

LOVE/SICK

BY JOHN CARIANI

2023 EDITION

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LOVE/SICK received its world premiere production at Portland Stage Company (Anita Stewart, Artistic Director; Cami Barrantes, Managing Director) in Portland, Maine, opening on March 29, 2013. It was directed by Sally Wood, the set design was by Anita Stewart, the costume design was by Kathleen Brown, the lighting design was by Bryon Winn, the sound design was by Chris Fitze, the incidental music was by Julian Fleisher, the production stage manager was Shane Van Vleit. The play was comprised of ten short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE	Abigail Killeen, David Mason
THE SINGING TELEGRAM	Torsten Hillhouse, Patricia Buckley
WHAT?!?	David Mason, Torsten Hillhouse
THE ANSWER	Abigail Killeen, Torsten Hillhouse
UH-OH	David Mason, Patricia Buckley
LUNCH AND DINNER	Abigail Killeen, Torsten Hillhouse
CHICKEN	Abigail Killeen, David Mason
WHERE WAS I?	Abigail Killeen, Patricia Buckley
FORGOT	David Mason, Patricia Buckley
DESTINY	Patricia Buckley, Torsten Hillhouse

LOVE/SICK had its first developmental production at High Point University (Ed Simpson, Chair) in High Point, North Carolina, opening on September 30, 2010. It was directed by Jay Putnam, the set and lighting designs were by Matthew Emerson, the costume design was by Ami Shupe, the sound design was by Daniel Horney, the production stage manager was Amanda Mayes. The play was comprised of eight short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE	Anna-Parsons Charles, Dan Moldovan
THE SINGING TELEGRAM	Maggie Jo Saylor, Daniel Harr
THE ANSWER	Marie Ventrone, Nathan Ruffin
UH-OH	Jennifer Arnold, Cody Russell
LUNCH AND DINNER	Cate Lightburn, Nathan Ruffin
CHICKEN	Maggie Jo Saylor, Cody Russell

FORGOT Marie Ventrone, Daniel Harr
DESTINY Anna-Parsons Charles, Dan Moldovan

LOVE/SICK had its second developmental production at Ball State University (William Jenkins, Chair) in Muncie, Indiana, opening on November 1, 2012. It was directed by Eva Patton, the set design was by Bri Kuffell, the costume design was by Tyler Phillips, the lighting design was by Adam Kelly, the sound design was by Bryan Martina, the production stage manager was Caitie Noller. The play was comprised of ten short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE Cole Abell, Nancy Hale
THE SINGING TELEGRAM Katie Stofko, Edric Mitchell
WHAT?!? Jon Whitney, Brad Root
THE ANSWER Bradford Reilly, Kara Schoenhofer
UH-OH Amber Price, Jack McFarlane
LUNCH AND DINNER Macie Tonn, Jon Whitney
CHICKEN Brad Root, Cynthia Nesbit
WHERE WAS I? Sarah Paradise, Kara Schoenhofer
FORGOT Cole Abell, Katie Stofko
DESTINY Bradford Reilly, Macie Tonn

LOVE/SICK received a professional developmental production at Shadowland Theatre (Brendan Burke, Artistic Director) in Ellenville, New York, opening on June 21, 2013. It was directed by John Cariani and Brendan Burke, the set design was by Drew Francis, the costume design was by Holly Budd, the lighting design was by Chris Hallenbeck, the sound design was by Jeff Knapp, the incidental music was by Julian Fleisher, the production stage manager was Brittney Green. The play was comprised of ten short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE Katie Hartke, David Mason
THE SINGING TELEGRAM Daniel Robert Sullivan,
Kathy McCafferty
WHAT?!? Daniel Robert Sullivan, David Mason
THE ANSWER Katie Hartke, Daniel Robert Sullivan

UH-OH Kathy McCafferty, David Mason
LUNCH AND DINNER Daniel Robert Sullivan,
Katie Hartke
CHICKEN Katie Hartke, David Mason
FORGOT David Mason, Kathy McCafferty
WHERE WAS I? Katie Hartke, Kathy McCafferty
DESTINY Kathy McCafferty, Daniel Robert Sullivan

LOVE/SICK received a professional developmental production at the Public Theatre (Christopher Schario, Executive/Artistic Director; Janet Mitchko, Co-Artistic Director) in Lewiston, Maine, opening on October 1, 2013. It was directed by Christopher Schario, the set design was by Dan Bilodeau, the costume design was by Hannah J. Brown, the lighting design was by Bart Garvey, the sound design was by Larry French, the production stage manager was Lisa Bragdon. The play was comprised of ten short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE William Peden, Heather Dilly
THE SINGING TELEGRAM Sarah Corey, Torsten Hillhouse
WHAT?!? William Peden, Torsten Hillhouse
THE ANSWER Heather Dilly, William Peden
UH-OH Sarah Corey, Torsten Hillhouse
LUNCH AND DINNER Heather Dilly, Torsten Hillhouse
CHICKEN Sarah Corey, William Peden
WHERE WAS I? Heather Dilly, Sara Corey
FORGOT William Peden, Heather Dilly
DESTINY Sarah Corey, Torsten Hillhouse

