's on your mind?

JESSE: None taken. Okay, what are your intentions towards her?

ZACH: That cliché is passé, don't you think? (*pause*) But to answer your question, I assure you, they are honorable. Let's get everything on the table. I—

JESSE: Isn't that a cliché too?

ZACH: (*laughs*) That's a gotcha.

JESSE: (*amused*) That's another one.

ZACH: I'll rephrase that. I like Karen a lot. Someday, I may love her. I've never been in love before, no cliché.

JESSE: Here's some advice. If you do fall in love with her, you'll know it in an instant and hopefully, she will too. It will happen without rhyme or reason. That's only my theory but I truly believe it.

ZACH: That's quite a theory. Thanks for the advice. It comes at a very appropriate time in my life, because...(*sings*)

I've got my eyes on love.

A deep romance is all I dream of.

That's why I've got my eyes on love.

I stay alert each day

If there's a chance it's coming my way.

I try to keep my eyes on love.

*Though some may wonder when they'll know
And how they'll feel it start.*

*When love begins I'll see a glow
And feel it in my heart.*

*I know someday I'll see
That shining glance from one who loves me.
Till then, I've got my eyes on love.*

JESSE: *(sings)*
*I've got my eyes on love.
Renewed romance is all I dream of.
That's why I've got my eyes on love.
I want to try once more.
A second chance is what I long for.
That's why I've got my eyes on love.*

JESSE AND ZACH: *(sing)*
*Though some may wonder when they'll know
And how they'll feel it start.
When love begins I'll see a glow
And feel it in my heart.*

*I know someday I'll see
That shining glance
From one who loves me.
Till then, I've got my eyes on love.
Till then, I've got my eyes on love.*

JESSE: Zach, I do believe we're on the same page.

ZACH: That's a—

JESSE: Cliché. I know and the hell with it.

ZACH: Excuse me. I better see what's keeping Karen.

JESSE: *(as ZACH exits)* That's a nice young man. I hope he and Karen see the light one day.

(RAY and MICHELLE enter)

RAY: Jesse, I told Michelle you were working on a plan that may force Warlock to expose himself.

MICHELLE: What?

RAY: As a fraud!

JESSE: Michelle, you must continue assisting him. He must not get suspicious. As for the rest of my plan, I just set it in motion. Karen is part of it.

MICHELLE: She knows about Monsieur Warlock?

JESSE: No. Though she is the key to success, she mustn't know what we're up to. She might ham it up if she knew.

RAY: What are you talking about?

JESSE: Karen is going to perform in front of Walter at the Crystal Lounge. (*sings*)

What if he sees Karen sing a hot number?

What if she gives him some backtalk?

While he takes some heat, he'll squirm in his seat.

What if he gets up and walks?

Say, what if it happens that way?

(*as JESSE, RAY AND MICHELLE congratulate themselves in an animated manner, ZACH and KAREN enter*)

ZACH: What's going on?

MICHELLE: We're doing a...French exercise. It helps the...but we're finished now.

(*RAY, JESSE and MICHELLE exit*)

ZACH: Karen, sometimes I think people get strange as they get older. I hope that never happens to us.

ACT TWO Scene 4

Setting: *The Torrington patio, Sunday evening.*

At Rise: ZACH is seated.

ZACH: *(rises as KAREN enters)* Hi, Karen. Would you like some wine?

KAREN: I guess it would be all right.

ZACH: *(he pours wine into two glasses)* What do you mean?

KAREN: Pops said something to me about my drinking.

ZACH: I doubt he was referring to a single glass of wine. *(he gives one glass to KAREN, seals the bottle, puts it on the table and takes one glass)*

KAREN: *(toasting)* Here's to my honorary grandfather. *(KAREN and ZACH drink)* What do you think of him?

ZACH: I like him a lot. He's interesting and easy to talk to.

KAREN: That's certainly true. He has this theory about how people fall in love.

ZACH: I know. According to him, people can't control who they fall in love with or why. There may be something to it. It would explain couples that appear to be mismatched.

KAREN: You're right. We've all heard things like "What did she ever see in him?" or vice versa.

ZACH: How about "Beauty and the Beast," or my all-time favorite, the princess who fell in love with a frog.

KAREN: Little did they know it was the 'light.'

ZACH: I wonder if you can jump-start it.

KAREN: What do you mean?

ZACH: Induce it.

KAREN: Induce or seduce?

ZACH: Prime it. *(pause)* For instance, what if we stared intensely at each other?

(KAREN and ZACH get close and stare at each other)

KAREN: I don't think anything is happening.

ZACH: Me neither. But, let's continue the experiment. *(he takes KAREN's glass and puts it with his on the table)* What if we held each other?

(KAREN and ZACH embrace)

KAREN: You're getting very close to a 'seduce.'

ZACH: What if we did this?

(As KAREN and ZACH kiss, a light from above shines on them for a second. They stare at one another and then face the audience.)

KAREN and ZACH: That did it!

KAREN: *(sings)*

*I know I've fallen in love.
It happened seconds ago.
You look so diff'rent to me
And somehow I know it's love.*

ZACH: *(sings)*

*I never saw you this way.
Your lovely face seems to glow.
It took a moment to see
And somehow to be in love.*

KAREN and ZACH: *(sing)*

*It's like we've only just met,
Although not true.
A kiss I'll never forget
Says I love you.
They say that falling in love*

*Just takes as long as a sigh.
And in that blink of an eye
I knew that you loved me too.
I know I've fallen love with you.*

KAREN: *(sings)*
*It was our moment to see
That light above.*

ZACH: *(sings)*
*And now it's clear as can be
That we're in love.*

KAREN and ZACH: *(sing)*
*They say that falling in love
Just takes as long as a sigh.
And in that blink of an eye
I knew that you loved me too.
I know I've fallen love with you.*

(JESSE and JOANIE enter)

JOANIE: I hope we're not interrupting you.

KAREN: No. Zach and I are about to go for a walk. Oh, there is one thing. *(KAREN looks up and makes an 'okay' hand gesture to JESSE as she and ZACH exit)*

JOANIE: Why did Karen do that?

JESSE: I believe it means that Karen and Zach are in love.

JOANIE: That's wonderful. Oh, to be young and in love.

JESSE: Either one isn't bad by itself.

JOANIE: I agree. *(pause)* Karen mentioned to me that you encouraged her to perform at the club but she didn't give me any details.

JESSE: Yes. I'm writing a special song for her. It is especially important that Walter is there to see her.

JOANIE: Why wouldn't he be there? Do you have anything else planned?

JESSE: No. I just think it's time that he learned to appreciate his granddaughter's talents.

JOANIE: Jesse, you're a wonderful guy. I'm very glad we met again after all these years. *(A light from above shines on JOANIE for a moment. She and JESSE look at each and kiss passionately)* Jesse, something just happened that I cannot explain.

JESSE: *(looking skyward)* It took you forty-five years but thank you.

JOANIE: How can this be?

JESSE: It's love and it's the greatest mystery in the universe.

JOANIE: But I'm married to Walter.

JESSE: Do you still love him?

JOANIE: I always assumed you fell in love only once in your lifetime.

JESSE: Do you still love him?

JOANIE: Walter is not the same person I married. *(pause)* But it doesn't make any difference. I believe in marriage and he needs me. *(JOANIE sobs)*

JESSE: I understand. I wish I didn't but I do. *(pause)* It's been a great weekend but it's time to leave. I'll let you know about Karen's performance. Tell her goodbye for me.

**This is the end of the FreeRead.
Now, order the perusal for the entire script and all of the music.**