

If Only

Libretto by David Stauffer
Music by Max Shinn

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Cast of Characters

JAMES MCCAULEY

The ambitious punter for the Manatee Football Team.

AGATHA JESSIBELLE “A.J.” AUSTENBERGER

A shy girl with Broadway dreams. She has a crush on James.

RON KIDNEY

James’ rival; a wide receiver on the team who joined choir simply to spite him.

KAYLA PRICE

Norris’ girlfriend and self-styled “Matchmaker of Chester A. Arthur”.

NORRIS VAN DAMME

Kayla’s boyfriend and friend to Maximillian and Aaron.

PHILLIP OVIC

James’ close friend and roommate on the trip.

SAWYER GOODWIN

A charismatic but lazy drifter.

MAXIMILLIAN HOFENHEINZ

German exchange student and close friend of Norris.

AARON SELESU

Norris’ good friend. Not the brightest fellow.

CAMILLE DAVIDSON

Kayla’s best friend.

ERICA LEDEROUX

Kayla’s other, NOT best, friend.

CHRYSTAL O'HARE

A.J.'s very excitable friend and roommate on the trip. She has a crush on Phillip.

TALIA CARTER

A mutual friend of A.J. and Kayla.

MIRA VASQUEZ

A.J.'s roommate and friend of Chrystal.

PAUL WESTCHESTER

Ron's friend and fellow football player. Also a friend of Norris'.

VINCENT FOYERS

The rambling, rule-obsessed director of the Chester A. Arthur Choir.

ERIC XAVIER

A very excitable young man who is absolutely THRILLED beyond all reason to be in Chicago.

KHALI DEWHEART

The only freshman in the choir, she follows Sawyer religiously.

TINA MINOR

Younger sister of Melissa. She fawns over Sawyer.

DEREK WINTER

A timid boy who likes to keep in the lines and follow the rules.

MARIE DONALDSON

Trip chaperone and mother to Ashley.

FLORENCE WATKINS

The succinct choir director of the Pennyback Academy Choir.

GIFT SHOP CLERK

A clerk at a Chicago souvenir shop.

FABRIC STORE CLERK

The chipper clerk of Crafty Creations, a fabric and craft store in Chicago.

TOUR GUIDE

A tour guide for a sightseeing tour of Chicago.

CHEERLEADERS

Cheerleaders for the Chester A. Arthur High School football team.

BUSINESSMAN

A businessman with a hotel room next door to James.

CUSTOMER

A customer at the Chicago souvenir shop.

AUDIENCE PLANT

A blatant plant in the audience, used to shout beneficial propaganda.

KYLE DAMIEN

James' and Phillip's roommate. He, along with his friend Kurt, stays by the vending machine at the hotel for the duration of the trip. (*Non-speaking role*)

KURT BRASTON

James' and Phillip's roommate. Along with Kyle, he stays by the vending machine at the hotel for the duration of the trip. (*Non-speaking role*)

MELISSA MINOR

Older sister of Tina. (*Non-speaking role*)

ASHLEY DONALDSON

Daughter of Mrs. Marie Donaldson, a chaperone on the trip. (*Non-speaking role*)

INGRID VASPERELLI

Roommate to A.J. (*Non-speaking role*)

BUSINESS ASSOCIATE 1

One of the businessman's associates who joins him at a dinner meeting. (*Non-speaking role*)

BUSINESS ASSOCIATE 2

Another associate of the businessman who joins him at a dinner meeting. (*Non-speaking role*)

CHEF

The chef at The Teriyaki Bar. (*Non-speaking role*)

WAITRESS

A waitress at The Teriyaki Bar. (*Non-speaking role*)

HOSTESS

A hostess at The Teriyaki Bar (*Non-speaking role*)

ORIENTAL GIFT STORE CASHIER

A cashier at an oriental gift shop in Chicago. (*Non-speaking role*)

Act I

Scene 1

Lights up on a Hotel Lobby. NORRIS chases KAYLA inside. KAYLA goes to press the elevator button, but sees a sign on the elevator door saying "OUT OF ORDER".

KAYLA

Drat!

She sees NORRIS coming and runs to the doorway to the stairs. She swings the door open, and stops, stunned. NORRIS runs up behind her and they see a silhouette of a man kneeling atop the silhouetted corpse of another, clutching the corpse's shirt with one hand and holding a knife in the other.

NORRIS

What the...

Blackout except for a silhouette of the scene, frozen in place after NORRIS' reaction. Bleachers are brought onstage to the auditorium of Pennyback Academy. The Chester A. Arthur Choir walks onto the risers and performs.

2. I Can Do Anything

CHORUS

I CAN DO ANYTHING I SET MY MIND TO.

NO OBSTACLES, NOTHING TO BLOCK MY WAY.

IF I CAN DO ANYTHING,
IT WILL BE A MUCH BRIGHTER DAY.

After the performance ends, VINCENT FOYERS turns towards the audience, allowing for polite applause and entering into lengthy remarks.

FOYERS

Good afternoon! Oh, morning, I suppose. What time is it? 11:34? Well, my goodness, I suppose by practical standards that is morning, although it feels like afternoon. But I digress. It's been a wonderful trip here to Pennyback Academy from Chester A. Arthur Highschool. A brief flight, I might add, yet still some of the children still aren't over the jetlag, three days into the trip! Honestly. I hope it didn't affect their performance at all. Affect, of course, being with an "A" for proper purposes, and not an "E." Well, by which I of course don't mean the simple grammatical error but rather Effect as a matter of foreign policy and foreign diplomacy, as to whether they have helped relations with some foreign nation as an American choir. Where was I? Oh... the flight... no... foreign policy? Hm... Oh! Yes! I was about to discuss the piece we just performed. You see, "I Can Do Anything", as you can probably glean from its title and composition, is a rather modern, inspirational American piece, in the traditional style of the great Ivan Charles, Mr. Charles of course evoking the traditional—

JAMES has walked down front, and talks quietly to FOYERS— loud enough for the audience to hear, but intentionally somewhat muted.

JAMES

Mr. Foyers. You are taking forever. There are 30 minutes total for this entire exchange concert. Do you really want to use all of them yourself?

FOYERS

Well, James, this is rather uncalled for, don't you think!

JAMES

Mr. Foyers. You just talked about grammatical distinctions relating to foreign policy. I really do think it's fairly called for.

FOYERS

Oh, come now, James! Who doesn't like a bit of foreign relations-pun humor! Huh? A bit of back and forth word-play!

JAMES

I literally cannot think of a human being who would enjoy that. Not in this room, not anywhere. Other than maybe yourself. And extensive scholars of the history of the United Nations. But I think even they might prefer something a bit more raunchy.

FOYERS

Now I have no idea what YOU'RE talking about. James, I will not tolerate any more of this nonsense at a public concert. Go back to your row.

JAMES does so, rolling his eyes. FOYERS continues his lengthy speech as the lights and sound fade out to a scene transition.

FOYERS

Anyway— yes! A traditional American piece, evoking traditional American images! The soaring eagle! The eagle, of course, rather, specifically, the bald eagle, being a national symbol of sorts— nay, what am I saying, one of the preeminent national symbols, along with the flag, and perhaps the liberty bell. Well, maybe not the liberty bell to the same EXTENT...

Scene 2

Inside JAMES/PHILLIP's hotel room. PHILLIP is sitting on the bed, checking his watch and waiting patiently. JAMES enters the room, and PHILLIP shoots to his feet.

JAMES

Phillip!

PHILLIP

Yes, Mr. McCauley?

JAMES

How many times have I told you— Call me James! You're not my secretary! You're my friend.

PHILLIP

Yes, of course, Mr. McCauley. (*pulling out a notebook*) "James, not Mr. McCauley." I'll put it in my notes for this afternoon.

JAMES

What is wrong with you? Even real secretaries don't talk like that.

PHILLIP

Well, sir, I've got a number of allergies— pollen, chocolate—

JAMES

Chocolate? That's just depressing.

PHILLIP

It certainly keeps me healthier than most. Now, sir, we have a three o' clock appointment to attend a sightseeing tour of Chicago.

JAMES

Phillip! I don't have appointments. (*slapping notebook away from him*) My goodness, last time we tried to go bowling together. . .

PHILLIP

Ah, yes sir, I remember it like it was yesterday. Mr. McCauley bowled two strikes, if I remember correctly—

JAMES

Don't refer to me formally by last name in the third person! We're GOOD friends!

PHILLIP

BEST friends, sir? (*his eyes widen, his entire person overcome with joy.*)

JAMES

Well, GOOD friends—

PHILLIP

Oh my goodness, sir! BEST friends! Imagine all the fun we'll have—

JAMES

I'd rather not...

PHILLIP *pulls* JAMES *forcefully under his shoulder.*

3. Best Friends

PHILLIP

BEST FRIENDS FOREVER, THAT'S FOR SURE.
MR. MCCAULEY AND I.

JAMES

PHILLIP, PHILLIP, I'M A BIT INSECURE
IN SAYING YOU'RE MY---

PHILLIP

BEST FRIEND, WE'RE GOING TO DO SO MUCH.
BEST FRIEND, COME ALONG,
TOGETHER WE'LL HAVE JUST SO MUCH FUN,
TOGETHER, YOU AND I!

JAMES

GOOD FRIEND, I'M SURE WE'LL DO A BIT.
GOOD FRIEND, COME ALONG,
TOGETHER WE'LL HAVE A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF FUN,
TOGETHER, YOU AND I.

PHILLIP

BEST FRIENDS TOGETHER, NOW I'M SURE,
MR. MCCAULEY AND I!

JAMES

PHILLIP, PHILLIP, I CAN'T ENSURE
THAT YOU ARE MY---

JAMES

We're not that great of friends, ok! We've only known each other a half a year!

PHILLIP

BEST FRIENDS, FOREVER? I'M NOT SURE.
MR. MCCAULEY AND I.

JAMES

PHILLIP, PHILLIP, I'M NOT UNSURE
THAT YOU ARE MY...

BOTH

BEST FRIEND, WE'RE GOING TO DO SO MUCH.
BEST FRIEND, COME ALONG,
TOGETHER WE'LL HAVE JUST SO MUCH FUN,
TOGETHER, YOU AND I!

PHILLIP

Oh, Mr. McCauley! I never thought you'd say it.

JAMES

Well, let's not—

PHILLIP

Oh, dear, look at the time! We must be going, sir!

JAMES

Call me “James”

PHILLIP

Oh, sir, do you mean it?

JAMES

(Disturbed) I insist...

PHILLIP

(Running out into the hallway offstage) Everyone! James and I are BEST FRIENDS!

JAMES

Oh, dear...

Scene 3

Inside A.J./CHRYSTAL/MIRA/TALIA's hotel room. CHRYSTAL walks in to the room. MIRA and TALIA are sitting across from each other on a small table by the window, playing cards, and A.J. is sitting on the bed farthest from the door, poring over a book on music theory.

CHRYSTAL

So, oh my goodness. I'm totally crushing on Phillip right now.

TALIA

Phillip? Like Phillip... Ovic?

CHRYSTAL

Well, of course! Who else? He's so CUTE, with that little book and everything!

MIRA

You find the whole "secretary" schtick endearing and cute?

CHRYSTAL

It's not a "schtick", it's just who he is!

TALIA

Chrystal. If it's not a "schtick", it's a "severe personality disorder", and in either case, kind of makes him a less than ideal candidate for a boyfriend, don't you think?

CHRYSTAL

You just don't get him.

TALIA

Not much to get; he's just kinda weird.

CHRYSTAL

A.J., you'll back me up on this one, won't you?

A.J.

(Focusing intently on her book) Um... I mean... You know, whatever you're into, and all...

TALIA

THAT was committal.

A.J.

I don't know, I just don't have a real strong opinion on Phillip Ovic, ok? Or most people, for that matter.

MIRA

You want to become a professional singer, don't you?

A.J.

Well, yes...

MIRA

Don't you think you're going to have to be a little more decisive and outgoing to really dive into celebrity life?

A.J.

Ok, ok, fine... Um... he definitely is a little... eccentric? But if Chrystal really likes him, then she ought to be able to pursue that without your criticism.

CHRYSTAL

Thank you!

TALIA

Yeah. Just wait. Two months from now you'll be locked in his basement as he, twitching, asks you for what kind of coffee "you and the other girls in the office would like"...

CHRYSTAL

Talia!

TALIA and MIRA burst out laughing. A.J. gives a light smirk.

CHRYSTAL

Are you interested in anyone, A.J.?

A.J.

(A frustrated sigh punctuating the air as she closes her book) Ok, I had a hard enough time discussing YOUR romantic problems, do I really have to get into MINE?

TALIA

Well, that kind of answer doesn't do a lot to curb curiosity.

A.J.

It's Chrystal we're talking about. I could threaten her at GUNPOINT to stop pestering me about something and her curiosity would only pique further.

MIRA

Well, in fairness, when someone's willing to threaten you at gunpoint to protect a secret, it DOES have to be pretty juicy.

A.J.

Yes, it's certainly something to be curious about, but do you actually ACT on that curiosity?

TALIA

Well, I doubt Chrystal would in that situation, either.

A.J.

With Chrystal, I do have my doubts...

CHRYSTAL

Me getting threatened at gunpoint isn't the issue here. It's who you're interested in dating, and you're changing the subject.

