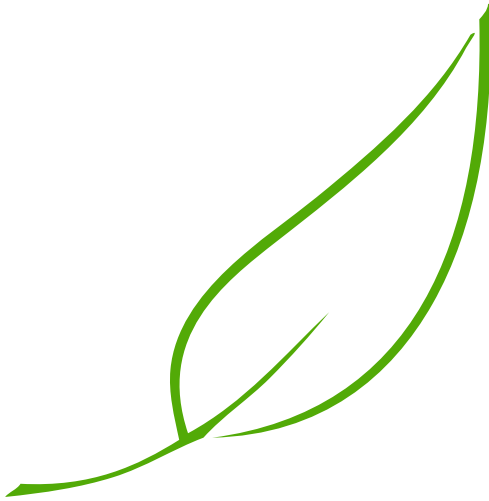


COUPLINGS

by Ken Bradbury



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Act I

Scene 1: Marvin and Clarissa

MARVIN: She's as beautiful as the day I met her. I mean that. Some people just say that because they think they should, but I mean that. We borrowed the money to start farming and our first house wasn't much more than a glorified lean-to about seven miles from any good road. One International tractor, a two-bottom plow, two-row cultivator and a cow ... that didn't milk. The tractor worked fine but the cow was busted. We ate her the first year.

CLARISSA: Did you get the kids up? They've got to get to school.

MARVIN: Yes, honey, they're up. Clarissa ran the scales at the elevator during the day then came home at night and drove the tractor while I slept. I got no idea when she slept.

CLARISSA: Can we go home now?

MARVIN: In a minute, sweetheart. We didn't have a car. She'd walk the four miles to town and walk back again the evening ... and she carried a gun. I don't know that she ever fired a shot, but she hated badgers ... hell, everybody hates a badger. We had two and they lived somewhere between our house and the elevator. You don't want to meet a Badger after dark and she met him twice. He held his ground and she didn't have any choice 'cause it was too muddy to get off the road. I told her not to be walking into town with a loaded gun ... wasn't safe ... so she talked to that badger while she tried to figure out where she'd put her bullet.

CLARISSA: Are we going home?

MARVIN: In a minute, Clarrie. That's when I started worrying about her all day ... walking around with that loaded gun.

CLARISSA: I don't like rice pudding.

MARVIN: You don't have to eat it.

CLARISSA: Are the kids up yet?

MARVIN: *(a pause, then)* Forty-seven years. That seems like a long time but it's not. Sold the farm, retired, moved to town ... a good move. You can't farm forever and I didn't have the energy or the brains to keep up with things. We'd lived in town maybe ... I don't know ... I don't remember when it started. Maybe two, three years before it all started.

CLARISSA: Somebody stole my purse last night.

MARVIN: It's right here, Clary.

CLARISSA: No, it's not.

MARVIN: Right here by your bed ... right where we keep it.

CLARISSA: That's not mine.

MARVIN: *(a pause, then)* She'd forget things, but hell, we all forget things. Then it got a little worse ...

CLARISSA: That's not my purse.

MARVIN: *(a pause, then)* Then she took off driving one day ... worst day of my life. Had to call the police. They found her at a truck stop near Alton. I got a ride down and brought her back. *(a pause)* It's like ... well, she's got this tape recorder ... It's got a "play" button but no "record."

CLARISSA: If those kids are late for school, don't blame me. I don't know why we just can't go home. But I need my purse.

MARVIN: I never miss a day. Don't matter what the weather is or how I feel, I just can't miss a day. I'm not being noble ... and she wouldn't know if I skipped day, but I would. *(looks at her)* I don't think she really needs me anymore ... but I need her.

Scene 2: Susan and Rick

SUSAN: I remember the day I told my son that his parents had gone to Woodstock. His jaw hit the floor. I stood there cooking oatmeal, wearing a dress suit while reading the Wall Street Journal and told him that his parents once painted yellow daises on their Volkswagen and tied dandelions in their hair. It was like the day he realized that even Michael Jackson goes to the bathroom. The kid was shattered.

RICK: It was your idea.

SUSAN: And you are so wrong ... but who cares?

RICK: I just wanted to get it straight.

SUSAN: We were both so out of it we didn't know who made the decision. We crossed the Illinois border with Creedence screaming out ...

RICK: *(singing)* I see ... a bad moon rising! I see ... trouble on the way.

SUSAN: We were higher than kites.

RICK: On Dr. Pepper and Cheetos.

SUSAN: You stopped at an Ohio truck stop to ask the way to New York.

RICK: I was lost.

SUSAN: We cranked up Pinball Wizard and headed east. A day later and there it was.

