

WRAPPED

by

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WRAPPED

ACT I

SCENE 1: INSIDE WRIGHT FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Benny, a performing artist in his mid-30's, stands alone, as if in a separate room to the side of what looks to be the living room of a home. His son, Dion, age fourteen, and daughter, Shana, age eleven, are standing side-by-side center living room; their eyes are tightly shut. Jewel, Benny's attractive wife, in her early thirties, is watching from the opposite end of the room from Benny. As the music begins, he lifts his hand, intentionally watching the action as he extend his fingers to the sky, calling out first to Dion.

BENNY

What do you see son?

DION

I see my fans in one hand and a mic
in the other.

Shana cannot contain her excitement, gleefully bouncing her figure up and down.

SHANA

I see myself on a stage of dancers;
front and center.

BENNY

I see those fans and that mic. I
see that stage.

SHANA

That's all you see, pop? What Dion
and I see? That's all you see when
you close your eyes?

BENNY

Oh, Shana . . .

He takes a leap forward as if entering in front of a large audience, smiles delightfully, lifts his arm, index finger extended upward to the sky.

(SONG 1: I CLOSE MY EYES)

Benny:

CHORUS:

(WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I SEE A VIEW OF ENDLESS SKY

WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I SEE THE LIFE THAT I'LL SOON REALIZE)

I CLOSE MY EYES AND I'M A FOUNTAIN OF FAME
THE TOPIC OF TALK SHOWS, NEW TO THE GAME
I CLOSE MY EYES AND MY KIDS LIVE IN VAIN
AND COMPLAIN DURING TRIPS TO SPAIN

(Dion and Shana nod in enthusiasm for the thought.)

I CLOSE MY EYES AND I AWAKEN ON QUEUE
TO WATCH AS MY FAMILY TRAVELS BY CRUISE
AN OCEAN OF SKY AND A SKY OF MUSIC
I'M LOST IN A DAZE OF AWE AND AMUSEMENT

ALL I GOTTA DO IS JUST CLOSE MY EYES
AND EVERYTHING INSIDE OF ME COMES ALIVE
ALL I GOTTA DO IS JUST CLOSE MY EYES
HOPIN ONE DAY I'LL OPEN THEM AND SEE IT'S MY LIFE

DION
I got it, pop . . .

Dion:
I CLOSE MY EYES AND THE STAGE IS MINE
TWENTY THOUSAND PEOPLE AND LIGHTS THAT BLIND
I CLOSE MY EYES AND PEOPLE STAND ALIGNED
BEGGIN' FOR A PIECE OF MY TIME

SHANA
Daddy, daddy.

Shana:
I CLOSE MY EYES AND I WAKE UP QUICK
TO LAUGHIN' ON A FAMILY TRIP
FOOLISH SWIMMIN' IN A SWIMMING POOL
AND DAYS UPON DAYS WITH NO SCHOOL

(WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
All three:
I SEE A VIEW OF ENDLESS SKY
WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I SEE THE LIFE THAT I'LL SOON REALIZE)

Music plays softly in the background. Benny runs over to
Jewel and pulls her by the arm to join the family.

BENNY
Well, hello gorgeous. Jewel, we
were just in the process of closing
our eyes.

SHANA
And seein' endless skies.

BENNY

That's right, my love. You know
what else I see when I close my
eyes?

JEWEL

What is that, Benny?

Music loudens.

Benny:

I CLOSE MY EYES AND MY WIFE AND I DINE
LIKE A PRINCE AND A PRINCESS IN A SHRINE
I CLOSE MY EYES AND THE FIRST THING I FIND
(embracing Jewel) IS THIS BRIGHT JEWEL OF MINE

Dion:

I CLOSE MY EYES AND I'M RAPPED IN RAP SONGS
BASKED IN CLAPS IN A CROWD OF PASSION
A MASS OF FANS THAT DANCE WHILE I GRASP THEM
CHEER WHEN I ASK AND BOO WHEN I'M ABSENT

I SHUT MY EYES

AND I FANTASIZE

Shana:

AND IN A MATTER OF TIME I WILL MAKE IT ALL MINE

Benny:

MY EYES, MY EYES, MY EYES
ALL I GOTTA DO IS JUST CLOSE
MY EYES
CLOSE MY, CLOSE MY EYES

Dion and Shana: (simultaneous with Benny's last verses)

(WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I SEE A VIEW OF ENDLESS SKY
WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I SEE THE LIFE THAT I'LL SOON REALIZE)

Benny, Dion and Shana:

WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES
I SEE A VIEW OF ENDLESS SKY
WHEN I CLOSE
MY EYES
MY EYES

MY EYES

Shana, high spirited, in perpetual motion, as if an inner
rhythm is propelling her around what is a kitchen table.

JEWEL

What's in your veins, girl?

SHANA

Don't know.

JEWEL

(very slow delivery)

Well, whatever it is, slow it down.

Swiveling and spinning, while setting knives and forks.

SHANA

(even slower delivery)

No slow gear.

Walking casually toward the television.

DION

She jitters while she sleeps.

SHANA

If you were dreamin' what Im
dreamin', you'd be jittering too.
(jitters enthusiastically) Just
like that.

DION

I think you're missing the whole
idea behind sleep, Shana.

SHANA

You know sleeping is a waste of
time. (pace accelerates) Most
people are just fine without a
third of their life in recline. If
every person were to sleep a bit
less (slows to calculate) there'd
be billions of hours of energy
excess. Enough to launch a rocket
to Mars or produce a hundred
thousand cars and . . .

DION

YOU have enough energy to produce a
hundred thousand . . .

SHANA

(deflecting Dion's jibe) Cheers,
claps and roars.

Garland, a distinguished, wealthy-looking male in the same
age range as Benny enters with his characteristic exuberant
charm.

GARLAND

What's up, buddy. (a personalized greeting to each of the family)
Hello, hello. Dion, future client, VIP. Shana, the hottest thing in Junior High. Jewel, the hottest thing since Junior High. (looking at Benny) Benny, my greatest of friends.

BENNY

Garland, oh distinguished one, what brings you?

GARLAND

Benny, friend, we got to talk.

Benny and Garland walk downstage.

BENNY

It's all settled, right? I was just about to let Jewel and the kids . . .
.

GARLAND

I tried to catch you before
. . .

BENNY

(alarmed)
Before what? Something bad? Is something wrong?

GARLAND

The suits decided to hold off on your gig. But it's just a bump in the road, friend.

BENNY

Hold off? In a day? Just like that? In one day? Just like that?

GARLAND

It's a bump, Benny. Not even a jut or a bulge. And definitely not a block. It's a bump.

BENNY

One more bump . . . one more bump!

GARLAND

There'll be a thousand more opportunities just like this one.

(MORE)

GARLAND (cont'd)

Hell, my next Who's Who party is coming soon. Can't you see the long road ahead? (encouraging) Open your eyes, Benny.

Benny shakes his head in disbelief and gently closes his eyes. The last few bars of "I CLOSE MY EYES" play while he firmly closes his eyes, then he masks his face with his hands, holding them in place while his head droops down in sorrow, Garland remaining inattentive.

SHANA

(noticing Benny's grimace, coquette) Daddy . . . What's wrong daddy? Can his little girl perk him up?

He nods "No."

SHANA

Daddy must have had a blah day at work today.

Jewel, witnessing Benny's somber mood, calls out to him at a distance.

JEWEL

Baby, what's wro . . .?

Garland turns to Benny.

GARLAND

Are you still scowling?

BENNY

No, I'm celebrating. You know how many promises have been spent, how this finally after years was the deal I was banking on, my last hope.

GARLAND

You're golden. (before Benny can respond) Come on now.

Benny shakes his head in reluctant resignation, but is led toward the door by Garland. Garland calls out to Jewel.

GARLAND

Jewel, I'm borrowing your man for a while. Stay beautiful like I know you will. (to Benny) We're going to Benny's favorite pub for a drink.

As they're almost out the door.

SHANA

Remember daddy, all you gotta do is
just close your eyes.

FADE OUT.

SCENE 2: JIMBO'S BAR - SAME EVENING

Garland and Benny are standing alone at the bar. The establishment is middle class, men dressed from casual attire to sport coats.

BENNY

(reflecting as if to self)
I didn't even tell Jewel. I stopped off at the market before I came home. I couldn't find a parking spot so I pulled up on the street behind. It was dark. As I was coming up the block, I see this car racing toward me and then a rifle comes out, just as I notice a man running frantically. (pauses) They shot him right in front of me. I went over to see if I could do anything for the guy. He was bleeding all over. His eyes were open and he reached out and put his arm around my neck.

GARLAND

Benny, probably a druggie. Don't get all worked up over it.

BENNY

(ignoring Garland)
He spoke into my ear: *Sometimes we have to do the right thing even if we die . . .*

GARLAND

Don't mean a thing. All you need to be concerned about is that you gotta keep going, going, going. This business is nothing but highs and lows.

BENNY

For me, lows and lowers.

GARLAND

Well highs and highers are comin'
soon. Smile, Benny, you're right
(takes his barely parted fingers to
display a tiny distance) . . .
there.

BENNY

For the last three years you've
been my manager and for the last
three years I've been Right There!

GARLAND

Benny Wright, Most Likely To
Succeed, Class of '94. You're our
hope, buddy. I've looked up to you
since we were digging in sandboxes.

BENNY

Tell me about all the guys in our
yard we grew up with. M.D., Ph.D.,
N.F.L., N.B.A., C.I.A (points
toward Garland) C E O! But the Most
Likely To Succeed? Z-E-R-O. Hell,
I'm still selling songs for a dime.

GARLAND

Don't get glum on me.
Today don't mean a thing.
Don't get droopy-eyed and numb on
me
Today don't mean a thing
With the future for you I see,
Today don't mean a thing.

BENNY

No more, Garland. That family of
mine, I've dreamed away their
futures. (eyes on verge of tears,
emotion swelling in his chest and
cheeks, chocking it in)

GARLAND

Your future is starting over, right
now.

BENNY

Can't do that. Gotta find a way to
get something better for Jewel and
my children, and soon.

Garland rejects Benny's depressive logic. His focus of
attention drifts inward momentarily. Then he animates, as if
possessed by a brainstorm.

Music begins. Garland rises while Benny slumps back in a bar chair.

GARLAND

You know what your problem is?

BENNY

Yes I do. That's what I'm trying to explain to you.

GARLAND

Your problem is you sulk your way through the tough stuff.

Beat begins to background sound, slowly increasing in volume.

GARLAND

I've got a different strategy.

(SONG 2: GET MOVED)

CHORUS X2:

(MOVE, DO IT WITH ME
GROOVE, RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME
GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT)

GIVE ME A LINE MAN, GIVE ME A BEAT
GET HOPIN AGAIN, FEELIN SO SWEET
ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS JUST LEAN WITH ME
ROCK WITH ME, FLY WITH ME
WHAT'S IT GONNA TAKE FOR ME TO GET YOU LOUD
RISIN AGAIN WITH THAT PASSION ROUSED
BENNY BABY, DON'T DIE ON ME
JUST LOVE THE DRIVE, LOVE THE DREAM
GIVE ME A HUG, I'LL RUB OFF SOME HOPE AND SOME LOVE
(Benny shrugs him off) NO NEED TO SHRUG
WE'LL GET THAT MAGIC BACK, SO DON'T YOU CRACK
JUST LIKE THAT

BENNY BABY
YOU KNOW I LOVE TO SEE YOU GET WI-I-ILED
BENNY BABY
YOU KNOW I LOVE TO SEE YOU GET RILED UP, COME ON NOW

(Link: MOVE
Garland: DO IT WITH ME
Craig: GROOVE
Garland: RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME
GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT)

Ensemble: MOVE
Garland: DO IT WITH ME
Ensemble: GROOVE
Garland: RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME

GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT)

It's apparent that the bartender, Jimbo, and the customers all know Benny, volleying casual greetings now that the music is paused. Craig, Benny's best friend, is similar in age, and Link, Craig's singing partner, is a few years junior to both men. Craig is wearing a sport coat, apparently not having gone home before coming to Jimbo's.

LINK

Garland, Garland.

He places himself between Benny and Craig, his arms draped over their shoulders.

LINK

Did Benny tell you what us two got in the works? You'll never hear nothin' half as sexy.

Link puts his hand over his heart.

LINK

(laughter)

But I won't show you a thing without a contract.

Craig hones in on Benny's depressive mood.

CRAIG

Benny, you look like . . . death.

GARLAND

The soon-to-be great star . . .
MAGIC is down on life, boys.
Benny's planning to quit on his
music career, just like that (snaps
finger, music stops at that
instant).

Jimbo, the bartender shakes his head in disbelief.

JIMBO

Uh, uh, not in Jimbo's he isn't.

Link moves closer to Benny, pantomimes taking a stethoscope out of his pocket and holding it to Benny's heart. He lingers a brief second before jesting.

LINK

J. C. in heaven, it's not movin'.

His act over, Link stumbles back to his drink, giggling. Then, from where he sits across the room, not rising.

LINK

(to Benny) Come watch my Detroit Pistons in action, let Jimbo get you on track for the hi-i-life, and tomorrow you won't remember a thing.

CRAIG

Benny, you . . . quitting? But it all felt so right.

BENNY

Yep, it was perfectly right for Benny Wright, Biggest Fool, Class of ninety-four. I'm failing everyone. Blowing bubbles of fantasy to hide in.

LINK

Well then until you blow another one, at least honor us with one last performance.

JIMBO

Come on Benny, give us what you know we want.

They all gather around Garland; the music to SONG 2 begins again.

GARLAND

Give me a line, Benny.

ENSEMBLE

Give us a line, Benny.

JIMBO

I got one.

DAMN IT BENNY, DON'T GET DOWN ON ME
NOT WHEN I'M CLEARIN A KEG AND IT'S FREE (winks at him)
DO WHAT YOU NEED TO GET UP
AND GET OUT OF THIS RUT

(to Ensemble) COME ON, LET'S TOAST TO BEN
GLASSES UP, FOR A REAL GOOD FRIEND
THE LEGEND
MAGIC, WE LOVE YOU 'TIL THE END

JIMBO

(ranting)

Look at these classy customers I
have to tend to (points to a
drunkin idiot then continues his
dialogue to the patrons in general)
and this kid's talking about givin
up. Nobody talks about givin up in
Jimbo's.

Link moves to center stage, readying to perform.

LINK

This one's to you, Benny. (holding
his liquor glass aloft)

I SAY, ALWAYS SMILE IN THE PRESENT
I BARELY MAKE A DIME AND LIFE IS PLEASANT
I'M HAPPY AS CAN BE
EIGHT HOUR SHIFTS DON'T BUG ME
GIVE UP ON A DREAM, NEVER
LOOK AT ME, I STILL DREAM MY HEAD OFF

LINK

Hey Jimbo, pass me another Bruski
right about now.

(Ensemble: MOVE
Link: DO IT WITH ME
Ensemble: GROOVE
Craig: RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME
Ensemble: GET MOVED
Jimbo: SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT

Ensemble: (simultaneous with Link)
MOVE MOVE MOVE
GROOVE GROOVE GROOVE
GET MOVED SMILE WITH ME
TONIGHT

Garland:
MOVE WITH ME TONIGHT
UNTIL THAT MAGIC REIGNITES
UNTIL THAT PASSION'S BACK ON TRACK
AND THAT ENTHUSIASM'S CRASHIN' OUT OF YA

Ensemble: (simultaneous with Garland)
MOVE MOVE MOVE
GROOVE GROOVE GROOVE
GET MOVED
SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT

Garland:
MOVE WITH ME DELIGHTFULLY

GROOVE RIGHT THROUGH ALL THIS LIGHTLY
GET THAT PASSION BACK
SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT

Ensemble: (simultaneous with Garland)
MOVE MOVE MOVE
GROOVE GROOVE GROOVE
GET MOVED
SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT)

The stage darkens momentarily. As the stage re-lights, Benny is seated alone at the bar.

JIMBO
Last round, team. Jimbo's going home.

The music stops and Jimbo begins cleaning, then glances toward Benny.

JIMBO
Benny, it'll be okay. We've heard, we've loved, and you'll conquer.

BENNY
(shaking his head)
I had so many opportunities I passed up for this pipe dream. What am I doing to my family?

In the following lines, each time Jimbo says, "Right, boys?" the customers in unison take a gulp of their drink, nod their heads in agreement, and respond, "Right, Jimbo."

JIMBO
Your family? You're doing everything right. Right, boys?

ENSEMBLE
Right, Jimbo.

JIMBO
(knowingly)
You're fighting for something sacrid. Every other man I know seems to be fighting for something worse. So as far as I'm concerned, what you're doing is worth dying over.

BENNY
(shocked by the comment)
Did you have to say it that way?

JIMBO

All I'm saying is that few men of honor are left, and I wish I could include your good friend, Jimbo. (pause) Why? Well, let me tell you my story. One time, a time ago, I had a wife, and kids too. And on top of that a damn good job to support 'em . . . right, boys?

ENSEMBLE

Right, Jimbo.

JIMBO

But for every night you've spent with a headphone on either side of you, I spent one with a pretty young thing on either side of me . . . right, boys?

ENSEMBLE

Right, Jimbo.

JIMBO

Well, eventually my wife caught me, dropped me, kicked me out, and left me in the street where I belonged, right, boys?

ENSEMBLE

Right, Jimbo.

JIMBO

By that point, with my fightin' so hard to ruin everything, me a thing of the past was the best thing for everyone. They were all better off. WAY better off! My whole family . . . right, boys?

ENSEMBLE

Right, Jimbo.

JIMBO

What you're doing is noble, Benny, worth fighting for even if you died doing it. I had it all wrong, right boys?