A.J.

Have you ever considered that me changing the subject from who I'm interested in dating to me threatening you at gunpoint was a very deliberate and NOT AT ALL SUBTLE nod to the fact that I don't want you changing the subject back?

CHRYSTAL

Come on, A.J. . .

A.J.

Chrystal. Stop.

CHRYSTAL

A.J. . .

A.J.

James, ok? James McCauley, now can we all please just stop talking about this?

CHRYSTAL

Agatha Jessibelle Austenberger, you dog!

A.J.

Chrystal O'Hare, you inconsolable pest! . . . And how many times have I told you not to say my full name?! It's my grandmother's name and it sounds disgusting. I'm not Agatha; I'm just A.J., alright?

MIRA

Well, "just A.J.", You guys WOULD be cute together. And he seems like a really great guy.

TALIA

Yeah, maybe you guys could go on double dates with Chrystal and Phillip.

MIRA

And then ALL of you could be locked up in Phillip's basement TOGETHER! How romantic. . .

CHRYSTAL

Hey! Would you stop about Phillip! And A.J., you HAVE to do something about this!

A.J.

Do you have ANY idea how difficult that would be for me?

TALIA

You have to try sometime... do you really like him?

A.J.

So much! I have for YEARS! But you know me...

TALIA

Again, professional singer... Probably need to step out of that shell sometime soon...

A.J.

I've been thinking about it for so long! I just can't get over my ridiculous nerves! If only I could just ... make things work!

4. If Only

A.J.

IF ONLY I COULD COME TO HIM AND
TELL HIM HOW I FEEL.
MY HEART WOULD KNOW WITH CERTAINTY
NO MORE FEELINGS TO CONCEAL.

IF ONLY HE WOULD GLANCE AT ME AND
SEE ME OVER HERE.
MY BURDEN WOULD BE EASIER
NO MORE WORRIES NO MORE FEAR!

IF ONLY!

IF ONLY HE COULD GO WITH ME
IF ONLY HE COULD KNOW!

IF ONLY HE'D ENCOURAGE ME,
IF ONLY I WOULD GROW.

IF ONLY!

IF ONLY I COULD GAZE AT HIM
AND TELL HIM WHAT I SEE,
AND MAKE IT CLEAR TO HIM THE REASONS WHY
HE MEANS SO MUCH TO ME.

IF ONLY I COULD OPEN UP,
IF ONLY HE WOULD CARE,
IF ONLY I COULD SAY MY PEACE,
IF ONLY HE WAS THERE.

IF ONLY I COULD LEARN TO FLY
THROUGH HIS WINDOW IN THE NIGHT.
I'D WHISPER TO HIS DREAMING EARS
WHAT I'D NEVER SAY IN LIGHT.

IF ONLY HOPING HELPLESSLY
WOULD MAKE HIM FEEL THIS TOO.
THE FEELING WOULD BE MUTUAL,
OUR HEARTBEATS SYNCED ANEW.

IF ONLY I COULD HALT THE THOUGHT,
IF ONLY THIS WERE THROUGH.
IF ONLY I COULD SILENCE MY HEART
NO, THE FEELING'S TRUE!

SO NOW'S WHEN I STOP WISHING.
NOW THAT I STOP BEING LONELY.
IT IS NOW THAT I WILL HAVE HIS HEART.
IT IS NOW...NO MORE 'IF ONLY'!

TALIA

Well, you do sound pretty nervous. And desperate. But also genuine. Have you talked to Kayla at all?

A.J.

Obviously not... I just talked to you guys.

TALIA

I'm going to tell her about you. She's been looking for a good "project" for some time, and I'm sure you'd be perfect.

CHRYSTAL

And what about me and Phillip? Will you tell her about that, too?

TALIA

Of course not!

CHRYSTAL

Well why not?

TALIA

Because that wouldn't just be unsafe for you— that'd be unsafe for humanity at large.

MIRA

Imagine if you guys were in it for the long haul— your babies would be hyperactive, overeager secretaries with the attention span of a dog at a laser light show.

CHRYSTAL

Oh, come on! You guys are just being mean! Right, A.J.?

A.J.

She has a point. I mean, to each his own, but there are limits. . .

CHRYSTAL

Hey!

TALIA and MIRA leave to find KAYLA, laughing as they walk out the door. CHRYSTAL sulks on the bed, and A.J. sits back down and looks at her book.

Scene 4

JAMES'/PHILLIP's Room. PAUL and RON barge in. JAMES is sitting on his bed, having changed into a football jersey, and PHILLIP is walking out of his bathroom.

RON

Take that football jersey off, McCauley! You know you don't deserve to wear it. Punters aren't real football players.

JAMES

Well, by any objective measure, you're not much of a football player yourself, Ron.

RON

I'm a wide receiver! I'm the go-to-guy through the air, you know that!

JAMES

I didn't say you weren't a wide receiver, Ron. I said you weren't a football player.

RON

What's that supposed to mean?

JAMES

I mean your hands are made of buttered jelly, and you have the hand-eye coordination of a dying tiger cub.

PAUL

A dying tiger cub? That's sick!

JAMES

I love tigers as much as the next guy, but it's true.

RON

Oh, and what? You're not so great yourself, James.

JAMES

Actually, I've had a few colleges come after me for scholarships. They say I could be the next Shane Lechler.

RON

Nobody even knows who that is! And besides, a good punter doesn't make a football team.

JAMES

You know, Ron, you're right. It doesn't. And thanks to our brilliant passing game, running game, and defense, we're a prestigious 17th in the Southern Albany Conference! Go Chester A. Arthur Manatees!

CHEERLEADERS run on, JAMES slaps his forehead and looks on at the following scene through slitted fingers, disgusted.

JAMES

Please don't do this.

5. Chester A. Arthur Fight Song

CHEERLEADERS

CHESTER A. ARTHUR
THE PROUD MANATEES!
CHESTER A. ARTHUR
THE BRAVE MANATEES!

CHESTER A. ARTHUR
FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT!
CHESTER A. ARTHUR
FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT!

GARFIELD DIED,
NOW WE'RE ALIVE!

ARTHUR, ARTHUR,
FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT!

JAMES

Get out of here!

PHILLIP

What on earth?

JAMES

I don't know.

RON

Ok, so maybe we don't have a great passing game, but we're not a bad football team. For you to say that- well, you don't even deserve to wear that jersey.

JAMES

Well, trust me, I value the rest of the team. I have to. If it wasn't for you guys playing so terribly, I might never come on to the field!

RON

Hey!

JAMES

Just stating basic facts, Ron.

6. When It's 3rd and Long

JAMES

WHEN IT'S 3RD AND LONG
AND YOU CAN'T MAKE THE SNATCH
THE GROANING THROG
KNOWS IT'S GAME, SET, MATCH.

RON

WELL THE CROWD, THEY WON'T BE CHEERING.

JAMES

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT, THEY WILL BE JEERING.

ALL

WHEN THE PUNTER COMES OUT!

JAMES

WHEN IT'S 3RD AND ONE
AND YOU CAN'T CLOSE THE DEAL
COACH SAYS YOU'RE DONE
IN COMES MY TRUSTY HEEL.

RON

WELL THE CROWD, THEY WON'T BE CHEERING.

JAMES

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT, THEY WILL BE JEERING.

ALL

WHEN THE PUNTER COMES OUT!

JAMES

WHEN IT'S THIRD AND GOAL
AND THE BALL GOES FREE
WELL THE COACH SURE KNOWS
THAT WE CAN'T GO FOR THREE

RON

SO? THE CROWD, THEY WON'T BE CHEERING.

JAMES

NO, YOU'RE RIGHT, THEY WILL BE JEERING.

ALL

WHEN THE PUNTER COMES OUT!

ALL

WHEN IT'S THIRD AND OUT
ON EVERY SINGLE DOWN,
EVERY GAME'S A ROUT
THE CROWD ALWAYS HAS A FROWN.

ALL

WELL YOU KNOW THEY WON'T BE CHEERING.

JAMES

Yeah, you're right, they'll sure be jeering.

ALL

WHEN THE PUNTER COMES OUT!

RON

I still don't like your attitude. I'm telling coach what you said when we get back home.

JAMES

Duly noted!

RON

Come on, Paul.

Scene 5

NORRIS's Hotel Room. NORRIS is sitting on the bed. KAYLA is pacing back and forth excitedly. MAXIMILLIAN and AARON are watching TV from two chairs.

NORRIS

So... what? You want to help set A.J. and James up?

KAYLA

Of course! I've done it a million times before, and they'd be SO CUTE together!

NORRIS

Don't get me wrong, I'm sure you have great intentions, but your track record isn't exactly... well... you remember Don and Andrea, right?

KAYLA

Sure! Love can't ALWAYS work out, Norris!

NORRIS

Ok, "not working out" is one thing. "Literally attempting to gouge one another's eyes out with kitchen utensils" is something else entirely.

KAYLA

You win some, you lose some!

NORRIS

When have you won?

KAYLA

You remember Flynn Hawkins? He found a girlfriend. And who is that thanks to?

NORRIS

Um... his own courage and ingenuity?

KAYLA

No! I told him he should “go for it”! And he did! Who is that thanks to?

NORRIS

Ok, Kayla. ANYONE could have told him to “Go for it”.

KAYLA

But who did?

NORRIS

Even if you hadn’t said something, I’m sure he would have been fine!

KAYLA

You’re just jealous.

NORRIS

Of what?

KAYLA

Of my status as the “Matchmaker of Chester A. Arthur”.

NORRIS

Who ever called you that?

KAYLA

Well, me, of course.

7. Match

WHEN LOVE IS IN THE HALL,

WHEN CUPID NEEDS A HAND,
JUST GIVE KAYLA PRICE A CALL.
YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND!

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A PLAN TO HATCH
THEN LOOK NO FURTHER,
I'LL FIND FOR YOU A PERFECT CATCH,
I'M SURE THAT YOU'LL LOVE HER!

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A HEART TO SNATCH
WELL I'M YOUR COLOGNE,
I CAN ENSURE YOU'LL BE SECURE
AND NEVER ALONE!

OH IT'S A MATCH!
OOH, IT'S A MATCH!
BABY, A MATCH,
OOH, MATCH!

SO LOVE, IT IS A POND.
YOU NEVER CAN BE SURE.
DON'T GO FISHING OUT BEYOND
UNTIL I GIVE YOU ALLURE.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A PLAN TO HATCH
THEN LOOK NO FURTHER,
I'LL FIND FOR YOU A PERFECT CATCH,
I'M SURE THAT YOU'LL LOVE HER!

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A HEART TO SNATCH
WELL I'M YOUR COLOGNE,
I CAN ENSURE YOU'LL BE SECURE
AND NEVER ALONE!

OH IT'S A MATCH!
OOH, IT'S A MATCH!
BABY, A MATCH,
OOH, MATCH!

OH, HEARTS, THEY COME AND GO
BUT LOVE IT NEVER DIES
I GIVE LOVERS THEIR 'HELLO'
HOPING THERE'LL BE NO GOODBYES.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A PLAN TO HATCH
THEN LOOK NO FURTHER,

I'LL FIND FOR YOU A PERFECT CATCH,
I'M SURE THAT YOU'LL LOVE HER!

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A HEART TO SNATCH
WELL I'M YOUR COLOGNE,
I CAN ENSURE YOU'LL BE SECURE
AND NEVER ALONE!

OH IT'S A MATCH!
OOH, IT'S A MATCH!
BABY, A MATCH,
OOH, MATCH!

MAXIMILLIAN

Why, this all sounds so fantastical! Oh, you must help me find true love, dear Miss Price.

AARON

Yeah! I could totes use some help with the ladies. . .

KAYLA

Well, that's what I'm here for. . .

NORRIS

Yes, yes. . . It was a very funny joke. . . But can we all be serious for a moment? Your track record is, without question, AWFUL when it comes to hooking people up.

KAYLA

Everyone who has come to me has found a date with SOMEONE!

NORRIS

Right, but love— particularly high-school relationships, notorious for their brief nature— is about more than the initial hook-up. The statistic you need to look at is amount of happiness per relationship, rather than number of relationships versus number of poor, desperate clients.

KAYLA

And I'm saying love isn't ABOUT statistics, silly! It's about falling for someone, hard! It's like if you have a pool and a lot of people nervous to get in— you can tell they want to swim— but they just don't have the courage to take that dive! I can give people the push they need to get into the pool of love!

NORRIS

Pool of love? Oh dear sweet— So what you're saying is, you're fantastic at shoving people who aren't ready to swim into water. What I'm saying is, you're pushing many who can't swim into the deep end, so they all drown, pushing some into the shallow end where nobody should be diving anyway, and assuming that because all of them are IN THE WATER, the bodies and blood can be glossed over as a trivial consequence of other problems. When it comes to love, you need to be a lifeguard and a swim instructor, not a drunken fratboy egging people on.

KAYLA

Love doesn't NEED a lifeguard! For some, it's harsh waters, and they need to learn the lesson that if they get sucked under or get in over their heads, they need to get out or suffer the consequences!

NORRIS

KAYLA! When people who can't swim get in over their heads, they tend to ask for help or drown- not swim away under their own power! They need your help!