LOVE/SICK received a professional developmental production at Half Moon Theatre Company (Molly Katz, Executive Director; Kristy Grimes, Managing Director; Patty Wineapple, Producer) in Poughkeepsie, New York, opening on November 1, 2013. It was directed by Christopher V. Edwards, the set design and props were by Aaron Ethan Green, the costume design was by Charlotte Palmer, the lighting design was by Jared H. Goldstein, the sound design was by Jeff Knapp, the production stage manager was Michael Castillo.

The play was comprised of ten short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE Jennifer Skura, Jack Corcoran
THE SINGING TELEGRAM Jack Corcoran, Shona Tucker
WHAT?!? Jack Corcoran, Greg Skura
THE ANSWER Jennifer Skura, Greg Skura
UH-OH Amy Lemon, Steven Patterson
LUNCH AND DINNER Jennifer Skura, Jack Corcoran
CHICKEN Shona Tucker, Greg Skura
WHERE WAS I? Amy Lemon, Shona Tucker
FORGOT Steven Patterson, Amy Lemon
DESTINY Shona Tucker, Steven Patterson

LOVE/SICK received a professional developmental production at TheaterWorks Hartford (Rob Ruggiero, Artistic Director; Nicole LaFlair Nieves, General Manager) in Hartford, Connecticut, opening on May 29, 2014. It was directed by Amy Saltz, the set design was by Michael Schweickhardt, the costume design was by Harry Nadal, the lighting design was by Mary Jo Dondlinger, the sound design was by Fitz Patton, the production stage manager was Kate Cudworth. The play was comprised of ten short plays, and the cast was as follows:

OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE Laura Woodward, Bruch Reed
THE SINGING TELEGRAM Chris Thorn, Pascale Armand
WHAT?!? Chris Thorn, Bruch Reed
THE ANSWER Laura Woodward, Chris Thorn
UH-OH Pascale Armand, Bruch Reed
LUNCH AND DINNER Laura Woodward, Bruch Reed
CHICKEN Pascale Armand, Bruch Reed
FORGOT Chris Thorn, Laura Woodward
WHERE WAS I? Laura Woodward, Pascale Armand
DESTINY Laura Woodward, Chris Thorn

LOVE/SICK received a professional developmental production by Royal Family Productions (Christine Henry, Artistic Director) at the Royal Family Performing Arts Space (Evan Storey and Andy Theodorou, Producers) in New York City. It was directed by Christine Henry, the movement direction was by JoAnn M. Hunter, the set design was by Shannon Rednour, the costume design was by Lux Haac, the lighting design was by Lucrecia Briceno, the sound design was by Danny Erdberg, the incidental music was by Barton Kuebler, Lars Jacobsen, and Christine Henry, the production stage manager was Adrian Peña. The cast was as follows:

MAN, BEN, BILL, KEVIN Debargo Sanyal
 WOMAN, CELIA, KELLY, JILL, LIZ, EMILY Dee Roscioli
 SINGING TELEGRAM MAN,
 ANDY, KEITH, MARK, JAKE Justin Hagan and John Cariani
 LOUISE, SARAH, ABBIE Simone Harrison
 SUPERCENTER DANCERS Jenn Aédo, Rachel Geisler,
 Stephanie Israelson, Jolina Javier,
 Schuyler Midgett

LOVE/SICK received a professional developmental production at Arc Stages (Adam David Cohen, Artistic Director; Marlene Canapi, Managing Director; Ann Shankman, President) in Pleasantville, New York, opening on September 25, 2015. It was directed by Stephanie Kovacs Cohen, the set design and props were by Ann Shankman, the costume design was by Libby Brennescholtz, the lighting design was by Adam Cohen, the sound design was by Stephanie Kovacs Cohen, the production stage manager was Emily C. Rolston. The cast was as follows:

MAN, ANDY, BILL, MARK Collin Smith
 WOMAN, CELIA, KELLY, JILL, ABBIE Katie Hartke
 SINGING TELEGRAM MAN,
 BEN, KEITH, KEVIN, JAKE David Lanson
 LOUISE, SARAH, LIZ, EMILY Caroline Kinsolving

THE PLAYS

LOVE/SICK is a one-act, nine- (or ten-) play cycle about love and loss—but mostly loss. Each play has its own arc and tells the story of a couple at a crossroads in their relationship. Since each relationship is more advanced than the previous relationship, a larger arc emerges, and the individual plays work together to create a satisfying whole—one that chronicles the life cycle of a typical relationship from meeting through divorce...and afterwards.

The plays:

1. “Obsessive Impulsive”
2. “The Singing Telegram”
3. “What?!?”
4. “The Answer”
5. “Uh-Oh”
6. “Lunch and Dinner”
[Bonus Scene: “Chicken”]
7. “Forgot”
8. “Sick of This”
9. “Destiny”

LOVE/SICK was originally published as a nine-play cycle, but can also be performed as a ten-play cycle. Please see the Bonus Scene on page 108 of this script for information.

LOVE/SICK works best as an intermission-less event. However, if the Bonus Scene is used and an intermission is desired, please take it after Scene 5, “Uh-Oh.”

CHARACTERS

1. **OBSESSIVE IMPULSIVE**

A WOMAN and a MAN who fall in love at first sight.

2. **THE SINGING TELEGRAM**

An inexperienced SINGING TELEGRAM MAN who delivers a life-changing singing telegram to an optimistic woman, LOUISE OVERBEE.

3. **WHAT?!?**

BEN, a sweet guy who is surprised that he has fallen in love, and ANDY, the sweet guy he has fallen in love with.

4. **THE ANSWER**

KEITH and CELIA, a groom and bride.

5. **UH-OH**

SARAH, a woman who wants to have some fun with her husband, BILL.

6. **LUNCH AND DINNER**

KELLY and MARK, a successful, seemingly happily married couple.

[**BONUS SCENE: CHICKEN**

JASON, a man who has some doubts, and MADDIE, a woman who now also has some doubts.]

7. **FORGOT**

JILL, a woman who wants more than she has, and KEVIN, her husband, who is happy with what he has.

8. **SICK OF THIS**

ABBIE, a hard-working stay-at-home mom, and LIZ, her hard-working wife.

9. **DESTINY**

JAKE, a recently divorced man, and EMILY, a recently divorced woman.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

LOVE/SICK is a play for four actors. With a cast of four, all actors should be in their 30s/early 40s.

LOVE/SICK can also be a play for eighteen actors and as many as twenty actors. (See the Bonus Scene on page 108 for more information.) Using a larger cast affords an opportunity to use actors of all ages. Since the characters in the earlier plays in LOVE/SICK are quite innocent, actors playing roles in the first few plays can be in their teens, 20s, and early 30s. Actors cast in the middle and later plays should be in their late 30s and older.

LOVE/SICK is meant to be performed by human beings, and human beings come in all kinds of shapes, sizes, genders, ethnicities, backgrounds, and abilities, so please cast accordingly.

Anyone who is comfortable playing the gender of the characters can play the roles.

TIME

7:30 P.M. on a Friday night in late September,
not too long ago—or maybe a long time ago.

PLACE

An alternate suburban reality.

NOTES FOR ACTORS, DIRECTORS, AND READERS

(If you are involved in a production of LOVE/SICK, please see the additional notes at the back of this volume.)

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, “The sentimental person thinks things will last—the romantic person has a desperate confidence that they won’t.”

I am a romantic. And so are the characters in LOVE/SICK. They are desperately confident that things are not going to last—and that things are going to go bad. But they fight like heck to make sure things last and don’t go bad.

LOVE/SICK is a romantic play. It is not a sentimental play.

LOVE/SICK is full of highs and lows. Play them fully. Soar. Crash. Repeat.

LOVE/SICK is a realistically absurd play. Play it for real. Even though it’s absurd.

LOVE/SICK is a very funny tragedy. Make sure it’s very funny. And very sad.

Notes on Punctuation and Stage Directions:

LOVE/SICK employs a lot of very specific overlapping dialogue.

You’ll often see this symbol: //. It will appear in the middle of lines or words, and it means that the next character to speak should begin their line where the // appears (and thereby interrupt the character who is currently speaking).

You’ll also see this symbol: >. It means that the character who is speaking should keep talking and drive through to the end of their thought or point or sentence and not wait for the other character to speak.

Sometimes you’ll see dialogue in brackets like these: []. These words are not spoken. They’re a guide to what a character leaves unsaid.

Sometimes you’ll see commas after end punctuation. This is to encourage pace.

The stage direction (*Receives and processes.*) means just that. It’s not a full beat—but a sorting through of what’s going on or what’s just been said.

Please don’t completely dismiss the stage directions. Many are actions—actions that are as important as what is spoken.

LOVE/SICK

Scene 1: Obsessive Impulsive

It's 7:30 on a Friday night in late September in an alternate suburban reality.

Lights up on the SUPERCENTER. [The SuperCenter is like a Walmart or a Target or a Costco. Fun fact: Places like the SuperCenter or Walmart or Target or Costco are the places where people are likely to find love in over twenty states.]*

A MAN and a WOMAN push shopping carts through the SuperCenter. They are consulting shopping lists.

In a flash, the Man and the Woman catch sight of each other, GASP (because they take each other's breath away), rush to each other, and, from out of nowhere, KISS—a big, long (at least eight seconds), sloppy, passionate kiss.

They finally break, horrified by what they have just done.

[Note: When the Man and the Woman speak “in unison, to each other,” it must be simultaneous and rapid-fire. Actors: In these unison sequences, you're speaking and listening and responding—all at the same time. Make sure that—while you speak—you are also listening and responding to each question/statement. You're taking in the same exact information you're providing—at the same exact time.]

MAN and WOMAN. *(In UNISON, to each other.)* Oh, my gosh!!! I am so sorry!—No, it's not you!—I know that's not an appropriate thing for a person to do, and I can totally explain why I just did that: You see, I'm obsessive impulsive, and—

* <http://flowingdata.com/2013/02/22/map-of-craigslist-missed-connections/>

Each quickly receives and processes what the other just said and then—incredulous and dumbfounded—asks:

WHAT?!?

Each quickly receives and processes this question and then answers:

I'm obsessive impulsive!

Each quickly receives and processes this extraordinary information—that someone else in the world might actually be obsessive impulsive!—and then, incredulous and dumbfounded, responds:

No you're not! It's an extremely rare disorder!, You can't possibly be obsessive impulsive!

Each quickly receives and processes this information and then responds:

Well—I am!

Each quickly receives and processes this response and then—incredulous, dumbfounded, and excited—asks:

You are?!

Each quickly receives and processes this question and then excitedly answers:

YES!

Each quickly receives and processes this answer and then—incredulous and excited—asks:

Are you sure?!?

Each quickly receives and processes this question and then excitedly answers:

YES!!

Each quickly receives and processes this answer and then, incredulous and skeptical, responds:

No! No—no—no, you're probably mistaking it with being obsessive compulsive—

Each quickly receives and processes what the other has just said and then, puzzled and excited, responds:

What?—No! I'm *not* [mistaking it with being obsessive compulsive]!,

I'm *not* [mistaking it with being obsessive compulsive]! I'm obsessive
IMPulsive, I'm obsessive *IMPulsive*!

WOMAN. I've been diagnosed! >

MAN. Me too!

WOMAN. Clinically!

MAN. Me too!

WOMAN. And that's why I just did what I just did to you in the
middle of the SuperCen//ter!

MAN. Yeah, and why *I* just did what *I* just did!, I'm obsessive
impulsive too!

WOMAN. Have you been diagnosed?!?

MAN. Yes!!

WOMAN. Clinically?!?

MAN. Yes!!!

*The Man and the Woman kiss—a big, long kiss—at least
five seconds.*

They break away from one another.

MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison; breathlessly.*) I'm sorry!... It's just
that—

Quick, earth-shattering discovery.

—I think I've fallen in love with you at first sight!

*The Man and the Woman are stunned and overjoyed by
this news.*

For real?!? Yeah!! Me too!!

WOMAN. And I keep wanting to kiss you! >

MAN. Me too!

WOMAN. And I'm just acting on that impulse! >

MAN. Yes!

WOMAN. (*Pulling away from the Man.*) And that's something I'm
not supposed to do. >

MAN. Yeah, I know, I know!

WOMAN. As an obsessive impulsive person, I have to guard
against that, // acting on *impulse* like that.

MAN. I know, me too, yeah! There's a lot of stuff that, as an obsessive impulsive person, that you've gotta guard against doing—acting on—
MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison.*) —and falling in love—

WOMAN. Yeah!

MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison.*) —especially at first sight—

WOMAN. —yeah!—is one of those things, because of the consequences!, >

MAN. Yeah!

WOMAN. You have to weigh the consequences!, // And—

MAN. Yeah!, And as a clinically diagnosed obsessive impulsive, I'm somehow lacking that capacity to discern consequences.

WOMAN. Exactly!

MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison.*) But: Obsessive Impulsive Disorder is treatable

[Note: What follows is a rapid recitation of the suggested course of treatment for Obsessive Impulsive Disorder, and its purpose is to explain to the other person that there's hope for improvement. The meaning here is, "I could get better!"]

through proper diet and exercise, therapy and counseling, medication, and having a loved one watch over you every single moment of the day, >

MAN. (*Indicating where his brother is.*) my brother's over in automotive.

WOMAN. (*Indicating where her sister is.*) my sister's over in home improvement.

MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison; amazed.*) Wow! You really *do* have it, don't you?!?

The Man and the Woman kiss again with reckless abandon.

Then:

WOMAN. (*Breaking away, horrified.*) I'm sorry!

MAN. Yeah, me // too!

WOMAN. That was a lapse, // and >

MAN. Yeah, you don't have to explain!

WOMAN. lapses are gonna happen with me, because my OIR—
my Obsessive Impulsive R//atio—

MAN. Obsessive Impulsive Ratio! I know!, You don't have to spell
it out for me!, I understand!

WOMAN. Well, my Obsessive Impulsive Ratio is very high, so
what keeps happening [all this kissing]—is gonna keep happening,
'cause I've only been in treatment for three years // and—

MAN. Well, that's not a real long time! I've only been in for seven,
and my OIR isn't exactly low!

WOMAN. Well, what is it?

MAN. One to thirty-three.*

WOMAN. (*Very impressed.*) Wow! You have an Obsessive Impulsive
Ratio of one to *thirty-three*?!?

MAN. (*A little proud.*) Yeah.

WOMAN. That's *amazing!* >

MAN. Thanks!

WOMAN. Wow!, So for every thirty-three things that you think of
to do, that you just...*wanna* do, // you only do—

MAN. Yeah, I only do one now, due largely to the diet and exercise
regimen, the therapy and counseling, the medication, and my
brother.

WOMAN. Well, that's just great.

MAN. Yeah, but you know, I used to be a one to one!

WOMAN. No!

MAN. Yup!

WOMAN. Me too!

MAN. Really?

WOMAN. Yeah! I did *everything* I thought of to do.

MAN. You'd *think* a thing, you'd *do* it.

WOMAN. Yes!

MAN. Exhausting, isn't it?

WOMAN. You have no idea.

* This is the written-out version of the ratio 1:33.

MAN. I think I do!

WOMAN. Oh! You do!

MAN. Because I understand!!

WOMAN. You understand!!

MAN. I understand!!!

MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison, thrilled to be understood.*) You UNDERSTAND!!! She/he UNDERSTANDS!!!! (*Jumping up and down and joyfully proclaiming to the world:*) SHE/HE UNDERSTANDS ME!!!!

The Man and the Woman are both suddenly mortified, because they realize that they just made quite a scene in the SuperCenter.

Oh-my-gosh! I'm so sorry about that! I just wanted to jump up and shout to the whole wide world that you understand me because no one ever has before! Who are you?!? Where did you come from?!? YOU! ARE!! AWESOME!!!

And the Man and the Woman have suddenly fallen into a crazy kiss—one that takes them to the floor and all over each other.

When they finally stop kissing, they are horrified by their behavior.

Oh-my-gosh! I'm sorry!

The Man and the Woman get up, collect themselves, and apologize to one another profusely—while making sure that no one in the SuperCenter saw what they just did.

Sorry! >

MAN. Sorry! Sorry...

WOMAN. Sorry about that. (*Relief.*) I don't think anyone saw.

MAN. Yeah, // we're clear!

WOMAN. (*Spotting her sister.*) Oh-my-gosh! >

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I think my sister saw me!—I have to go!

The Woman starts to go.

MAN. No–no–no, // don't go!

WOMAN. No—she only lets me come to the SuperCenter on Friday nights when it seems like I'm getting better, and this is *not* better!, This is [worse!]

The Woman realizes that her sister didn't see them kissing.

Wait—!!!

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I don't think she saw!, She's going into *electronics!!!* >

MAN. Oh! [Awesome!]

WOMAN. She didn't *see!!!*

MAN. All right!! So stay!!!

WOMAN. All right!

The Woman suddenly kisses the Man quickly.

Sorry!

MAN. No! [Don't be!]

The Man suddenly kisses the Woman—and the kiss almost becomes tender.

And then the Man suddenly breaks away.

I'm so sorry I keep doing that!

WOMAN. No—it's me! It's me! My OIR is only one to thirteen—you're the one at one to thirty-three! // It's me!

MAN. Hey–hey–hey! Don't compare! You've only been in treatment less than half as long as me—you're doin' great! This is just a rough patch!

WOMAN. I don't know—

MAN. Check this out: There's a guy who's been in treatment for thirteen years—not even twice as long as me—and he has an OIR of one to one billion two hundred and seven million nine hundred and nineteen thousand six hundred and forty-six.

WOMAN. (*In awe.*) Really!

MAN. Yeah.

WOMAN. So he's...normal.

MAN. Yeah. He doesn't do *anything* anymore.

WOMAN. Wow.

MAN. Yeah. So let him inspire you. Stick to the program. It's really good. It's really helped me get my life together.