ENSEMBLE

Right, Jimbo.

Benny stands and squeezes his eyes shut, uttering to himself.

BENNY

Even if I die doing what's right;
what's what the dying man said.

After pausing on the awareness, he seems to shake it off,
suddenly opening his eyes wide, as if in revelation.

BENNY

(to himself) A noble cause; the
best thing for everyone. (long
pause, to Jimbo) I think you may
have stumbled onto something.

He gazes off for several seconds, as music begins in the
background.

BENNY

Hold on, wait a second . . . you
got it right and I got a plan.

He begins singing, dreamily at first, as if fondling a sweet
vision.

(SONG 3: GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D)

THIS LITTLE PLAN, OH IT FEELS SO RIGHT
PERFECTLY PACKED AND WRAPPED UP TIGHT

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL THING
AND IT CALLED ME SO QUICK WITH A BEAUTIFUL RING
OH JEWEL YOU DON'T KNOW HOW I FEEL
I CAN GET YOU CARESSED BUT I CAN'T GET YOU A MEAL
NOW I GOT THAT FANTASY LIFE
ALL PACKED UP AND IT'S COMIN' TONIGHT

A LITTLE BIT OF LUXURY IS ALRIGHT
A TINY BIT OF DIAMONDS
A LITTLE LESS PLIGHT
A LITTLE BIT OF PILES OF GOLD
A LITTLE BENTLEY AND A SUV
A LITTLE TRIP FROM THE COLD
A LITTLE BIT'S NICE
A LITTLE BIT'S NICE
WHEN IT'S A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING YOU WANTED IN LIFE
A LITTLE BIT OF A MANSION
A LITTLE BIT OF VAN GOGH
A LITTLE BIT OF A LANDING
IN A PLACE CALLED CABO

CHORUS:

(IT'S GUARENT E E D TO SUCC E E D
JUST BELIEVE IN ME, COME ON BELIEVE IN ME
IT'S GUARENT E E D TO SUCC E E D

IF THINGS WORKS JUST THE WAY I SEE I KNOW

IT'S GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D
JUST BELIEVE IN ME COME ON BELIEVE IN ME
IT'S GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D
IF THINGS WORK JUST THE WAY I SEE)

JUST LIKE THE DAYS PASS QUICK AND BECOME THE PAST
AND THE SPRING TIME BLOOMS THE SUMMER TIME GRASS
LADIES WANT LOVE, NO QUESTIONS ASKED
AND ALWAYS IT DRAWS A FIGHT WHEN THE DREAM GETS CRASHED
IT'S LIKE THAT, THIS IS GUARANTEED
NO NEED TO HAVE A DOUBT, YOU JUST NEED TO BELIEVE

JUST LIKE A DUDE LIKE YOU GET BOOZED
AND A GUY LIKE ME GETS ROCKED AND REFUSED
A LUCKY MAN, HE'LL GET THE WORLD ON A SPOON
WITH A CHERRY ON TOP 'TIL HE AGES ON PRUNES

IT'S LIKE THAT, THIS IS GUARANTEED
NO NEED TO HAVE A DOUBT, YOU JUST NEED TO BELIEVE
THIS IS GUARANTEED
WITHOUT A DOUBT, IT'S BOUND TO SUCCEED

IT'S A MATTER OF FACT I GOT THIS PLAN LOCKED UP
A SMILE ON MY FACE, AND I'M 'BOUT TO ERUPT
IT COULDN'T BE MORE GUARANTEED
SO LONG AS EVERYTHING WORKS OUT PERFECTLY

CHORUS:

(IT'S GUARENT E E D TO SUCC E E D
JUST BELIEVE IN ME, COME ON BELIEVE IN ME
IT'S GUARENT E E D TO SUCC E E D
IF THINGS WORKS JUST THE WAY I SEE I KNOW

IT'S GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D
JUST BELIEVE IN ME COME ON BELIEVE IN ME
IT'S GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D
IF THINGS WORK JUST THE WAY I SEE)

As the song ends, Benny appears a transformed man, at peace, proud, joyous. Jimbo delights in his perception of a job well done.

Music tracks softly. Link calls out from across the bar.

LINK

You got it!

BENNY

I'll get them everything I
promised.

Music ends.

LINK

You'll do it!

BENNY

(smiling confidently)

It's guaranteed.

Hard stop to the music.

DARK:

SCENE 3: INSIDE WRIGHT FAMILY HOME - SAME EVENING

The fumbling, bumbling drunk careens off the side of the door jam, making his way into the living room. The lights are dim, but visible is Jewel, rising from the couch. Restraining obvious anger, she grits her teeth and points at the wall clock reading 2:30. She points again. Benny grins, slumping in a chair.

JEWEL

Where have you been; it's 2:30 am?
 You walk in with a grin at 2:30 am.
 For three days straight you're
 inebriated And every
 night you walk in elated For
 three days straight (pause,
 slower delivery) I've been up
 with a nervous twitch With you
 I've never heard of this For
 three days straight!

Benny attempts to take Jewel by the arm, gyrating rhythmically to a silent sound. Then he grabs an umbrella from the corner of the room and opens it, putting himself and Jewel under it, and coaxing her to dance, stumbling over himself. She pulls away.

JEWEL

What are you doing? You can't even
 stand on your feet.

BENNY

Come on, you're no fun. I've been
 celebrating.

He walks back to her and again attempts to shield them with the umbrella.

JEWEL

Celebrating what?

BENNY

It's over. I worked it out. See,
your guy has a plan! No, I mean
your MAN has a plan!

JEWEL

Well my man better leave me out of
the plan.

BENNY

(laughing)

Oh, no, no. You are the plan, you
and the kids. And don't you ever
forget it.

He walks into the kitchen and opens the refrigerator, taking
out a can of beer, still absurdly under the umbrella. Jewel
runs over to grab the can out of his hand.

JEWEL

Are you some sort of fool?

BENNY

No, I've become some sort of . . .
not fool.

He steadies himself with his arms on her shoulders. He smiles
adoringly.

JEWEL

(calming) Look at me. Stop. I keep
asking. Now tell me what's got you
by the horns, Benny, my love.

BENNY

Nothing at all. I'm just a changed
man.

JEWEL

That I can tell.
(half threatening and half
pleading)
But Benny, don't let this keep
happening.

Benny grins, falling proudly in a chair.

BENNY

(giggly)
Yes, dear.

Jewel snatches the umbrella from Benny's hands and points it
at him as she lets out a repressed force of rage, now
convinced herself Benny is deliberate in his motive.

JEWEL

You're doing this on purpose,
aren't you? Damn you! Damn you for
whatever it is you're doing.

BENNY

Just learn to let things flow,
darling.

His use of the word, the way he says it so matter-of-fact,
provokes her into further rage.

JEWEL

Oh, you've become a master at
flowing on your ocean of liquor.

Benny speaks with a hypnotic rhythm.

BENNY

Oh, but just wait 'til I get to
where I'm flowing. Just wait 'til I
flow away. You got to know when to
let me flow . . . when it's the
only way.

Laughing to himself, he stands and begins snapping his
fingers as he speaks.

BENNY

Hey, hey, you gotta learn to let me
flow when it's the only way . . .
to go.

The bitter meaning of his words freezes her. She looks as if
she was impaled by a machete. Her heart stops, her eyes drip
tears.

JEWEL

You mean give up on you?

Music begins.

JEWEL

Do you think for a minute I'm
giving up?

She puts herself in his face, grabbing him by the cheeks to
pull him to attention.

JEWEL

Do you think I'm going away?
(adamantly, tearfully)
I love you, Benny You're
not driving me away; no way.

With an effortless push, Jewel tosses Benny backward into a waiting seat. As she delivers the following lyrics she gaits around him, accenting her words with movements of the umbrella still in her hands.

(SONG 4: STAYING RIGHT HERE WITH YOU)

Jewel:

LOVIN AIN'T AN EASY THING
MOST PEOPLE CAN'T DO IT RIGHT
BUT I LONG FOR YOU LIKE A FAIRY TALE
SO WE BETTER GIVE IT ONE GOOD TRY

YOU RUN FROM ME AND PUNISH ME
AND I COULDN'T EVEN TELL YOU WHY
SO COME BACK TO ME, BACK IN PEACE
AND LIVE WITH A PAINTED SMILE

I REMEMBER DAYS
WE'D PRAY TO LAY AWAY IN BED
BUT LATELY ALL YOU PRAY TO DO
IS LIQUOR UP INSTEAD

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAGIC IN YOUR NAME
THE PASSION YOU HAD FOR FAME
THE FIRE IN YOUR LUNGS THAT WOULD SHOOT OUT WARMTH
WHEN THE WINTER CAME

CHORUS:

(YOU MAKE ME FIGHT WHEN I JUST WANNA TOUCH
YOU MAKE ME CRY WHEN I JUST WANNA CUDDLE
YOU MAKE THESE STANDS
WHEN I JUST WANNA LAY ON DOWN WITH YOU)

I COULD NEVER TELL YOU
THAT I KNOW ABOUT THE PAIN YOU FEEL INSIDE
BUT OPEN UP A LITTLE AND I SWEAR TO YOU THIS
I'LL BATTLE IT DOWN IN SIZE

SURROUND ME WITH THE HURT YOU FEEL
LET ME FEEL IT TOO
BUT DON'T GO STABBIN AWAY
AND GIVIN ME MY OWN DAMN OPEN WOUNDS

IT'S TOO DAMN LATE TO DRIVE ME AWAY
TOO DAMN STUPID TO DRINK THROUGH PAIN
TOO DAMN SELFISH TO GIVE UP A DREAM I LOVE
BUT I'M HERE, I JUST WISH YOU WOULDN'T

Ensemble: MAKE ME FIGHT

Jewel:

(YOU MAKE ME FIGHT WHEN I JUST WANNA TOUCH
YOU MAKE ME CRY WHEN I JUST WANNA CUDDLE

YOU MAKE THESE STANDS
WHEN I JUST WANNA LAY ON DOWN WITH YOU

YOU MAKE ME FIGHT WHEN I JUST WANNA TOUCH
YOU MAKE ME CRY WHEN I JUST WANNA CUDDLE
YOU MAKE THESE STANDS
WHEN I JUST WANNA LAY ON DOWN WITH YOU)

'CAUSE I JUST WANNA LAY ON DOWN WITH YOU
I JUST WANNA LAY ON DOWN WITH YOU

BUT YOU MAKE ME FIGHT!

Benny stands, now seeming defiant, the two staring at one another, pausing for a long punctuation to the song ending.

BENNY
You don't understand.

JEWEL
Why should I?

DARK:

SCENE 4: JIMBO'S BAR - AFTERNOON

Garland at the bar, looking at papers. Phone RINGS. He picks it up.

GARLAND
Garland here. (pause) Hey, just the man I need to talk with. (pause) I know he's top of the line, and now he's all mine. Yeah. (pause) Oh, Magic'll survive; business is business. Out with the old, in with the new; no shame, it's the name of the game. (ha, ha) And I can still throw Magic a bone now and again 'cause he's my brother from a different mother.

Garland's secretary, Georgia enters. She's a tall, slender women with flaming, long red hair, a proper southern accent and a quirky personality. All of her expressions and actions are exaggerations. She waddles rather than walks, always at a brisk pace.

GARLAND
(into the phone) Hold on a minute.

GEORGIA

Link and Craig were waiting for like two hours at the office; honey they were ready to camp out in the lobby.

GARLAND

Every time they see me . . . oh, just tell them I got held up; we'll get back to them.

GEORGIA

Well, you see . . . there is a slight problem. I made my first little mistake. They asked where you were and I told them you were meeting Benny and . . .

GARLAND

You told them I was here?

GEORGIA

No, I mean, not exactly. They just figured it out and then said they were coming right over so I rushed out ahead of them to warn you . . . (pointing to the phone) you didn't answer when I tried to reach you.

GARLAND

Okay, just hold on. (into the phone) Looks like I've got a couple of other 'Magics' I need to dispose of . . . a little spring cleaning, friend. These long shots'll break your back. (rhythmically, smiling) I'll call you when I got somethin' hot, 'cause I know you can't be caught on a long shot soon to be forgot. (laughs boisterously) Okay, bye bye.

Georgia, impatient, now widens her arms to accentuate the point.

GEORGIA

Well?

GARLAND

(resentfully)
Hell, let's get it over with; when they get here I'll see them for a minute and get rid of them.

A few seconds later the door offers entry to the men. Georgia, positioned to greet them first, rotates her body just in time to intercept a high-five from Link that's intended for Garland, her gesture, shocking for a woman, catching Link off guard as he slaps back halfheartedly. Garland then welcomes them like best buddies and we see ceremonial shakes, hugs and smiles.

GARLAND

Looking up, looking good.

Georgia watches the scene unfold from off to the side.

CRAIG

What's up, what's up! Show us the dotted line . . . we're ready to sign.

GARLAND

You all are right . . . (snaps his finger) there.

LINK

You've been behind us all the way. And this time, we're gonna' blow you away (holding out a CD).

GARLAND

Can't wait. But . . . what a day. Things are locked tight, so if you just leave that with me, I'll listen up tonight.

LINK

You got to hear this. I mean we've been waiting hours.

GARLAND

I wish to god I could, but . . .

CRAIG

It's got it all. Our heart, our soul, our story, our ups and downs.

LINK

All wrapped up in one track.

CRAIG

It's our anthology, it's money-making-music.

GARLAND

(reticent)

Sure, but . . .

LINK
Now you're gonna kick us out too.

CRAIG
And knock us down.

Music begins.

LINK
Give us a chance, Garland.

CRAIG
We can't take another knock out
blow.

The two quickly recompose, then smile proudly at each other. Link points at Garland so as to say, "Here comes the goods." Garland stands disinterested. The music is LOUD and both start rapping.

(SONG 5: T.K.O.)

Craig:
I CAN'T GO ON TAKIN KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE MY SOUL

As they begin performing, Georgia nods approvingly at the performance. She then places a paper in front of Garland, but before he can look at it he picks up the phone.

CRAIG
Garland!

The agent continues to be engaged in everything but paying attention to the music. He lingers on the phone, not even looking at them. He turns to Jimbo, inaudibly saying a few words. He goes back to the phone conversation. Finally he hangs up, scans the papers Georgia brought with her, and signs.

Craig:
I CAN'T GO ON TAKIN KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE MY SOUL

Link:
NO I CAN'T GO ON TAKIN KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE MY SOUL

GARLAND
I've been behind you all the way,
but . . .

CRAIG
Not another 'but.'

LINK

It doesn't take but one more 'but'
to kill our dreams.

Craig:

I REMEMBER THE DAY

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY LOOKIN' TO PLAY
WITH A MICROPHONE, I WAS ALL ALONE
MY FRINEDS COULDN'T GET IN MY WAY

Link:

I WANTED TO SING OUT IN SONGS
I WANTED TO BRING OUT THE THRONGS
SO I TRAINED MYSELF STRONG

Craig:

I GREW AND MY MUSIC DID TOO
TO A LEVEL THAT IT NEVER KNEW
TO THE POINT THAT I COULDN'T JUST STOP
'TIL I OPENED THE WORLD TO MY TUNES

Link:

SO I INTRODUCED
THE THINGS I DID TO THE ONE'S I KNEW
LET 'EM HEAR IT THROUGH
AND TELL ME WHAT THEY WANTED TO

Craig:

WELL, THEY SAID THAT I'M BETTER THAN GREAT
AND THEY TOLD ME NOT TO HESITATE

Link:

SO I DID JUST THAT
AND TWENTY YEARS QUICKLY PASSED
ALWAYS CLOSE, THEN SLASH

Both:

CHORUS X2
(NO I CAN'T GO ON TAKIN' KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE MY SOUL
I CAN'T TAKE ANOTHER T.K.O.)

Craig:

WELL I CAN'T GO
ON TAKIN' KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH
INSIDE MY SOUL

Link:

SO THEY ALWAYS SAID
WORK ENOUGH AND GET THE BREAD
WELL I WORKED TEN TO TEN

FOR TWENTY YEARS TO PAY MY RENT

HOW DOES THAT SEEM
LIKE AN AMERICAN DREAM

IT MAKES ME SCREAM,
BUT I GET BACK ON IN
BECAUSE THOSE BIG WIGS SHAKE ON MY HAND WITH A GRIN

Craig:
WELL I'M THE GUY
WHO PUTS HIS LIFE OUT ON THE LINE
TAKES THE HITS TO THE SPINE
AND TASTES THE GRIME

GARLAND
Guys . . .

CRAIG AND LINK
Yeah!?

GARLAND
(matter-a-fact)
I'll get back to you. Later fellas.

Both:
(BUT WE CAN'T GO ON TAKIN' KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE OUR SOULS
WE CAN'T TAKE ANOTHER T.K.O.)

WE CAN'T GO ON TAKIN KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE OUR SOULS

NO WE CAN'T TAKE A T.K.O.

They turn to leave, confident they have made a statement.

CRAIG
See what you can do with that.

LINK
Yeah, we'll be waiting.

The two leave. Garland responds to his cell call again, but is interrupted by Georgia.

GARLAND
(into the phone) Hold on. (to
Georgia) Well.

GEORGIA
Well, what?

GARLAND

Well, Jewel told me you're a stick of dynamite . . . and you want to learn the biz, right?

GEORGIA

You bet. I dream of it every night.

GARLAND

(gets very close to her) So now, be a doll, go back to the office and then in an hour or so call Craig and Link and tell them it's a no-go.

GEORGIA

A no-go? Just like that? But didn't you hear them?

(attempts to mimic Craig and Link's style, but in her thick accent, shes' unintentionally humorous)

THEY CAN'T
GO ON TAKIN' KNOCK OUT BLOWS
IT HURTS TOO MUCH INSIDE THEIR SOULS
THEY CAN'T TAKE ANOTHER T.
K.
O.