KAYLA

I dare not tamper with the wishes of the tides, Norris! I can't pull out a lost soul if that's what love desires!

NORRIS

Wait— tides? We're talking about a pool, not an ocean. And does a lifeguard simply wait for people to drown "because that's what the tides desire"?

KAYLA

Pool, ocean- same thing— and besides, I told you! Love doesn't need a lifeguard! And even if it does, I'm not it! I push people in, I don't save them when they can't handle the current!

NORRIS

Pools and oceans are NOT the same thing, Kayla! Pools don't have TIDES, pools don't have CURRENTS... unless, of course, you get a bunch of people and do that whirlpool thing, where you all run around in one direction and then try and swim against your own current... that's so much fun... ANYWAY! Then you're just making the waters more unsafe and intentionally harming people, so why even bother?

KAYLA

Then they need WATER WINGS, Norris, if you can't-

MAXIMILLIAN

Water wings? You both need to halt these pool metaphors immediately. It's inconsistent and ridiculous.

AARON

Yeah, dude. Stuff's getting crazy. Stuff doesn't mean stuff anymore, you know.

NORRIS

Yeah, Aaron. "Stuff doesn't mean stuff anymore". Totally get what you mean. Yes. Pool metaphors. Getting a bit ridiculous. Kayla, what I mean to say is you need to stop thinking that simply starting meaningless high school relationships is a substitute for actually being a modern-day Cupid.

KAYLA

Oh, meaningless, huh? Meaningless? Is that what you think?

NORRIS

Well, they tend to be brief, and tend to not truly explore a fuller realization of LOVE—

KAYLA

Oh, yeah. They can be brief. And apparently OUR high school relationship is meaningless to you, too, huh?

NORRIS

Kayla, I—

KAYLA

Well, I'll tell you what. Maybe you're a self-fulfilling prophet, because whether or not it was meaningless, it's SURE GOING TO BE BRIEF! Goodbye, Norris. I hope you find a lifeguard to save you from drowning. Or maybe, in your case, some CONCRETE SHOES!

She storms off, slamming the hotel door behind her.

NORRIS

Well, that definitely ended how I wanted. Now I'm single. Awesome.

AARON

Dude, can I have her?

NORRIS

Are you an idiot? Wait. No. Scratch that. Rearrange it. YOU ARE an idiot.

AARON

Jeez, chill. Just asking.

MAXIMILLIAN

There is an appropriate time and phrasing to that question, Aaron.

AARON

(Mockingly.) “Oh, look at me, I'm Maximillian, I'm German and stuff so I know everything, blah blah blah big words for no reason” Shut up.

MAXIMILLIAN *glares at AARON, shaking his head, and then turns to Norris.*

MAXIMILLIAN

Are you going to attempt to make amends?

NORRIS

No. She'll be back. Who else is she going to date?

MAXIMILLIAN

Well, considering she is a matchmaker, there are probably plenty of desperate guys coming to her at all times, so I'm sure finding respectable quantities of available options is no difficulty.

NORRIS

Oh, Maximillian. You always apply the best cure for a broken heart— cold, painfully unassuming logic. It's like super glue. Only if superglue were a jackhammer. Shattering my heart into thousands of tinier and tinier fragments of dust.

AARON

Dude. Maybe you should quit talking about CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT and start thinking about APOLOGIZING. Or nabbing some other babes.

NORRIS

Wow— if I ignore that last caveat, that almost seems like good advice! I just need to figure out the best way to approach the situation. . .

AARON

Aight. Well, while you figure out how you're going to say sorry or hammer something, or whatever, Maximillian and I are going to go down to the vending machines to grab some snackage and chill with Kyle and Kurt.

MAXIMILLIAN

They are still down there? Honestly, how fascinating is a dispensary?

AARON

Maxi. I've said this too many times in our brief stay together. Shut up. We're getting food. Deal. Maybe you can get some pretzels or something. Remind you of home. Jeez.

MAXIMILLIAN growls, but follows AARON out the door, leaving NORRIS sitting on the bed, head in hands. He sighs, and the lights dim. Scene ends.

Scene 6

A public park in Chicago.

MRS. DONALDSON

Paul Westchester.

PAUL

Here. . .

MRS. DONALDSON

and. . . Eric Xavier?

ERIC

PRESENT! WOO! CHICAGO! SO EXCITED!

MRS. DONALDSON

Well. . . Ok, then. Look's like my group's all here. Let's get a move on, everybody! We've got a whole lot of sightseeing to do!

TOUR GUIDE

Now as we start our journey. . . (*he trails off, all the kids follow him, PHILLIP and JAMES bringing up the rear, with the exception of SAWYER, TINA, and KHALI, who hang out by a group of berry bushes by a fence in a public park*)

SAWYER

Hey, McCauley!

JAMES

Sawyer, what do you need from me? And why aren't you coming along for the tour?

SAWYER

Just come over here!

PHILLIP

Come on, Mr Mc— Come on, James!

JAMES

Hold on a second, Phillip. . . What do you want?

SAWYER

I want you to live a little.

JAMES

Live a little. I'd prefer to live a lot.

SAWYER

Well, you've got to start somewhere.

JAMES

And perhaps that somewhere can be enjoying a beautiful tour of Chicago with the rest of our classmates, hm? As opposed to hanging out in some bushes eating wild berries, the safety of which you can't even vouch for?

SAWYER

Hey, man. I was a Boy Scout.

JAMES

In what twisted universe were you a Boy Scout?

SAWYER

In the twisted universe we already all live in, man!

JAMES

Oh, wow. That was DEEP. Guess I have positively NO CHOICE but to join you now.

PHILLIP

James, the rest of the tour is way ahead of us!

JAMES

Go on, I'll catch up.

PHILLIP

Well, I'm not going up alone. I'll just wait for you to be done making WITTY BANTER long enough to actually practice what you're arguing.

JAMES

Somehow, the sass that I've instilled in you bites a bit more than your usual subservience. Perhaps I should have let you keep the appointment book.

SAWYER

OH, BURN! Oh, man. He got you there, Phil.

JAMES AND PHILLIP

Would you shut up!?!

TINA

Come on and have one!

KHALI

They're good!

JAMES

Thank you, sirens of the bushes, but we'll be needing to be on our way.

SAWYER

James, man. You need to try one.

JAMES

If I try JUST ONE, will you let Phillip and I leave?

SAWYER

Just one?

KHALI AND TINA

Just one?

8. Just One

SAWYER

JUST ONE, JUST ONE?
WELL THAT'S NO FUN
BE MORE AMIBITIOUS,
THEY'RE QUITE DELICIOUS,
I BET YOU CAN'T EAT JUST ONE.

KHALI

JUST ONE, JUST ONE?

TINA

YOU'RE QUICK TO RUN.

KHALI

DON'T BE SUCH A BORE,

TINA

COME HAVE SOME MORE,

KHALI AND TINA

I BET YOU CAN'T EAT JUST ONE.

SAWYER

JUST ONE? JUST ONE?
YOU'VE JUST BEGUN.
COME AND TAKE A CRACK
AT THE PERFECT SNACK.
I BET YOU CAN'T EAT,

KHALI AND TINA

NO I BET YOU CAN'T EAT,

SAWYER

NO I BET YOU CAN'T

KHALI, TINA, SAWYER

EAT--- JUST--- ONE!

Big finish— hold for applause, then wait until it's over, still holding in pose for a few seconds for silence to become awkward, then JAMES delivers his line.

JAMES

Well, that was an excellently choreographed waste of my time.

KHALI

We worked on it for weeks!

JAMES

Good, great. It shows. Can I have the berry now?

SAWYER picks a berry and hands it to JAMES. He and the girls wait expectantly for him to ask for another.

JAMES

Hm. Well. It would appear you've lost your bet. Come on, Phillip. They're probably worried sick. Or negligent. Either way.

JAMES and PHILLIP exit, end scene.

Scene 7

JAMES' Room. RON is sneaking around the halls, and happens to notice JAMES' door open just a crack. He mischievously enters.

RON

Oh, James. What to do with you? Or to you, I guess. MUAHAHAHA! (*a three chord "scary theme" is played by the pit during this and all recurrences of RON's scary laughter*) Oh, man. Didn't know I had that in me. Football's a real workout

for the lungs. Also, choir, I guess. Why am I wasting time talking to myself? I have VENGEANCE to plot.

He spots another of JAMES' jerseys, this one with an alternate color scheme, lying by the bed. He picks it up and examines it.

RON

You really brought a home AND an away jersey? Why? You don't even PLAY enough to— ugh... James. James, James, James.

9. Rivals

RON

JAMES, JAMES, JAMES...
I'VE DONE EVERYTHING I CAN
TO MAKE YOUR WORLD GO UP IN FLAMES.

JAMES, JAMES, JAMES...
OH WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?
SO JUST HOLD ON, NOW
AND I'LL EXPLAIN HOW
WE BEGAN THESE SILLY GAMES.

RIVALRY ON ARRIVAL
IT'S BEEN MY FIRM BELIEF
THAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OUR CALLING
TO CAUSE EACH OTHER GRIEF.

THE MOMENT I FIRST SAW YOU
THE MOMENT WE FIRST MET
YOUR FACE WAS ENOUGH EVIDENCE
TO ENSURE MY HATRED, SET.

THERE WERE NO BEST INTENTIONS,
OH, MINE, THEY WERE THE WORST,
IT'S NOT AN EXAGGERATION
TO SAY I HAD BLOODTHIRST!

AT FIRST, SOME PUSHING, SHOVING,
PERHAPS A LIGHT INSULT.
THEN WE BEGAN IN EARNEST

WHAT WAS TRULY ALL YOUR FAULT.

YOUR DECISION TO JOIN FOOTBALL
JUST TO BRING ME SPITE,
ALLOWED A SILENCED TENSION
ONCE DORMANT, TO IGNITE!

YES, YOU BECAME A PUNTER
AND STARTED YOUR ATTACK.
BUT I BECAME A SINGER
TO PROVE THAT I'D FIGHT BACK.

EVERY LITTLE MOVEMENT,
EVERY LITTLE JAB,
ONLY SERVED TO OPEN
EVERY SINGLE SCAB!

AND THOUGH WE ARE STILL AT IT
TODAY WILL BE MY DAY
FOR YOU SEE I HAVE A PLAN
TO FILL YOU WITH DISMAY.

THIS WILL BE MY VICTORY
SORRY, JAMES, MY FRIEND. (NOT!)
HERE AND NOW, THIS FINAL ACT,
THIS WILL BE THE END!

He brandishes a knife at the jersey and moves in to stab. Blackout.

Scene 8

A hotel hallway. RON, breathing heavily and clearly angry, creeps out of James' room, leaving the door open a crack and staring at his knife intently. He walks offstage just as A.J. skips on, happily holding a wrapped gift. She stops at James' door.

A.J.

Oh, goodness. I've never been this excited before! It's not natural, really. I should be more... calm. But I'm not! Oh, goodness I'm so nervous! What if he finds out it's me? ... What if he doesn't?!? Oh, goodness... I better write a note... Um... Pen. Pen. Oh goodness, oh goodness, oh goodness. (*pulling a pen and a scrap of paper out of her pocket*) "From your secret admirer. Love, Your secret admirer." Oh shoot! That was redundant, wasn't it! Um... Oh goodness, oh goodness, he'll think I'm an idiot! I don't even know if he'll like this thing! Why did I let Kayla talk me into this? Oh, goodness! Should I even do this at all? I should just run away! But if I do, he'll wonder how I broke into his room! He'll think I'm a creepy stalker who breaks into people's rooms! That's not endearing at all! Oh goodness, oh goodness, oh goodness! What if he hears me? WHAT IF HE'S IN THERE?!? WHAT IF HE'S BEEN LISTENING TO ME THIS WHOLE TIME! Oh goodness, oh goodness, oh GOODNESS!

Just then, a BUSINESSMAN swings open the door next to JAMES', clearly frazzled.

BUSINESSMAN

Look, I don't think goodness cares what you do to with the boy in the room next door, and neither do I. But you HAVE to calm down. Seriously. You are worrying—that I don't care about—but you are also worrying LOUDLY, which is preventing me from getting my spreadsheets done by five. Do whatever you want—just be a bit more calm while you do it, huh?

He slams the door shut.

A.J.

Oh goodness—I need to stop saying that. And calm down. Ok. Yeah. But I'm so nervous! I know what will calm me down! A song—a happy little tune. That always works! Sing, Sing a song Sing a song Sing a happy little song And sing it strong

10. Happy Little Tune

A.J.

SING, SING A SONG
SING A SONG

SING A SONG AND THEN YOU
KEEP ON SINGIN' STRONG

SING, SING A SONG
SING A SONG
SING A SONG AND THEN YOU
MAKE 'EM TINGLE
A CATCHY JINGLE
HAPPY LITTLE SONG

TODAY IS A HAPPY DAY
IN A VERY HAPPY WAY
TODAY IS A HAPPY DAY
HAVING FUN A-TAPPIN',
AND MAYBE SNAPPIN',
TO MY HAPPY SONG.

SING, SING A SONG
SING A SONG
SING A SONG AND THEN YOU
KEEP ON SINGIN' STRONG

SING, SING YOUR SONG
SING A SONG
SING A SONG, AND THEN YOU
MAKE 'EM TINGLE
A CATCHY JINGLE
HAPPY LITTLE SONG.