RICK: Mud. Mud and crazies ... no toilets and no food and more mud and ...

SUSAN: And you loved it.

RICK: ... and I loved it.

SUSAN: You remember any of it?

RICK: I remember all of it.

SUSAN: Really.

RICK: Test me.

SUSAN: Okay. Who sang ... uh ...

RICK: *(to the audience)* Watch this.

SUSAN: Soul Sacrifice.

RICK: Santana.

SUSAN: That was too easy.

RICK: *(to the audience)* I've got her.

SUSAN: Ball and Chain.

RICK: Janis Joplin.

SUSAN: Amazing Grace.

RICK: Arlo Guthrie.

SUSAN: What did Joni Mitchell sing?

RICK: She didn't. She was on the Dick Cavett show that weekend. *(to the audience)* Score!

SUSAN: Darn. The Star Spangled Banner.

RICK: Jimi Hendrix! Anybody knows that!

We are stardust, we are golden,
We are billion-year-old carbon.
And we got to get ourselves back to the garden.
By the time we got to Woodstock,
We were half a million strong.

SUSAN: How do you remember all that?

RICK: Pot makes me sick and beer gives me gas. A half-million people in that pasture and I was the only one who could find my car.

SUSAN: *(a pause, then)* So how'd we get here?

RICK: Where?

SUSAN: Three kids, a mortgage, and yearly rectal exams.

RICK: Good Karma. The Age of Aquarius.

SUSAN: Do you see Mikey's face when I told him his mother used to wear beads and weave sun catchers?

RICK: That was a terrible thing to do.

SUSAN: He had to know sometime. God, that kid is so straight he scares me. He polishes his shoes. Who polishes Nikes?

RICK: So if every generation is a reaction to the one before it, our grandkids will be ...

SUSAN: Terrorists.

RICK: You're right. We are stardust, we are golden,

SUSAN: We are billion-year-old carbon.

RICK: And we got to get ourselves back to the garden.

SUSAN: The timer just went off.

RICK: What's for dinner?

SUSAN: Chicken potpie. Hurry up. His soccer game's in an hour.

RICK: Peace.

SUSAN: Peace.

Scene 3: Meg and Bruce

MEG: Third time's the charm.

BRUCE: Stop saying that.

MEG: I mean it. I think we can make it work this time.

BRUCE: Of course we can. Stop talking about it. It's bad luck.

MEG: It's a fact, Bruce. We've been married three times.

BRUCE: Okay, okay! But we've got it all worked out now so stop talking about it. Everywhere we go, you tell people that. It's not even funny anymore, Meg. It makes us sound like ...

MEG: What?

BRUCE: Losers.

MEG: We are. I mean we were. Now we're winning.

BRUCE: But what's the good of bringing it up all the time? Every time we get in a crowd of people you announce, "This is my three-time husband Bruce! Third time's the charm!"

MEG: They laugh.

BRUCE: Of course they laugh. They're embarrassed. How do you answer something like that? You laugh.

MEG: I don't know what else to say. How am I supposed to explain something like that?

BRUCE: Don't! Don't explain it! Nobody ever asks you for an explanation of why we've been married three times, so don't tell them.

MEG: They don't ask but they want to know. I would. This is not normal, Bruce. Most people don't get married three times.

BRUCE: Then it's none of their business. Besides ... "Third time's the charm!" doesn't exactly explain anything.

MEG: It shuts them up.

BRUCE: I just wish ... I just wish you'd drop it.

MEG: So which wedding did you like the best?

BRUCE: Meg!

MEG: Just asking.

BRUCE: All of them. I liked them all.

MEG: Even if the first two didn't work?

BRUCE: All weddings work ... it's the marriages that get crappy.

MEG: So which one?

BRUCE: Okay! Number two.

MEG: You didn't like the last one?

BRUCE: Two's an even number. I like it.

MEG: Bruce, I'm asking a serious question.

BRUCE: See what you're doing? You're purposely starting an argument.

MEG: I am not! I'm just asking your opinion.

BRUCE: And I'm in trouble no matter which way I answer.

MEG: Why'd you like number two?

BRUCE: Meg!

MEG: Okay, I won't ask anymore questions. State plainly what you liked about wedding number two. That was a statement. No question mark.

BRUCE: Okay. The first wedding ... we were young, we were nervous ... we had no idea what we were doing.

MEG: I did.

BRUCE: Let me finish!

MEG: Sorry.

BRUCE: Who can enjoy their first wedding? Grandmothers. Grandmothers enjoy first weddings. Mothers enjoy first weddings. The bride and groom don't even know what's going on. It's all a blur.

MEG: I was blurry at our first wedding?