GARLAND

Welcome to the industry.

GEORGIA

Hot damn! (pause) But . . .

GARLAND

No room for tender hearts here. They'll be back knocking on the door again and again. They'll beg me to come to one of my parties. They'll re-invent themselves, together, separately . . . these people never know when to hang it up . . . and who am I to say miracles never come true?

Georgia leaves with her head bobbing, too dazed to speak. Garland resumes the waiting phone call.

GARLAND

(robust, delighted)
Garland here. Yeah, just got through with a meeting, but listen. Now be patient.

(MORE)

GARLAND (cont'd)

I'm behind you all the way. Wait
for that break. (pause) Whoops, I
got another call . . . I gotta go.

Garland stands up and looks into the mirror behind the bar, stares at himself with obvious self-contentment, straightens his tie, turns around and with a large puff of the chest proudly and joyously walks toward the exit.

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 5: JIMBO'S BAR - EVENING, SAME DAY

Benny, sporting a peaceful grin, is giving a helping hand to Jimbo, putting some bottles on the shelf. The place is empty except for the two of them. They chat while dealing with the cases of liquor.

JIMBO

Um, um. It was awful, Benny. They
sang their hearts out, right here
at Jimbo's, and after they finished
I heard Garland tell that secretary
of his . . . um, um, he could have
cared less what they did, they
never had a chance.

Craig enters, somber but seeming to have absorbed the worst of the rejection. He takes a seat on a stool.

CRAIG

Jimbo, drink.

JIMBO

You got it. You doing okay?

CRAIG

Feel like my lights got shut off.

BENNY

Sorry, Craig, I just heard.

CRAIG

Already?

JIMBO

A big birdie told him.

Link strides in, seeming in fine spirits, talking before he even takes a seat.

LINK

Hey Benny, I wrote a new song . .
. and this one's got gold and
platinum oozing out of it.

CRAIG

(mocking)

Yeah, ya know, Link, I think I just
heard it on the radio on my way
over. (half-hearted laughter)

LINK

(ignoring Craig) I wrote this one
for you, Benny . . .

BENNY

Sorry Link, that song's not gonna
have my voice on it.

LINK

Well not until I write the lyrics.
Of course Benny, I know.

CRAIG

(sarcastically)

Sounds like it's gonna be a smash.

LINK

With Benny it will. He's a true
artist. He touches people where
they're feeling the deepest, where
they're struggling the most.

Transcending his typical boyish, fun-loving manner, Link energizes, his enthusiasm frothing like a rousing spirit at a labor rally.

LINK

This piece is about busting through
monotony. The average man toils
every rotten day, in and out, at
some repetitious job that's
destining him for nothing other
than his grave. Sure he's the salt
of the earth, but he'll likely die
doing what's right.

We hear collective voices concurring with Link.

LINK

I'm going to inspire the working man of America, give him a sound that belongs to him and that he can use to fight back.

Link picks up two bottles and creates a rhythm by tapping them on the bar.

(INSTRUMENTAL)

CRAIG

Link, political activist; never would have guessed it.

Link begins to rouse the others into picking up various items and building on his beat, the sound representing that of factory workers in an assembly line.

LINK

Don't you feel that Craig?

Heads down and hands moving as if automatons, all pass materials to one another using repetitive movement coordinated with a background sound. As the pace quickens and the sound elevates, hand movements take on the form of a choreographed routine. Benny's standing dead center, immobile. His face is expressionless. It's Link, leading the charge with the rest of the patrons, including Craig, doing their part.

LINK

Now tell me Benny, how's that for lifting up your spirit?

BENNY

My spirit doesn't need any lifting. I'm feeling great again boys.

Craig and Link slowing and simultaneously turn to Benny in confusion.

CRAIG AND LINK

Great?

BENNY

Grand.

CRAIG AND LINK

Grand?

BENNY

Stupendous.

CRAIG

But how?

BENNY

Acceptance, boys. I'm thirty-five. To a music executive, I may as well be Benny . . . Goodman. I'm finished . . . I'm done. It happens a ton.

CRAIG

I call it "hell no there's something you're not telling me."

LINK

And I call bull shit.

Link and Craig stare at Benny for a moment, silent.

BENNY

All right, all right. A few days ago I was down, all right, real low, okay? But then it hit me. All my dreams, they haven't been for me. I've been dreaming (takes out his wallet, flips it open) for them. And I can still make my dreams come true.

CRAIG

I'm listening, I'm listening.

BENNY

It's not even gonna be hard. Jewel's a hell of a catch, right?

CRAIG AND LINK

(gazing up) Oh lord you know she is. (carried away with zeal) She's got that . . .

BENNY

Right. She just hasn't been caught by the right guy. And I know thousands of men with diamond hooks are out there dying to pull her in. I've just gotta step out of the way and let 'em.

CRAIG

So you're gonna leave her?

BENNY

Oh, no sir. She's gonna leave me.

CRAIG

(mind jumping quickly from thought to thought, head and eyes jolting with each new phrase) How?

LINK

(before Benny can answer) I don't even care. That's ridiculous. That's nuts. That's stupid.

CRAIG

(matter-of-fact) She loves you too much.

BENNY

You'll see. I'll drive her away and she'll do better than me in no time.

CRAIG

Benny, you're my friend, my best friend, so it's hard for me to tell you this . . . but I think you're going insane.

BENNY

I gotta do this, I got to make up to them. (hesitates) I might as well tell you this part of it. It all seemed to come together for me the other day. See, I witnessed this shooting; a man died in my arms. Just before he did, he whispered to me that 'sometimes we have to do the right thing even if we die . . . ' He never finished the sentence. Then I listened to Jimbo, about his family. I heard the same message about doing the right thing.

CRAIG

What is all that supposed to mean?

LINK

It's all words Benny.

BENNY

You said it too, Link, about the working man doing right . . .

(MORE)

BENNY (cont'd)
but ending up in the grave just the same.

LINK
I'm talking about something different.

BENNY
Same thing . . . message clear.
It's up to me to man up to what I've done, make a real sacrifice.
If I die, that's the risk I have to take, to do what's right . . . look at all I've put them through for MY dreams.

CRAIG
(calming himself down) Your heart's in the right place, buddy. (pause) Your mind's nowhere near the right place.

BENNY
I have to try; I have to. And you have to trust me. I mean, look at me. (exaggerated grin) I couldn't be happier already.

DARK:

SCENE 6: INSIDE WRIGHT FAMILY HOME - MORNING

In a corner of the living room Dion is sitting at a desk, wearing headphones. Several pieces of musical equipment are out. While he's generally a reserved, moody teen, inclined toward introversion, his life spirit elevates around music. He stops to adjust levers and his body starts gyrating. He stands, moving and mouthing lyrics; all MUTED. After a few moments he pulls off the headphones and yells across the room to Benny, who is readying to leave.

DION
Dad, you gotta hear this.

BENNY
I've gotta go, son.

DION
It'll only take a minute.

Benny is intolerant, impatient and harsh.

BENNY
Sorry, busy day.

DION
It's Saturday.

BENNY
I know it is, but I've got a meeting.

DION
It's been like this for weeks.

BENNY
Too busy, that's all.

DION
Please, just listen to this one.
I've been working on it for days
and it's the song I'm doing next
week for a concert at school.

BENNY
(as if making a grand
concession)
Okay, just for a minute.

DION
Fine.

The music starts with Dion performing. Part way through Shana comes out, providing a dance routine choreographed to the beat. Benny, reluctantly and impatiently, tolerates the show. He starts to inch toward the door.

(SONG 6: MY FANTASY LIFE)

CHORUS:

(IT'S TIME TO CLIMB AND BE
AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD I'M DYIN' TO SEE
MY FANS IN MY HAND WITH A MIC
SO I CAN GET LIVIN' MY FANTASY LIFE)

I GOT A WHOLE LOTTA LIVIN' TO GO
AND I AIN'T PLANNIN' ON LIVIN' LIKE AN AVERAGE JOE
I KNOW I GOT THE TOOLS
TO GET TO TOP OF THE TIMES AND MAKE THE RULES

WELL I WANT WHAT I WANT
AND I GOT WHAT I NEED TO REACH IT
I KNOW JUST WHAT TO FLAUNT
SO I LEAVE YA'LL SITTING SPEECHLESS

IT'S A SIMPLE PHENOMENON

AIN'T NOBODY LIKE ME, I'M FAR BEYOND
SOON I'LL BE COMMANDANT
WITH THE WORLD IN THE GRIP OF MY PALM

CHORUS X2:

(IT'S TIME TO CLIMB AND BE
AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD I'M DYIN' TO SEE
MY FANS IN MY HAND WITH A MIC
SO I CAN GET LIVIN' MY FANTASY LIFE)

MY POP USED TO ALWAYS SAY
THAT IF YOU GET GOOD, YOU'RE BOUND TO MAKE WAY
WELL I GOT SOME SWEET TRICKS AND A SOFT TONE
A MILLION LINES AND A STYLE OF MY OWN

I'M ON THE WAY UP
TO MY FANTASY LIFE
AND I'M BOUND TO ERUPT
JUST THE WAY I'D LIKE

CHORUS X2:

(IT'S TIME TO CLIMB AND BE
AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD I'M DYIN' TO SEE
MY FANS IN MY HAND WITH A MIC
SO I CAN GET LIVIN' MY FANTASY LIFE)

BENNY

(indifferently)

Great, great. I got to go.

DION

Wait! 'Gotta go' is all I hear from
you anymore. I tell you 'bout a
track I wrote, and you say . . .

DION, SHANA, AND JEWEL

Gotta go

SHANA

I show you my new jazz tap steps
(Shana executes a couple quick
steps), you say . . .

DION, SHANA, AND JEWEL

Gotta go

JEWEL

I say I miss a man that can make me
smile, you say . . .

DION, SHANA, AND JEWEL

Gotta go

Dion is first to confront Benny in song.

(SONG 7: YOU SAY GOTTA GO)

WHY DO WE KEEP FIGHTIN' FOR YOUR TIME, POP
WHY DO WE KEEP BATTLIN' FOR A TINY LITTLE DROP

YOU USED TO LOVE TO WATCH AND LISTEN AS WE SANG
SO WHY DO YOU SIT QUIET NOW AND LET YOUR SMILE HANG

WHY DO WE KEEP FIGHTIN' AS THE DAYS WEAR
WHY DO WE KEEP BATTLIN' FOR A RAY OF CARE

Shana: YOU USED TO WANNA SEE ME DANCE ATOP MY TOES
SO WHY DO YOU KEEP ACTIN' LIKE YOU'VE FOUND A BETTER SHOW

Both: NO MATTER WHAT WE TELL YOU
Ensemble: YOU SAY YOU GOTTA GO
Shana: WHEN I DON'T FEEL SO WELL
Ensemble: YOU SAY GOTTA GO
Dion: THE ONLY THING WE HEAR IS FAREWELL GOTTA GO
Both: SO POP WE'LL BOTH REBEL TIL
Ensemble: YOU DON'T GOTTA GO

Dion: YOU USED TO SWING IN SMILING BOTH HANDS FULL WITH GIFTS
SO WHY DO YOU POP IN AND DROP OUT UNBELIEVABLY SWIFT

Shana: YOU'D ALWAYS JOKE AROUND WITH ME 'TIL YOU GOT A LAUGH
NOW WHEN I LOOK AT YOU IT'S ALWAYS YOUR BACK HALF

Both: NO MATTER WHAT WE SHOW YOU
Ensemble: YOU SAY GOTTA GO
Dion: WE BEG FROM RIGHT BELOW YOU
Ensemble: YOU SAY GOTTA GO
Shana: BEEN SINCE A MONTH AGO YOU ALWAYS GOTTA GO
Both: SO WHERE IN ALL THE WORLD POP DO YOU GOTTA GO

Songs end, Benny opens the door, ready to step out. Jewel
sidles up to him, whispering out of earshot of the children.

JEWEL

We're right here, waiting.

He stands mute, still impatient to leave. She stares directly
at him.

JEWEL

(kind, but subtly
threatening)

Benny, I know it can't be, but I've
got to ask. There isn't another
woman, is there?

His head cocks, as if tweaked by a thought.

BENNY

A what?

JEWEL

(confused) Another woman.

Benny pauses, debating his response before speaking. After a moment, his cell phone goes off. He looks at the screen and answers.

BENNY

Hey, Garland.

JEWEL

(challenging)

That was a question, Benny.

BENNY

Just give me a minute.

Benny talks into the phone.

BENNY

Hey, Garland. (pause) Wednesday night? (pause) I know you love me but I told you I'm out. (pause) Great opportunity to be exposed, huh? (pause) Everyone's gonna be there? (long pause) Alright, put me on the list.

Benny hangs up and smiles. Jewel is standing strong and impatient, tapping her foot. She says nothing, but stares at Benny with an inquisitive glare.

BENNY

(casual) Sorry, Jewel. No. Okay? I'm late; I've (mimicking) 'gotta go.'

Jewel stares blankly, not sure what to believe. Benny struggles to hold back a smile.

DARK:

SCENE 7: JIMBO'S BAR - SAME DAY

The same cast of characters fills the bar, as drunk as the first time we met them. Link raises a glass.

LINK

To the best place in the city to spend a day.

He takes a sip.

CRAIG

I hear it's 70 degrees out today,
and sunny.

LINK

Well it's 70 degrees out today,
right in here. And I won't get
burnt.

JIMBO

And that's why I love you all. Who
could ask for a better customer
than a drunk? There's not a more
loyal breed in the wor . . .

Jimbo is caught mid-sentence as a beautiful woman in her mid-twenties walks in, Cookie. She exudes sexiness; long dark hair, blockbuster figure and provocative dress. Her gait is long and seductive. All the men are awestruck at the sight of her, and follow her every, dramatic movement.

COOKIE

Hi, fellows.

JIMBO

Can I help you, dear?

COOKIE

Yes, I'm meeting a man named Benny.

LINK

I'm Benny.

CRAIG

No I'm Benny.

COOKIE

(giggling) Nice try boys. But I
know Benny.

Benny enters.

BENNY

Cookie, good to see you . . . and
welcome to my home away from home.
Allow me to introduce you to
Jimbo's regulars.

COOKIE

(winking to the men) The pleasure
is all mine.

Benny walks over to the bar offering Cookie a chair, but Cookie remains standing.

CRAIG

(discomfort, confusion)

Benny, I'm . . . gonna be goin'. 70 degrees and sunny's sounding too good to pass up.

Craig exits.

COOKIE

I thought you forgot about me.

BENNY

No one could.

COOKIE

You'd be surprised how easily I've been forgotten. Cookie, nothing but a pretty surface and . . . (displaying her figure) they all assume there's nothing deeper.

BENNY

Today I need the surface . . . but someday I may want what's underneath.

COOKIE

Then you'll be the first to cash in the coupon.

BENNY

And I'll keep it (patting his wallet) where I can get to it quickly.

COOKIE

Okay, but what does that mean today, Benny? You need a back-up singer?

BENNY

No, not back-up singing this time.

COOKIE

(half-joking)

Then, Benny, you may for the first time be singing my tune.

BENNY
(giggling)
I want to take you to a party this
Wednesday night, that's all.

COOKIE
A date? You want to take me out?

BENNY
If you'd allow me to.

COOKIE
(slightly teary) Benny I've always
wondered about you.

BENNY
Have you?

COOKIE
Well you've never made a pass,
never thrown a line, never given a
wink. (composing herself) You know,
some say that's a crime.

BENNY
Well I'm no criminal. Listen, there
are tons of music industry people
coming too. So it certainly won't
hurt your career.

COOKIE
Sounds irresistible.

BENNY
So you're in?

COOKIE
You bet I'm in.

Link approaches and puts his arm around Cookie.

LINK
And if you can't go Benny, I'm in
too.

Benny smiles to Link. Cookie stands up, gives all a wave, and
walks out.

COOKIE
(without looking back) Bye boys.

ALL BUT BENNY
(like children) Bye, bye.

COOKIE

And Benny, I'll think of something
. . . unusual to wear.

BENNY

I'll bet you will.

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 8: GARLAND'S HOME - EVENING

Garland's home is full with guests, an equal number of men to women. All are scattered about with cocktails, some sitting on couches and some standing. The doorbell rings, and Garland moves to answer it. In walk Benny and Cookie. Benny is stylishly dressed; Cookie is barely dressed. She's up for the occasion, straightening Benny's tie, acting as if they're about to be guests at The White House.

GARLAND

Put you on the list, huh? You must
have forgotten to mention your
little 'plus one.'

BENNY

Oh, you never met Cookie.

GARLAND

It's my loss, I'm sure.

BENNY

She sings back up for me from time
to time. (to Cookie) Cookie, this
is my good friend and manager,
Garland.

He inspects Cookie like a nuclear missile, the rest of the
guests from a distance catching the heat as well.

COOKIE

It's a pleasure to meet any good
friend of Benny's.

GARLAND

Likewise, to a (pauses, looks at
Benny curiously) 'good friend' of
Benny. (immediately distracted)
Well y'all have fun. I'm gonna go
stir up some trouble of my own.
(big chuckle)

He turns and shakes hands with another guest.

COOKIE
Ready to impress?

BENNY
I'm ready.

COOKIE
What must all these people be
thinking right now, seeing you
without Jewel?

BENNY
Don't you worry yourself about it,
not at all.

COOKIE
(as if caught by a revelation) Hold
on just one moment. It makes
perfect sense. (petting Benny) This
all makes perfect sense now. My
poor man.

BENNY
You get what? What all makes
perfect sense now?

COOKIE
You want to be caught. Because you
caught her.