She whistles.

JUST GO AHEAD AND KEEP ON SINGIN'
AND MAYBE EVEN SWINGIN'
TO-A HAPPY SNAPPY WONDERFUL SONG.

SING, SING A TUNE
SING A TUNE
SING AND WHISTLE TO YOUR
HAPPY LITTLE TUNE.

SING, SING A TUNE
SING A TUNE
SING AND WHISTLE THEN YOU
DON'T JUST TWIDDLE

LIVE A LITTLE
HAPPY LITTLE TUNE

AND SO
WHENEVER I'M BLUE
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I NEED TO DO.
JUST THINK OF MY SONG
SINGING ALONG
THE REST OF THE WORLD WILL BE JOINING IN TOO.

SING, SING A TUNE
SING A TUNE
SING AND WHISTLE TO YOUR
HAPPY LITTLE TUNE.

SING, SING A TUNE
SING A TUNE
SING AND WHISTLE THEN YOU
DON'T JUST TWIDDLE
YOU LIVE A LITTLE
HAPPY LITTLE TUNE

She finishes the song, self-satisfied, but right at this moment, the businessman's door swings open again.

BUSINESSMAN

Seriously?!? SERIOUSLY. You took my advice to calm down a little bit as the perfect motivation to start SINGING? Why. Why would that be something that I would want? I mean, don't get me wrong. It was beautiful, really. Angelic, even. You've got a bright future, and all that— but just stop. Stop it. Go, put that thing in his room. No, don't just stand there, looking at me all frightened. Go. Fall in love. It'll be magical. You two can sing an incredible and meaningful duet, and the gods themselves will smile down upon you. But I swear to all that is holy that if you prevent me from getting this presentation done before my dinner meeting down at The Teriyaki Bar tonight, I will make your love a little more like Romeo and Juliet. At the end of the play. Understand? (*she nods*)

BUSINESSMAN

Good. (*He slams the door, and she nervously walks into JAMES' room.*)

Scene 9

MR. FOYERS *is standing on city street in Chicago in front of a shop, his face buried in a comically long sheet of paper, essentially oblivious to anything but the sound of his own voice. DEREK is sitting in front of him, somewhat impatiently. Chaperone MRS. DONALDSON walks up next to him.*

FOYERS

... Rule Number 1,453, Section N, Subsection Roman Numeral Three. No tapdancing on the sides of marble buildings. Now, yes, I know some of you may be thinking to yourselves “That isn’t physically possible”, but in addition to this violating the commonly accepted rules, or “laws” of physics, as most call them, it also violates the rules of the trip. This rule, of course, like many of them, was written by me in response to a general fear that you may damage the marble with your tap shoes that I told you to bring. Some of you may be asking yourselves why I bothered to ask you to bring the tap shoes in the first place, but THIS, of course, brings me to subsection Roman Numeral Four, which is—

MRS. DONALDSON *gently taps him on the shoulder.*

FOYERS

What on EARTH, Marie? I am reading the children the rules! They must know about them, you see, as in addition to educators, we are, of course, disciplinarians, and—

MRS. DONALDSON

Vincent. I dismissed the children who were on the tour with me three hours ago.

FOYERS

Well, just because YOU have a desire to see anarchy throughout the streets of Chicago, does not mean I share your twisted ambitions, Marie! These children must understand order, lest—

MRS. DONALDSON

Vincent. They've all left. Well, all except Derek, of course.

FOYERS *finally looks up from behind his sheet.*

FOYERS

Oh... So... So they have. Well. Er. Hello, Derek.

DEREK

Hey, Mr. Foyers. Can I go now?

FOYERS

Well, I suppose, if you'd really like to, but of course, we do still have a few thousand more rules to explore. If you'd just sit tight, I'm sure we could breeze through them—breeze! Ha! The windy city! That's where we are! Oh, puns, Derek! Puns! But anyway. As I was saying. Roman Numeral Four is—

Just at this moment, ERIC runs in excitedly.

ERIC

Derek! DEREK!

DEREK

Um... What, Eric?

ERIC

Derek! Our names rhyme! Eric, Derek! Hahaha! Also, we're in CHICAGO! WOO!

DEREK

Yeah, we are, but I haven't really gotten a chance to—

ERIC

WOOO! CHICAGO! YEAH! SO EXCITED! PUMPED BEYOND RECOGNITION!
CHICAGO! WOO!

DEREK

To be completely honest, I could really use something to eat, like a hotdog or someth—

ERIC

MANATEE CHOIR! COME! GATHER AROUND! BE EXCITED ABOUT CHICAGO
WITH ME! WHO ELSE IS EXCITED?!?

TINA runs in.

TINA

I'm excited!

ERIC

WOO! WAY TO GO TINA!

They hi-five as the rest of the choir, with the exception of RON, runs in.

ERIC

WE ARE TOTALLY SINGING A SONG ABOUT THIS GUYS! ISN'T THAT RIGHT,
DEREK?

DEREK

I mean, I'm REALLY hungry, maybe in just a little bit we could—

ERIC

SONG TIME! EVERYONE READY? CHICAGO! WOO!

FOYERS

Oh, goodness! A song! Eric, this is a fantastic idea! If you wouldn't mind, I'd love to join in, I mean it's been years since I truly devoted myself to actual PARTICIPATION in the art form, I've been conducting for so long it feels like there's a hole where my heart used to—

ERIC

SURE! YEAH! WHATEVER! SINGING! CHICAGO! WOO!

11. Chicago!

MEN

PLANE ARRIVES AT SEVEN FLYING INTO O'HARE
READ A MAGAZINE AND THEN YOU'RE SUDDENLY THERE
CHICAGO, CHICAGO.

WOMEN

GET SOME FAMOUS PIZZA SO DELICIOUS TO EAT
FOR LUNCH WE'LL FIND A VENDOR SELLING FOOD ON THE STREET.
CHICAGO, CHICAGO.

SOLO GIRL

THE PARKS, MUSEUMS, AND CONCERTS...THERE'S JUST SO MUCH FOR ME.

SOLO GIRL 2

THE WINDY CITY HAS SO MANY PLACES TO BE.

SOLO GUY

ON TOP OF WILLIS TOWER THERE IS SO MUCH TO SEE.

CHORUS

CHICAGO, CHICAGO!
CHICAGO, CHICAGO!

MEN

WE'RE ROAMIN' 'ROUND THE CITY
THROUGH THE NIGHT AND THE DAY

CHORUS

ROAMIN' 'ROUND THE CITY...
CHICAGO, CHICAGO!
CHICAGO, CHICAGO!
TAKIN' TO THE CITY IN THE LOCALISTS' WAY
CHICAGO IS THE CITY WHERE I WANT TO STAY!

DEREK

Can I get food now?

ERIC

(Calmly) Yeah, come on. There's a pizza place just down the corner.

The choir scatters offstage in small groups. Inside the storefront FOYERS was standing in front of, we see RON having a heated conversation with a CLERK.

RON

Fine. But don't go telling anyone I'm going to do this, ok?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Why... who would I tell?

RON

Look, I don't know, ok? But I have a reputation to keep up, and I can't let anyone—

A CUSTOMER walks in, looking around; RON lowers his voice.

RON

I can't let anyone know that I'm . . . doing . . . that. People will start to talk, you know?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Buddy. You're nuts. I don't care about you, or whatever you're planning on doing. And swear on my aunt Sadie's life, I won't tell a soul. But you need to get out of my store. Immediately. And you keep that (*points to the knife*) I ain't takin' it back.

RON

Yeah. Fine. Maybe I will, then, huh? (*walks out of the shop, putting the knife back in his pocket*)

GIFT SHOP CLERK

(*shouting*) See ya later, lunatic!

Scene 10

MAXIMILLIAN

So. Mr. Apology. What are you planning on doing to apologize, now?

NORRIS

I'm in the process of figuring that out.

MAXIMILLIAN

Perhaps you ought to be a bit faster processor on these matters, hm?

AARON

Dude. Love isn't a computer, Maxi. You can't just get more . . . CDs . . . and expect to be able to work with the ladies. It takes something . . . else. Taking time to make sure your . . . hard drives are all there. You need all the . . . RAM . . . webcam . . . thingys of love to link up.

MAXIMILLIAN

... You do not understand anything about computers, do you? The metaphor I was attempting to communicate was more that being able to think QUICKLY is a valuable asset in romance. Not that you would understand about thinking at ANY SPEED, much less at a lightning fast pace.

NORRIS

To a certain extent, Aaron's right, though I doubt he knows why.

AARON

Dude, I'm just going to take that as a compliment. Eat it, Maxi! I'm right and you're wrong.

NORRIS

I didn't say that at all. You're still a complete fool, I'm just saying that maybe relationships aren't about lightning-fast decision making and split second processing. Maybe there's something to be said for slow, deliberate, and careful consideration.

MAXIMILLIAN

But one can't dwell forever on decisions, or no decision gets made at all.

NORRIS

Then let's make this decision carefully, but make sure it gets made, shall we? How do I say I'm sorry?

AARON

Maybe you should just... come out and... say it.

NORRIS

Wrong again. I need more.

MAXIMILLIAN

Get a... gift?

NORRIS

FANTASTIC! You're brilliant.

AARON

But I think—

NORRIS

AAAAND what to get?

AARON

I mean I really actually think—

NORRIS

What did we just say to you? You don't think. You open your mouth and words come from your diaphragm, yes, but I don't know that your brain plays a real strong part in that process. Now, where was—

AARON

WAIT!

NORRIS

This had better be good.

AARON

Dude. I think you should just... say it. You don't need to be so... crazy-flashy about it. Just be honest.

MAXIMILLIAN

But clearly she is going to be more... difficult to please, and so Norris is just going the extra kilometer.

AARON

Oh, yeah. Go ahead, use the metric system. Remind everyone, ONCE AGAIN, that you're not FROM HERE, and you're really EXOTIC.

MAXIMILLIAN

Aaron. Lots of places use the metric system. Russia, Canada, Japan... The ENTIRE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY—.

A valiant German march is played by the pit orchestra to underscore Aaron's words.

AARON

Oh, so Germany, Japan, and SCIENCE are teaming up against American values ONCE AGAIN, huh? Remind you of something?

MAXIMILLIAN

Are you really comparing Japanese and German systems of measurement to the Third Reich?

AARON

Small steps, Maxi, small steps. This isn't what my grandfather fought for.

NORRIS

Aaron, your grandparents are all Swiss.

The valiant German march turns into a noticeably less valiant polka.

AARON

Exactly. My grandfather really was not involved in World War II, is what I'm saying.

NORRIS

Can we get back to my relationship issues?

AARON

Oh, yeah, it's always ALL ABOUT YOU, isn't it?

NORRIS

You know what? It isn't. It's about KAYLA. Which is why I should buy her a gift instead of indulging your unjustified, random, and frankly offensive accusations of fascism towards Maximillian.

AARON

No man, you're missing the point and getting waaay away from the topic we ought to be discussing, which is the fact that you DON'T need to buy her a gift. You can just give her your honesty. Trust me man, I read about it on this online dating site. Chicks dig honesty. They'll totally let you take off their bras if you're just, you know. Honest.

MAXIMILLIAN

You honestly did not have a bad argument, and then... then you ruined it. I do not really know how you are capable of such things. You are the only person that could make honesty seem creepy. It is honesty, after all. One of the most sincere things, yes? And, you... you ruin it. Look, Norris, you do not listen to him, you hear? You do not need to buy her anything. Simply be honest with her and this will win her heart for you.

NORRIS

Look, that's really cute and all, Maxi. But neither of you have been in a serious relationship. Let me explain this to you as simply as I can:

12. You Can't Just Say It

HONESTY AIN'T JEWELRY
DOESN'T SPARKLE, DOESN'T SHINE.
HONESTY AIN'T POETRY
DOESN'T FLOW, NO, DOESN'T RHYME.

WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ROMANCE,
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING BIG,
WELL, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT,
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW 'EM SOMETHING MORE.

YEAH, HONESTY AIN'T A DIAMOND,
NO, IT DOESN'T REALLY GLISTEN.
AND HONESTY AIN'T MUSIC,

'Cause with music they'll actually listen.

MAXIMILLIAN

You're a bit cynical.

NORRIS

I take pride in it.

WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ROMANCE,
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING SOMETHING BIG,
WELL, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT.
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW 'EM SOMETHING MORE.

HONESTY AIN'T CHOCOLATE.
BITTER REALITY ISN'T SWEET.
AND HONESTY AIN'T CANDLELIGHT
'CAUSE THE COLD TRUTH'S GOT NO HEAT.

YEAH, YEAH, WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ROMANCE,
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING SOMETHING BIG,
WELL, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT,
NO, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT,
YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT.
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW 'EM SOMETHING MORE!

MAXIMILLIAN

I really don't think you've got the right idea here...

NORRIS

Well, to each his own, right? Even if YOUR own might be a bit more... idealistic.
And wrong.

NORRIS begins looking through shelves and bins to find a gift.

AARON

Fine. Do whatever you want, bro. Your loss.

MAXIMILLIAN

Aaron, I do have to admit. . . Although I find your particular line of reasoning flawed, I have found your positioning to be. . . much more thoughtful than usual, even if it is based in shallowness.