The Man suddenly kisses the Woman—and then breaks away, upset.

Argh—even though right now it feels like everything's falling apart! >

WOMAN. I know!—

MAN. (*Honest and true.*) Because I really do think I fell in love with you the second I saw you!

WOMAN. Me too!

The Woman suddenly kisses the Man quick.

And, since then, I haven't wanted to do anything except kiss your whole face! That's the only impulse I've had!

MAN. Me too!

The Man and Woman kiss each other quick.

WOMAN. But that's bad.

MAN. Yeah.

They kiss each other quick.

But it doesn't *feel* bad!

WOMAN. No!

They kiss each other quick.

MAN. In fact, it feels *good*!

WOMAN. Yeah!

They kiss each other quick.

Really good!

MAN. Yeah!

They kiss each other quick.

WOMAN. Really—really good!

They kiss each other quick.

MAN. It does, it *does*! (*Suddenly retreating.*) But—wait! I'm not sure

it is good! Because—remember: Our prescribed plans for wellness don't allow this—for us to fall in love at first sight.

WOMAN. Right, right, // you're right.

MAN. (*Advancing.*) Which is a little confusing to me right now—and really too bad—because I swear: I have fallen in love with you!

WOMAN. Me too, // yeah!

MAN. And not just at first sight—but...for what feels like...could be forever!

WOMAN. (*Advancing.*) Me too, yeah! I mean, (*Advancing.*) I can see myself spending the rest of my life with you!!

MAN. (*Advancing.*) Oh, me too, y//eah!!!

WOMAN. (*Retreating.*) But...that's just not a good idea, >

MAN. (*Retreating.*) You're right.

WOMAN. because we both know—it just won't work, what with the disorder and all.

MAN. I know.

WOMAN. I'll be too much of a burden. >

MAN. Yes [me too]—

WOMAN. A liability even, my sister says.

MAN. Yes, me too, my brother says.

WOMAN. And I don't want to be a burden—or a liability—to anyone other than my sister.

MAN. I understand.

Little beat.

WOMAN. So, I guess I should probably g//o—...

MAN. Yes: Probably the best—the healthiest— >

WOMAN. Yes, yes.

MAN. thing for me to do right now is to just...go.

WOMAN. Yes. Yes. Me, too. Absolutely.

MAN. Yes. So: Very nice to meet you. >

WOMAN. You, too.

MAN. And: Goodbye.

WOMAN. Bye.

The Man and the Woman abruptly turn away from each other and start to leave in opposite directions.

Just as abruptly, they stop and turn back to each other, blurting out, in all heartbreaking seriousness.

MAN and WOMAN. (*In unison.*) I love you!

The Man and the Woman are stunned.

And overwhelmed.

That took a lot out of them.

Oh, no!

WOMAN. I'm sorry!!

MAN. Yeah, // me, too...

WOMAN. I'm sure I didn't mean that!

MAN. Me neither!

WOMAN. Saying something like that can be very misleading!

MAN. Yeah!

WOMAN. One of those lapses!

MAN. Yeah!

Little beat.

And then the Man and the Woman suddenly rush to each other to kiss—but the Man stops himself, which stops the Woman.

And the Man decides that a handshake may be more appropriate than a kiss and extends his hand to the Woman.

The Woman looks at the Man's hand...and then takes it... and shakes it.

Nice to meet you.

WOMAN. You, too.

The Man and the Woman start to go.

Lots of sadness.

MAN and WOMAN. (*Suddenly stopping and turning back to each other; in unison.*) Hey!

Each eagerly waits to hear what the other has to say before asking:

What? [What do you want to say?] Oh [I was just thinking that maybe we should just make a go of this thing we feel for each other even though we're not allowed to]—nothin'. Just—...you get better.

Each receives and processes this directive and then responds:

Yeah. You, too.

Little beat.

Bye.*

The Man and the Woman go their separate ways as the lights fade.

Existential space vacuum sound/music/transition.

And we move on to...

* Actors and directors: Please see notes on "Obsessive Impulsive" on page 138.

Scene 2: The Singing Telegram

It's 7:30 on the same Friday night in the same alternate suburban reality.

Lights up on the LIVING ROOM of a modest home.

A MAN in full singing telegram regalia arrives.

He knocks on the door.

LOUISE. *(From off.)* Oh, my gosh! Gary?!? You're early!

LOUISE OVERBEE—ebullient, open, passionate, driven, successful, and smart—enters, scrambling to get herself together.

We hear more knocking.

Hold on! It's only 7:30, sweetie! I thought you said be ready at eight!?

Louise grabs her bag.

We hear more knocking.

I'm comin', I'm comin', cool your jets!

Louise opens the door.

The man dressed in full singing telegram regalia is not who she was expecting to see.

Oh—um... Hello.

SINGING TELEGRAM MAN (STM). *(Cheerily.)* Hello! Singing telegram for Miss Louise Overbee!

LOUISE. Um—I'm sorry—what?

STM. Singing telegram for Miss Louise Overbee!

LOUISE. Wh—? Singing telegram?

STM. Yup. For Miss Louise Overbee, are you Louise Overbee?

LOUISE. Yeah.

STM. Okay, good! Singing telegram for Miss Louise Overbee!

LOUISE. Are you [serious]—? Seriously?

STM. Yeah!

LOUISE. I didn't know they had those anymore, // singing telegrams.

STM. Oh—they do!

LOUISE. Really?!?

STM. Yup.

LOUISE. Okay, um...well, can I see some credentials?

STM. Oh—yeah—sorry—here.

The Singing Telegram Man presents some sort of identification.

LOUISE. The SuperCenter? >

STM. Yeah—

LOUISE. You work out of the SuperCenter?

STM. Yeah, it's a new service they're providing. They have a kiosk.

LOUISE. Oh. Okay. Well...um... [This is weird.] Who's it from?

STM. Huh?

LOUISE. My singing telegram: Who's it from?

STM. Oh. Um—sorry—this is my first day—um...

The Singing Telegram Man checks an information card.

...Gary.

LOUISE. (*Super happy and excited.*) GARY?!?!

STM. (*Confused.*) Yeah...

LOUISE. Really?!?

STM. Yeah...

LOUISE. Well—... (*Overjoyed.*) What's he—? What is he *doing?*,
What is he *up* to?!?

STM. Um, I // don't know.

LOUISE. This is so neat!

STM. Yeah, um, can I ask you somethin' real quick? Who is...Gary?

LOUISE. Oh! He's my guy!

STM. He's [your guy]?!?—

LOUISE. I think we're gonna get married! >

STM. Oh!

LOUISE. And honestly—that's something that I just thought wasn't
gonna happen for me, and now— (*JOY!*) —aaaaah!

STM. Well, congratulations!, // Um—

LOUISE. Thanks! I'm lucky. He's pretty great. I mean—get this: Tonight—he's taking me dancing! Isn't that neat?!? For a guy to take a girl dancing on a Friday night, in this day and age?!?

STM. Y//eah!

LOUISE. Yeah! He's always doing stuff like that, always surprising me, and boy, this takes the *cake*!! I mean, a singing *telegram*?!? So *retro*!!!

STM. Yeah!

LOUISE. And so *fun*! So, how do we do this?, I guess just come on in, and...

STM. (*Not wanting to enter Louise's home and sing what he has to sing.*) Oh—u//m—

LOUISE. Where's good?

STM. You know what? I don't want to intrude, so—

LOUISE. You're not intruding!

STM. No, I don't think—

LOUISE. You're not! Now get in here and sing me my singing telegram, Singing Telegram Man!

STM. Well—

LOUISE. (*Insistent.*) Get in here!

STM. O//kay.

The Singing Telegram Man reluctantly enters.

LOUISE. Argh! This is so *FUN*! I mean, what is he *up* to?!?

STM. Um...I'm not sure.

LOUISE. (*Gasping—huge revelation.*) Oh! Oh-my-gosh! Wait! Aaaaah! I think I might know what he's up to! Oh-my-[goodness]-aaaaaaaah! I've been thinking that he might do something like this!, Is he—...Oh, my goodness, I can't breathe—hooooo: Is he *proposing* to me?!? >

STM. Um...

LOUISE. Is that what's happening right now?!?

STM. Well—

LOUISE. Aaaaah! He's proposing, isn't he!! >

STM. Well—

LOUISE. Aaaaaaah!!!, He's-proposing-he's-proposing-he's-proposing-he's PROPOSIIIIIIIIIIIIIIING!!!! AAAAAAAAH!!!

Beat.

Louise is overjoyed and full of anticipation, waiting for the Singing Telegram Man to start singing.

But the Singing Telegram Man is not singing.

He's just standing there, doing nothing.

Well, don't just stand there! Go ahead! Sing! Sing!! Aaaaaaah! This is so crazy!

STM. Yeah.

Beat.

The Singing Telegram Man is frozen.

LOUISE. What's wrong?

STM. Nothin'.

LOUISE. Are you okay?

STM. Yeah.

LOUISE. Well—then, let's go! Sing!

The Singing Telegram Man does nothing.

Come on! Sing me my singing telegram, Singing Telegram Man!

Beat.

STM. I can't.

LOUISE. What?

STM. I can't do this.

LOUISE. You can't do what?

STM. *(Coming up with an excellent lie to get himself out of the predicament he finds himself in.)* Sing!

LOUISE. What?

STM. I can't sing!

LOUISE. You can't *sing*?!?

STM. Nope!

LOUISE. Of course you can sing, you're a singing telegram man!

STM. No. I can't.

LOUISE. Well—how in the world did you get to be a singing telegram man if you can't sing? >

STM. Um—

LOUISE. How did you get this *job* if you can't sing?!?

STM. Um, well—

LOUISE. I mean, didn't you have to audition?!?

STM. No—

LOUISE. *No?!?*

STM. No, 'cause, see, I guess there's just a real shortage // of us—

LOUISE. There's a *shortage*?!?

STM. Yeah, there's a shortage of singing telegram men right now, // and—

LOUISE. There's a *shortage* of singing telegram men right // now?!?

STM. Yeah, and I guess they just liked me and thought I was pretty charming // and that—

LOUISE. Really.

STM. —yeah—and that I had a lot of charisma, and, so, I think they had the confidence that I could pull it off.

LOUISE. Really.

STM. Yeah, // but—

LOUISE. Well then, pull it off.

STM. Huh?

LOUISE. Pull it off.

STM. But I can't sing.

LOUISE. Tough! It's your *job*, so do your *job*!

STM. But I—

LOUISE. Do your job, Singing Telegram Man!

STM. (*Fear.*) But—

LOUISE. (*Fiercely—and losing it a little.*) Do it!! *I'm excited about this!!! This could be BIG for me!!!!*

STM. (*Finally—and reluctantly—obliging.*) All right, Miss Overbee.

LOUISE. Thank you!

STM. Um...

The Singing Telegram Man collects himself...and then continues.

Okay, um...singing telegram for Miss Louise Overbee from Gary.

LOUISE. (*All starry.*) Aw, Gary. He is somethin' else, isn't he?

STM. Yup. He is.

Little beat.

Well, here goes.

The Singing Telegram Man takes out a pitch pipe, finds his note, and sings a song called "No Lie."

"No Lie" is an original song written for this scene. Sheet music is available from Dramatists Play Service.

Here are the lyrics:

We met and BAM!
You said I was the one.
We have good times.
We have way too much fun.

And now it's time
For me to tell you
Somethin' straight from my heart,
Somethin' that's true.
Now I don't want you to misconstrue,
So listen close cuz this is the truth.

Just like that old song says:
I want you, I need you,
But I ain't ever gonna love you, Louise.
Don't you dare go gettin' down on your knees.
I gotta set myself free.
It's no lie.
I'm sorry if I am makin' you cry.
I never loved you, although I tried.
I gotta be true to me.

I know you thought
You found a love that would last.
I know your heart
Is probably smashed.
But I can't live
This lie anymore.
I need to go my own way.
I'll show myself the door.

Just like that old song says:
I want you, I need you,
but I ain't ever gonna love you, Louise.
Don't you dare go gettin' down on your knees.
I gotta be true to me.
It's no lie.
I'm sorry if I am makin' you cry.
I never loved you, although I tried.
I gotta set us both free.

[Note: If you can get the rights, the chorus of "Two Out of Three Ain't Bad" by Meatloaf works really well as the song the Singing Telegram Man sings.]

After the Singing Telegram Man sings his song, there is a long, long beat.

The awfulness of what just happened washes over Louise.

She is devastated.

And finally says:

LOUISE. What the [f*#@ just happened, here]—.

A horrible little beat.

I thought you said you couldn't sing.

STM. Yeah, well—

LOUISE. You sing very well.

STM. Yeah. I can sing fine. I just didn't want to sing *that* to you.

Beat.

LOUISE. Wow. This is—...

The surreal awfulness of what has just happened consumes Louise.

Long beat.

STM. Um...I have another appointment that I have to get to...

The Singing Telegram Man starts to leave.

And then he stops.

Um...

The Singing Telegram Man produces a business card or an information card.

Here's—...um...they ask us to ask you to rate my performance. Here's info on how to do that.

The Singing Telegram Man leaves a business card or an information card somewhere and starts to go.

LOUISE. (*Stopping the Singing Telegram Man.*) What's—?!? Why did he do this?!? Why would anyone do this? What kind of a person... does this—like *this*?

STM. The kind of person I don't think you want to be with.

Little beat.

I'm so sorry.

Little beat.

Goodbye, Miss Overbee.

The Singing Telegram Man starts to go—but stops and turns to Louise...but doesn't say anything...and then leaves.

The lights fade on a sad and perplexed Louise—and on a sad and perplexed Singing Telegram Man, who is just outside her door.

Existential space vacuum sound/music/transition.

And we move on to...