BENNY
I wish.

COOKIE
Really?

BENNY
Really.

COOKIE
Damn. I guess I better be ready for
it then.

BENNY
Ready for it?

COOKIE
Ready for Jewel. If I know women,
and I think I do, things are gonna
get . . . nasty, Benny. Woman
nasty. And that's a kind of nasty
you gotta get ready for.

BENNY

She'll be fine, you'll be fine.
Just remember when we talk with
Garland . . .

COOKIE

I'll be like fudge on a sundae.

BENNY

A guy my age with a wife and two
kids is not rapper material, unless
he has a more . . . youthful
outlook.

COOKIE

Okay, then.

BENNY

Cookie, you and me, we gotta take
care of business, you know that.

COOKIE

Are we gonna take care of business?

BENNY

Let's mingle.

At that moment Link enters. He stops to address Cookie's hot figure, but is quickly grabbed by Garland who has interest in introducing him around. Within seconds, in comes Georgia. She's holding a stack of papers which she disposes on a counter before approaching Garland. She turns to point Garland in the direction of the papers when her finger navigates her in the direction of Benny, who now has his arm cozily around Cookie's waist. Georgia, always animated and of high-energy, is frozen in a long pose, finger drawn toward the two like a weapon. All she's able to utter is:

GEORGIA

Holy shit!

Garland handles the situation with characteristic lightness.

GARLAND

Out with the old, in with the new.
That's the game.

Georgia, unable to recover, can only spit out another:

GEORGIA

Holy shit!

Movement ceases for whole stage group. They eavesdrop, raising one hand to comically grab their tongues.

LINK

(big smile) Every time I look at her I want to say the same thing.

Georgia positions herself in a confrontational pose, Link not in the least understanding her consternation.

LINK

At first I didn't understand it. But now, I tip my hat to my friend. Hell, sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's got to do.

Georgia is notably irked.

GEORGIA

Yeah, I know some women who do what they gotta do too.

Female cast members turn to closest male. To a LOUD drum beat they each raise their left arms, an exclamation mark to her statement.

LINK

Sure, some women. But no woman I'd be with.

GEORGIA

(obsequiously)
Of course not. I'm sure they're all just innocent Detroit girls.

FEMALE ENSEMBLE

We're all innocent Detroit girls.

Garland dismisses the whole matter, grabbing the arm of another man he's talking with and calls out to Benny while dragging the man along with him.

GARLAND

Benny, I got someone for you to meet.

As Garland and the other man approach, Cookie loosens her grip and stands next to Benny. The man with Garland is a handsome young fellow, years younger than Benny. He's dressed fashionably. His head is shaved bald but his face has an extremely short full beard.

GARLAND

Benny, meet Angel Face. You heard the name . . . he's up and coming up higher.

(MORE)

GARLAND (cont'd)

And after I dine him I'm gonna sign him. Ha ha, fames the name of the game, right my friend?

ANGEL FACE

Definitely, we're working on that one, my man.

They share a boisterous, gleeful exchange. Garland then addresses Cookie.

GARLAND

In case you didn't notice, this here is Cookie.

ANGEL FACE

Mama gave you the right name.

COOKIE

She said I popped out soft and sweet.

ANGEL FACE

(sounding like Garland)

Ha, ha. I like that.

Angel can't take his eyes off Cookie. He turns from Benny and Garland, facing Cookie. Garland is talking softly to Benny, his typical jovial self.

ANGEL FACE

So, you looking to be a star, Miss Cookie?

COOKIE

In my own right I'm a star already, can't you see?

ANGEL FACE

Yes, I'd agree. But you could be bigger and bigger so hastily

Cookie smiles receptively, as Angel steps closer. Interrupting the moment, Link approaches and embraces both.

LINK

Hey Angel, you ready to make beautiful music babies this week in the studio.

ANGEL FACE

He he, yeah, I'm ready Link.

LINK

(tangentially, almost interrupting, calling out to Benny) Hey Benny, me and Angel gonna make beautiful music babies this week.

BENNY

Sounds beautiful, Link.

LINK

(now calling out to Georgia just as boisterously) Georgia, come over here. You know Benny?

GEORGIA

Look, look, look. What do we have here, Mr. Benny Wright?

Benny nods uncomfortably, but says nothing. Georgia presses forward with the awkward exchange, now putting Cookie in her sights.

GEORGIA

Why don't you introduce me to your 'friend,' Benny?

BENNY

(coldly, perfunctorily)
Georgia, this is Cookie; Cookie, Georgia (now squaring off with Georgia) . . . Jewel's best friend.

Cookie shows no sign of intimidation, standing mutely. She does take Benny's hand like it's an old possession.

GEORGIA

Everything fine?

BENNY

Things are great.

GEORGIA

(spontaneously)
Great?!

The cast of females punctuates her inquisition by mouthing a disavowing: 'Great!'

Jimbo, who has not said a word, is standing tending to a small bar. He comes closer.

JIMBO

Let's be fair. A man has rights.

Angel, intrigued with the discussion, moves toward the group as well.

ANGEL FACE
The man has a point.

GEORGIA
(sarcastically mocking)
Constitutional rights!

Angel signals for everyone to listen.

ANGEL FACE
(sweetly)
See ladies . . . men are a
different breed. We're like water,
always gently flowing.

GEORGIA
(swooning)
Oh, sounds so peaceful . . . I see
why they call you THE angel.

Female cast, both hands cradle tilted, snuggled heads.

ANGEL FACE
Indeed! But . . . what if something
dams us up and we can't run free?
Then we're not so gentle. We start
smacking around, trying to break
free.

GEORGIA
I see.

ANGEL FACE
That's why the smart ladies know
that once in a while 'he's gotta do
what he's gotta do.' It's our
natcha.

GEORGIA
(sarcastically, making fun
of his diction)
Your natcha?

The ladies collect themselves in a line opposite the men who are doing the same, the beat soft in the background.

FEMALE ENSEMBLE
Your natcha?

The two lines are juxtaposed; the music begins for a dance and singing piece.

(SONG 8: YOU GOT THAT?)

Angel Face: SIT BACK LADIES
WITH A DRINK IN THE HAND
Male Ensemble: HAND
Angel Face: AND LISTEN REAL CLOSE
SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND

Angel Face: THE NATURE OF THE BEAST
THE NATURE OF
Male Ensemble: THE MAN
Angel Face: IT AIN'T THAT PRETTY
BUT IT'S HOW THINGS STAND

L.A. MEN TAKE FRIENDS TO THE BEACH
(Male Ensemble: THEY GO SAILING)
WHEN BACK IN THE DEN THERE'S A HEN IN HEAT
N.Y. FOOLS USE MUSICALS
TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE, AWAY FROM THEIR JEWELS

Jimbo: IN MA THEY HEAD UP TO FENWAY
AND IN CHI THEY DINE ON DEEP DISH PIE
THE SOUTHERN STATES CRACK CRAWFISH AND CAKE
BUT THE STORY ENDS THE EXACT SAME WAY
(Male ensemble nods and calls out in agreement)

IT'S THAT SIMPLE, I MUST SAY
IT'S THAT SIMPLE, AND ANYWAY

IF YOU MISSED ANY BIT OF THE LIST GET THE GIST
A PERFECT MAN WILL JUST NEVER EXIST
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A RELATIONSHIP
UNLESS THE MAN'S GOT SOME
Male Ensemble: PIE ON THE SIDE

Female Ensemble:
WE GOT IT
IT'S ALL SO CLEAR
WE GOT IT
AND WE THANK YOU DEAR
WE GOT IT
HAVE NO FEAR
WE GOT IT, WE GOT IT

Georgia: AN L.A. MAN
TAKES HIS WOMEN WITH A LITTLE SUNTAN
Female Ensemble: WE GOT IT

Georgia: AN N.Y. GUY
LIKES TO HAVE A LITTLE SHOW ON THE SIDE
Female Ensemble: WE GOT IT

Georgia: CHI TOWN, CALI AND MA
ALL GOT A SPECIAL WAY

AND THEY GET AWAY

Female Ensemble:
WE KNOW IT'S TRUE
AND GENTLEMEN, WE'LL BE TRUE TOO
SO SIT BACK AND GET LOOSE
WE'D LIKE TO BREAK SOME NEWS

Georgia: WHEN YOU SIN IN MICHIGAN
WATCH YOUR BACK
Female Ensemble: YOU GOT THAT

Georgia: WHEN YOU CHEAT IN THESE HERE STREETS
WATCH YOUR BACK
Female Ensemble: YOU GOT THAT

Georgia: SLEEP AROUND, IN THIS LITTLE TOWN
AND WATCH YOUR BACK
Female Ensemble: YOU GOT THAT

(DO WHAT YOU GOTTA
IF YOU GOT THE KNACK
BUT WHEN YOU MESS AROUND IN MICHIGAN
WATCH YOUR BACK
YOU BETTA WATCH IT
OH YOU BETTA WATCH IT

DO WHAT YOU GOTTA
IF YOU GOT THE KNACK
BUT WHEN YOU MESS AROUND IN MICHIGAN
WATCH YOUR BACK
YOU BETTA WATCH IT

All cast, front stage. The ladies take a step forward,
pointing assertively toward the audience.

YOU GOT THAT!!!

The men move in a circle, a football huddle, with one, the
QB, down on one knee but looking over his shoulder at the
ladies, all frozen in pose as the stage gradually

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 9: INSIDE WRIGHT FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

Jewel is tidying up the living room. Shana literally waltzes
in, singing to herself.

SHANA
Come now, get some real feel music;
bum around to some real feel music.

She tosses her knapsack to the side of the room like a dirty shower towel, as she proceeds to the refrigerator to get a drink.

SHANA

Hi, mom. (continuing singing) It's that simple when you got a smooth lick, a bumpin' bass line and some drums that kick, a little bit of Ella, some Snoop . . .

JEWEL

Shana, what's that you're singing?

SHANA

Oh my God, you are out of it, mom. It's called music.

Doorbell rings.

JEWEL

Please get it, Shana.

Shana answers to Georgia.

SHANA

(draws Georgia in as she goes back to singing) Come now get some real feel music, bum . . .

Georgia joins in with Shana, immediately recognizing the song.

SHANA AND GEORGIA

Around to some real feel music,
come now get some real feel music
in your life, it feels so right.

Georgia gives Shana a hug and as she does her joyous tone dies away.

GEORGIA

Shana, let mommy and I talk. Go on, scat.

Shana leaves and Jewel approaches Georgia, who is clearly uncomfortable.

JEWEL

What's wrong?

GEORGIA

Maybe you better be taking a seat, honey.

Before Jewel can react, Garland comes in.

GARLAND

Door was open so I let myself in.
(to Georgia) You told her?

GEORGIA

Said I'd wait for you, didn't I?

JEWEL

Told her what?

GEORGIA

Oh shucks, you're the king when it comes to tearing out hearts so you tell her.

GARLAND

I had a little get-together a couple nights ago . . . and Benny showed up with a girl, Cookie.

GEORGIA

She was smothering him like Mascara on a zit . . . right in front of all of us. (hands on hips) I was an inch from gouging out her eyeballs, ripping out his sacred 'jewels' . . . then doing me some real redecorating.

GARLAND

Jewel, I didn't want you to get hurt . . .

JEWEL

(strong) Just go on, Garland.

GARLAND

He's been seen one place after another with her. I had to tell you . . . I didn't want you to find out . . . some other way.

JEWEL

I knew it, I knew it! He lied to me; I asked him and he lied.
(working herself into a rage) That creep. (quiet disgust) That germ.

Garland reaches out to take her hands.

GARLAND

I couldn't stand what he was doing
to you.

She starts sobbing loudly, both Georgia and Garland moving to sit next to her. Suddenly she breaks loose of their hugs.

JEWEL

Another woman; it's the one thing I
won't tolerate.

GARLAND

You need anything, anything, I'll
be there in an instant; you know

JEWEL

Just go now, I need to be alone.

They start to leave, just as Benny enters, hanging his coat on a hook near the entrance. He puts down his lunch box and turns around. Facing him, a grim-faced Jewel and a somewhat-startled Garland and Georgia. All stare momentarily.

GARLAND

Benny.

Benny, curious, gives no response. Garland speaks quickly as he makes his way to and then out the door.

GARLAND

Well then. Jewel, Benny, y'all take
care now. I gotta go do a whole lot
and then a whole lot more. Busy
day, you know. I'm sure y'all got
stuff to sort out anyway. Don't
need me arou . . .

Georgia takes Garland's cue, exiting without a word.

JEWEL

Why, Benny? (louder) Why?

BENNY

Why what?

JEWEL

I always told you any malicious,
vicious, poisonous truth is better
than a lie. But you had to deceive
me.

BENNY

Some day you'll . . .

JEWEL

Today, Benny, today!
 Today you get the hell out of here
 . . . for good.

The comment unleashes her to barely controlled rage. She rushes off stage for a moment and returns with a suitcase, items hastily thrown in and sticking out the side. As she drops it on the floor, it falls open. "Get out!" is repeated as she point to the clothing in the case. Dion walks in from school, astonished by the tumult. Music begins and Shana, hearing the noise, races off stage. Jewel repeats "Get out!" She begins singing, and at first the kids try to unpack the case. Jewel throws the items back in, creating a tug of war with Shana and Dion which serves as a backdrop while she sings. Part way through Jewel prevails and the kids stand by helplessly.

(SONG 9: TIME TO GET PACKED)

I WAS WORRIED
 AND I WAS CONCERNED
 I WAS LONELY
 BUT I STOOD FIRM

I WAS JUST SADDENED
 AND PITYING YOU
 I COULDN'T FATHOM
 THE THINGS YOU WOULD DO

I WAS JUST SOUR
 AND I WAS CONFUSED
 I FIGURED IN HOURS
 IT WOULD FEEL LIKE A RUSE

IF YOU'D EXPLAIN
 THE THOUGHTS IN YOUR BRAIN
 I'D KNOW I WAS SANE
 AND YOU WERE IN PAIN

BUT THEN THINGS CHANGED
 AND I WAS JUST LIVID AND I WAS INFLAMED

ON THE HIT OF A BUTTON
 AND ALL OF A SUDDEN
 I HEARD FOUR WORDS
 THAT SHOCKED ME AND BURNED
 ME RIGHT TO A FUME

BENNY CHEATED ON YOU

CHORUS:

(I WAS JUST BENT
 BUT NOW I'VE BEEN CRACKED

SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
Ensemble: AND THAT'S THAT

Jewel: I WAS JUST SCARED
BUT NOW I'LL FIGHT BACK
SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
Ensemble: AND THAT'S THAT

Jewel: I WAS UNSTEADY
BUT NOW I'M UNLATCHED
SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
Ensemble: AND THAT'S THAT

Shana (talking):
MOM, NO
DON'T MAKE DADDY GO

Dion (talking):
DON'T MAKE HIM GO, MOM . . .
DON'T GIVE UP, MOM (Volume picks back up)

Jewel (To Dion and Shana):
SORRY KIDS . . .
I'VE BEEN CRACKED
SO BENNY GET PACKED
AND THAT'S THAT

I WAS UNSTEADY
BUT NOW I'M UNLATCHED
SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
AND THAT'S THAT

LEAVE
IT'S MY FAMILY NOW
DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO
BUT DON'T COME BACK AROUND

PLAY WITH THAT LITTLE DAMN TOY OF YOURS
BUY IT JEWELRY
AND TELL IT STORIES

TAKE IT ON VACATION
AND KISS IT LIKE A CHILD
CAUSE THESE LIPS
THEY'RE NOT ON FILE

CHORUS:
(I WAS JUST BENT
BUT NOW I'VE BEEN CRACKED
SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
Ensemble: AND THAT'S THAT

Jewel: I WAS JUST SCARED
BUT NOW I'LL FIGHT BACK

SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
Ensemble: AND THAT'S THAT

Jewel: I WAS UNSTEADY
BUT NOW I'M UNLATCHED
SO IT'S TIME TO GET PACKED
Ensemble: AND THAT'S THAT

Jewel: I'M SIMPLY ENRAGED
MY ANGER UNCAGED
SO YOU BETTER GAGE
YOUR BEST COURSE OF ACTION
I'D GET PACKIN
AND I'M NOT ASKIN)

Jewel carries the now closed suitcase to the front door,
motioning for Benny to leave. She pauses and glances to the
corner of the room where the umbrella is hanging on a rack.
She reaches and takes it, tossing it to Benny while shouting.

JEWEL

Get out!

Benny exits just as she slams the door. The kids are standing
in shock. With authority and decisiveness she faces the
children.

JEWEL

Shana, set the table for dinner!

CURTAIN CLOSE:

ACT II

SCENE 1: NO SETTING

Benny steps out in front of the closed curtain and puts down
a suitcase. There's no music, no elation, rather a
contemplative, musing tone as Benny speaks meditatively to
himself.