AARON

Well you know. I try. The ladies do love thoughtfulness.

NORRIS

(Not even looking up) Yes, you really demonstrated your thoughtfulness in regards to women when you grabbed Tina's chest last year during a sexual harassment seminar.

AARON

Hey, man! I was just trying to give a brief demonstration!

NORRIS

And I'm sure the slap in the face you got was just her demonstrating an appropriate response to that situation.

AARON

Exactly. Everyone's safety was improved that day by "hands-on" learning.

MAXIMILLIAN

Hey! What if you got her this? *(he holds up a stuffed animal)* You know how much she likes animals.

NORRIS

See, I was thinking the same thing, which is why I decided to get her this: it's a book on origami. I know she likes stuffed animals, but I feel like this also appeals to her love of art.

MAXIMILLIAN

(Still holding the animal) Yes, because the girl who knows everything about Japan probably has never read anything about origami. Why don't you get her a sword and some sushi, while you're at it, just to show her what a cultural guru you are?

NORRIS

Now, now. There's no need to get snippy. If you want that stuffed animal, you don't have to convince me to buy it. You can get it yourself.

MAXIMILLIAN

(Looking down at the animal defensively) Fine, maybe... maybe I will, then! Just to show you my... superiority in the area of giftgiving.

NORRIS

(Fake coughing) Yeah. *(cough)* Gift. *(cough)* Right.

NORRIS goes to pay for the origami book, MAXIMILLIAN follows. AARON just rolls his eyes.

MAXIMILLIAN

Hey, you never know... it could be... for... my girlfriend back home!

NORRIS

(Paying as he does this) Oh? And what's her name?

MAXIMILLIAN

B... Bridgette. Bridgette... Marx.

NORRIS

Marx? That's the best you could come up with?

MAXIMILLIAN

It's a German name! And she loves stuffed animals!

NORRIS

I find it hard to believe she could love them as much as you.

(MAXIMILLIAN *grumbles and begins to pay for the animal as NORRIS and AARON walk out of the store.*)

AARON

Yeah, we'll wait for you outside, dude. Go ahead and pay for that gift for (*stifling laughter*) for

,

'Bridgette'!

AARON and NORRIS *burst out laughing as they step out. Lights down on MAXIMILLIAN rolling his eyes and paying for the gift.*

Scene 11

Lights open on "The Teriyaki Bar". There is a bar-style table in the center, where a CHEF is preparing ingredient and serving the BUSINESSMAN from earlier and his ASSOCIATES, sitting alone at three barstools. A HOSTESS is greeting customers, and there are two tables set up apart from the bar. At one of these tables sits KAYLA, ERICA, CAMILLE, and TALIA. NORRIS comes in with PAUL, MAXIMILLIAN, and AARON, and asks for a table for four. They are seated.

KAYLA

(*Whispering*) Oh god...

CAMILLE

What's the big deal? They're probably just getting a bite to eat.

KAYLA

To spite me.

ERICA

Or... because they're hungry. Which is why most people get a bite to eat.

AARON

Dude! The menus are in English too!

NORRIS

Aaron. It's an Asian RESTAURANT. We aren't in an Asian NATION. Now come on. I don't know about you guys, but I came here for some delicious orange chicken!

PAUL

But I thought you were coming here for Kayl—

NORRIS

Kaylet's look at the menu, shall we? Perhaps for something to put in our mouths other than our feet, hm, Paul?

AARON

Dude, that's gross. Why would you want to eat feet.

KAYLA

I swear I heard my name. I swear it.

CAMILLE

Kayla, you're hearing things. And even if you're not, who cares? You said what you wanted to say to him, and you're through now, right? Now finish your octopus.

KAYLA at this point picks up some octopus with chopsticks, looks at it, and sets it back down on her plate, a bit disgusted.

ERICA

What, our resident “Japanese Cultural Expert” is a little too afraid to have her taste buds “culturally immersed”? You’re the one who demanded we go to a place with “real Asian cuisine”. I was just going to suggest we grab some pizza. We ARE in Chicago and all.

KAYLA

It’s not that I can’t handle the taste... I just have too much respect for living creatures to do that...

TALIA

I’m pretty sure that octopus is dead.

KAYLA

I think I saw it twitch a little...

MAXIMILLIAN

Just go over and tell her! This is why we came out here, stop being so coy about it!

NORRIS

Even if that WASN’T the reason, and I’m not saying it is, this is the only restaurant within walking distance of our hotel, so it’s where we’d be eating anyway.

PAUL

I think you pretty explicitly ASKED me where she was because you wanted to give her that orig-

NORRIS

(Looking over at KAYLA nervously as he says this) Oregano?!? Paul, Paul, Paul... don’t be silly. They don’t serve Oregano here, this is a Japanese restaurant.

MAXIMILLIAN

That didn’t make any sense.

NORRIS

Well, in contex—

MAXIMILLIAN

IN ANY CONTEXT. Would you just go over there and tell her?

A WAITRESS comes over with drinks.

NORRIS

Oh! Would you look at that, our drinks are here! And goodness knows, I am PARCHED! Hahaha! (*he takes the drink and starts chugging*)

TALIA

Ok, yeah. Something's definitely up.

KAYLA

See? What did I tell you?

CAMILLE

You told us Norris was obnoxious and egotistic. This isn't proving anything different, it's just proving you still care about what he thinks of you.

KAYLA

He's been my ex-boyfriend for 7 hours, could you give me a little time to grieve?!?

CAMILLE

You didn't seem to be grieving much a little bit ago.

KAYLA

I just... go through the stages of grief faster than most people.

ERICA

Really? Because you still seem to be in “denial” to me.

NORRIS

Fine, fine, ok? I’ll go over and give it to her. What do I say?

AARON

“Yo. I’m sorry and all, here have this cool book I got you to help apologize?”

NORRIS

It needs more extravagance.

PAUL

Like “ye olde” extravagance? “M’lady, thou hast been wrong-ed. Perhaps a tome of ancient paper folding techniques shall right any wrongs thou hast suffered.”

NORRIS

Ok, not SHAKESPEAREAN, just more... I don’t know. Like a middle ground between you and Aaron.

AARON

“Yo, hark! And stuff. I feelst as though you might be a little miffed with me! Perhaps thou would like this superfly origami book, in the hopes that M’lady will cool her jets and come with me to, in a fortnight’s time, eat a baguette and ride off into the setting sun, and then... you know, maybe... post—... yonder... sunset, watch a DVD, or whatever.

NORRIS

You know the word fortnight?

AARON

Not really, no. Heck if I know what it means. I was just kind of saying stuff.

NORRIS

Well, great. You just kind of saying stuff is definitely going to salvage my relationship.

AARON

Dude, just be straight up with her, like my webstie. That's what I was telling you before, and then you went and bought a book about paper. How ironic is that? A book about paper.

MAXIMILLIAN

I don't think that's ironic at all.

AARON

Yeah? Well English isn't your first language, Maxi, so I wouldn't expect you to understand the subtleties of my ironic humor, anyway.

MAXIMILLIAN

"Subtleties". Right.

ERICA

So, changing the subject, did A.J. ever give that to James?

TALIA

She actually snuck it in his room with a note a while ago.

CAMILLE

That's cute.

KAYLA

Glad I was able to help someone.

CAMILLE

They're not together YET.

KAYLA

But they WILL be. I'm sure of it. It's destiny. That's how these things always work.

ERICA

But how can you be so—

NORRIS *awkwardly walks over, carrying the book.*

KAYLA

Oh, Hi Norris.

ERICA, CAMILLE, TALIA

Hi, Norris.

NORRIS

Hey, girls. . . How is your meal?

KAYLA

Not quite dead.

NORRIS

Much like our relationship, right?

KAYLA

Sure. . . and much like our food, I'm holding back vomit and waiting for it to die.

NORRIS

Oh, how. . . nice. I. . . um. . . I was thinking. . .

KAYLA

That's a change.

NORRIS

Well, I was just...

AARON

(Still in his seat, shouting) Suave, bro!

NORRIS *shoots him a look.*

NORRIS

Look, I just wanted to say I'm sorry.

KAYLA

Oh, you are, are you?

NORRIS

Yeah, I really am. What I said was... wasn't fair to you, and I'm sorry it came out like it did.

KAYLA

Hm.

NORRIS

And I still really like you, and I don't want... what we had to end over one stupid misunderstanding. And... *(he shows her the book)* I got you this.

KAYLA

Oh! Origami! You know how much I love animals!

She smiles, stands up and hugs him. He pulls away slightly, still in her embrace.

NORRIS

Yeah, well I thought it would be a good hobby, you know, instead of matchmaking.

She stays in his arms, holding back her rage VERY thinly.

KAYLA

Oh, you did, did you? Well, how thoughtful of you..

NORRIS

I know, right? I knew it'd be the right decision. After all, matchmaking just isn't the right thing for you.

KAYLA

What exactly are you sorry about, now?

NORRIS

What?

KAYLA

You said you were... sorry? What were you sorry about?

NORRIS

Oh, just the whole misunderstanding you seemed to have about me saying you were incompetent. See, I didn't mean you were incompetent at EVERYTHING, I just meant you were incompetent at MATCHMAKING.

KAYLA

OH. How... truly... KIND of you.

NORRIS

(Really not catching on) Well, I do what I can.

She slaps him.

KAYLA

You really are a piece of work, you know that? Maybe you're right. Maybe I'm not the world's greatest matchmaker. Maybe some people that I've tried to set up, maybe they haven't worked out so well. But by GOD, I know more about people, and their feelings, and how to make people HAPPY, than you EVER could. You're so caught up in your own ego that you think you're never wrong, that you deliver some inherent TRUTH to people that they can't be too upset with because at least you're RIGHT.

NORRIS

Well isn't that the pot calling the kettle black, Miss "Perfect Match". You've trampled ALL OVER other people's feelings. You just think it's ok because they're STRANGERS.

KAYLA

Just because the pot is calling the kettle black, it doesn't mean the kettle isn't black. And you're black as soot in crude oil. I do what I do out of love; you just want to make people feel bad about themselves. You don't care about love— you never could— it's too foreign a concept.

NORRIS

Kayla, I—

KAYLA

Nope! I'm done, Norris! You're a heartless, heartless man. I believe in destiny, and destiny does NOT believe in you. Goodbye!

KAYLA storms out. NORRIS chases after her.

Scene 12

KAYLA

Drat!

She sees NORRIS coming and runs to the doorway to the stairs. She swings the door open, and stops, stunned. Norris runs up behind her and they see Ron kneeling over James' body, clutching his jersey with one hand and holding a knife in the other.

NORRIS

What the...

Act II

Scene 1

16. Shifting Shadows

SHIFTING!
SHADOWS!
CHANGING!
WAH!

CONSTRUCTING MEANING FROM NOTHING,
OBSCURING TO CONSTRUE.
EXAMINE YOUR POINT OF VIEW:
THE ONLY THING THAT'S CERTAIN IS WHAT'S
TRUE TO YOU.

SHIFTING!
SHADOWS!
CHANGING!
WAH!

BLACKENING SHADOWS,
DANCING SHADE.

ALL WE'RE DOING IS QUEUING TOMORROW.
FLAKES OF STONE FROM A MONUMENT OF TIME.

WHAT IS HIDING
IN THE SHADOWS
UNKNOWN?

SHIFTING!
SHADOWS!
CHANGING!
WAH!

LIGHT IS WHAT CREATES THE SHADOWS.

MARCH DOWN THE PASSAGE OF DARKNESS
WATCHING THE SKY OCCLUDE.

YOUR MEMORIES RENEWED.
GAINING ALL THE TRUTHS YOU KNOW ARE
TRUE TO YOU.
HIDING IN SHADOWS
ALL WE'RE DOING IS QUEUING TOMORROW.
WHAT IS CERTAIN?
SHIFTING!
SHADOWS!
CHANGING! SHIFTING! SHADOWS!

The Pennyback Academy Choir Performs "Shifting Shadows" enshrouded in darkness. When this has finished, their director, MS. FLORENCE WATKINS, turns around.

MS. WATKINS

I am Ms. Florence Watkins. This was the Pennyback Academy Choir, performing "Shifting Shadows". Thank you for coming today.

With that noticeably succinct statement, she motions for the choir to move offstage, still in silhouette. They do. Lights up on a frozen scene of RON, standing with knife clutching the fabric of James' shirt, with NORRIS and KAYLA looking on, horrified. JAMES unfreezes, wiggling out of Ron's clutches and walks towards the audience. He stops near the front of the stage.

JAMES

Well hello there! ... (*waving awkwardly*) Um... What? Oh— oh right. "Oh my god! We thought you were dead!" Don't worry, don't worry—I am. I am completely dead. Kicked the bucket, kicked the can, kicked the... well, some other container. Look. Dead? Kapiche? Kapiche.

Now. To more important matters. Who killed me? I mean, I should know, right? But I don't! Something about neuroscience and memory. Or something. Those psychic cop shows really use some false advertising, I guess is what I'm getting at. I was never... great with biology.