BRUCE: You said you wouldn't ask another question.

MEG: Sorry.

BRUCE: The third wedding ... well, it just felt like "Here we go again."

MEG: I can't believe you said that!

BRUCE: Meg!!

MEG: That was not a question! When the minister was asking if you'd love and cherish me you answered, "I will," but you were thinking, "Here we go again!"?

BRUCE: That's a question.

MEG: Then take off the question mark! I exclaimed it. It was an exclamation mark ... a big exclamation.

BRUCE: Look, I had my doubts, okay? You walk up to your neighbor's front door on Monday and his dog bites you. You do the same thing on Tuesday and he bites you again. You gotta admit, you wonder on Wednesday if you might get bit. (*Meg stares at him a furiously long time, then ...*) Bad analogy?

MEG: Very bad analogy.

BRUCE: Wanna hit me?

MEG: I want to bite you.

BRUCE: I'm not literary, okay? Meg, this one might work. We're smarter.

MEG: We are?

BRUCE: Aren't we?

MEG: What do you think?

BRUCE: I don't know. I think we are. I hope we are.

MEG: I hope so too. You know what they say ... Third ...

BRUCE: Don't.

MEG: Sorry.

Scene 4: Jason and Lydia

A telephone conversation but an actual phone need not be used. Assume that they are speaker phones.

LYDIA: Did you post it yet?

JASON: What?

LYDIA: You know what.

JASON: I don't know.

LYDIA: You don't know.

JASON: No.

LYDIA: Your status.

JASON: Oh.

LYDIA: Did you?

JASON: I will.

LYDIA: When?

JASON: I don't know.

LYDIA: It takes like three seconds.

JASON: I know. I keep forgetting.

LYDIA: You go to Facebook. You click "Yes. In a relationship." You don't even say with who if I embarrass you that much.

JASON: You don't embarrass me.

LYDIA: Then why don't you post it?

JASON: I don't know.

LYDIA: Mine's been there for a week.

JASON: I know.

LYDIA: Something wrong with that?

JASON: No.

LYDIA: (*a pause, then*) Why don't you ever say more than two words?

JASON: I don't know.

LYDIA: That was three. Progress.

JASON: Lydia, why do we ... (*he stops ... can't find the word*)

LYDIA: Why do we what?

JASON: You know. Tell everybody. Why does the whole world have to know we're going together?

LYDIA: Are you embarrassed ...

JASON: I told you ... I'm not embarrassed about it. But it ought to be private, you know? This is just between me and you, right?

LYDIA: Yes.

JASON: Then why do we ... you know.

LYDIA: I read in People Magazine ...

JASON: Oh, God.

LYDIA: Just listen to me. It said that men fall in love with their eyes ... and women fall in love with their ears ... what they hear. A girl wants to hear things.

JASON: That's crazy.

LYDIA: It's true.

JASON: You fall in love with your ears?

LYDIA: I think so.

JASON: I just go by what I see?

LYDIA: That's what it says.

JASON: So talking to you on the phone doesn't mean I care about you? I can't see you now.

LYDIA: Are you visualizing me?

JASON: Huh?

LYDIA: Do you have a picture of me in your head?

JASON: I was looking at You Tube.

LYDIA: Jason!

JASON: But I was listening!

LYDIA: You watch your computer stuff while you're talking to me?

JASON: Everybody does it.

LYDIA: They do not. *(a long pause)* Jason?

JASON: Huh?

LYDIA: You still there?

JASON: Yeah.

LYDIA: I'm sorry.

JASON: No. My fault. I'll put in my page ... I'll say we're in a relationship ... and I'll say it's with you.

LYDIA: You don't have to.

JASON: It's okay.

LYDIA: Jason, don't do it if you don't want to.

JASON: No ... I guess I want to ... I just didn't ... you know ... want to.

LYDIA: *(a long pause, then)* I gotta go.

JASON: Yeah.

LYDIA: *(a pause, then)* Do you really ... I mean do men really fall in love with eyes instead of what they hear?

JASON: I don't know. Never thought about it.

LYDIA: I'll guess I'll go.

JASON: Yeah. See you tomorrow.

LYDIA: Okay ... *(a pause)* ... bye.

JASON: Lydia?

LYDIA: Yeah?

JASON: You got a nice voice.

Scene 5: Jim and Joyce

JIM: I can't hear you.

JOYCE: Are you on the road?

JIM: What?

JOYCE: Are you on your cell?

JIM: I'm on my cell. You're dropping out.

JOYCE: I'm fine. I'm sitting in our living room. You're the one that's dropping out.

JIM: Hey, I'm gonna be late.

JOYCE: You can't be late. We're the ones who set the time.