A CAPELLA: GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D

IT'S GUARANT E E D TO SUCC E E D
AND THAT'S THE WAY THING'LL BE

JUST LIKE THE DAYS PASS QUICK AND BECOME THE PAST
AND THE FLIES GET BUSY IN THE SUMMER TIME GRASS
LADIES WANT LOVE WITHOUT A QUESTION ASKED
AND INDEED IT DRAWS A FIGHT WHEN THE DREAM GETS CRASHED
IT'S LIKE THAT, THIS IS GUARANTEED
NO NEED TO HAVE A DOUBT, YOU JUST NEED TO BELIEVE

JUST LIKE THE STRINGS OF A SYMPHONY SHAKE WHEN THEY MOVE
AND THE TROMBONES BLAST OUT MELODIC TUNES
PEOPLE GET CALM TO SOUND OF THE FLUTES
AND MY WIFE LOVES TO SPEAK 'TIL I'M MUTE
IT'S LIKE THAT, THIS GUARANTEED
NO NEED TO HAVE A DOUBT, YOU JUST NEED TO BELIEVE

A LITTLE BIT OF LUXURY IS OKAY
A LITTLE BIT OF GOLD DANGLING COLD ON A CHAIN
A LITTLE BIT OF TRIPS TO THE MALL MAKES YOU SANE
A LITTLE BIT THAT'S IT
WHY AM I A LITTLE BIT OF PAIN
IT'S GUARANTEED I'LL SHOUT
WITHOUT A LITTLE BIT IN DOUBT
I'M NOT EVEN A LITTLE BIT CONCERNED
THAT SHE'S A LITTLE BIT PUT OUT

IT'S GUARANT E E E D TO SUCC E E D
AND THAT'S JUST THE WAY THING'LL BE

BENNY

(somber)

Sometimes we have to do the right
thing, even if we die . . . If this
does kill me, God, I know I'm doing
right.

DARK:

SCENE 2: INSIDE WRIGHT FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Jewel enters, dressed in office attire and looking haggard.
She throws down her coat and purse. Shana is in the kitchen,
Dion playing music.

JEWEL

Shana, is the pasta boiling?

SHANA

Almost. Why are you home so late?

JEWEL

It's called a job, love.

SHANA

You never worked before.
(assertive) Where's daddy?

JEWEL

Shana, your father decided to leave
us.

Dion comes over and picks up a bowl, heedlessly mixing the salad as they all stand in the kitchen area.

SHANA

You kicked him out.

JEWEL

Shana, I told you, a person has to do what's right sometimes, even though it hurts.

SHANA

(motoring)

Well I think this is all a big waste of time. According to a very reliable site on the internet, sixty seven percent of marriages at one time or another have a separation. Forty nine percent of the time someone cheats. But out of all the times someone cheats, only a third of the people get a divorce. See what I'm saying?

Dion and Jewel stand mutely. Shana hardly pauses for a response.

SHANA

Two thirds of the people who are unfaithful work it out. And people like you, who have been married for so long and have children have even a better chance to work things out. (pauses) So what I think is that if you and daddy sat down and talked it out, he could come home.

The doorbell RINGS. Dion goes to answer, and Garland enters. They shake and Garland greets Shana with a wave.

JEWEL

I'm sorry, Garland. I got home a bit late. Did you eat?

He stands near the table.

GARLAND

I'm fine. Hey, Dion. How's that album coming?

DION

Shoot Garland, you won't even be able to sign me in three years.

GARLAND

(happy-go-lucky)

Then talk to me in two and a half.
Ha ha.

JEWEL

(ignoring the question, to Shana
and Dion) Dion, Shana, go clean
yourselves up. It's time for grown
up talk.

DION

This sucks, mom.

SHANA

This double sucks.

The two walk over to the living area, leaving Shana and Dion
behind. They sit and we see Garland take her hand and speak
in a beseeching manner. Their conversation becomes auditory,
but the children cannot hear.

GARLAND

Well . . . did you think about it?

JEWEL

I just don't see how I can.

GARLAND

You can't make it work, all alone,
can't you see. With those kids, and
all they need, all alone, can't you
see. Those kids needs things,
things that can only come with me.

JEWEL

Those kids won't have it. It won't
work, Garland.

GARLAND

(like a pitchman, light-
hearted)

Things'll take a little time, sure.
But they'll get used to me. (pause)
Jewel, I've loved you forever. I
should have never let you go.

JEWEL

You didn't. I wasn't in love with
you . . . I loved Benny.

GARLAND

Well Benny's a cheat. An
irresponsible cheat. Not like me.

JEWEL

This is just all happening so fast,
I can't keep up. It's not . . .
right. I'm still married; we could
never . . .

GARLAND

Then we'll wait until you're
divorced.

JEWEL

Garland, it would only be for
convenience. That's not fair to
you.

GARLAND

It's fair. (pause) We need to be
together. We need each other.

JEWEL

(somber, to herself) I need love.

GARLAND

Then let's do love. It's the
sensible thing to do.

Garland stands and begins singing.

(SONG 10: LET'S DO LOVE)

CHORUS:

(WE FIT LIKE WATER AND FOOD
YOU'LL SEE THE HARMONY BREW
LET'S DO LOVE
IT'S THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO

I'LL BE TRUE
YOU'LL SEE THE HARMONY BREW
LET'S DO LOVE
IT'S THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO)

NOW I SEE YOU WANT TO TAKE IT SLOW
BUT IT'S RIGHT I SIMPLY KNOW
I'M AT ONE WITH THIS HOUSE, I FEEL SO CLOSE

DON'T DENY US AS A PAIR
IT'S A SPECIAL THING THAT'S RARE
TAKE ME IN, TO THIS LIFE, AND DO AS YOU CARE

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL FIT AND MORE
THE PERFECT SQUARE OF FOUR
AND WHEN THOSE KIDS NEED ME, I'LL BE THERE IN A STORM

SO LET'S GET, GOING, RIGHT ON THE PATH

TO A LIFE SO LAVISH THAT IT BUBBLES WITH LAUGHS

CHORUS:

(WE FIT LIKE WATER AND FOOD
YOU'LL SEE THE HARMONY BREW
LET'S DO LOVE
IT'S THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO

I'LL BE TRUE
YOU'LL SEE THE HARMONY BREW
LET'S DO LOVE
IT'S THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO)

Garland is spinning prattle, a speech delivered without engaging the family. At times his eyes close, at others he turns his back to Jewel so as to not be aware of what she is handling with the children. The beat flows quietly in the background.

GARLAND

Now listen to me Jewel. I don't want to sound cold, and I don't want to sound insensitive. I know you've got your hang ups, and I've got mine too. But can't you see the harmony, Jewel? I'm right on the same page as all of you. (pause)
You fall, I feel the floor shake.

Dion and Shana are fighting over a rubber stretch exerciser, each pulling mightily, and Dion all of a sudden devilishly letting go. Shana falls, hitting her nose on the end of a table, bleeding. Jewel runs over to her. We see her take out a tissue from her pocket, holding it to Shana's bleeding nose.

GARLAND

You bleed, I see red.

Jewel continues to tend to Shana.

GARLAND

You need a helping hand, and mine's there to take.

In the background it appears Jewel is chewing out the kids for playing in the house. Dion is peeved. They all seem dramatic and intense.

GARLAND

Things get hectic, and I'm right there for you.

As the scene calms, Jewel walks back to where Garland is executing the final touches of his soliloquy. She stares a moment before he turns to view her, still unaware of what has transpired. Jewel picks up a glass of water, placing a pill in her mouth.

JEWEL

Excuse me.

Without waiting for her to swallow.

CHORUS:

(WE FIT LIKE WATER AND FOOD
YOU'LL SEE THE HARMONY BREW
LET'S DO LOVE
IT'S THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO

I'LL BE TRUE
YOU'LL SEE THE HARMONY BREW
LET'S DO LOVE
IT'S THE SENSIBLE THING TO DO)

GARLAND

I want you to come live with me; I
won't take no for an answer.

Jewel fixes her gaze on him, as if inspecting her sanity from a precipice. She tentatively nods several times, then tentatively mouths "okay."

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 3: INSIDE GARLAND'S HOME - EVENING

Jewel and Shana step on stage, loaded with purchases in department store bags. Jewel is walking and Shana, as if possessed by a force of energy, is fluttering. They're both dressed to the hilt, Shana hip and trendy and Jewel fashionably. Garland is watching TV but gets up to greet them, surveying them like two fillies from a stable of prize ponies. He gives both a cheek kiss, delighting as always in the moment.

GARLAND

Shop at Vermillion's and this is
how you come home.

JEWEL

You seem especially chipper.

GARLAND

When am I not?

SHANA

You never get in bad moods, do you?

GARLAND

That's how I keep from having to get out of them.

SHANA

Garland, humans can't help being in a bad mood sometimes, 'cause bad things happen. People who can't let themselves feel bad get their feelings all jumbled up. When they should be sad, they're not; and they're happy for the wrong reasons. They're so confused about feelings they're afraid to be in close relationships. Now the question is what to do. There are a number of theories

. . .

Garland, unimpressed and unaware of the obvious association to himself, cuts her off with another hug.

GARLAND

I'm just a happy cat. And tonight I'm going to teach your brother how to be happy too.

Dion, who just walked in, bristles to the reference. His appearance is unkempt.

DION

You buying me a car?

JEWEL

Dion!

Jewel launches an evil eye, silencing his apparent disrespect.

GARLAND

I've got a surprise for you.

DION

What?

GARLAND

Oh, nothing much . . . just signed a new client. You may know him -- Angel Face.

DION
(incredulously)
Angel Face . . . you? You signed .
. . .

GARLAND
Angel Face. Landed a big one kids,
huh? A whale. And he just happens
to be coming here for dinner to
toast to a bright future with the
one and only. (points to himself)

Dion smiles doubtfully at Garland.

DION
Here . . . for dinner? (dismissive)
Sure!

GARLAND
(delighting)
Would I lie?

DION AND SHANA
Absolutely! (snickers)

DION
He's a famous rapper, man. (waves
to Garland as if Garland is
teasing, turns to walk off) Give me
a break.

The doorbell RINGS. Garland calls to Dion.

GARLAND
Go ahead and answer; see for
yourself.

Dion rushed toward the door, opening it, and then staring
speechless at Angel.

ANGEL FACE
You must be Dion. And Shana.
(smiling) Hey there Ms. Jewel.

Both Dion's and Shana's eyes glisten as they nod to Garland.

ANGEL FACE
(to Dion and Shana) So . . . what
are you kids trying to do now that
you got Angel Face in your house?

DION AND SHANA
(star-struck) Whatever you wanna
do.

He flips a disc out of his coat pocket, flashing it like a check book.

ANGEL FACE

I wanna listen to some tunes.

DION

I knew you'd get a Grammy this year. I knew it was your time.

ANGEL FACE

I'm glad you knew.

DION

Wasn't even close, right?

ANGEL FACE

I like you already kid.

JEWEL

You know, Angel, Dion's a bit of a performer himself.

ANGEL FACE

(sweeping turn to Dion) Oh is that right?

SHANA

(interjecting) Yeah. He wants to be the next you.

DION

(to Shana) Shut it, Shana. (to Angel Face) I perform a little. I'm doing a concert at my school.

ANGEL FACE

Start small, end big.

DION

That's the plan.

ANGEL FACE

And don't give up. Shana, isn't that right?

SHANA

(confused) I guess.

Angel Face pops his CD into a player.

ANGEL FACE

(to Dion) So . . . show me what you got.

DION

No way. I couldn't.

ANGEL FACE

I thought you wanted to make it
big. Here's your shot. I know
rappers that would probably kill to
show me what they got. (to Shana)
You want me to start this off?

Too wired to answer verbally, Shana is a concoction of bodily
gyrations oozing a giant, unrestrained grin.

ANGEL FACE

Let's do it.

Garland and Jewel walk off to the couch.

ANGEL FACE

Let's get into some "Real Feel
Music."

Shana starts jumping up and down like a teen at a concert.
She glances deliberately toward Jewel.

SHANA

(singing)

I feel that real feel music, yes I
do.

ANGEL FACE

All right, then let's do it.

Angel Face cues the CD, grabs an imaginary microphone and
leaps into the center of the room, which is now his stage.
Ensemble is Jewel and Garland only.

(SONG 11: REAL FEEL MUSIC)

CHORUS X2:

(COME NOW, GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
BUM AROUND, TO SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
COME NOW, GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
IN YOUR LIFE, IT FEELS SO RIGHT)

Angel Face:

YOU KNOW THAT REAL FEEL MUSIC, I TRIED IT FOR SIZE
AND IT FIT LIKE A WOMAN IN A LOVIN MAN'S EYES
TOOK A LITTLE LISTEN AND TINGLED INSIDE
FOR THE FIRST TIME, I HAD BUTTERFLIES
IT'S THAT SIMPLE WHEN YOU GOT A SMOOTH LICK
A BUMPIN' BASS LINE AND SOME DRUMS THAT KICK
A LITTLE BIT OF ELLA, SOME SNOOP OR SOME BIG
WHATEVER BE THE RECIPE THAT YOU GONNA DIG

IT KINDA MAKES THE WORLD GET MOVED
AND IT HOLDS US TOGETHER WHILE WE BOND AND FUSE
MUSICIANS DREAM FOR THE TUNE
AND THEN WE DREAM WE CAN SHARE IT WITH YOU

CHORUS x2:

(Angel Face: COME NOW
Ensemble: GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
Angel Face: BUM AROUND
Ensemble: TO SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
Angel Face: COME NOW
Ensemble: GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
IN YOUR LIFE, IT FEELS SO RIGHT)

Angel Face:

I WON'T CRY NOW
BUT IT'S MAKING MY EYES WET
AND I'M ALIVE NOW
WITHOUT A SINGLE REGRET
SO I'LL GIVE IT TO MY MAN DION
(to Dion) YOU KNOW THE WORDS, GO AHEAD, SING ON

Dion:

WELL I WROTE A BIT OF MUSIC AND IT STICKS LIKE A STAMP
I WET IT WITH MY TONGUE, BUT WHERE WILL IT LAND
IF I COULD JUMP TO THE ROOF TOP
I'D FLIP A LITTLE LOVIN TO THE PEOPLE I SAW
I THINK I'D GET A TINY MIC STAND
BUT PUT THE MIC IN MY HAND SO I COULD IT KICK DOWN
TO ALL OF MY FANS
ALL I WANT TO DO IN THIS WORLD OF ABUSE
IS GET FUNKY, KICK IT, AND MAKE YOU FEEL LOOSE
SO PLAY WITH ME, IN THIS SYMPHONIC GROOVE
AND ROCK WITH ME UNTIL YOU FEEL IT TOO

CHORUS x2:

(Dion: COME NOW
Ensemble: GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
Dion: BUM AROUND
Ensemble: TO SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
Dion: COME NOW
Ensemble: GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
IN YOUR LIFE, IT FEELS SO RIGHT)

Shana (overcome with the moment): WATCH ME NOW!

Shana:

I WANT TO GET SOME SINGING TIME TOO
JUST A LITTLE BIT BEFORE THE GOOD TIME'S THROUGH
IT'S MY TURN, SO YOU BETTER STAY
JUST AS I TELL YOU, JUST AS I SAY

(she physically positions Dion and Angel Face; they all dance)

GET A LITTLE LOOSE LIKE ME
CAUSE WE GONNA DANCE, AND WE GONNA PARTY
BY THE TIME I'VE DONE MY PART
YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME FROM THE CORE OF YOUR HEART
I FEEL, THIS REAL FEEL MUSIC TOO, YES I DO

CHORUS x2:
(Shana: COME NOW
Ensemble: GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
Shana: BUM AROUND
Ensemble: TO SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
Shana: COME NOW
Ensemble: GET SOME REAL FEEL MUSIC
IN YOUR LIFE, IT FEELS SO RIGHT)

After the singing ends, the SOUND of music continues in the background. Garland and Jewel stay positioned and are heard in conversation while Dion and Shana go off to the opposite side of the room to talk separately, and inaudibly, with Angel Face.

JEWEL

Thanks Garland. Dion needed that.

GARLAND

I never met a better kid.

JEWEL

I'm sure you have. He's got all sorts of problems. Grades slipping. Gettin' into fights all of a sudden. Suspensions for the first time.

GARLAND

(chuckling)

We all had our share of brawls growing up.

JEWEL

It's not just Dion. Dion's not being Dion, Shana's not being Shana. They're both mouthy and disrespectful from out of the clear blue. I'm trying to understand and be patient, but I feel like smacking those faces.

GARLAND

She's growing up, Jewel. What little girl doesn't get fresh from time to time?

JEWEL
(irritated)
Garland, I'm trying to talk to you.

Jewel has a queer expression, as the doorbell rings. Jewel answers the door as Garland ambles over to Angel Face and the kids. Georgia enters, seemingly winded and irritated.

GEORGIA
Honey. (pause, quickly spoken) I'm a hop and a jump out the front seat with a bottle of somethin' strong and an itchin' for somethin' wrong from leavin' those kids.

JEWEL
Kids!? You don't . . .

GEORGIA
No, no, darling. That's for another time.

Georgia scans the parcels like fine jewels. Jewel stands silently, unsure how to respond.

GEORGIA
Wow. I'll give ya a thousand a piece for them two right there. (pausing to again focus on Jewel's shopping bags) You bought out the store today, honey?

JEWEL
Well is that supposed to make me happy?

GEORGIA
Ouch! Let me try that again. Hi, I'm your friend Georgia. What a lovely bunch of whatever's in them fancy bags you got. You done well for yourself.

JEWEL
Georgia, I just don't know what to do. I may be buying out stores but I can't buy myself a half a grin let alone a smile.

Jewel picks up a couple of the bags and listlessly drops them on a couch, Georgia assisting by doing likewise with the others.

GEORGIA

You sound like what I sound like every Wednesday from 6pm to 7pm in Doctor Rosenbaumbergerstein's . . . whatever's office.

JEWEL

(unable to contain a giggle in amusement with Georgia's natural personality) So what does he say?

GEORGIA

That if I don't start straightening out my life, he's raising his fee.

JEWEL

(laughing)

That might be a cheap kick in the ass.

GEORGIA

Yea well I can find a man to kick mine any time, for free.

Jewel looks over at Garland whose grooving to the music, happy as a lark.

JEWEL

Ever feel like you're wishin' for a good ass kickin', so you know for sure what's going on . . . if only for a moment?

GEORGIA

Maybe. That's why I always keep a man on the side who can make a wishin' for a good ass kickin' come true.