Anyway, so— suspect lists (*wheeling on a board with pushpins*) Suspect number one:

Ron Kidney, of course. (*puts his poster on the board with a big “1” under it*) I mean, seriously. Look at this guy. (*points to him standing above the empty space with a knife*) What’s not to suspect? He has a knife, he has... well, kind of a motive, I guess... Alright. So it’s not rock solid, but it’s suspicious, ok? At least a little “suspect” behavior, if you get me? Huh? Get it? “Suspect”? ... Aw, you guys are no fun.

Moving on! Suspect number two! Sawyer Goodwin. The guy poisoned me with a berry. I remember feeling pret-ty sick on my way back to the hotel room, and then what? I don’t remember a thing. BAM. MURDER. IN THE FIRST. Or maybe manslaughter. Maybe it wasn’t his intent, but he still fed me that berry, folks. I’m telling you. This guy— (*tacks up a picture of SAWYER with a big “2” beneath it*) is pretty shady. Alright. Lot of flash, lot of pomp— but weird, if you will, ok? Weird. Motive? Who knows. He seemed pretty intent on getting me to eat that berry, though. Like some kinda weird-cult-pact-thing... Yeah.

And finally, suspect number three! Erica LeDeroux! She’s... pretty shady! Did you see... that... thing that she did? Wow! That was... I can’t even... I mean... The nerve, really! Don’t you think so? I’m not crazy, right? Right, audience plant?

At this point, a PLANTED AUDIENCE MEMBER holding a large “ERICA DID IT” sign stands up.

AUDIENCE PLANT

YEAH!!! GET HER!

JAMES

Yeah, I mean, even he thinks it’s her! It’s totally got to be her! All of that stuff that she was— oh man, wow! She just— ok. Blatantly, we’re doing this for gender balance, right now, alright? All I’m saying is murder isn’t just a man’s field anymore. I’ve watched plenty of crime dramas, and taken half a semester of women’s studies, and I really think women are underrepresented in not only management positions but also line-ups. So... just... just throwin’ it out there... (*puts up a picture of ERICA with a big “3” under it*) So anyway folks, what we’ll be doing all through the second act is looking at some different scenes, some— Oh, what? “Oh my god, he’s breaking the fourth wall! He knows he’s a character in a play! Blah blah blah whine whine whine!!!” Yeah, ok? We get it. It’s a play. I’m on stage. Get over it. We have a mystery to solve. We’re going to be looking at some scenes some different ways to find out how I died. It’s like Sherlock Holmes meets the famed 1939 comic character and 1945 cartoon icon Casper the Friendly Ghost. Except without the

friendly. . . .*(makes a mean face)* . . . Let's do this. *(walks off stage, but no scene change music happens, so he walks back on)*

(To orchestra director) Seriously? Seriously. I walked off. That's the cue. Start the scene change music. *(music ends)* Thank you. Seriously. Murder to solve. Can't be missing orchestra cues.

Scene 2

JAMES

Oh, hello again! It hasn't been very long at all, has it? Just a scene change, really. So, I thought we'd start looking for suspects in the most logical order possible: starting from the bottom! Suspect Number Three! Here we come, Erica! Your murderous reign of terror will be exposed to all!

JAMES steps off to the side of the stage as the curtains open, revealing MAXIMILLIAN walking out of the gift shop with a stuffed animal, along with NORRIS and AARON. They walk out of the store to the right, and moments later, KAYLA, ERICA, and CAMILLE walk in.

KAYLA

Norris... is just... AGH!

CAMILLE

Hey, it's ok.

KAYLA

No! It's not ok! He KNOWS how much I care about matchmaking.

ERICA

And you can let him know how good you are at matchmaking by helping A.J. get together with James.

KAYLA

Yeah... yeah. That's a good idea. Forget him! This is about helping her! ... Where is she, anyway?

TALIA

(Bursting in the door of the store, dragging A.J. very reluctantly alongside her, pointing to KAYLA) HERE she is!

A.J.

Fantastic. I'm SO glad we found her.

KAYLA

A.J.! A little birdie whispered to me about some of your feelings of love!

A.J.

You mean Talia blatantly shouted to you that I was interested in James?

KAYLA

Well, that doesn't sound quite as pretty, but yes, I was so informed.

TALIA

A.J., I just had to. You need the help. Goodness knows you weren't going to tell her on your own.

A.J.

And I told you why, too.

TALIA

Because you, the future big-shot Broadway singer, are shy, and I get that, but I'm not. So I decided to tell her for you.

A.J.

What a favor. Thanks.

(CHRYSTAL *bursts in the store.*)

CHRYSTAL

And did you tell her about Phillip?

TALIA

Chrystal, as Mira and I told you, that's just insane.

ERICA

Wait. You like Phillip? Phillip OVIC?

CHRYSTAL

How couldn't I?

ERICA

The list is really just too long.

KAYLA

Yeah, I don't really know if that's such a—

CHRYSTAL

Oh, COME ON! Everyone says you're such a great matchmaker, why can't you take a challenge!

KAYLA

Um... yeah... Well, I guess I could—

CHRYSTAL

So you'll do it?!?

KAYLA

Well I didn't say—

CHRYSTAL

FANTASTIC! Oh, how do I tell him?!?

KAYLA

You know, I think I'm going to help out A.J. for a bit, but you should go... look around the shop for a bit.

CHRYSTAL

For him? To demonstrate my PASSION?

KAYLA

Sure, we'll say that's why.

CHRYSTAL

Oh my gosh! (*she runs into the back of the store and starts rummaging through the shelves; TALIA follows, trying to calm her down*)

KAYLA

ANYWAY! A.J... I want to help you with James.

A.J.

Fantastic. How do I break my feelings to him?

KAYLA

Well, you'll need to do something special.

A.J.

And how do you suggest I do that?

ERICA

Maybe you should just... come out and... say it.

KAYLA

Wrong. She needs more.

A.J.

Get a . . . gift?

KAYLA

FANTASTIC! You're brilliant.

A.J.

But I think—

KAYLA

AAAAND what to get?

A.J.

I mean I really actually think—

KAYLA

You think what? I know what I'm doing. I've been doing this for YEARS.

A.J.

What's wrong with just being honest with him?

KAYLA

A.J., let me tell you something.

17. You Can't Just Say It Reprise

HONESTY AIN'T JEWELRY
DOESN'T SPARKLE, DOESN'T SHINE.
HONESTY AIN'T POETRY
DOESN'T FLOW, NO, DOESN'T RHYME.
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ROMANCE,

WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING BIG,
WELL, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT,
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW 'EM SOMETHING MORE.

YEAH, HONESTY AIN'T A DIAMOND,
NO, IT DOESN'T REALLY GLISTEN.
AND HONESTY AIN'T MUSIC,

'Cause with music they'll actually listen.

TALIA

You're a bit cynical.

KAYLA

I take pride in it.

WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ROMANCE,
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING SOMETHING BIG,
WELL, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT.
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW 'EM SOMETHING MORE.

HONESTY AIN'T CHOCOLATE.
BITTER REALITY ISN'T SWEET.
AND HONESTY AIN'T CANDLELIGHT
'CAUSE THE COLD TRUTH'S GOT NO HEAT.

YEAH, YEAH, WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ROMANCE,
WHEN YOU'RE TALKING SOMETHING BIG,
WELL, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT,
NO, YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT,
YOU CAN'T JUST SAY IT.
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW 'EM SOMETHING MORE!

A.J.

Ok... I guess I can get him something. But what do I get?

KAYLA

Food.

A.J.

Food? Why food? What's romantic about food?

KAYLA

Haven't you ever heard "the best way to a man's heart is through his arteries"?

A.J.

Isn't that just kind of stereotyping?

KAYLA

It's not stereotyping if you're creative enough!

A.J.

I don't really know what you meant by that, but I know I'm a little offended.

KAYLA

Don't worry about it! Here, look at this! (She picks up a green colored orb of food with a Japanese label on it.)

A.J.

I'm not sure what that is...

KAYLA

I read Japanese! It's a—

ERICA

Kayla. You don't read Japanese. You read English translated comic books from Japan. There's a difference.

KAYLA

And there's a difference between "comic books" and "manga", Erica. Ok? So let's not criticize our resident cultural expert, over here, alright?

ERICA

Cultural expert. Right. Looked at some Japanese characters online once defines you as an expert in the Japanese language.

KAYLA

Yes it does, thank you very much. This says... “Burning...” um... “Burning”... I think the second character might be “Passion”. Yes. Passion. It’s a Burning Passion.

A.J.

What does that mean, exactly?

KAYLA

It’s probably a passion fruit... candy...treat. He’ll love it! Get it! It’ll show him you care! Trust me!

A.J.

You don’t seem entirely confident.

KAYLA

Well you aren’t entirely confident either, so that’s why I’m here! To get you out of that wishy-washy place of constant over thinking and just make decisions for you!

A.J.

I’m not sure that that’s what I—

KAYLA

Nonsense! Nonsense! Get some nice paper (*she pulls some off of a shelf nearby without looking and shoves it into A.J.’s arms*), wrap it up real nice, leave him a note, and you’re set!

A.J.

Are you sure there’s not a better—

KAYLA

Do you want my help or not? You can be lonely for the rest of your life! See if I care!

A.J.

I mean, yes, I do care about that but—

KAYLA

But— but— what? Go buy that. He'll love it. Trust me.

A.J.

If you're sure...

KAYLA

Of course I'm sure! Go on!

(A.J. walks over to the counter and begins to pay. KAYLA turns over to ERICA and CAMILLE and begins quietly talking with them.)

CAMILLE

You're not really sure, are you?

KAYLA

Of course not.

ERICA

Then why would you do that?

KAYLA

Because people like it when I'm decisive. It helps push them away from indecision.

CAMILLE

No, people like it when you help them make THE RIGHT DECISION.

KAYLA

Well, they were never going to make ANY decision on their own, so it's at least an improvement!

CAMILLE

By almost nobody's standards but your own. Norris did have a bit of a—

KAYLA

Don't you bring Norris into this. He was stupid. And wrong. And we're not going to talk about him.

CAMILLE

Alright, alright, but I'm just saying, if you want to help her, you should really try and help her, and really try and find someone who can read Japanese to tell her if that's a good gift for the boy she wants to impress.

KAYLA

Oh? And do you see anyone else here who can read Japanese? I think I'm the only one, Camille.

ERICA

Kayla, we're in a JAPANESE GIFT SHOP. OWNED BY JAPANESE IMMIGRANTS. Plenty of people RIGHT HERE can read Japanese.

KAYLA

Oh yeah? Well—

CHRYSTAL bursts through the pack excitedly.

CHRYSTAL

Kayla! Don't you think Phillip would LOVE this?

She holds up a ballpoint pen.

KAYLA

Chrystal, I think that's just a pen.

CHRYSTAL

I KNOW! (*she giggles excitedly*)

KAYLA

... Um...

CHRYSTAL

You're all speechless because you can't BELIEVE how much he'll LOVE IT, I know!

ERICA

Yeah. Yeah that's why. Speechless because we're so... impressed with... with your thoughtfulness.

CHRYSTAL

YES! I'm going to go pay for it RIGHT NOW! I can't wait...

She runs behind A.J. to pay, TALIA walks over to KAYLA, ERICA, and CAMILLE.

TALIA

I really don't know what to do with her.

ERICA

Just smile and nod. Smile and nod.

KAYLA

You know, knowing Phillip, is it really that out of the realm of possibility that he might love that pen like his first-born child?

ERICA, TALIA, CAMILLE

(In unison after a bit of thought) No.

KAYLA

See, she might have the right instinct, then.

TALIA

Instinct. Right. We're trusting Chrystal's instinct.

(A.J. finishes paying and walks back to the group.)

A.J.

Are we ready to go?

CAMILLE

I think Chrystal's still paying.

A.J.

Right. So we are ready.

TALIA

Yes, I think it would be best if we left. Immediately.

KAYLA

Agreed.

All of the girls leave, except CHRYSTAL, who, at the moment they are gone, finishes paying and turns around excitedly.

CHRYSTAL

Oh my gosh you guys— ... Guys? Oh no... I bet they left and told everyone about my great idea! What if Phillip finds out! I better stop them!

She runs out of the store. JAMES walks out into center stage.

JAMES

You know, they're really skeptical of Chrystal, but she'd really be perfect for Phillip. They're both just crazy enough to make it work. On another note— A.J! ... Huh. ... Well, I guess we should keep following Erica, right? (*he enthusiastically waits for an answer*)

... No? But we're hot on the trail! Come on! Suspect number three!

... Alright, fine, fine. We'll go after Sawyer. I know that's what you REALLY want. Right? Right!

He's about to trudge off stage excitedly when he turns back to the audience and pauses mid-step.

JAMES

Ok, fine, fine, we'll get Ron, ok? Jeez.

He sulks off, and the lights fade out.

Scene 3

JAMES

Here we are! Haha! Let's see what Ron's up to!

The curtain opens on RON in JAMES' hotel room, holding up his jersey and starting to sing. JAMES is on the side of the stage.

JAMES

... In MY hotel room...?

18. Rivals Reprise

RON

JAMES, JAMES, JAMES...
I'VE DONE EVERYTHING I CAN
TO MAKE YOUR WORLD GO UP IN FLAMES.

JAMES, JAMES, JAMES...
OH WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?
SO JUST HOLD ON, NOW
AND I'LL EXPLAIN HOW
WE BEGAN THESE SILLY GAMES.