JIM: I know. Call 'em, would you?

JOYCE: Jim, we've got to make this work tonight. The whole dinner was our idea.

JIM: Joyce, we're supposed to be there in an hour and I'm two hours from home. It's not my fault. It's geography. It's physics.

JOYCE: It's getting old.

JIM: Pat ...

JOYCE: It's not the first time, my dear. It's not even the second or third or fourth. It's a pattern.

JIM: Honey, we've been through this. This job ... I never know when I'm ... Look, you're cutting out. I'll send you a text.

JOYCE: Don't you dare!

JIM: Huh?

JOYCE: We are not going to settle this with text messages!

JIM: What's the difference?

JOYCE: The difference is ... it's a text message. When was the last time we talked?

JIM: Last night. I called you from Peoria.

JOYCE: I mean face to face.

JIM: Oh, I don't know. What? Last week maybe?

JOYCE: A week ago Sunday. I woke you up to go to church and you said you'd been out too late. Then you left again Sunday night. A thirty-second conversation.

JIM: Joyce, you know I don't like working this way.

JOYCE: What color are my eyes? *(a long pause, then)* I'm waiting.

JIM: You got those contacts two years ago ...

JOYCE: Good. I knew you'd remember writing the check. So what color are they?

JIM: *(a long pause, then)* If I guess wrong I'm dead, right?

JOYCE: Right.

JIM: They were blue when we got married.

JOYCE: You remember my driver's license ... good. What color are you wife's eyes, Jim?

JIM: Honey, you know how I am with details. I wouldn't remember if I saw you yesterday.

JOYCE: That's the most romantic thing I've ever heard. You've seen me for two years with this color. What color are my eyes?

JIM: You're going to make a thing of this, aren't you?

JOYCE: I'm already making a thing of this. What color are my eyes?

JIM: What happens if I guess wrong?

JOYCE: You've already guessed wrong because you have to guess.

JIM: What?

JOYCE: I said you've already ...

JIM: You're cutting out, honey.

JOYCE: You're telling me.

JIM: I think I'm losing you.

JOYCE: I think you're right.

JIM: Honey? *(no answer)* Honey, I can't hear you. *(no answer)*

Joyce? *(no answer)* Joyce, I'm losing you. Joyce?

Scene 6: Laurie & Phil

LAURIE: You do have a daddy and mommy just like all the other girls. You have Mommy Monday through Friday and Daddy on weekends.

PHIL: "Dear Parent, your student's parent-teacher conference will be held this Thursday and Friday. It's most beneficial if both parents are in attendance."

LAURIE: "Dear Mrs. Lester, we realize that some families are victims of divorce, but we must insist that the Summer Soccer League practice schedule be followed strictly. If Jonna must miss every fourth Saturday then perhaps she might consider trying out for spring softball."

PHIL: "The First Methodist Church cordially invites you to attend the confirmation of Jonna Lester on Sunday, April 1st. We hope that both of her parents will be able to attend this important rite. Please sit together on the front pew."

LAURIE: "Welcome to the opening of school for the current year. We know that only a close partnership between the parents and a child's school can produce the results we both wish for your child."

PHIL: "It's volleyball season again! In order to welcome you to the program we'd like each parent to bring two quarts of chili for the fundraiser. Please bring your donation to the school Tuesday morning." Chili? In the morning?

LAURIE: "Girls hoping to represent the Tigers this year should bring their \$125 for uniforms by Monday morning."

PHIL: "The all school family outing will be held this Saturday. This is a great time to get to know the other parents."

LAURIE: She's busy Saturday.

PHIL: Again?

LAURIE: I can't help it, Phil. It's the school schedule.

PHIL: "Notice to everyone working in the main office: The family picnic is June 17th. Don't forget the spouse and kids."

LAURIE: "Please note that the camp scholarship forms must be signed by both parents."

PHIL: "Special note: the signatures of both parents are required."

LAURIE: "No forms without both parent signatures will be accepted."

PHIL: I can't pick her up Friday night.

LAURIE: What's wrong?

PHIL: Out of town. Tell her first thing Saturday morning ...

LAURIE: She has dance on Saturday morning.

PHIL: Okay, then ...

LAURIE: And we've got to shop for prom this weekend.

PHIL: Prom?

LAURIE: You want to go dress shopping?

PHIL: "Remember, Tuesday is bring-your-child-to-work day."

LAURIE: "We forgot to put it in the bulletin, but don't forget the church family night tonight."

PHIL: A whole week in Florida? With who?

LAURIE: She didn't okay it with you?

PHIL: No way.

LAURIE: I told her to ... oh, darn.

PHIL: You're letting her spend a week in Florida?

LAURIE: No! I thought you ...

PHIL: No way, Laurie. Not a chance in hell.

LAURIE: "It's senior night for the basketball team. We hope that all moms and dads will escort their daughters onto the floor."

PHIL: "The senior parents should sit up front in Friday's graduation ceremonies."

LAURIE: She's not speaking to me this week. Did she say anything to you?

PHIL: She said you two were fighting.

LAURIE: We're not fighting. I don't fight with my own daughter.

PHIL: I don't know what it was. Just a pretty silent weekend.

LAURIE: She's not talking to you?

PHIL: Then who's she talking to?

LAURIE: "The parents of Jonna Lester and Michael Richards cordially invite you to the wedding of their children on Saturday, August first."

PHIL: I had no idea weddings cost this much.

LAURIE: It's terrible.

PHIL: Your folks be there?

LAURIE: Of course. Yours?

PHIL: Oh, yeah. I'm sure. The receiving line?

LAURIE: I never thought of that.

PHIL: It's for Jonna.

LAURIE: I know.

PHIL: Whatever you say.

LAURIE: I know.

PHIL: Laurie, I want this to be normal ... just as normal as any other little girl would have it.

LAURIE: I want it to be better.

PHIL: Better. Yeah ... I agree.

LAURIE: We've got some making up to do.

PHIL: I know. I know. Can we get together?

LAURIE: What?

PHIL: To talk about the wedding.

LAURIE: *(a pause, then)* When?

PHIL: Anytime. I'll cancel anything you want.

LAURIE: No, don't do that. Make it a good time for you.

PHIL: How about tonight?

LAURIE: Sure. I could do that.

PHIL: At the house?

LAURIE: Well ...

PHIL: No ... no ... bad idea. Sorry. The Steak place. My treat.

LAURIE: I've got this problem.

PHIL: What?

LAURIE: You.

PHIL: Huh?

LAURIE: Phil ... I ... I get along better with you than anybody else in my life.

PHIL: *(a pause, then)* Same here.

LAURIE: Then what are we doing?

PHIL: *(a pause, then)* I don't know ... I honestly don't know.

LAURIE: Seven?

PHIL: Huh?

LAURIE: Seven o'clock?

PHIL: Uh ... yeah ... I'll call in a reservation.

LAURIE: Phil?

PHIL: Yeah?

LAURIE: *(a very long pause, then)* Never ... never mind.

Scene 7: Max and Gina.

GINA: You're an idiot!

MAX: I know.

GINA: You drive me crazy!

MAX: I agree.

GINA: Tell me why I married you!

MAX: I have no idea! I've told you that!

GINA: Tell me again!

MAX: I have no idea why you married me!

GINA: Then why are we arguing?

MAX: I have no idea why we're arguing! You started it!

GINA: Always it's me!

MAX: You noticed!

GINA: You're an idiot.

MAX: You said that already!

GINA: So let's get the house ready ... they'll be here tomorrow.

MAX: All of them?

GINA: All of them.

MAX: Good! I love having the whole family together. Even the bambinos?

GINA: Every blessed one of them. So help me!

MAX: I am helping, woman! I'm staying out of your way! Everything I do, it is wrong! Soon as I lift a finger you say, "Stop! Stop! Not that way!"

GINA: That's because everything you do is wrong!

MAX: Did I just tell you? Is that just what I said?

GINA: For once, you're right! Only when it gets you out of work do you try to make sense. Why did I marry you?

MAX: Because you love me! Admit it! You love me!

GINA: I admit nothing!

MAX: "Max!" you say ... "Max, there is no one like you in the world!"

GINA: That, I got right.

MAX: How many you think?

GINA: Tomorrow?

MAX: No, how many potatoes in the basement? Of course I mean tomorrow!

GINA: I lose count.

MAX: How many kids we got now?

GINA: You don't know?

MAX: I'm testing you.

GINA: Eight. We got eight kids.

MAX: How many bambinos?

GINA: That's where I lose count.

MAX: You don't even remember how many grandchildren?

GINA: They keep moving around! Ask them to hold still a minute and I'll count. Don't bother me, old man. I have work to do!

MAX: Work quietly. I need a nap.

GINA: A nap! Thirty-two family coming for dinner tomorrow and you sleep?

MAX: I thought you didn't know the number.

GINA: I was testing you. You're napping?

MAX: Tomorrow you will be too tired from working and I will have to do all the hugging and kissing. I need my rest.

GINA: That's you! Hug and kiss! Don't lift a finger, but hug ... yes, he can do that.

MAX: It's my nature, pet. I'm a lover ... not a sweeper.

GINA: Move your feet.

MAX: Ten rooms in the house and she must start sweeping under my feet.

GINA: Two minutes and you'll be snoring. Lift your feet while you're still awake. Why did I marry you?

MAX: I told you. You love me. You still do.

GINA: That doesn't mean I like you.

MAX: What's the difference?

GINA: Love is an obligation. Liking takes effort. Move the other foot.

MAX: You are lucky to have me.

GINA: Such luck. Now stand up so I can move the sofa.

MAX: Some day I shall just leave you! I shall walk out the door. Goodbye, Gina! Feed the dog! Pay the bills! Move the sofa! ... and never come back.

GINA: So many promises!

MAX: Lost! You would be lost without me, Gina! I am your rock!

GINA: Ha! Rocks have a purpose. Fifty-one years together and I am still looking for yours. Did you see the letter?

MAX: What letter?

GINA: From your daughter Olivia. She asked if for once Mama and Papa would not shout at each other at Easter.

MAX: Who's shouting!!?

GINA: Would you listen to yourself?

MAX: We do not shout!

GINA: Stop shouting.

MAX: That's just the way we live! How do other people live? Don't they shout?

GINA: No. The Meggason's ... do you ever hear them shout at one another?

MAX: The Meggason's are deaf. They've not heard a word in years. They gave up shouting.

GINA: The Goldstein's?

MAX: Too old. No breath.

GINA: They're younger than we are!

MAX: But they don't love each other like we do. This isn't anger, Gina! It's love!

GINA: Move your feet!

MAX: I'd love to.

GINA: Very funny.

MAX: You say ... Olivia ... this bothers her?

GINA: It upsets her children.

MAX: What's the world coming to? I don't understand children any more.

GINA: The world has changed, Max. Not every husband and wife spend their day screaming at each other.

MAX: And they call that love?

GINA: They call that love.

MAX: Go figure. It's a whole new world. You think we should try it?

GINA: Try what?

MAX: Being peaceful ... stop the shouting.

GINA: You're kidding?

MAX: No. I'm not too old to change. Are you?

GINA: I have never been the problem.

MAX: You!? You have never been the problem!!? Ha!

GINA: You're shouting again.

MAX: I am not shouting!!!!

GINA: Max ...

MAX: The only reason I shout is to be heard over your shouting!

GINA: You're doing it again!

MAX: I'm only ...!

GINA: Max! Move your feet!

MAX: I'm busy!

GINA: Doing nothing!

MAX: Don't shout at me!

GINA: I'm not shouting!!!

MAX: Do you love me!?

GINA: Yes!

MAX: Then I say it!

GINA: I love you, Max!

MAX: See?! See? We love each other! That proves it! I love you, Gina!

GINA: And I love you, Max! Now move your feet!

Scene Eight: Mark & Rebecca

REBECCA: You pushed me.

MARK: Did not.

REBECCA: Did too. Standing right in line for milk time. You pushed me hard.

MARK: I bumped you. I didn't do it hard.

REBECCA: You did too.

MARK: Did not.

REBECCA: Right in my back ... right when Miss Meyer was handing out the milk. I think I spilled some.

MARK: The carton wasn't even open.

REBECCA: You wanna sit by me on the bus?

MARK: Why?

REBECCA: 'Cause we can talk and stuff.

MARK: I guess. Can I have a Twizzler?

REBECCA: They're mine.

MARK: You ain't gonna eat all of 'em.

REBECCA: Maybe I will.

MARK: Just one.

REBECCA: Okay. But eat it slow or you'll want another one.

MARK: No, I won't.

REBECCA: Do you like Chloe Richards?

MARK: No.

REBECCA: She said you do.

MARK: I don't.

REBECCA: Did you kiss her?

MARK: No.

REBECCA: She said you did.

MARK: Just once. Not hard.

REBECCA: That mean you like her?

MARK: No.

REBECCA: Not even a little?

MARK: I just kissed her. I didn't mean it.

REBECCA: Oh.

REBECCA: Would you kiss me?

MARK: No.

REBECCA: Why not?

MARK: 'Cause I don't hate you.

REBECCA: Oh. Want another Twizzler?

MARK: Yeah. Thanks. They're good. You got good Twizzlers.

REBECCA: Do you think I'm pretty?

MARK: I don't know.

REBECCA: How can you not know?

MARK: I don't know.

REBECCA: You wanna go with me?

MARK: Where?

REBECCA: Steady.

MARK: Oh.

REBECCA: Maybe for just a week.

MARK: I don't know. Whatta you gotta do?

REBECCA: Just talk and stuff.

MARK: That's it?

REBECCA: I think so. We just say we're goin' together and that's it.

MARK: I don't have to do nothin'?

REBECCA: I don't think so. We just say it and that's all.

MARK: Oh. Maybe.

REBECCA: When you gonna tell me?

MARK: Okay. I guess.

REBECCA: Then we're goin' together?

MARK: Now? It started already?

REBECCA: Yeah. I happens quick. Like automatic.

MARK: Wow. I didn't even notice.

REBECCA: Fun, isn't it?

MARK: I guess. You gonna eat the last Twizzler?

REBECCA: I don't have to. You want it?

MARK: Yeah.

REBECCA: Here.

Scene 9: Paul and Jean

PAUL: *(alone onstage in front of a grave ... a long moment, then)*
Gonna be an early winter. Seems like they come sooner. You liked winter though, didn't you? Said it cleaned up the air. They don't always scoop out the cemetery unless there's a burial, so there might be some days I don't make it up here, Jean. I'll drive by, though. Maybe stop. Get as close as I can. It's handy you being buried back here on the far side ... saves people gawking when they drive by.

Bob Fessler called the other night ... asked if I was all right. Said he'd seen my car parked in the cemetery last week ... wondered if everything was okay.

I said, "Hell no. My wife died. What'd be okay?" I mean, I laughed about it ... so did he. He was just curious. But it was a silly phone call. Why else would I come here?

The kids are good. One of 'em calls almost every day. Sometimes the "call waiting" lights up because two are calling at once. I don't have much to tell 'em. I'm doin' fine, I'll say ... thank 'em for calling. I don't think I ever talked to them this much when you were alive. You did the talking for both of us.

I don't tell 'em this, but lonely hurts.

I mean, I'm okay, I got most of my health and don't worry much about paying bills, but those walls ... they get pretty silent, Jean.

Don't say much at all. Yeah, I still go places, but ... well ... third wheel and all that. Don't many restaurants have a table for three. If something lasts very long I just don't stay.

You know it's funny ... I mean, in a way ... I made it all the way through your funeral ... the visitation ... everything ... didn't shed a tear. I just didn't feel like it and ...well...you know me... I don't cry much.

But then the girls...when they wanted to have Thanksgiving at our place...you know, just because we always had Thanksgiving at our place... They went searching through the cupboards and brought out your red casserole dish. ... then put it on the table. I don't know what happened ... I just ... I ... well ... I had to leave the room. Ain't that funny? Not a tear at the funeral but cryin' at the sight of a red casserole dish?

Strange how things happen.

(a long pause then) I gotta go.

You're still my girl, Jean ...

You're still my girl.

Act II

Scene 1: Max and Gina

MAX: Is that them?

GINA: They're here.

MAX: All at once? They came all at once? Good grief ... one, two, three ... eight cars! They came in eight cars!

GINA: Eight families come in eight cars. Life is funny, Max.

MAX: Are we ready?

GINA: How would you know? You haven't done a thing to get ready.

MAX: Ha! Look! A clean shirt! Just for you, a clean shirt!

GINA: You're an idiot.

MAX: Stop talking that way. The children are coming.

GINA: Promise you won't shout?

MAX: I don't shout! I just answer you! *(looking out the window)* You sure those are all ours?

GINA: Eight families, Max. Eight products of our peaceful, loving marriage.

MAX: Don't be smart. We did okay.

GINA: Tuck your shirt in. And where's your tie?

MAX: I don't need a tie to greet my own children.

GINA: Max!

MAX: I wasn't wearing a tie when we conceived them.

GINA: Margaret?

MAX: Okay. Once. *(gazing out again)* I think we've gained some ... so many.

GINA: And if you can't remember a name, don't guess.

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MAX: You think I don't know the names of my own family?

GINA: Yes, and you run through them all before you land on the right one. Just skip the names and tell them you love them.

MAX: You don't have to tell me to love my own grandchildren. (*gazing out*) Louie! He's got three! When did he get three?

GINA: He started wearing a tie.

MAX: How do I look?

GINA: Old. They won't tell you that, but when they drive home they'll say, "You know, Papa's getting older."

MAX: And what will they say about you?

GINA: "Isn't it amazing how Mama has kept herself so young?"

MAX: What does it matter? Your own papa never ages. He just stays your papa.

GINA: Let's go to the door. They're coming up the walk. And behave yourself this time.

MAX: Don't tell me to behave in front of my own children! I raised them! They know me!

GINA: And that's why I'm telling you that. They have memories.

MAX: That's not fair, Gina.

GINA: Exactly what I've told myself for forty-two years with you.. "That's not fair, Gina."

MAX: Don't start in front of the kids.

GINA: You started this forty-two years ago. Open the door.

MAX: Can we be nice to each other for at least a day?

GINA: What do you think?

MAX: You're right. I'll open the door.

Scene 2: Jason and Lydia

JASON: Lydia? (*nothing*) Lydia, you there?

LYDIA: I'm here.

JASON: I been texting you all day.

LYDIA: I know.

JASON: Why didn't you answer?

LYDIA: I don't know.

JASON: You get mad at me every time I say that.

LYDIA: I know. Sorry.

JASON: What happened? What'd I do?

LYDIA: Nothing. It's got nothing to do with you.

JASON: I send you messages all day and you don't answer and it's got nothing to do with me?

LYDIA: Well ... I mean, you're part of it.

JASON: What'd I do?

LYDIA: Nothing. (*a very long pause*) You mad?

JASON: No. (*a pause*) Yes.

LYDIA: I'm sorry.

JASON: What happened?

LYDIA: I went to this ... I don't know ... meeting ... thing. A guy gave a talk.

JASON: About what?

LYDIA: Love.

JASON: Oh, God.

LYDIA: Don't talk that way. He was really good. I been doing a lot of thinking.

JASON: You fell in love with some guy giving a talk?

LYDIA: That's stupid. He was like ... I don't know ... 30 or something. Old.

JASON: Oh. What'd he say?

LYDIA: He talked about the difference between lust and love.

JASON: Oh, geesh.

LYDIA: Listen to me, Jason. He said that if you truly loved a person, then you want their happiness more than anything else in the world.

JASON: So what's the big deal about that?

LYDIA: This morning ...

JASON: Yeah?

LYDIA: I came to school a little bit late and you were in the hallway.

JASON: Yeah?

LYDIA: And you were surrounded by girls.

JASON: Lydia...

LYDIA: And they were giggling.

JASON: I was telling a joke!

LYDIA: They were giggling and you were smiling and you were happy.

JASON: So? What's wrong with that?

LYDIA: That's when I discovered I didn't love you. *(a very long pause)* Jason?

JASON: What?

LYDIA: I'm sorry. But I was watching you and you were happy. You were smiling at them and you were feeling good because they were listening and that didn't make me happy.

JASON: That's dumb, Lydia. That's just dumb.

LYDIA: If I truly loved you, then whatever makes you happy would make me happy. *(a pause)* I wasn't happy, Jason.

JASON: You're dumping me for smiling at three girls?

LYDIA: Does that make sense?

JASON: No. It's stupid. If that was true, nobody would be in love.

LYDIA: You think?

JASON: Even your mom and dad.

LYDIA: Wow. I never thought about that.

JASON: So is the opposite true?

LYDIA: What?

JASON: If there's somebody you know that you truly love. If they're unhappy then should you be unhappy?

LYDIA: *(a pause, then)* Yeah. I guess so.

JASON: Then I love you. *(a very long pause)* Did you hear me?

LYDIA: Yeah.

JASON: One thing.

LYDIA: What?

JASON: Don't go to any more speeches, okay?

LYDIA: Okay.

Scene 3: Marvin and Clarissa

MARVIN: Looks like you've had your lunch.

CLARISSA: I haven't had a thing to eat all day. They just leave me here.

MARVIN: Here's your tray ... looks like you ate it all. Chicken ... and what's this ... green beans? You cleaned up your plate real good, girl. That's the way to stay perky.

CLARISSA: They don't feed me.

MARVIN: Pretty day out.

CLARISSA: Did you pack Richard's lunch?

MARVIN: Yes.

CLARISSA: You're forgetting things more and more. Are you sure you packed it?

MARVIN: I packed it, Clarrie.

CLARISSA: A banana. He always likes a banana. And I hope you didn't put the jelly on top of the peanut butter. You've got to put down a layer of butter then the jelly then the peanut butter. The jelly will be soaked right through the bread if you do it any other way. They stole my purse again.

MARVIN: It's right here.

CLARISSA: That's not my purse. I got it at the Seattle World's Fair, opening day, April 21st, 1962.

MARVIN: The Space Needle.

CLARISSA: We had lunch at the Space Needle. Two and a half dollars for a hamburger ... without cheese. Robbery.

MARVIN: I remember it.

CLARISSA: It's a wonder. You know you're forgetting things.

MARVIN: I do my best, Clarrie. Want to go for a ride this afternoon?

CLARISSA: With all I've got to do today?

MARVIN: We can make it a quick one.

CLARISSA: Sure, then the Guild Members arrive tonight and there I am with a dusty house. You know, it wouldn't hurt you to help around here.

MARVIN: I surprised you, sweetheart. I dusted everything in the whole house.



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