JEWEL

(half chuckling, half crying)

Georgia, I'll tell you, I always feel better after a couple of minute with you.

GEORGIA

(sighs)

Oh yeah? Well honey don't speak too soon, 'cause you ain't gonna like this. I saw Mr. Benny Wright today. And he did not look good, no ma'am. He looked like a dirt rag with a .

. . .

JEWEL

Maybe that whore of his dropped
him.

GEORGIA

I don't know, I won't guess, I just
had to tell, that's all.

JEWEL

I know.

Georgia embraces and consoles Jewel.

GEORGIA

Love, you keep that precious chin
of yours up. This is the worst
part.

JEWEL

I wish I could be sure of that. I
hate to say it but I'm starting to
think I'm no different than Benny.

GEORGIA

What are you talking about?

JEWEL

(whispering)

Don't you think I look like a damn
whore myself. I've got a man
boarding here with me; he'll pay
anything to get into my pants and
I'm milking him. Jewel Wright,
Biggest Sap, Class of Broken
Hearts, 2012.

GEORGIA

You're being a bit hard on
yourself, love. Besides, Benny
started this.

JEWEL

Georgia, do you think it's possible
to want something so bad that if
you don't get it you become so
distracted you destroy everything
you do have?

Jewel breaks into sobs.

JEWEL

It's tragic, Georgia, just tragic.
Everything ruined; no way back.

GEORGIA
I'm sorry, darlin'.

JEWEL
No exception can be made for
betrayal.

Jewel offers a shrug of resignation. Then she smiles as
Georgia reaches to hug her.

JEWEL
What could I do, Georgia. I had to
take care of those children. Benny
and I said from the beginning of
our family that we were going to
better their lives. So what's a
little humiliation for every moment
of the rest of my life?

Garland walks back over. He smiles at them.

GARLAND
Am I missing out on all the fun,
girls?

GEORGIA
Well lookey who we got here. We'll
let ya know if any fun starts, ya
know, like if we get to plannin' to
end someone's career or get to
(quoting Garland) 'making room for
a big fish.' The great stuff,
honey, the stuff you wake up
smilin' for.

GARLAND
Am I that bad?

JEWEL AND GEORGIA
(in unison)
Yep!

GEORGIA
But darlin' I don't judge.

JEWEL
And I try not to. You've got your
uses. You're all the fun I'd never
ask for.

GARLAND
(exuberantly)
Wonderful. 'Cause I got an idea.

JEWEL

What?

GARLAND

(calling out) Dion, Shana. What do you think about a vacation? I'm thinking about the beach . . . somewhere, say, in . . . I'm thinking about Hawaii.

SHANA

(in disbelief) Hawaii?

DION

Hawaii!

Jewel wears a bemused expression.

GARLAND

You'll love it, Dion. You're not too young for the ladies, are you?

Shana walks halfway over to her mom and Garland.

SHANA

This is going to be great. Did you know that actually there are 132 islands, extending over 1500 miles in the North Pacific Ocean?

Cast on stage saunters away while Shana prattles dialogue. Suddenly she looks, deliberately, left, then right, noticing she's been abandoned and nobody is listening. Lights begin to fade as she monologues regardless to herself.

SHANA

Almost all the people live on just seven of them and most of those are on Oahu. They were discovered in 1778 by Captain Cook. The big island, Hawaii, has Mauna Kea, the famous mountain . . .

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 4: JIMBO'S BAR - MORNING

Jimbo is cleaning up the joint. The only customer is Benny, sitting on a bar stool with a drink, looking bleak. Craig, breathless, runs in.

CRAIG

Been looking all over for you. I never imagined you'd be here . . . eleven in the morning! You are going down fast, son.

BENNY

It's just a soda.

Benny hardly acknowledges Craig's presence or his words.

CRAIG

I'm worried for you. I heard you haven't been showing up at work and they may fire you for job abandonment.

BENNY

(dismissive)

Don't worry.

CRAIG

So tell me, have you seen Jewel and the kids . . . I mean since . . . ?

BENNY

Yeah, I told you it worked out perfect.

CRAIG

Are you telling me this was all part of your plan . . .

BENNY

Didn't I tell you it was The Perfect Plan; took a little editing here and there but . . . Garland wanted her since he set eyes on her in grade school. And knowing Garland, I didn't think it would take long for him to . . .

CRAIG

Get outta here, kid. There's nothin' perfect about a best friend and a man's wife . . .

BENNY

(holding out his palm toward Craig)
Oh stop right there. (pause) For me, everything about a best friend and a wife is perfect.

(MORE)

BENNY (cont'd)

It's just how I dreamt it in my wildest dreams. And just like the rest of the plan, it was guaranteed.

CRAIG

But he's not right for her.

BENNY

He's right for THEM. When you have a family of your own, you'll know what I've done is nothing but right.

CRAIG

Well then My God, friend. I'd call you a genius if it didn't look like hell just came crashing down on you. (pause)

BENNY

I'm in heaven, man. Heaven just ain't always how it seems.

CRAIG

Well I hope my heaven's a hell of a lot better than yours. (pause) You're hurting, Benny. I can see that. I'm worried it's going to break you.

BENNY

(evasively)

Break me, Benny Wright. Ha ha. (doubt shown through, then acknowledgement) Well, you may have a point there but . . . I agreed to pay whatever the price would be to do right by them.

CRAIG

Honor has never been one of your shortcomings, for sure. I just hope you're not taking it too far this time. (caringly pats Benny on the shoulder) I have to leave; you take care.

Benny watches as Craig exits, afterward sitting back in a relaxed pose for a few moments. Then he comes to awareness, reaching under the bar and pulling out a guitar, playing a few notes before allowing gravity to drop it back under the bar lifelessly.

He seems dazed, landing his limp body into a nearby chair.
His eyes close as he dozes and the stage goes DARK.

After a few moments a spotlight on the opposite side of stage reveals Dion and Shana at play, and Jewel sitting like a wildflower on a broken branch, sad in a place of joy. Bathing suits indicate a beach.

Jewel singing. Benny remains in a darkness representing the thousands of miles that separate them.

(SONG 12: WHO'S LIFE?)

Jewel:

WHO'S LIFE DID I BUY
I WANT TO GET USED TO A LIVING WITH PASSION AND RHYME
A LIVING THAT'S MINE
O-O-OH I
WANT A MOMENT WHERE LONELINESS DIES

I'M LOSING FEEL AND I'M LOSING SIGHT
OF ALL THE FEELINGS THAT KEPT ME WRAPPED TIGHT
MY GRIP IS LIGHT
STRIPPED DOWN ON A BEACH WHITE

THINGS SEEM PERFECT TO ME
SET IN THE SUN LIKE A FANTASY
TWO CHILDREN AT PLAY
LAUGHING AT LAUGHTER
WITHOUT A CLOUD OF GRAY
BUT THIS LIFE DOESN'T FEEL LIKE MINE
SO I CRY ON THE SIDELINE

A spotlight open on Benny who bolts up as if poked by a hot prod. He looks around, like he'd suffered a stroke, the world a mystery. At no time do Benny or Jewel look in each other's direction.

CHORUS X2:
(WHO'S LIFE AM I GIVIN A TRY
DOESN'T FEEL LIKE MINE EVEN WHEN I CRY)

Benny:

I'M DOING TIME AND IT'S NOT EVEN MINE
DRINKIN LIQUOR IN THE DAY CAUSE I CAN'T WRITE A RHYME
MY EYES CLOSED SHUT BUT I CAN'T SEE SHIT
BLIND TO THE WORLD WHERE I USED TO LIVE
FANTASY, MAY BE LIFE'S GREATEST GIFT
UP IN THE CLOUDS I COULD SMILE WHILE I SIT

I THOUGHT I HAD IT ALL SET IN STONE
DIVINE INSPIRATION HAD GIVEN ME GOLD

LIFTED ME UP LIKE A KING TO HIS THRONE
TO WATCH AS MY KINGDOM THRIVES A HAPPY HOME
BUT I LEFT MYSELF ALL ALONE
THIS DOESN'T FEEL LIKE HOME

CHORUS X2:
(WHO'S LIFE AM I GIVIN A TRY
DOESN'T FEEL LIKE MINE EVEN WHEN I CRY)

Jewel: I WANT TO GET ANXIOUS TO LAY IN BED

Benny: I WANT TO LAY A KISS ON MY LITTLE KIDS HEAD

Jewel: I WANT TO WALK IN SHOES THAT DON'T SHINE

Benny: WHY'S IT HURT WHEN I KNOW I DID FINE

Jewel: SOMETHING, FEELS OFF TODAY

Benny: NOTHING WENT WRONG I CAN HONESTLY SAY

Jewel: I'M LOST IN A HOUSE SO BIG

Benny: BUT I'M LOSING IT, LOSING IT

Both:
IT'S LIKE I'M DRIVING ON A ROAD SO FAST
TRYIN TO GET TO GRACELAND WITHOUT A MAP
TRYIN TO GET HOME BUT I LOST MY WAY
I WANT TO MAKE IT HOME BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

CHORUS X4:
(WHO'S LIFE AM I GIVIN A TRY
DOESN'T FEEL LIKE MINE EVEN WHEN I CRY)

After the chorus each in perfect unity takes an identical white handkerchief out of their respective right pockets and dabs their left eye, then stand straight, tilt their heads 45 degrees to the sky, pause, and then close their eyes.

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 5: JIMBO'S BAR - MORNING

Identical to Scene 4, Jimbo is ordering up the joint. The only customer is Benny, at the same bar stool, looking bleak. Craig, breathless, runs in, Link following behind.

CRAIG

Eleven in the morning, Benny! (to Link) I told you, Link, every morning he's in here by eleven in the morning.

LINK

Um, Um. Eleven in the morning.

CRAIG

Eleven!

BENNY

What's wrong with a little time
outside the house now and again.

CRAIG

Look at yourself.

BENNY

I'm trying to sort some things out.

LINK

How's that going . . .

BENNY

Well I had this dream last night.
It kept going all night, over and
over like an album stuck on one
track. And it felt so real.

Craig and Link slowly turn to each other in confusion.

BENNY

You were in it, Link. You were
dressed in this silk maroon tight-
fit shirt unbuttoned to the navel
and wearing black leather pants.

Craig and Link all of a sudden become intrigued.

LINK

Oh was I now? Why don't you tell me
more about this . . . (looking to
Craig in confusion) dream.

BENNY

All I recall is being exhausted and
then going out for a drink or two.
I must have somehow got home and
crashed. Then when I woke up this
morning I was a wreck. I never
drink in the morning; that's like
gospel with me. But this morning,
believe me, Craig, I didn't have a
choice. I'm freaking out here.

CRAIG

Because of this dream!?

BENNY

But it felt so real. Link, you were on a stage. And you looked out into the audience and saw me and stopped and said:

LINK

(interrupts to say the lines for Benny)

This is a special night for me. We all have someone who inspired us, a mentor. Mine is in the front row . . . Magic, come up and share a song with me.

BENNY

Yeah, (showing complete astonishment and bemusement) that's right. Then you grabbed my arm and lifted me on stage like I was a feather . . . my body was weightless and I had no power to resist. (pauses, lowers his head)

LINK

(to Craig) More like a ton of bricks.

BENNY

And at that moment I looked out into the audience . . . and I saw three broken hearts. The three last hearts I'd ever want to see broken. The three hearts I thought I was strengthening to that day. Then Link, you started rapping, and the music rose in volume.

BENNY

The lights turned dim. I can still see those three broken hearts, glowing in the dark. And I can still see Jewel, with that glow around her, our eyes the same eyes looking at both of us at the same time.

CRAIG

You got that right. I saw those eyes too . . . and the glow around Jewel's head.

BENNY

And those six heavy eyes locked
onto mine, weighing me down. I want
to cry, I try to scream out, but I
couldn't speak . . .

Benny, dreamy and in a world apart, begins singing.

(SONG 13: I WAS WRONG ALL THE WAY)

I CAN'T DESCRIBE THE WAY IT MADE ME FEEL
TO SEE BEFORE MY EYES, BUT PAST A SHIELD
MY LIFE, BROKEN AND PEELED
AND BE CULLED FROM IT SO I CAN'T HELP IT HEAL

SIX WEEPING EYES WASN'T PART OF MY PLAN
I KEPT LOOKING BACK CAUSE I COULDN'T HAVE RAN
IT WAS INTOXICATING, AND I CAN'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT WENT WRONG WITH MY CLAN

CHORUS:

(I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
BUT I KNOW I WAS STUNNED

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
I MUST HAVE BEEN DUMBED

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
CAUSE GOD HAD JUST COME
AND PUT EVERY ANSWER ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
NOW I KNOW I WAS OFF

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
BUT I'M SURROUNDED WITH LOSS

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
BUT I WAS HIGH ON SAUCE
IN THE STREETLIGHT ON A WEEKNIGHT CAUSE LIFE LOST CAUSE)

I KNEW I COULD HELP THEM
IF I COULD JUST LEAVE
AND WITH A BIT OF MONEY
THEY'D FIND SOME PEACE

I KNEW THEY'D MOVE UP
RIGHT THE RANKS
TO A LIFE A LUXURY
THAT I COULDN'T BANK

AND THEY MOVED UP
IT WORKED LIKE A CHARM
LOUNGING ON THE BEACH WITH PALMS

THE PLAN WENT THROUGH
AN HOUR AGO
I WAS RIGHT AND I KNEW

BUT I SAW SOMETHING SCARY
ON THE FACE OF ALL THREE
THEY GOT WHAT I WANTED
AND THEY DIDN'T NEED

SOMEWAY, SOMETHING WENT ASTRAY
AND I'M OUT NOW, LEFT ONLY TO PRAY

(Spoken)

WHAT AM I TO DO NOW
CONCEIVE A SOLUTION
THAT'S SOUND

NO,
I'M GONNA SIT THIS ONE OUT
AND HOPE WHILE I PRAY
THAT THINGS TURN AROUND

CAUSE THAT'S THE BEST I CAN BE
SILENT, WAITING, WISHING

CHORUS:
(I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
BUT I KNOW I WAS STUNNED

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
I MUST HAVE BEEN DUMBED

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
CAUSE GOD HAD JUST COME
AND PUT EVERY ANSWER ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
NOW I KNOW I WAS OFF

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
BUT I'M SURROUNDED WITH LOSS

I KNEW I WAS RIGHT
BUT I WAS HIGH ON SAUCE
IN THE STREETLIGHT ON A WEEKNIGHT CAUSE LIFE LOST CAUSE)

When he finishes he's drenched with tears, sweat and fatigue,
nearly collapsing on the chair near where to Craig is
standing.

CRAIG
Benny, you were there.

LINK
You were there Benny.

BENNY
I was there?

CRAIG
Benny, it was real.

LINK
It was! No doubt, Benny. I did that little concert and you came.

BENNY
It was real?

CRAIG
The only person in that place that looked worse than you . . . was Jewel.

We hear the BEAT of a THICK BASS DRUM as all turn silent for a long moment of realization. After a short bit, Jimbo blurts out.

JIMBO
Benny, come over here and give me a hand while I watch the next World Series winner Detroit Tigers.

BENNY
I'll pass. I haven't been watching this year.

JIMBO
Cheer up, man, you could have been married to my wife. How's that Perfect Plan going, Benny?

BENNY
I need a new plan.

JIMBO
Well, well. Just give it time. All things need time. You give up too easily.

Just then the door opens and Cookie walks in. Serving drinks, drinking drinks and watching sports cease as she lustfully approaches Benny.

COOKIE
Hi, Benny. Can I sit?

LINK

Sit with me, Cookie! I can make you crumble!

CRAIG

(blurting out) Not now, Cookie. This is not a good time.

BENNY

(dismissing Craig) Yes it is. Cookie, please, your welcome.

COOKIE

Been thinking about you.

BENNY

You have?

COOKIE

A girl like me never had a chance, did she? Oh, we had our times together (smile devilishly), didn't we?

Benny looks up wearily, but attentive.

COOKIE

But then after the party . . . you took me home. After the movie . . . you took me home. No matter where we went or what we did, you always took me home.

Benny takes his hand and gently cups it under her chin, staring at her.

BENNY

You hate me too?

COOKIE

No, Benny. You're one of the good ones. You're the type a woman can love.

BENNY

Don't. Love Benny, get hurt by Benny. And Heaven forbid Benny loves you. I gave them everything I thought they wanted and everything they didn't need. All they ever wanted was me.

COOKIE

I could have told you that the last time we sat chattin' right here on these same two seats.

BENNY

Maybe I didn't want to figure it out. Lovin' ain't an easy thing. Maybe I didn't want to handle it. But what replaces a father . . . a husband?

COOKIE

Nothing. That's why it will all be fine.

BENNY

(pauses to reflect)

You know Cookie, I just couldn't figure it out at first. I knew Garland, and lots of other men, would go after her once I stepped out of the way. But why on God's earth would she go for Garland, the most superficial and ingenuous man on this planet? I went over and over it and couldn't imagine. Then one day it hit me . . . moron, moron, moron, I said to myself. How could I be so dumb.

COOKIE

He's got more money than a bank.

BENNY

It was the children, their futures. Jewel would do anything to advance their lives and I left her desperate for a way out, destitute with no money to support them. I did it on purpose so she'd seek out someone, not realizing that Garland would be beating at her door the second she was in need. I set up her up with no option but to whore herself to him.

COOKIE

Can't do that to yourself too, Benny. She had her choices to make just like you did.

BENNY

(morosely)

Cookie, any way you look at it, I messed this up so bad I might not even live through what's going to happen.

COOKIE

I promise you, if you have forgiveness in your heart . . . and I'm sure she does too . . . things are not as bleak as you think.