RIVALRY ON ARRIVAL
IT'S BEEN MY FIRM BELIEF
THAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OUR CALLING
TO CAUSE EACH OTHER GRIEF.

THE MOMENT I FIRST SAW YOU
THE MOMENT WE FIRST MET
YOUR FACE WAS ENOUGH EVIDENCE
TO ENSURE MY HATRED, SET.

THERE WERE NO BEST INTENTIONS,
OH, MINE, THEY WERE THE WORST,
IT'S NOT AN EXAGGERATION
TO SAY I HAD BLOODTHIRST!

AT FIRST, SOME PUSHING, SHOIVING,
PERHAPS A LIGHT INSULT.
THEN WE BEGAN IN EARNEST
WHAT WAS TRULY ALL YOUR FAULT.

YOUR DECISION TO JOIN FOOTBALL
JUST TO BRING ME SPITE,
ALLOWED A SILENCED TENSION
ONCE DORMANT, TO IGNITE!

YES, YOU BECAME A PUNTER
AND STARTED YOUR ATTACK.
BUT I BECAME A SINGER
TO PROVE THAT I'D FIGHT BACK.

EVERY LITTLE MOVEMENT,
EVERY LITTLE JAB,
ONLY SERVED TO OPEN
EVERY SINGLE SCAB!

AND THOUGH WE ARE STILL AT IT
TODAY WILL BE MY DAY
FOR YOU SEE I HAVE A PLAN
TO FILL YOU WITH DISMAY.

THIS WILL BE MY VICTORY
SORRY, JAMES, MY FRIEND. (NOT!)
HERE AND NOW, THIS FINAL ACT,
THIS WILL BE THE END!

RON

Yes! VENGEANCE, JAMES! THIS IS THE END! MUAHAHAHA! (*he stabs at the jersey, but nothing happens— he lays it on the bed and tries harder and harder to cut it, but, again, nothing happens*) Cheap freakin' knife... (*he tosses the jersey aside*) What to do, what to do... (*he looks towards the bathroom door in the hotel room*) AHA! (*he runs over to it and locks it from the inside, then closes it, then turns the knob a few times from the outside to make sure it is locked*) Yes, anyway. MUAHAHAHA. VENGEANCE IS SO MINE. SO MINE. HAHA. GOT YOU.

... Yeah. This isn't really... working. Doesn't have any stabbing. And what's vengeance without stabbing? Not freakin' vengeance at all, I'll tell you that. I need a better knife.

He exits the hotel room. JAMES walks after him.

JAMES

Zoinks, gang! Looks like we better follow him, huh?

He walks offstage for a moment, then walks back on.

JAMES

Look, I know that was stupid, ok? Just come on. We've got my murder to solve.

Scene 4

RON walks into the gift shop from the first act. JAMES walks to the side of the stage, watchful.

RON

Hey. I'm looking to return this knife. It doesn't work.

GIFT SHOP CLERK

What do you mean it "doesn't work"?

RON

I tried to... cut some fabric with it, and it wouldn't cut.

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Cut some fabric? Buddy, what kinda' fabric were you tryin' to cut?

RON

Jersey fabric. Like (*grabs his jersey*) this kinda fabric, huh?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

That "knife"... isn't going to cut much of anything.

RON

Oh yeah? And why's that?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Because it's a five dollar souvenir letter opener with a picture of the Willis tower on the side.

RON

A letter opener? But it's still a blade, right? I mean, it's sharp?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Well, yeah, but every blade's not a real cuttin' blade, ok, kid? You probably need something a little sharper. Maybe spend more than five bucks to get it? Look, if you're doing some kinda craft project—

RON

I DO NOT. DO. CRAFTS! This is a serious thing, ok!

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Woah! Easy buddy! Don't go pushing me around! You're the idiot who bought the cheap letter opener for his "totally not a craft" fabric cutting, ok? Listen jerkwad—you want a solid way to cut some fabric? Buy some fabric cutting scissors over at the fabric supply store right down the road.

RON

A... fabric supply store?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

That should have what you need.

RON

Fine. But don't go telling anyone I'm going to do this, ok?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Why... who would I tell?

RON

Look, I don't know, ok? But I have a reputation to keep up, and I can't let anyone—

A customer walks in, looking around; RON lowers his voice.

RON

I can't let anyone know that I'm... doing... that. People will start to talk, you know?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

Buddy. You're nuts. I don't care about you, or whatever you're planning on doing. And swear on my aunt Sadie's life, I won't tell a soul. But you need to get out of my store. Immediately. And you keep that (*points to the knife*) I ain't takin' it back.

RON

Yeah. Fine. Maybe I will, then, huh?

WALKS OUT OF THE SHOP, PUTTING THE KNIFE BACK IN HIS POCKET.

GIFT SHOP CLERK

(*shouting*) See ya later, lunatic!

CUSTOMER

Say, do you have these name keychains for Kelli with an "I"?

GIFT SHOP CLERK

(*Sighs*) No... but we got "Adam"! You want Adam?

JAMES *walks after* RON.

JAMES

To the Fabric Store! I guess!

Scene 5

JAMES *runs to the side of the stage, panting.*

FABRIC STORE CLERK

...and that's... two punches on your Crafty Creations punch card! Just 8 more and you'll be on your way to 50% off on any purchase of 20 dollars or less!

RON

Look, I don't really know that I'll be back. I don't really live in the area.

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Well, just keep it in your wallet! We have plenty of locations, and the punch card can be used at any one! Just think of it as an all inclusive membership card into the super-duper secret and exclusive WORLD OF CRAFTERS!

RON

Um... ok. I don't really... (*looking down at the fabric scissors*) Hey, wait a minute. What the hell?

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Sir! That kind of language is not appropriate for a crafter!

RON

Well, I'm NOT A CRAFTER, ALRIGHT!

FABRIC STORE CLERK

(*Gasps in horror, clutching her heart in pain*) Not... a... crafter? (*almost in tears*)

RON

Yeah. Not a crafter. Alright? I just need some fabric cutting scissors for an awesome revenge plot I'm... plotting. And the fact is, your scissors are in extremely tight packaging, and zip-tied. How am I supposed to open them?

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Scissors, of course!

RON

... Scissors.

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Mhm!

RON

You're saying I need... scissors... to open my SCISSORS?!?

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Well, I— uh— store policy, and—

RON

You know what? Fine. I'll go find somewhere to BUY SCISSORS that don't require SCISSORS to OPEN, OK?

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Well— but— I—

RON

Oh, and you can keep your useless punch card, ok? (*crumples it up and throws at the CLERK, storming out*)

FABRIC STORE CLERK

Happy Crafting!

RON

(*On his way out*) Yeah, happy FREAKING crafting!

JAMES RUNS PAST THE STAGE.

JAMES

(Still panting) Obligatory exiting comment!

Scene 6

Returning to the hotel, RON storms in with his shopping bag and goes to the stairs. He opens the door to see JAMES' body lying in a heap at the foot of the stairs.

RON

Oh... oh god... oh god... oh... oh my...ok. Ok. What now... um... *(checks for a pulse)* Oh no. Oh god. Um... *(chest compressions, then listening for a heartbeat)* Aw, hell... *(he opens James' mouth and begins to try mouth to mouth)* Oh god, this is... no. This won't work. I need something else. Oh, right, 911. *(calls on his cell)* Yeah, hi. My friend's at the bottom of a stairwell. Unconscious. No Pulse. Yeah. I tried CPR. It didn't work. The Park Walker Hotel. Yeah. Get here as soon as you can. *(checks the corner right by the stairs to find a wall-mounted defibrillator)* A-hah! *(he peels it open to find two nodes for the chest and side)* Um... *(looking around on JAMES' body)* Ok... Now, to get the shirt— *(he begins trying to pull the jersey off, but it starts to catch on his head, pulling it)* Ok, don't want to mess with that... Um... *(checking)* Jeez! How many layers are you wearing? It's like 40! Um... Well, I guess I'll have to cut it... *(looking at the bag)* Obviously that's not going to work... Well, time to try this again...

Pulls out the letter opener, grabs JAMES' shirt, and holds the knife very high, getting ready to pierce the fabric, when KAYLA and NORRIS burst in.

NORRIS

What the...

Everything freezes, JAMES gets up from out of RON'S grip again. He steps forward and a curtain covers RON, KAYLA, and NORRIS. The "suspect board" is wheeled out.

JAMES

Um... Well, ... wasn't expecting that... That eliminates Ron, I guess... (*He tears RON off the board*) Well, who else do we have left? Sawyer and Erica. Haha! The case is still open. Let's see what Sawyer was doing during this time, hm?

He motions for the curtain to be opened. It opens on a hotel room, with SAWYER running into the bathroom and locking the door. Profuse vomiting can be heard muffled from inside the bathroom. JAMES stands horrified.

JAMES Oh... oh god. Close it. He has an alibi. Just close it.

The curtain closes. JAMES, still horrified, reaches without breaking his horrified stare and tears SAWYER's picture off the board.

JAMES

So... Um... That just leaves ERICA, I guess.

AUDIENCE PLANT

YEAH! GET ERICA! GET JUSTICE! YEAH!!!

JAMES

Look, man. Put the sign down. We all know she didn't do it. It used to be cute, but you're just sad, now.

AUDIENCE PLANT dejectedly lowers his sign and sits down, and JAMES tears ERICA'S picture off the board.

JAMES

...No. No! Ron... Ron had to do it, right? We can't rule him out just yet? I mean, you saw the knife! ... The plotting! There's just no way that it wasn't him! (*tries to re-post RON's torn page, but misses with the pushpin, and the page falls off*) ... Well, I mean... it had to be... SOMEONE, right? And there are so many people we haven't even CONSIDERED! Three suspects was just too narrow, you know? (*putting up pictures on the board as he says the names*) There's no saying that Norris couldn't have done it—just because he discovered the body doesn't mean

he didn't kill me, right? I mean, throw Kayla into that boat, too... And they've got motive! Distract the other one from their relationship drama by killing ME! So selfish, but so cunning. . . Or maybe Aaron—he's just dumb enough to be able to pull it off—or Eric! He's way too energetic! Energetic—that's... that's a main trait of serial killers, you know—or maybe Khali, or Tina! Just because Sawyer didn't kill me with a berry doesn't mean they didn't! I mean—Phillip, too! After all, he's closest to me—who's to say he didn't end it? And—heck—who's to say Sawyer DIDN'T do it?! Just because someone has an alibi doesn't mean they couldn't have committed the crime! The list goes on of all of the people who could have done it—Chrystal, Mira, Mr. Foyers, the fabric store clerk, A.J—*(he pauses as he puts the pushpin in on her, then slumps down, before finally sitting in front of the board)* . . . A.J. Didn't even notice her. Hm. It's all. . . just. . . frustrating, you know? All the lost opportunities? Heck, and—and it's weird, too; it's the small opportunities that you don't even think about that really get you. I mean, yeah, I had big things ahead of me, and that's what everyone will talk about, but—and again it sounds so fickle, but it's still gone—there was this movie coming out next week. You know the one, with the zombies? . . . and the guy? . . . with the gun? Well, in any case, just. . . I'll never get the chance to go. Maybe I could've taken A.J. Probably going to have to turn down that scholarship, now, too. . . “Being a corpse” certainly is a career-ending injury. . . Not as though I ever had a career to begin, much less end. College, a family, “my whole life ahead of me”, blah, blah. . . blah. just. . . everything. Gone.

But god, you should have SEEN the trailer for this thing! I mean, there were explosions, and kissing, and so much GORE! I mean, not like, BAD gore, or anything. It's still just a trailer, so they have to get it through the censors—and at the very end, right after they show the release date, they have this zombie turn around and jump at the camera! And I remember one time, I was sneaking downstairs late at night to watch some T.V. and that part came on and I jumped! I jumped out of my chair and spilled the water that was in my hand—just all over myself. My heart was RACING.

. . . But it's too late.

I spilled that water all over myself. Ha. Spilled that water, just. . . everywhere. I don't even know why this is hitting such a chord with me, but. . . I mean, just even the idea of. . . of water. Oh. . . oh god. *(he freezes, eyes widening as the orchestra swells)* Oh god. It's all. . . coming back to me now. Oh man, oh man, oh man. *(he stands up again)*

Oh. . .

You guys really have to see this. It's. . . it's incredible.

. . . Like that? Really? Of all the. . . hm.

I solved it. Or, remembered it—really. Not terribly climactic, me just, saying it and

all, I know, and... and you'll have to wait just a bit for it, but trust me, it's worth every second.

(he faces the suspect board, pointing out people as he names them) And I'm sure you're wondering—who to blame? I mean... Kayla's kind of at fault, tangentially... Sawyer, too... And Phillip, most directly... Even A.J... and of course Ron, *(picking up his picture)* the idiot... Tried to save my life, right after he helped kill me. But even though they all had a part, I can't really BLAME them... None of them had any intent, and individually, none of them did anything that would have led to this. Not that you'd understand. You haven't even gotten to see it yet. Trust me, it'll come in time. I'm trying to avoid it. As you may imagine—well, if you do imagine this sort of thing, you're rather sick, but let's say for sake of argument you do—it's rather painful to watch your own death, and though we're leading up to it, even though I could show you right now, I'm trying to delay the inevitable... I already did it once, and that was fairly difficult. I mean—it's just all so... embittering. I've been hunting, CONSTANTLY, for someone to blame. I'm a vengeful spectre with nobody to justly haunt. Even Ron, malicious as he is, was FOOLISH, not murderous. Really more of a hero at the end of it all, though in vain. I suppose they'll all have their just deserts in the end, though—they're probably all mourning my death, wondering how it could have happened, perhaps even feeling some personal responsibility and gaining the weight of lifelong guilt to go with it... Which I'm MORE THAN HAPPY about. I hope they're crying. I hope they're all guilty and pained and can never live their lives without the constant flash of my mangled corpse in front of them. Because I don't get to live my life at all. I am that mangled corpse. My parents probably don't even know. Didn't even expect this or consider as a possibility that asking if I had my bags packed and getting an eye roll and a half-assed wave goodbye would be the last time they saw their son. So yeah. I hope each and every one of them feels some sort of unending weight upon their souls for what happened...

But I CAN'T, CAN I? *(he begins tearing off all the pictures from the suspect board indiscriminately)* I CAN'T. WHY? BECAUSE IT'S NOT THEIR FAULT. BECAUSE I LIKE PHILLIP. BECAUSE SAWYER AND RON ARE STUPID, BUT NOT MURDERERS. BECAUSE A.J... A.J... *(holding her picture)* Because what happened to me isn't their fault. Because I want to see them suffer selfishly, not because I think they really DESERVE it. But haven't I EARNED that right? EARNED the right to be selfish? MUST I BE SELFLESS AND MODEST EVEN IN DEATH?

19. Heart's Hot Emotion

ONCE YOU GIVE UP YOUR LIFE,
CAN'T YOU BE AS SELFISH AS YOU LIKE?
AFTER ALL, WITHOUT A SENSE OF SELF,
IS THERE REALLY MUCH TO BE SELFISH ABOUT?

CAN'T I TAKE THE MINIMAL SPECTRAL SWIRLINGS
OF VENGEANCE AND DISGUST OVER MY OWN DEATH
AND HOLD THEM CLOSE AND BE FILLED
WITH SICK, UNHEALTHY VAINGLORY FOR THEM?

IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE ANYTHING
FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES ANY SELFISH FEELINGS I HAVE
ARE JUST THOSE--- FEELINGS.

NOT ONLY WILL I NOT ACT ON THEM
I CAN'T ACT ON THEM.
I DON'T HAVE A BODY WITH WHICH TO DO SO.
AND WHOSE FAULT IS THAT?

WELL... I SUPPOSE
THAT'S WHAT THIS WHOLE DISCUSSION HAS BEEN ABOUT, HM?

RAGE, RAGE, RAGE...
CAN I TURN THE PAGE?
DO I WANT TO?

FURY, FURY, FURY...
I HAVE NO COSMIC JURY.
CAN'T I LASH OUT?

WRATH, WRATH, WRATH...
HAVE I NO BETTER PATH?
DOES IT MATTER?

WHEN THE SOUL'S LEFT BEHIND,
IT ABANDONS THE MIND;
WITHOUT THE EGO'S FORBID,
THE DEPTHS OF THE ID,
ARE LEFT FREE TO ROAM.

BUT ALL OF MY PRIDE,
WELLED UP INSIDE,
CANNOT DENY,
JUST HOW AWRY,
MY FATALITY WAS.

(spoken) Fatal implies fate,
And that's to misstate,
The undeniable fluke,
That made me a spook,
Happened accidentally.

EVEN WITH COLD LOGIC,
MY HEART IS HOT EMOTION.
A FREAK ACCIDENT, WHILE TRUTHFUL,
IS NOT A COMFORTING NOTION.

Perhaps I don't need comfort. Perhaps the dead don't need comfort. It's the living that need to grapple with the consequence. I'm not staring at their crying faces. It'd probably be harder to say I want to see them suffer if I had to watch them do it. Still. They have it easy, comparatively. Logic isn't the only thing that's cold. Sorrow is, too. Anger is an emotion you can feel, totally alone, to its fullest extent. Sorrow, without a shoulder to lean on, is simply a sickening hollowness. It's easier to be angry. It's feeling... something. Feeling something like it ought to be felt.

The most painful part of this whole thing is... was... always A.J... and I know that must seem weird to you—it's not like we really had any chemistry going. I mean, heck, I—I don't know that I even saw her once the whole trip outside of the performance. But knowing that she wanted me... that she liked me, that she was obsessed with me—not in a creepy way, but in a sweet, caring way—it's at least enough to make a guy... think, you know?

She was so afraid to act, and when she did, well... If she had just spoken up—or maybe not... I can't say I was really desperate to reciprocate, or anything... I don't know HOW I would have responded had I still been alive. Probably an awkward teenage dating situation that might last a few weeks. I don't really know. I might have just insulted her and blown her off, and I'd have been the guy that ruined men for her. I have no idea. Maybe we would have had a passionate, beautiful, and angelic love that lasted a lifetime. Love is always... significant, at the VERY least, noteworthy, even when it's not reciprocated, even when you just find out about it secondhand; in this case, too far after the fact to really matter.

... And neither of us will ever know. And she'll be forever guilty, torn between the consequences of both action and inaction. Romeo and Juliet trapped in Schrödinger's box along with the cat.

The curtains open to reveal A.J.'s hotel room, with her just about to sing "If Only". JAMES stands offstage and begins to sing.

19a. If Only Reprise

JAMES

ASSUMING I WAS STILL AROUND LOVE
STILL MAY'VE LACKED A SPARK.

IN LIFE IT WAS NO PERFECT LIGHT
BUT IN DEATH ITS SURELY DARK.

ASSUMING I HAD GLANCED AT HER
AND SEEN HER GROWING NEAR,
IT MAY HAVE BEEN LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT
BUT SIGHTS CAN DISAPPEAR.

ASSUMING!

ASSUMING NOTHING CAME TO ME,
ASSUMING I HAD KNOWN!
ASSUMING I COULD SIMPLY BE,
ASSUMING I'D BEEN SHOWN!

ASSUMING!

ASSUMING I HAD GAZED AT HER,
NOT SURE WHAT THIS WOULD BE.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT ANSWER LIES.
THERES NOTHING I CAN SEE.

ASSUMING SHE HAD OPENED UP,
ASSUMING I COULD BEAR,
ASSUMING SHE HAD SAID HER PEACE,
ASSUMING I WAS THERE!

A.J. joins him onstage.

JAMES/A.J.

BUT SURELY IT WERE LOVE TO SEE
BUT SURELY IT WERE TRUE!
BUT SURELY CAN WE TRULY BE!
BUT SURELY, ME AND YOU!

OH, SURELY!

BUT SURELY HAD I GAZED AT HER
WE'D BE SO DEEP IN LOVE
THAT TIME, IT SURELY HASN'T PASSED
OH, COME TO ME, MY DOVE!

BUT SURELY THIS WERE TO BE REAL
BUT SURELY, NO GOODBYE!

BUT SURELY WOULD THESE WOUNDS COULD HEAL
THEN SURELY, YOU AND I!

JAMES

IF ONLY I HAD GAZED AT HER.
WE'D BE SO DEEP IN LOVE.
THAT TIME, HOWEVER, IT HAS PASSED
YOU'LL NEVER BE MY 'DOVE'.

A.J. has left at this point.

IF ONLY THIS WERE TO BE REAL
IF ONLY, NO GOODBYE!
IF ONLY WOULD THESE WOUNDS COULD HEAL
IF ONLY, YOU AND I!
...BUT NEVER, YOU AND I.

JAMES stands, alone and saddened, on stage.

JAMES

... But you didn't come here to hear me talk—I mean, don't get me wrong, I made you do that anyway, but—no, you didn't come here to hear me talk. You came here to see me die. And we can't let my monasterial patience to finally lay my soul to rest prevent you from having the all-important mystery of its restlessness solved in a timely fashion. And now that I know how that happened, I suppose there's nothing left for me to do but to indulge you, as you have indulged me. And remember—just because this is a stageplay, doesn't mean the world's not a stage.

James walks offstage, pushing off the now-empty suspect board, before walking back on to clean up the torn off suspect pages.

JAMES

Hey, I thought that last piece of advice was poignant. I don't know about you guys, I'm just saying, it took me a while to—Oh, fine, fine, fine, you can watch me die, you can solve your mystery... You people are SICK... *(he walks offstage)*

Scene 7

The curtain opens, revealing the hotel hallway. JAMES is walking back to his hotel room with his hand on his forehead, looking a tad dazed. KHALI is walking in the other direction, towards the stairs with MR. FOYERS, very sick.

FOYERS

Now, Ms. Dewhart, don't you see why perhaps staying with the group and progressing through the city would have been a better option? Tour guides are there for your assistance; well, perhaps that's not quite the word for it- guidance, yes, that's a better one. Guidance, which of course is self-explanatory, considering the nature of a tour guide, of course. Do you understand this now, Khali?

KHALI

Not at all— now I have a headache, too...

The two walk off stage.

JAMES

Ow... Dang Sawyer and his ... berry. Gah— I NEED to lie down...

JAMES walks into the hotel room. PHILLIP is waiting there.

PHILLIP

Come now, James, perhaps this incident has taught us a lesson?

JAMES

Yeah, yeah... hey, what's this? (*he examines the gift from A.J.*) "From your secret admirer... Love, your secret admirer"? Well, then... I wonder who that could be? Did you see them come in?

PHILLIP

No, I just got here a minute ago and it was sitting right there. Along with a pen, with a note saying it was for me, for some odd reason.

JAMES

A pen?

PHILLIP

Yeah. (*he holds it up*) Someone thought it would be really... ROMANTIC... to get it for me.

JAMES

How... endearing?

PHILLIP

Yeah, that's... that's kinda what I was thinking. (*he tosses it into the trash*) So what exactly is THAT?

JAMES

(*unwrapping*) Ah, it appears to be some sort of— ... thing. Looks edible, even!

PHILLIP

James, weren't we just talking about a "lesson" of some sort? Perhaps "don't eat strange things just because someone happens to offer them to you"?

JAMES

Well, I mean, this is wrapped, very professionally, very commercially. It's not just some random wild berry.

PHILLIP

And they have Cool Ranch Doritos in the vending machines downstairs! Just because it's wrapped doesn't mean it tastes good.

JAMES

Well, whoever bought this for me obviously put some care into choosing it, so I have to imagine it's probably a bit more edible than Cool Ranch Doritos.

PHILLIP

James, if a serial killer sticks a razor blade into an apple, then wraps it up with a nice, neat little bow, would you eat it simply because they said they really put their heart into making it?

JAMES

Well, I wouldn't want to be inconsiderate of the time and effort they put into it, would I? (*he takes a bite of the treat, enjoying it at first- his eyes start to widen as his mouth begins to go ablaze*)

PHILLIP

(*With a wry, knowing grin*) Why, is something the matter, James?

JAMES

(*Pained*) I think it had . . . wasabi in it . . . A LOT of wasabi . . . AAAHHH! (*he runs to the bathroom, only to find it locked*)

PHILLIP

It's a pull door, you know.

JAMES

I know that! It's locked! From the inside! Hello? Is someone in there?

PHILLIP

Kyle and Kurt are down at the vending machines, where they've been almost this entire trip.

JAMES

Well, why would they lock the bathroom? Did they think it would be funny? It's theirs, too!

PHILLIP

You did take a while in the shower. . .

JAMES

Oh my god. . . Can you get me a bottled water from the vending machines? My mouth is on FIRE! Oh, and when you're there, you can tell Kyle and Kurt that THEY'RE fixing this door.

PHILLIP

I thought I wasn't your secretary— I was your friend?

JAMES

Ok. . . Well, be a PAL and go get me a BOTTLE OF FREAKING WATER, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND?!?

PHILLIP

(Timidly shocked) Yes, of course, Mr. McCauley! *(he runs out)*

JAMES

Who the hell would think it would be a good idea to get something with wasabi in it for a romantic gift? AAAH! *(he throws the treat away angrily and begins pacing and panting frantically, waiting for PHILLIP to get back)*

PHILLIP

(Running as fast as he can up the stairs, offstage) Mr. McCauley! I have the water! Oh! And also! Misters Braston and Damien said they had nothing to do with locking the bathroom door, in case you were- *(he gets to the top of the steps and trips, spilling the water everywhere)* Oh, dear. . . I'll. . . I'll get another one then. . .

JAMES

Where on earth IS HE? If you can't get something done right, honestly. . .

JAMES begins to run, knocking on doors frantically, but receives no answers.

JAMES

Hey! Is anyone there? Where IS EVERYONE! GAAH!

JAMES starts to run downstairs to get himself a bottle of water, but slips on the puddle from PHILLIP, falls down the stairs and lands in a crumpled heap on the landing, having snapped his neck. The curtain closes, and Happy Little Tune (Minor Reprise) begins to play. JAMES walks back onstage in front of the curtain, and as it reopens, RON is standing with the knife in hand above thin air, along with NORRIS and KAYLA. JAMES walks over, ducks under RON, and puts his jersey back in RON'S hand. As he does, the music stops abruptly, unresolved. Blackout.