BENNY

You can die doing what you believe is right, even though what you did is wrong . . . it can happen.

COOKIE

Come on. What you gonna do now?

BENNY

I don't think there's much I can do. Cookie, you'd have to understand the pact Jewel and I had; she fixes things in her head and . . . it's too late. Infidelity! You're incorrect; for her, no forgiveness.

COOKIE

Honey, you need a new point of view. All you did was put 'em on loan; and men like you come around once in a lifetime. Jewel . . .

BENNY

Hates me. Cookie, it's not about her and Garland, it's about you and I . . . in some crazy way I may have done right, but the price is a dead soul.

COOKIE

If you're ready to cash in one of those coupons I gave you then I'll give you a formula to fix it; I'm going to tell you exactly what to do.

From the bar Link calls over to Benny.

LINK

Brighten that face up, Benny.

JIMBO
Looks like he's given up again?

LINK
That's right.

JIMBO
And I believe I gave you clear
instructions about giving up in
Jimbo's . . . it don't fly.

COOKIE
Don't worry boys, I'm taking care
of it.

JIMBO
How is that, little lady?

ENSEMBLE
Yeah. How is that, little lady?

COOKIE
'Cause I'm gonna show him the way.

ENSEMBLE
The way to what?

COOKIE
The way to get moved.

The bar patrons all rise, Jimbo comes from behind his
station. The music starts.

COOKIE
I've got the recipe.

(SONG 14: THE RECIPE TO GET MOVED)

YOU, NEED THE RECIPE TO
GET MOVED, AND DO WHAT YOU PRAY TO
DO, SO LISTEN I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU NEED ME TO

IT'S QUITE THE TASK, I'LL AGREE
BUT I CAN GIVE YOU THE RECIPE
YOU'LL CHANGE HER MIND
WITH JUST A BIT OF GRIND

WRITE THIS DOWN I'D RECOMMEND
CAUSE SHE'LL REBUT 'TIL THE BITTER END
FROM EVERY ANGLE AND BEND
YOU'LL PROD AND SHE'LL DEFEND

THE FIRST STEP DOESN'T TAKE A PRO
GIVE HER A HOLLER, BUT JUST FOR SHOW

SHE'LL HANG UP I KNOW
 BUT THE SEED YOU PLANT IS SURE TO GROW

THEN WHEN THE TIME'S RIGHT
 FIND A PLACE SHE GOES AT NIGHT
 SHOW UP IN STYLE WITH A SMILE
 BUT DON'T REUNITE

SAY NOT A WORD, NOT A PEEP
 JUST BE SEEN, AND RETREAT
 THEN YOU'LL BE SWOOSHIN' THROUGH HER HEAD ALL WEEK

NOW YOU'RE MOVIN' ON THE KILL LIKE A MATADOR
 WITH A SHINING SWORD AND A BULL THAT'S SORE
 THIS MY FRIEND, THIS IS WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR SCORE

A GESTURE, NOT TOO LARGE,
 LIVE IN PERSON, PREPARED AND ON GUARD
 SOMETHING SPECIAL, TO MAKE HER SMILE
 AND FIGHT DENIAL

Ensemble sings quiet runs in the background during the following two stanzas, leading to the chorus.

SHE'LL FALL TO YOU INSIDE AT LEAST
 AND LONG FOR YOU WHILE SHE SLEEPS
 HER HEART WILL POUND A BEAT THAT'S LOUD
 AND YOU'LL STAND PROUD

YOU'LL BE READY WITH ALL YOUR LINES
 ONE THEN THE NEXT FALLING IN RHYME
 IT'S BOUND TO WORK, THE PLAN IS SUBLIME

IT'S TRUE, THIS IS THE RECIPE TO
 GET MOVED, AND DO WHAT YOU PRAY TO
 DO, I'LL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING
 Ensemble: THAT YOU NEED ME TO

(MOVE
 Cookie: DO IT WITH ME
 Ensemble: GROVE
 Cookie: RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME
 Ensemble: GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT
 Cookie (simultaneous with line above): MOVE, SMILE WITH ME
 TONIGHT

Ensemble: MOVE
 Cookie: DO IT WITH ME
 Ensemble: GROVE
 Cookie: RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME
 Ensemble: GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT
 Cookie (simultaneous with line above): MOVE, SMILE WITH ME
 TONIGHT)

Cookie: GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT
Ensemble (simultaneous with line above): MOVE, SMILE WITH ME
TONIGHT
Cookie: GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT)

Cookie picks up her bag, bending down to hug the still
reclining Benny.

COOKIE
You know what to do?

Benny nods, but the enthusiasm she tried to inspire dubious.

BENNY
Thanks.

Cookie leaves. Customers take their seats. Benny gets up and
wanders to a corner of the room. He appears to be speaking to
himself, giving himself a pep talk. Finally, he grips his
hands and wags his head up and down, as if he's found the
courage to act. He picks up his cell phone and fingers it.
Several RINGS. He hangs up, the bravery of the moment
seemingly lost. Then he takes a few steps, stops to ponder
again, turns back to where he was standing, takes a deep
breath, picks up his phone and again fingers it; three RINGS.

BENNY
(hesitantly)
Jewel, it's Benny.

The SOUND of the receiver hanging up leaves Benny depleted.
He moves center stage, stopping to examine himself in a
mirror above the bar. His head drops but then as he slowly
raises it and stares, a force seems to take hold of him; he
begins humming the Cookie's recipe song. Then a new sound
begins and Benny extemporaneously imposes his will.

(SONG 15: GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP)

GOTTA GET GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
GOTTA GET GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
GOTTA GET GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP

CHORUS:
(GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
SO I LOOK JUST RIGHT
PACKED IN A PACKAGE
SHE CAN'T DENY

WRAPPED UP
LIKE A NICE SURPRISE
SO THE MOMENT WE MEET
SHE'LL WANNA SEE INSIDE)

I'M WHAT THEY NEED AND THEY ALWAYS DID
AND I'M THE ONLY THING I COULD ALWAYS GIVE
A HAPPY HARMONY HUMMED THROUGH THE HOUSE
AND I WAS DEAF TO IT, THOUGH IT WAS SO DAMN LOUD

SHE ALWAYS KNEW WHAT I WAS TAKING AWAY
THE FIRE INSIDE ME THAT WARMED THE DAY
THE MAGIC IN MY NAME
AND ALL THE LOVELY NIGHTS THAT WE'D CUDDLE AND LAY

I WANTED RUBIES LIKE CHUNKS OF GREEN
TO LATHER HER UP LIKE ROYALTY
I WANTED FANCY SHINY THINGS
CAUSE THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE SAYS THAT A WOMEN NEEDS

I WANTED CHRISTMAS TREES IN THE MIDDLE OF SPRING
SO EVERY TIME I'D COME HOME I'D HAVE GIFTS TO BRING
BUT I'D NEVER NEED A CHRISTMAS TREE
TO GIVE THE GIFT OF ME

CHORUS:

(GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
SO I LOOK JUST RIGHT
PACKED IN A PACKAGE
SHE CAN'T DENY

WRAPPED UP
LIKE A NICE SURPRISE
SO THE MOMENT WE MEET
SHE'LL WANNA SEE INSIDE)

NOW THAT I LOST HER TRUST
I CAN ONLY GET BACK IF I GET PAST HER DISGUST
I GOTTA SHINE UP AND LOOK BRAND NEW
SO SHE KNOWS WHAT I DID I CAN NO LONGER DO

AND SHE SEES I CAN MEND WHAT I BENT
AND PUT US TOGETHER SO IT LASTS FOREVER
ONLY THEN I CAN GIVE THEM ME
AND WE'LL BE BACK, AS A FAMILY

GOTTA GET GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
GOTTA GET GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
GOTTA GET GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP

Music continues while Benny walks back and forth across the bar, reaches for a glass with water on the counter and takes a sip. After a few moments, he picks up the phone again, fingers it and waits.

BENNY

Ma'am, it's Benny Wright. Is Jewel there?

(MORE)

BENNY (cont'd)
 (pause) Do you know where she went?
 (pause) You say she'll be back at
 3:00? Are you sure? (pause) All
 right, thank you. I appreciate it .
 . . and you have a great day.

CHORUS:
 (GOTTA GET WRAPPED UP
 SO I LOOK JUST RIGHT
 PACKED IN A PACKAGE
 SHE CAN'T DENY

WRAPPED UP
 LIKE A NICE SURPRISE
 SO THE MOMENT WE MEET . . .

SHE'LL WANNA SEE INSIDE)

DARK:

SCENE 6: GARLAND'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Jewel, standing by the kitchen counter, is tending to her nails. The door opens to a brisk entry of Georgia. She's dressed in wild colors and eccentric style. She scans the room as if it's her stage.

JEWEL
 What are you doing here?

GEORGIA
 You don't want me either?

Georgia moves to the opposite side of where Jewel stands, picking up a bottle of nail polish, opening and applying it.

JEWEL
 What's wrong?

GEORGIA
 What's always wrong? I can't never
 find a way to keep my love alive.

JEWEL
 You can't keep your love alive?
 Well, (mimicking Georgia) "honey,
 my love ain't exactly hoppin' and
 jivin' either."

GEORGIA
 (paying no mind to Jewel) They
 always love me, to the bitter end.

JEWEL

Puts you far ahead of the field.

GEORGIA

Well not quite. Time I come clean.
How many times have I brought a man
over to your home for a lovely
evening?

JEWEL

None.

GEORGIA

Right. And how many times have I
been married?

JEWEL

None.

GEORGIA

Not quite. (counting fingers) Six .
. . at last count . . . six times
I've been married.

JEWEL

Six times you've what?

GEORGIA

Not really, see, I ain't never been
de--vorced.

JEWEL

Six marriages? Six marriages!? No
divorces? And your best friend
never once knew about one? What in
the name of God, Georgia, are you
talking about?

GEORGIA

And I loved every one of them up to
the day they died.

JEWEL

What did you do, kill 'em?

GEORGIA

No, I didn't have to kill em', dag
gum it. But I hate to say they just
didn't die off on their own either.
All my husbands just happened to be
locked up . . . incarcerated on
death row.

She gently dabs the corner of each eye with a hanky she takes out of her purse.

GEORGIA
(outburst of sorrow)
And She-She is going away tomorrow.

Jewel looks astonished.

JEWEL
Who!? She-She?

GEORGIA
Don't let no name fool you, he was
as much man as any I've had and
I've had . . . well, quite a few.

JEWEL
(confused how to react)
I'm . . . sorry? Will you be okay?

GEORGIA
(recomposed)
I always am. My friend taught me
the trick and once I gave it a try
I just couldn't get enough. You
have to be cut out for it, though.
Not everyone is.

JEWEL
You're serious?

GEORGIA
That's right, I'm dead serious. And
I'll tell you what, they were six
of the best relationships of my
life. (animated/excited) I'm
heading down to the hoosegow to
pick me up #7 before She-She turns
cold; that's just how he'd want it.

JEWEL
(spurning)
Well Georgia, call me old fashioned
but when all this is over I'll
still be looking for something a
little more long-term.

GEORGIA
Oh I know exactly what you want.

Just then Benny steps on stage, but Jewel has her back to him.

Georgia is staring straight at Benny, whose at attention, a single long-stem red rose in his hand. He looks handsome and groomed. He's eyeing Jewel.

GEORGIA
Speaking of the devil.

Jewel looks back and sees him. She quickly tries to run out of the room, but Benny grabs her firmly by the shoulders. He holds her in place, peering deep into her orbits.

BENNY
We need our life back.

She twists and pulls, but he holds tight.

BENNY
Come on, Jewel. Please, just hear me.

JEWEL
I heard you, Benny. (bellowing) You want the rest of the world to hear you too? I'm the chaff off the wheat . . . I was . . .

BENNY
It's just not like that.

JEWEL
Oh, I see. I was so infinitely valuable you traded me in.

BENNY
I never . . .

JEWEL
Oh, yeah. You did, you did!

BENNY
This isn't the place . . .

JEWEL
Then why did you come here? I told you to get out, now get out!

One more time the door opens, this time to Garland. Friendly, composed and typically self-assured.

GARLAND
Was I invited to the party?

Rather than relieved to see him, Jewel's eyes are daggers.

JEWEL

(to Garland) He's your friend, you deal with him.

GARLAND

Benny, what's up?

BENNY

I've come for my wife and family.

JEWEL

You don't own us.

GARLAND

Now I think you better leave her alone. She's happy with me, so are the kids. (pause) You made your choice.

JEWEL

(to Garland) Happy? Let's not go that far. We haven't shared a genuine moment . . .

GARLAND

Jewel!

JEWEL

You speak, but your words never say a damn thing. You're so genteel, but you never feel, you're never real. (look of disgust) Between the two of you there's not half a man.

GARLAND

Baby, you're just upset about Benny. Let's talk.

JEWEL

Again, and again, and again. More of your lines?

GARLAND

What lines?

Music begins.

JEWEL

(to Garland) Your lines. (to Benny) Your lines.

(SONG 16: YOU GOT LINES)

CHORUS:

(EVERY TIME THE SITUATIONS ARISE,
YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES)

YOU SAY YOU GOTTA HOLD ME, WHEN YOU SEE ME
AND KEEP TIGHT 'TIL THE END OF MY LIFE
HE'S BREEZY LIKE FEATHERS IN THE WIND
SAYS I'M HIS SENSIBLE WIFE

YOU NEED ME, TO KEEP GROWING
WITHOUT ME YOU COULD NEVER SURVIVE
AND THIS ONE, HE'S OH SO CONFIDENT AND LIGHT
A LITTLE BIT OF LAUGHTER, AND HIS TOUCH OF SPICE

YOU SAY I GOT, BEAUTY AND SASS
I'M LIVELY, CARING, AND SO GREAT TO GRASP
YOU WANT ME NEED ME MUST,
COULD, GOTTA, SHOULDN'T, BUT YOU'RE FILLED UP WITH LUST

CHORUS:
(EVERY TIME THE SITUATIONS ARISE,
Georgia and Jewel: YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT
LINES, YOU GOT LINES)

Jewel: EVERY TIME THE SITUATIONS ARISE,
Georgia and Jewel: YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT
LINES)

O-OH, I PLEA WITH YOU
STOP THIS, I'M SO CONFUSED
I'VE GOT A WHOLE LOT OF LOVE
BUT I DON'T LOVE IT ALL
A COUPLE OF MEN
THAT TEAR ME APART

I WANT TO WANT YOU, BUT I CAN'T IT SEEMS (to Garland)
I WISH TO HATE YOU, BUT YOU SHAKE ME SO DEEP (to Benny)
YOU BUY ME, SO KINDLY, THE FINEST OF THINGS (to Garland)
BUT YOU SMILE, AND SUDDENLY, I'M WEAK AT THE KNEES (to Benny)

Benny:
OH I KNEW IT'S NOT IN MY HEAD
WHEN I TURN TO LOOK YOU DEAD
IN THOSE EYES, YOU GET SHY, AND YOU HOLD BACK A SIGH

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS I LOVE
LIKE WHEN I'M GIVING YOU A HUG
AND THOSE HANDS SLIP DEEP IN BACK OF MY HEART

Music stops as Jewel speaks.

JEWEL

Stop!!!

JEWEL

Well, well, well. Look what you
seem to have packed tight and ready
to go; lines, lines, lines.

Music starts again.

Jewel:

CHORUS:

(EVERY TIME THE SITUATIONS ARISE,
Georgia and Jewel: YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT
LINES, YOU GOT LINES

Jewel: EVERY TIME THE SITUATIONS ARISE,
Georgia and Jewel: YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT LINES, YOU GOT
LINES)

JEWEL

So sick of your lines.

As music stops, Benny entreats.

BENNY

Jewel . . .

JEWEL

What now?

BENNY

No lines, alright, just the truth.
(pause) The evening this all began,
Garland told me . . .

JEWEL

I know what Garland told you and I
know you were on your way to New
York that day.

BENNY

There was more. I saw a man shot
and he died that night in my arms.
He said to me that we have to do
what's right even if we die.

JEWEL

(cutting him off harshly)
I don't care . . .

BENNY

(forcefully)
It's important.
(MORE)

BENNY (cont'd)

After that Jimbo said the same thing and then Link did too. It all came together; for once it made sense and I knew no matter what I had to make it right for my family.

JEWEL

(disgustedly)

The man killed was dead! Jimbo lost his family! Link nearly lost his life! And you're making sense out of that! So what did you lose, Benny, your mind?

BENNY

No, I lost faith. After they crushed my dream back in New York, just like that, one more rotten time, I was smashed to nothing.

JEWEL

Well, I'm sorry you took it that way; I'm sorry for all of us but I can't wipe out your sins.

BENNY

I wanted to take care of you better, I wanted to give you a better life. I didn't know how.

JEWEL

(irate)

A better life? What I've lived the last couple months . . .

A tear breaks out of Jewel's right eye and her voice quivers.

JEWEL

Benny, there's no road back. You knew damn well what the one rule was I'd never tolerate being broken, and you went ahead and destroyed us.

Sobbing and breathing deeply, she turns to leave. making her way toward the front door. Benny, pleading, yells out to stop her.

BENNY

But what you think happened between me and, well, you know . . .

Jewel ignores his words and is about to open the front door to leave.

As she does, she notices it's opened ahead of her and she finds herself face-to-face with . . . a beautiful woman she doesn't recognize as Cookie. Her dress is toned down. She glances at Jewel and then invites herself into the house. Cookie takes the opportunity to embellish on Benny's last statement, letting Jewel know that it was her he was referring to.

COOKIE

Me. I'm Cookie.

JEWEL

(outraged)

You! What are you doing here?!

COOKIE

Figured the two of you could just maybe use my help . . . it's the least I can do.

JEWEL

And I've seen the most you can do.

BENNY

Cookie, remember that coupon?

COOKIE

(matter-a-fact)

You bet I do. Jewel, IT . . . never happened.

JEWEL

Don't you protect him.

COOKIE

Benny never wanted me.

JEWEL

Then what in God's name were you two . . .

COOKIE

I was just another piece of his plan. He wanted you to think he was having an affair, so you'd hate him, kick him out, and find someone better. (pause) Would have been a perfect plan . . . but, too bad, you two loved each other too much to make it work.

Jewel stands exhausted, overwhelmed; too much emotion even for tears.

GARLAND
(chuckling, looking at
Cookie)
Ditto that, darling.

COOKIE
Ditto what?

GARLAND
I'll admit I would have . . . but
Jewel never let herself get cozy
with me . . . never even slept in
the same room with me; hell, she
never even held my hand. (bellows a
huge laugh) You win, buddy. She's
yours, Benny. Always has been . . .
always will be.

JEWEL
(looks at Garland
contemptuously)
Cookie may work better for you.

Garland and Cookie look at one another. Both simultaneously
give a shrug, as if to say, "Maybe." Jewel breaks to run out
of the room, over her shoulder looking back at Benny.

JEWEL
(total exasperation)
Oh, this is beautiful!

Jewel exits.

DARK:

SCENE 7: INSIDE WRIGHT FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Shana at the table reading. Jewel walks in. Shana gets up to
greet her.

SHANA
Mommy, I want to have a woman to
woman talk with you.

JEWEL
A woman to woman talk?

SHANA
Well, I've been giving it a lot of
thought. You have terribly mixed
feelings now, about daddy, and
that's understandable with
everything that's happened.
(MORE)

SHANA (cont'd)

You've been hurt and people have a
tendency when they've been hurt to
. . .

Dion enters, headphones drooping in his left hand, head sunk.
He lifts his head to address Jewel and Shana.

DION

(as if making a
proclamation)

My eyes are wide open now. They're
wide open and I don't like what I
see. I've been closing my eyes and
dreaming of everything that'll
never be real. But they're wide
open now. I stood on stage,
everyone locked on me, mic in one
hand, the whole school in the
other. The beat dropped. I poured
my soul out. I hit every snare drum
and tip-toed along every high hat.

SHANA

So what went wrong? What?

DION

And after the show I see my boy
Mike with two business cards in his
left hand, shaking two business
arms with his right. But to me,
they didn't even say good job. Not
even a "way to go, kid," My eyes
are open and I see music for what
it is, a dream.

JEWEL

Music is a dream, Dion. And
sometimes it's even a good one.

Interrupting the conversation with a dramatic change of tone,
Link enters with a long stem red rose attached to a small
card, standing tall and dressed nicely.

LINK

(Calling out) Delivery! Delivery
for Mrs. Jewel Wright. (reading
from the card) One long stem red
rose.

SHANA

Who's sending roses?

LINK

One long stem red rose for my first
evening coming home at 2:30 am.

Link exits as Craig enters, dressed exactly like Link and
carrying the exact same type of rose.

CRAIG

(Calling out) Delivery! Delivery
for Mrs. Jewel Wright. (reading
from the card) One long stem red
rose . . .

SHANA

(giggling) Mommy what in the heck?

CRAIG

One long stem red rose for your
first step onto a sandy beach
without me.

As Craig exits Link enters again, with another rose.

LINK

One long stem red rose for every
line.

Craig enters with his final rose, and as he speaks Benny
enters behind with a long stem red rose of his own, nicely
dressed.

BENNY

One long stem red rose for every
Sunday morning we didn't lay away
in bed.

Benny walks out in front of Craig and Link.

Benny begins to speak rhythmically, speech turning into a
love song.

(SONG 17: EVERY MOMENT LASTS FOREVER)

IS IT TOO LATE
TO TELL YOU DEAR
THAT EVERY HOUR
FEELS LIKE A YEAR

KNOWING YOU'RE IN PAIN
AND I CAN'T MAKE IT GO AND DISAPPEAR

AT FIRST I WAS ALONE
YOUR HURT UNCLEAR
AND I COULD LIVE IN PEACE

THINKING OF YOUR CHEER

BUT NOW I ONLY
FEEL CONTRITE
AND I CAN'T GET THROUGH
A NIGHT

EVERY SECOND'S LIKE A YEAR
EVERY MOMENT'S BLEAK
AN HOUR'S LIKE A YEAR
A MINUTE A WEEK

A DAY IS LIKE A DECADE
A WEEK'S A SCORE
A MONTH'S LIKE A LIFETIME
A YEAR IS LIKE FOUR

Chorus:
(EVERY MOMENT LIVES FOREVER
EVERY MINUTE LASTS 'TIL NEVER
EVERY HOUR'S LIKE A YEAR
AND EVERY DAY IS PACKED WITH TEARS)

I NEVER KNEW
THE BEST THING FOR ME
WAS FOR ME TO BE WITH YOU

SO TAKE ME TAKE ME TAKE ME BACK
GIVE ME ANOTHER CRACK AND I'LL STACK UP
TAKE ME BACK FOR THE SAKE OF TOMORROW
TAKE ME BACK FOR MY SORROW

IT'S G-U-A-R-A-N-T
E-E-D TO BE A SMILE SPREE

(Shana:
EVERY MOMENT LIVES FOREVER
EVERY MINUTES LASTS 'TIL NEVER
EVERY HOUR'S LIKE A YEAR
AND EVERY DAY IS PACKED WITH TEARS

Dion:
EVERY MOMENT LIVES FOREVER
EVERY MINUTES LASTS 'TIL NEVER
EVERY HOUR'S LIKE A YEAR
AND EVERY DAY IS PACKED WITH TEARS

Benny, Shana and Dion: EVERY MOMENT LIVES FOREVER
All four: EVERY MINUTES LASTS 'TIL NEVER
EVERY HOUR'S LIKE A YEAR
AND EVERY DAY IS PACKED WITH TEARS

Benny and Jewel: EVERY MOMENT LIVES FOREVER
Shana and Dion: EVERY MOMENT (simultaneous with 'LIVES

FOREVER')

Benny and Jewel: EVERY MINUTE LASTS 'TIL NEVER

Shana and Dion: EVERY MINUTE (simultaneous with 'LASTS 'TIL NEVER')

Benny and Jewel: EVERY HOUR'S LIKE A YEAR

Shana and Dion: EVERY HOUR (simultaneous with 'LIKE A YEAR')

All four: EVERY DAY IS PACKED WITH TEARS

Benny, Shana and Dion begin the chorus one more time together with Jewel joining the last two lines. They all stand silently for a moment, holding hands and with eyes closed look upward toward the sky.

BENNY

Lovin' ain't an easy thing, Jewel.
You said it best. But I'd move
heaven and earth one long stem red
rose at a time to work my whole
life at it with you.

JEWEL

(tearfully)

Benny . . . the pain you put me
through, you've put us through.
It's been unbearable. But I look in
your eyes, and somehow I can't help
but love you while I hate you.
(pause) For the sake of the
children, for our sake, you earned
yourself a shot.

Benny falls into Jewel's arms, exhausted in relief and flush with emotion.

BENNY

I've had better plans.

SHANA

(unknowingly humorous) This is
going to take some time to heal.
Feelings may be jumbled up for a
while (to Jewel) You may be
experiencing love one second and
hate the next, but keep remembering
this moment . . . and you'll get
through it.

BENNY

Thank you, Dr. Wright.

Benny notices Dion's somber mood.

BENNY

And what's wrong with you? Things are looking up now, man.

DION

(curt)
Not really.

JEWEL

(to Benny) School concert. Didn't go so well it seems.

BENNY

(smiling coyly, arm around Dion)
Welcome to the highs and lows, son. The road is long and winding, but who wants their roads short!?

SHANA

(blurting out) Mom, you said we could go to Angel Face's concert Friday.

JEWEL

Did you get tickets?

SHANA

(ranting excitedly) How many should I get? Can I call now?

JEWEL

Sure, get four; we'll all go.

DION

(harshly)
I'm ain't going. I'm done with music.

SHANA

Quitter, quitter, pumpkin . . .
(confused) quitter.

DION

Pumpkin quitter?

SHANA

(dubious self-assurance)
Yeah!

DION

I can't take it. Sorry dad, but I'm not screwing my life up TOO waiting for a miracle.

Dion jets out of the room.

JEWEL

(to Shana) Get those tickets; and make it four.

SHANA

He won't go.

JEWEL

Over my dead body, he won't. (turns to Benny) Kid's got a size ten hurt and size eight heart. That's the difference between men and women. Women know they're short on heart and long on hurt and surrender. Men think they can win, and will fight to the death trying.

BENNY

That must be why I'm still fighting.

JEWEL

And with your son following you stride for stride.

Jewel chuckles freely. Shana swirls her body several times on the way to the phone. She presses in a number and holds the receiver.

SHANA

(repeating the message) Your call may be monitored for quality purposes. (She takes her index finger and aims it at her temple as a gesture of absurd futility, then continues repeating the verbal message she's listening to on the phone.) Thank you for your patience. All our operators are busy helping other customers. Please hold on and your call will be taken in the order received. If you'd like to order on-line we can assist you at www.blahtickets.com. Your wait is currently three minutes. (whimsically) Mom, do they say that to everybody?

JEWEL

Only to you, Shana.

SHANA

I hope there's still good seats.
(into the phone) Hold on, please.
(to Benny) Daddy, there's a man on
the phone for you.

BENNY

Let me take it.

Benny grabs the phone and Shana goes to the kitchen area.

SHANA

Daddy, don't forget the tickets.

BENNY

I'll handle it. (into the phone)
You're sure now my friend? You bet
I can do it. Friday? Where else
could you expect to find me?
Thanks, bye.

Benny lingers at the phone, silently for a brief period
before hanging up. Shana yells back across the room.

SHANA

What happened to my call?

BENNY

Oh my, I . . .

SHANA

You forgot?

BENNY

I'm kidding.

SHANA

You got them?

BENNY

Quick as a wink.

SHANA

That fast? You got them that fast?
Did you get amazing seats?

BENNY

Good enough, my girl. Now eat.

Benny goes back to the kitchen. Jewel measures him carefully,
perceiving a subtle glimpse of a smile. Shana shrugs, and
then begins helping Jewel with the food.

SHANA

(excitedly)

Daddy, you're not quitting on your music (glances at Dion who has come to the table) like some people I know, are you?

BENNY

No, I learned my lesson about giving up on things you love. In fact, I just finished some new tracks. (to Dion) About me; for me. Even if the rest of the world doesn't care.

DION

(unimpressed)

You're not going to make a lot of money printing home CD's.

SHANA

I still believe you'll make it, daddy. I feel it . . . right here (pointing to her heart).

BENNY

You keep that hope alive.

SHANA

(impulsively) I can't wait to see MY MAN, Angel, again.

BENNY

Oh speaking of your man, that call I just got was about a meeting after work Friday. I can't miss it, big opportunity. So I might just have to meet you at the concert.

FADE TO DARK:

SCENE 8: LARGE CONCERT STAGE - FRIDAY EVENING

At the front flanks of the stage are chairs, facing both the audience and center stage. At the right sit Craig, Dion, Shana and Jewel next to an empty seat. On the left side sits the rest of the cast as part of the audience.

SHANA

I can't get over these seats, mom.

JEWEL

Neither can I.

CRAIG

(leaning forward to Shana
from his seat behind)
Your daddy knows how to do it
right, huh?

DION

(responding to Craig but
looking directly at
Garland)
I'm sure the 'great one' gave him a
hand.

Garland smiles but gives nothing away. The lights begin to
flicker causing Shana to fidget in her seat.

SHANA

So much for promises. Daddy's going
to miss it.

ANNOUNCER

If you'll all have your seats the
show will be beginning soon.

The audience commences a rhythmic clap, eager to get on with
the performance. The noise continues for several seconds,
intensifying progressively.

ANNOUNCER

Your attention, please. We're sorry
to inform you that our opening act,
FlipSide, took ill and won't be
with us tonight.

The audience expresses displeasure.

ANNOUNCER

(excitedly)
But I promise you will not be
disappointed. You'll be thrilled to
know that this man coming out in a
moment has been around forever, but
he's coming out brand new. Sounds
bigger and better than ever, trust
me when I tell you to put your
hands together for the man whose
about to release his new album
'Wrapped,' that's right, it's . . .
MAAAGIC.

The crowd claps hesitantly, but Jewel, Shana and Dion are
stopped in their tracks, motionless. The lights brighten.

Benny can be seen to the right of the stage. His eyes are closed momentarily before he raises his right arm above his head, eyeing his index finger as if it's pointing the way toward his communion with God. He runs on stage. His head raised high, he closes his eyes.

BENNY

Welcome to the show! I couldn't be more thrilled to be here and to tell you . . . this will be the last public performance I'll ever make as a recording artist.

Benny waits.

BENNY

(laughing)

Thank God no applause there. My career may have not been what I dreamed but my dreams are fulfilled. In front of me are the three people I love most in the world.

The audience applauds.

BENNY

I'll admit that I took a few wrong turns getting here, read a couple signs incorrectly. It ended up being a long grueling journey; but I fell in love with fighting for what I believe in, fell in love with the fight to do what I thought best for the people I love.

Pausing for more clapping.

BENNY

I even fell in love with the brick walls placed in my path because I fell in love with breaking them down. Oh, many times I sat in front of them, sighing, letting them feel like a stone cold wall, but finally I fell in love with standing up to the giant obstacles. I learned the hard way that I just needed to put on a smile cheek-to-cheek and get hammering through whatever was holding me back.

(MORE)

BENNY (cont'd)

I wrote this music as a reminder to me--and for any of my friends out there stuck in a grind--to play whenever you're busting through hard times and tearing down brick walls . . . because I want to be right there with you, because it's my favorite thing to do.

(SONG 18: WINDOW TO THE SKY)

CHORUS:

(I'VE GOT MY WINDOW OPEN TO THE SKY
AIN'T NO CLOUDY DAY GONNA BREAK MY HIGH
MY WINDOW'S OPEN TO THE SKY
AND I'M WAITIN' WITH A SMILE FOR THE SUN TO SHINE)

I HAD A VIEW THAT COULD BLOW MY MIND
AND OPENED THE WORLD TO MY SHIELDED SHRINE
ON THE EVENINGS IN JULY
I SAW BLUE BIRDS ON MOONLIT VINES

RED CLOUDS CLOAKED THE TREES
ON A DAWN IN THE MIDDLE OF AN AUTUMN BREEZE
ROSES BLOOMED FROM LEAVES
WITH A GRACE THAT COULD CARRY ME TO PEACE WITH EASE

BUT THEN TIMES GOT TOUGH
AND THE DAYS GOT DARK AND THE DARK GOT STUCK
MONTHS PASSED BY, MIRED IN DUSK
AND I LOST MY DESIRE AND LUST

SO I STAINED MY WINDOW WITH A PAINTED GLAZE
'CAUSE I'D GIVEN UP ON SUNNY DAYS
BUT THE MOMENT I DID
I WAS LIVIN IN A HOPELESS PIT

I WAS DEAD INSIDE, NO HOPES AT ALL
NOTHING TO PRAY FOR, NOTHING RESOLVED
I JUST LONGED TO SEE HAZE AND FOG
AT LEAST THEN I COULD HOPE TO SEE SOMETHING EVOLVE

CHORUS:

(I'VE GOT MY WINDOW OPEN TO THE SKY
AIN'T NO CLOUDY DAY GONNA BREAK MY HIGH
MY WINDOW'S OPEN TO THE SKY
AND I'M WAITIN' WITH A SMILE FOR THE SUN TO SHINE)

NOBODY LIKES IT WHEN THE MONTHS SPILL RAIN
EVERYBODY'S WISHED THAT THEIR WINDOW WAS STAINED
BUT ONCE YOU GIVE UP AND THROW IT AWAY
YOU'LL NEVER SEE THE SUN AGAIN, NO WAY

YOU'LL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT AND THAT'S A-OKAY

IF YOU NEVER HAD A TASTE OF A SUMMER DAY
BUT WHEN YOU GET IT AND YOU SEEN THE VIEW
YOU CAN'T LIVE LIFE IN A HIDDEN ROOM

YOU'LL JUST CRY, AND YOU'LL DREAM OF SKY
DREAM OF CLOUDS AND DREAM OF LIGHT
YOU'LL EVEN DREAM OF RAIN ON GLOOMY NIGHTS
AND DREAM OF LIGHTNING STRIKES

SOMEHOW SOMEWAY
I GOT MY WINDOWS BACK TODAY
AND THIS TIME, COME RAIN OR SHINE
I AIN'T PAINTIN' NO WINDOW OF MINE

CHORUS:
I'VE GOT MY WINDOW OPEN TO THE SKY
AIN'T NO CLOUDY DAY GONNA BREAK MY HIGH
MY WINDOW'S OPEN TO THE SKY
AND I'M WAITIN' WITH A SMILE CAUSE THE SUN'S GONNA SHINE)

BENNY
A good friend of mine did one of my
songs, *Get Moved*. Anyone know it?

The audience claps affirmatively.

BENNY
Let's do it then.

The music begins and the audience sings the chorus several times with Benny.

Song: GET MOVED, reprise, X5)

(MOVE, DO IT WITH ME
GROOVE, RIGHT THROUGH IT WITH ME
GET MOVED, SMILE WITH ME TONIGHT)

BENNY
Bless you all.

Benny bows to the dazzled audience. His eyes lock onto Jewel's for a moment and then he jumps down to the floor and runs to her, holding her shoulders with his hands as he peers into her before hugging and kissing her.

CURTAIN CLOSE: