

Moonlight & Love Songs

By
Scott C. Sickles

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

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MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

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MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

Cast of Characters

- HARRY** Harry Wallace. 50 years old in the present, 45 in the past. An architect. Bright, funny, and caring but also emotionally guarded, especially when it comes to romance.
- JIM** Jim Bennett. In both the past and the present, he appears about 20 years of age. Attractive, charming, masculine, in excellent physical shape, he almost always comes off as “mature for his age.”
- BEN** Ben Stafford. Harry’s best friend, colleague, and brother-in-law; a great guy, gregarious, in his 40s; exudes an easy confidence and authority.
- DIANE** Diane Wallace-Stafford. Harry’s sister and Ben’s pregnant wife; loving but acerbic, allergic to bullshit, late 30s–early 40s.
- REV** The Reverend James Bennett, Sr. Jim’s father; a caring man and progressive minister; 40s–50s.
- GRAYSON** Richard Grayson, Esq. Harry’s attorney, a middle-aged man; 50s. Actor doubles as POLICEMAN and various BOX OFFICE STAFF.
- MOM** Eileen Bennett. Jim’s mother; 40s. Very ill with cancer, she relies on her faith, in both God and in those she loves, and good humor to keep her spirits up.

Scene: New York City and a Pennsylvania College Town.

Time: This September and the summer five years prior.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS was originally produced by the WorkShop Theater Company (Timothy Scott Harris, artistic director; David M. Pincus, managing director) at their Main Stage Theater in New York City in November 2008. The scenic and lighting design was by Duane Pagano; the sound by David Schulder. The production stage manager was Michael Palmer. The production was directed by David Gautschy with the following cast:

Harry Wallace	Jeff Woodman
Jim Bennett	Ryan Tresser
Ben Stafford	Jeff Paul
Richard Grayson <i>et al.</i>	David Palmer Brown
Diane Wallace-Stafford	Nicole Taylor
Rev. James Bennett, Sr.	David M. Mead
Eileen Bennett	Anne Fizzard

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MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS was subsequently produced by SunnySpot Productions' GayFest NYC (Jack W. Batman and Bruce Robert Harris, producers) at the Abingdon Theatre Arts Complex / June Havoc Theatre in New York City in May 2013. The lighting design was by John Eckert. The scenic and costume design was by Michael Bottari and Ronald Case; the sound by David Schulder. The stage manager was Amy Francis Schott. The production was directed by Steve Petrillo with the following cast:

Harry Wallace	Gerald McCullouch
Jim Bennett	Nick Bailey
Ben Stafford	Corey Richard Skaggs
Richard Grayson <i>et al.</i>	Robert Meksin
Diane Wallace-Stafford	Kathryn Markey
Rev. James Bennett, Sr.	D. H. Johnson
Eileen Bennett	Christine Verleny

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*As there are many settings, both indoors and outdoors, there should be either a unit set OR a bare stage with portable set pieces. **THE ACTION OF THE PLAY MUST BE RELENTLESS, NEVER FULLY STOPPING FOR SET CHANGES.** It can be (and has been) performed on a bare stage with two chairs. New York City, this September. JIM enters and walks slowly to CS. HARRY enters and walks hurriedly right past Jim, not noticing him. Jim calls out to him.*

JIM. Harry? (*Harry stops and faces Jim, a bit stunned.*) I thought that was you. (*No response.*) It's Jim.

HARRY. I know.

JIM. Uh. Okay. I'm sorry. I probably shouldn't have—

HARRY. No, no. *I'm* sorry. I just... I didn't expect...

JIM. I know. Yeah. Me neither.

HARRY. It's been a while.

JIM. Yes. Yes, it has. So, um... You look great.

HARRY. Oh? Thank you. So do, uh, —

JIM. Can I buy you a cup of coffee?

HARRY. Uh. I don't know if I can. I've got, you know—

JIM. I'm sure you're busy. In New York on business?

HARRY. I am. How about-- What are you--

JIM. I live here now.

HARRY. I hadn't realized. Are you going to school here?

JIM. Yep. It's great. I'm finally away from my parents and—

HARRY. Lots of movie theaters here.

JIM. Are you sure you can't stay? Just one cup? Please.

HARRY. Uh... Sure. Why not?

JIM. On me. Birthday present.

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HARRY. You remember.

JIM. Fifty, right?

HARRY. You remember that, too.

JIM. September Libra, on the cusp of Virgo. Who else has a birthday like that?

HARRY. That's right. Happy Birthday to you, too.

JIM. Thank you. I do find it cause for celebration. Getting older.

HARRY. You'll get over that.

JIM. How is work?

HARRY. Well... here I am, so I guess it's going well.

JIM. Kudos. And, um... Ben and Diane? How are they?

HARRY. They're fine.

JIM. The kid should be about to start kindergarten, right?

HARRY. Next year.

JIM. Wow. Time flies, huh? *(Pause.)* So, are you seeing anybody—

HARRY. Seen any good movies lately?

JIM. I'm not... seeing anybody.

HARRY. You're not?

JIM. Nope.

HARRY. Me neither.

JIM. *(Brightens up.)* You don't say. *(Beat.)* So, how long are you in town?

HARRY. I'm going back tonight.

JIM. That's too bad. There's a classic at the Film Forum on Houston. I was thinking maybe we could go.

HARRY. Were you now?

JIM. I know a really great bistro nearby.

HARRY. You "know bistros" now?

JIM. Come on. It's cozy, the food's great and lighting is flattering.

HARRY. That's good because, you know, I'm fifty now, and if the lighting is unflattering...

JIM. Shut up. It's just... It's a nice place. I think you would like it.

HARRY. It's very tempting.

JIM. Well, then, what are we waiting for?

HARRY. What indeed.

JIM. Can you do the eight o'clock?

HARRY. Sure. I'll just move my flight--

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JIM. Cool. And don't worry. You won't have any trouble getting to the airport; there are always cabs in front of my apartment.

HARRY. Hmm?

JIM. Or did Ben put you up in a hotel?

HARRY. No, it's not... Um... I just realized... I can't.

JIM. I got ahead of myself, didn't I? I didn't mean to—

HARRY. No, no. It's not—

JIM. We can just do dinner and the movie and talk; maybe exchange email addresses.

HARRY. Don't get me wrong. It's not that I don't want to. I just... *(Beat.)* I really should be going.

JIM. Oh? I was hoping you'd have a few more—

HARRY. I can't.

JIM. But you should still--

JIM. That's okay. If you're not gonna... I've seen it.

HARRY. *(Beat.)* It was great seeing you.

JIM. Yeah, you too.

HARRY. Take care of yourself, okay.

JIM. You, too. Take care.

(Harry and Jim cross to opposite ends of the stage and each ends up in his own SPOTLIGHT.)

HARRY AND JIM. *(A long, tense exhale:)* Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck...

(SPOTLIGHT OUT on Jim. Harry addresses the audience.)

HARRY. “It was a dark and stormy night.”ⁱ “Last night, I dreamt I went to Manderley again.”ⁱⁱ “A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The great thing about movies – and plays and books for that matter – is that, unlike life, they have beginnings, middles, and ends. They all start with their own version of “Once upon a time.” If you're lucky, they end with “Happily ever after.” Life's not like that. In life, you hit the ground crawling, learn to walk, and if you have good instincts, you know when to run.

I have terrible instincts.

Once upon a time, I had a life. Granted, it wasn't the most exciting life. I had my job.

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(It's now summer five years ago in a Pennsylvania college town. BEN enters Harry's office. He's a good-natured, gregarious sort – the kind people call “big guy” even if he isn't.)

BEN. Harry!

HARRY. Benjamin.

BEN. How are things with our prestigious client?

HARRY. His wife's feng shui expert thinks the house has too much energy concentrated in the death zone.

BEN. Ready to kiss some major ass?

HARRY. I don't just design houses, Ben. I design lives.

BEN. Keep me posted.

HARRY. *(Aside.)* Said job overlapped with said life. Besides being my boss, Ben was also my brother-in-law.

BEN. Diane wants to know if you can come over for dinner this weekend. Friday or Saturday?

HARRY. Either works.

BEN. She also wants you to know you can feel free to bring a plus-one.

HARRY. That's sweet. *(Aside.)* After work, I could go home and relax. Or I'd take in a movie.

MOVIE BOX OFFICE. How many, sir?

HARRY. Just one, please. *(Aside.)* Every now and then, I'd go to the community center if they had an event I might enjoy.

SWISHY BOX OFFICE. Welcome to the Gentlemen Only Ballroom Dance Club. Did you bring a partner?

HARRY. Just one.

SWISHY BOX OFFICE. Just one? That's fine. Ladies, we've gone another floater. Here you go. Just one.

HARRY. *(Aside.)* And when all else failed.

DIANE. *(Entering. DIANE is very upper-middle class. She's also obviously pregnant.)* How is my baby brother?

HARRY. I'm older than you, Diane.

DIANE. All by yourself again?

HARRY. I brought a Bundt cake.

BEN. Poppy seed?

HARRY. You know it.

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BEN. Score! I'll just put that in the fridge.

HARRY. Hey, that's my date.

DIANE. Harry, I've been reading about your lifestyle.

HARRY. *Bridget Jones's Diary?*

DIANE. I've been thinking what a shame it is: your baby sister is already married with a child on the way and you... look at you. I could weep.

HARRY. Diane, I think it's great that you have a wonderful life and a wonderful husband –

BEN. Catch it! Catch it! Run! Run! Run, you son of a bitch! Yes! Yes!

DIANE. He's watching Super Bowl Ten on the Classic Sports Network. I'm sorry, you were telling me how wonderful my life was.

HARRY. I'm fine. Don't worry about me.

DIANE. In the wild, animals without mates die of loneliness.

HARRY. Am I a panda?

DIANE. You're my brother and I love you. I don't want you to die alone. (*Crosses away.*)

HARRY. (*Aside.*) Good job. Active life. Loving, supportive family right at my disposal. Once upon a time. But that all changed one day.

(Jim pantomimes doing yard work: mowing, trimming, whatever. He's taken off his shirt and is wearing jeans and a sleeveless undershirt. He's in admirable physical shape.)

HARRY. (*Aside, continued.*) If any movie had the right opening line for my story, it was *Funny Girl*. And that line was...

(Jim wipes his face on his undershirt, exposing his midriff. Harry stops walking and stares at Jim. Silence as Jim stops wiping his face, tucks his undershirt back in his jeans, and, as he adjusts his baseball cap, sees Harry. They make eye contact, neither moving for a moment.)

HARRY. (*Aside, cont'd.*) "Hello, Gorgeous!"

(Jim smiles a bit and tips his hat to Harry. LIGHTS FADE on Jim.)

HARRY. (*Aside, cont'd.*) That's the great thing about summer in a condominium housing plan: the landscapers. Nice to look at from your window, and they're generally too busy to notice you. And if they do notice you, most of the time, they don't care. This time... (*A knock at the door.*) This time, he cared.

(LIGHTS UP on Jim as though standing in the doorway, his shirt tied around his waist, perhaps with his sunglasses up on his forehead.)

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HARRY. May I help you?

JIM. I hope so. My name's Jim. I'm one of your landscapers.

HARRY. Right. You guys do a great job.

JIM. We try. Could I trouble you for a glass of water? Normally I wouldn't, but it's such a hot day.

HARRY. Where are your coworkers?

JIM. Gone. This is our last job today, and I live right nearby.

HARRY. Really, where?

JIM. Presidential and Burnham.

HARRY. Nice neighborhood. Not exactly walking distance.

JIM. It's only five miles. Besides, it's a nice jog.

HARRY. I suppose it is.

JIM. Which is why I need the water. Even walking on a day like this—

HARRY. Sure, sure. Come on in. I'd have invited you in sooner, but I thought I already had. *(Harry leads Jim in; gets him a glass of water.)*

JIM. Nice place.

HARRY. Thanks. I designed it.

JIM. The interior or...

HARRY. The building. The whole neighborhood, actually. I'm an architect.

JIM. Well done. It's a beautiful neighborhood. *(Takes glass from Harry. Aside to Harry.)* Cheers. *(Slowly drinks water down. Hands back glass.)* Thanks.

HARRY. Can't have you dehydrating.

JIM. Nice DVD collection. You have *Rebecca*.

HARRY. It's my favorite Hitchcock.

JIM. I've never seen it.

HARRY. It's great. Even Joan Fontaine is good.

JIM. Coincidentally, it happens to be playing at the Student Union tonight.

HARRY. You should see it, especially on a big screen. It's beautiful.

JIM. Would you like to come with me?

HARRY. I'm sorry, where?

JIM. The Student Union. I'm a senior at the university.

HARRY. Are you, now?

JIM. Come fall, anyway. See: here's my student ID.

HARRY. Oh, that's not... I didn't mean for you to—

JIM. And my driver's license.

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HARRY. Yeah, let me see that. Not a bad picture.

JIM. I photograph well. I'm lucky that way. So how about it?

HARRY. I can't.

JIM. Why not?

HARRY. I'm old enough to be your father.

JIM. May I see some ID? Come on. I showed you mine. (*Harry shows Jim his ID.*)
We almost have the same birthday.

HARRY. Same month. Different decade.

JIM. September Libras, right on the cusp of Virgo. You made it just under the wire.

HARRY. What's the difference?

JIM. Libras, like us, like balance and harmony. We sometimes take too long to make decisions because we can see all sides of an issue. We like to surround ourselves with beautiful things. (*Jim smiles at Harry very directly. Harry smiles back and blushes.*) And we have warm, inviting smiles that come naturally and often.

HARRY. And the Virgos?

JIM. How to describe them... Virgos are the kind of people who clean behind their large kitchen appliances. They're all about order over chaos and about how things "should be" instead of the way they are.

HARRY. That pretty much describes me.

JIM. Well, we're on the cusp, so we both have strong underlying Virgo tendencies. But really, at heart, we're lighthearted, passionate people who just want to lay back and enjoy life.

HARRY. Are we?

JIM. Absolutely. Libras, that is.

HARRY. Not unlike the conflict that rages between Vulcans and their sister-race the Romulans.

JIM. Whoa. I am impressed.

HARRY. It's basic *Star Trek*.

JIM. Seriously, I could fuck you right here on the linoleum.

HARRY. Okay, one: this floor is slate.

JIM. So it is. I could fuck you right here on this slate floor.

HARRY. Second: this is very presumptuous of you. I mean, how do you know I'm even— (*Jim touches Harry's face; Harry shuts up. As Harry tries to say something, Jim gently kisses him on the lips. After a moment, he relents.*)

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JIM. Most straight guys react differently.

HARRY. I was going to say “interested.” When is this movie?

JIM. In about an hour and... ten minutes.

HARRY. I can’t. I have a huge presentation tomorrow.

JIM. Tomorrow’s Saturday.

HARRY. Be that as it may— hello— (*Jim kisses Harry again.*) Tempting though you make it.

JIM. You’re taking a rain check?

HARRY. Yeah.

JIM. Really?

HARRY. Has this never happened before?

JIM. Actually, no, it hasn’t.

HARRY. Believe me, if it wasn’t directly threatening to my livelihood...

JIM. I’ll let you off this time. How’s tomorrow?

HARRY. I’ll be too tired. How’s Friday?

JIM. A week away.

HARRY. Be that as it may.

JIM. Next week’s movie is *Enchanted April*. I’ve never seen it on a big screen. Have you?

HARRY. Not recently. So, Friday?

(*CROSS FADE TO: Student Union. Harry and Jim sit, waiting for the movie to start.*)

JIM. I’m a journalism major with a film minor, but I don’t want to be a critic.

HARRY. What do you want to do?

JIM. Go to grad school. I think I want to make movies. I love movies.

HARRY. I got that impression.

JIM. I’m a bit fanatical, aren’t I?

HARRY. So far you just seem passionate.

JIM. You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.

(*Harry and Jim sit side by side as though watching a movie. Harry addresses the audience.*)

HARRY. (*Aside.*) Have you ever seen *Enchanted April*? Lovely film. There’s this amazing scene where Alfred Molina brushes his wife’s hair. She’s in her nightdress. He’s wearing a robe over his clothes. But all at once, it’s beautiful and tender and

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so filled with love it can't help but be... (*Jim starts stroking Harry's hair. Harry closes his eyes.*) ...fiercely erotic. (*Beat.*) Then, we went back to my place.

(*CROSS FADE TO: Harry and Jim arrive at the bed.*)

HARRY. And here's the bedroom. (*No response.*) Which of course includes the, uh... the bed.

JIM. What's that on the wall? One of your blueprints?

HARRY. It's for the house I designed for my parents.

JIM. What are we looking at here?

HARRY. Well, my parents are getting old, so I created this sort of three-way split-level design. See, if you enter here, there's a nice little foyer with a large coat closet for guests – my mother lives to entertain. It opens suddenly into a large living room with a small bar, which is where my father generally hangs out while she entertains.

JIM. He's not a dinner-party person?

HARRY. That's what he says, but I watched him one night. He loves to watch her work the room.

JIM. Your parents are still in love?

HARRY. They're discreet, but... Let's just say, the kitchen cabinets have a lot of calcium supplements and vitamin E.

JIM. Go Mom and Dad.

HARRY. How about your parents?

JIM. In their own way. What's this?

HARRY. That is the passageway to what I call the private wing. It includes a breakfast nook.

JIM. I've never had breakfast in a nook.

(*Jim moves away from Harry during this next speech and watches him from afar.*)

HARRY. This oblong room is, believe it or not, for the model railroad. It's also where he watches sporting events and smokes cigars. Over here is her dressing room complete with walk-in closet, and of course, the master bedroom.

JIM. Which is where we started.

HARRY. What are doing you all the way over there?

JIM. Watching you work the room.

HARRY. Oh.

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JIM. (*Approaches Harry.*) I'm done watching. (*Jim kisses Harry as they fall together on the bed. The interaction escalates, and Jim reaches down Harry's pants. Harry grabs Jim's hand.*)

HARRY. Hmm? Oh, yes. Right. Uh, Jim. Look. It's been a long time. I mean... a long... time. And I'm a little nervous... to say the least. Okay, so what I'm trying to say is if we're... you know and I... don't... I mean if my body doesn't react the way you might expect it to—

JIM. It will.

HARRY. Excuse me?

(*Jim takes Harry in his arms, kisses him passionately, and pulls Harry's hips to his own. The kiss breaks.*)

JIM. Told ya. (*Pushes Harry on the bed. LIGHTS GO TO LOW, BOUDOIR LIGHTING. We hear voices in the dark and barely see.*)

HARRY. Okay, then. I'll just get out of these— What, what are you doing?

JIM. Let me get that for you.

HARRY. That's okay, I can take that off myself— Oh. Oh, God. Um.

JIM. This is foreplay.

HARRY. It's nice— oh! Oh, wow... Oh... Oh, what are you doing?

JIM. Bored with foreplay. Come here. I'm going to kiss you. A lot.

HARRY. Well, if you must — mmpf!

(*LIGHTS RISE UP A NOTCH as Harry rests in Jim's arms in post-sexual afterglow.*)

JIM. And you were worried.

HARRY. Silly me.

JIM. Can we see each other again?

HARRY. Uh, yeah!

JIM. Cool.

HARRY. Did you think I wouldn't want to? (*No response.*) Jim?

JIM. I've never really had a second date with a guy before.

HARRY. You mean, the next time we go out, I'll be your first second date?

JIM. Kinda, yeah.

HARRY. I'm... honored.

JIM. Great. Let's celebrate.

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HARRY. How? (*Jim starts kissing him again and reaches under the covers.*) Oh, you are such an optimist. How do I say this? Once I'm done, I'm done. It's both valiant and flattering of you to do this, but I can tell you right now that – ow-ow. Mm. Hm. How about that.

JIM. Oh ye of little faith.

(*Harry and Jim emerge from the covers fully clothed and the LIGHTS COME BACK UP. Harry "goes to the Staffords" for dinner.*)

HARRY. Ding-dong.

BEN. Hey, Sport!

HARRY. Hey, Big Guy!

DIANE. Ben, take his jacket. Harry?

HARRY. Diane?

DIANE. You're fucking someone!

BEN. She's so happy; she made popovers.

DIANE. Tell us everything! Except the naked stuff. Ben doesn't like it.

BEN. I don't care. (*Sees Diane giving him a disapproving look.*) What?

DIANE. (*To Harry.*) Just write it down for me and I'll read it later.

HARRY. What makes you think –

BEN. Your secretary is my spy.

DIANE. So, is it a fuck, a fling, or will there be a wedding?

HARRY. Well... Yes. I have met someone.

BEN. See. I told you he seemed happy.

HARRY. I don't normally seem happy? I generally think of myself as a happy kinda guy.

DIANE. Oh, Harry; of course you do. So, is he pretty?

HARRY. Oh, he's...

BEN. Hot, huh? (*To Diane, off her look.*) What?

DIANE. (*To Harry.*) So, what is he? A bear, a cub, an otter, a circuit boy –

HARRY. For starters, he's a PERSON.

BEN. That's what I told her, Harry. Labels are for food storage. What's he like?

HARRY. His name is Jim. (*Substitute description of actual actor if he doesn't look like this.*) He's about six feet, dark hair, blue eyes. Cute.

BEN. In good shape?

HARRY. Oh, yeah.

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BEN. Score!

DIANE. He's a nice guy?

HARRY. Remarkably so.

DIANE. And what does he do?

HARRY. He's, um... a student. *(Pause.)* At the university. He's a senior. Or he will be in a couple of months. Then he plans on going to graduate school for film.

DIANE. So, he's...

HARRY. He'll be twenty-one in September. Right around when I—

DIANE. —when you turn forty-six.

HARRY. Look.

BEN. Dude. High-five.

HARRY. You approve?

BEN. Of course. If I were your age and single, I'd want a—

DIANE. You'd want a what, Ben?

BEN. I would want someone exactly like you, but since there is no one else in the world like you, I would want you and only you. *(To Harry.)* But! If I were your age, single, and gay, I'd want some young hottie with boundless energy who could — pardon my candor — suck the chrome off a bumper.

HARRY. And you, dear sister?

DIANE. Are you happy?

HARRY. I think so.

DIANE. I don't want to see you get hurt.

HARRY. Diane. I just met this kid.

DIANE. You see: "Kid!"

HARRY. Fine then, "guy." I just met this "guy." Honestly, Diane, what is the big deal? I went to a couple of movies with him; we're not exactly picking out China patterns. But if we do, don't worry; I'll make him sign a prenup, so he won't get his grubby hands on my thousands.

BEN. How about this: instead of getting worked up over things that haven't actually happened, why don't we agree to be happy for you until you get your heart broken and promise to be there for you if it does. Does that sound reasonable?

HARRY AND DIANE. *(Stunned.)* Yeah?

(CROSS FADE TO: Harry's living room. Harry has just suggested a film to Jim.)

JIM. I hate that movie.

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HARRY. (*Gasps!*) Blasphemer! How can you hate it?

JIM. They spend the entire movie making repressed British goo-goo eyes at each other and they never say anything!

HARRY. Of course they don't! They can't! It's—

JIM. It would be improper. I get it. I don't accept it. He loves her. She loves him. She threatens to marry someone else. He doesn't stop her and loses her. Tragedy. Heartbreaking. Fine. But we spend two hours watching the entire story in flashbacks while he drives across the countryside, only to find her and let her go again! I mean, when she gets on the bus and they shake hands, he should just say something! He knows she wants him to! We all want him to! But he just lets the damn bus drive away! Cut to close-up of her hand being pulled out of his and, fuck all, we're back where we started!

HARRY. They live in a society that forbids them the honesty you and I take for granted. Love each other, though they do, they've been conditioned by this society not to be able to act on it. What makes it so tragic and heartbreaking is that they have not only betrayed and denied themselves, but they have betrayed and denied love itself. That may sound corny or over-the-top to you, and if it does, you're very lucky. But trust me when I tell you: there is no greater sin than denying love where it should be able to thrive. (*Pause.*) But that's just me.

JIM. Okay, let's watch it.

HARRY. We don't have to.

JIM. You see something beautiful. If I'm denying myself that beauty... like you said, "no greater sin." (*Harry and Jim curl up on the couch. LIGHTS CHANGE. SFX of music resembling (but is not) the end title theme of The Remains of the Day. Harry rises and starts to cross. Jim takes Harry's hand in his own.*)

HARRY. I have to take the DVD out.

JIM. Do me a favor. Step back.

HARRY. Okay.

(*Harry steps back. Jim closes his eyes but keeps hold of Harry's hand.*)

JIM. Keep going. Like the bus.

(*Harry evenly walks backward until their arms are stretched out completely, and finally their hands are forced to let go of each other.*)

JIM. (*Whispers.*) Shit. (*Harry pulls Jim up. Jim embraces him. There is no kiss here, but a very good nuzzle.*)

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

(LIGHTS CHANGE to indicate early morning light coming through window. Jim gets up and gets dressed. Harry talks to him half asleep.)

HARRY. Going home?

JIM. Sorry. Christian parents. No matter how old you are—

HARRY. No problem. *(Beat.)* Why do you still live at home? Wouldn't you rather be in the dorms or something?

JIM. I was for the first two years, but my mom got sick again, so my dad asked me to move back home... *(Looks on "bookshelves.")* I'm going to need something to read on the bus. Do you mind if I...?

HARRY. Take what you like. I'm sorry; I didn't know your mom was sick.

JIM. *(Leafing through a couple books.)* I don't really talk about it much. *(Finds a very dog-eared volume.)* Who's James Merrill?

HARRY. Twentieth-century homosexual poet, author, and playwright. You'll love him.

JIM. You certainly did. You dog-eared every other page.

HARRY. If you read it, you'll see why.

JIM. I will. Thanks.

HARRY. Don't lose it; it's autographed.

JIM. I'll treat it as though it were yours. I'll see you tonight, okay?

HARRY. Okay. I love you.

(Jim exits. Harry sits up, tries to remember something, and then it hits him.)

HARRY. Oh, shit. *(Dials phone. Diane answers.)*

DIANE. What? What's wrong?

HARRY. I told him I love him!

DIANE. What was he doing when you said it?

HARRY. Leaving.

DIANE. When was this?

HARRY. Just now.

DIANE. So, he's putting on his shoes for the Walk of Shame and you think this is a good time to... What? No, leave me alone. I'm not going to give you the goddamned phone. He's *my* brother. Give your own brother bad advice. Ben? No, Ben. Ben!

BEN. Hey, Harry, it's Ben. Dude, don't worry. If he comes back, just play it cool.

HARRY. If?

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

BEN. Just be like, “Yeah, I said that. We say that to each other all the time.” And he’ll be like, “Whoa. We do?” and you’ll be like, “Yeah, yo,” and he’ll be like “Coolness.”

HARRY. Who is this?

BEN. Dude, I’m tired. Stop worrying about it. Maybe he loves you too. And if he doesn’t, fuck him. A lot. Seriously, if he’s like an asshole about it, at least hit that one more time before you kick him out on his ass because with you, man, Christ knows when you’re going to get laid again.

HARRY. Thanks, Ben. You’ve been nothing but helpful.

BEN. That’s why I’m here, man. Here’s your lunatic sister. Ow! Don’t hit me with the fucking phone!

DIANE. Harry, it’s me again.

HARRY. Is he like this every morning?

DIANE. I think you should do what he says.

HARRY. He didn’t say to do anything.

DIANE. That’s right. He’s a simple man who specializes in simple solutions. I’m going back to bed. Tell me how it goes.

HARRY. Thanks. (*Hangs up.*) Play it cool.

(*CROSS FADE TO: Harry and Jim in line at the movie theater.*)

HARRY. I don’t see why we had to travel all the way across town when the same movies are playing in our neighborhood.

JIM. Because I love this theater. The architecture is amazing. I think it was built in the 1920s.

HARRY. Which is roughly the last time they shampooed this carpet.

JIM. Don’t look down, look up.

HARRY. (*Looks up. Beat.*) You may have a point. (*Beat.*) It’s interesting how the atmosphere suddenly shifts from Moorish Revival to Art Deco right over – Sold out?!? Our movie is sold out! How is that possible?

JIM. On the bright side, they’re running *Casablanca* in their tiny, underpopulated art-house cinema!

HARRY. We have it at home in three formats.

JIM. Big screen!

HARRY. We watched it a month ago.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

JIM. If we don't, we'll regret it: maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of our lives—^{iv}

HARRY. When I said, "I love you" this morning, I meant it. (*Beat.*) That's not a problem, is it?

JIM. (*Beat.*) Oh my God, if you were any cuter, I'd die. (*Embraces Harry.*) I love you, too.

HARRY. Well, then. I'm glad that's settled. (*Releasing Jim, quite pleased.*) I'll get the tickets. You get the popcorn.

JIM. We'll always have Paris.

(*Jim jauntily crosses away. Harry approaches the BOX OFFICE PERSON.*)

BOX OFFICE PERSON. Good evening and welcome. How many this evening, sir?

HARRY. Just one. I mean, uh... Two please. (*Beat. Liking the way it sounds.*) "Two, please."

(*CROSS FADE TO: Harry's living room home. Jim glides in humming a tune that seems to be **but definitely is not** "As Time Goes By." He turns to entering Harry and extends his hand.*)

JIM. Dance with me.

(*Harry lets Jim take him in his arms, and they dance while Jim continues to hum Not-"As Time Goes By." Jim nuzzles Harry and sings unintelligibly into his neck.*)

HARRY. (*Giggles.*) Stop it.

JIM. I thought you liked the whole "hot breath on your neck" thing.

HARRY. I do but it tickles and you're getting the words wrong.

JIM. You can't even tell what I'm singing!

HARRY. Never mind the crime you're committing against the melody. If you're going to leave a film of woo-spittle on my neck, at least get the lyrics right.

JIM. The lyrics are hetero-centrist!

HARRY. Is that even a word?

JIM. All I'm saying is it's not just woman who needs man.

HARRY. Any issues with the next line?

JIM. Oh, that I'm good with. Man's gotta have his mate, right?

HARRY. Undeniably.

(*Jim stops dancing; gives Harry a long look, then suddenly embraces him.*)

JIM. I hate to say this, but we have a curfew in Casablanca.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

HARRY. It's ten o'clock.

JIM. I know, but my mom hasn't been... So my dad wants me home by eleven, so she won't wait up worrying. Thing is, by the time I get home, she'll already be sleeping, so how worried can she possibly be?

HARRY. Maybe she lies awake waiting for you, and when she hears you come in, she instantly drops off. My mom was sort of like that. I'd tiptoe down the hall so as not to wake her, and I'd see the light go off under the door.

JIM. That's what I hate about living at home. No matter how grown-up you are, they still treat you like a kid.

HARRY. Yeah, that doesn't change.

JIM. Great. Shoot me now. Anyway, she's not the problem. My dad's being really weird.

HARRY. Does he have a problem with you and me?

JIM. Not that I'm aware of. I mean, he hasn't said anything. I don't know. It's probably just, you know, the stress. Anyway, I gotta jet.

HARRY. You want a ride?

JIM. It's a nice night. I could use the walk.

HARRY. If you're sure.

JIM. But thank you. *(He starts to go but hesitates.)* Harry?

HARRY. Yeah?

JIM. *(Beat.)* Nothing.

(CROSS FADE TO: Ben's office. Harry puts his jacket on and crosses to Ben.)

HARRY. Hey, Ben. What's the big news?

BEN. New client. Have a look.

HARRY. A church?

BEN. They want to move out of their current digs into something newer. They requested you personally.

HARRY. I've never designed a church.

BEN. But you've done your share of schools and apartments, and they want a decent classroom with a rectory that can house a family instead of one lonely old man. They want to meet with you tomorrow at 3:00. Can you do it?

HARRY. I'll get my secretary to move things around.

BEN. Great. Coincidentally, Diane is dying to have you two over for dinner.

HARRY. Really? Because she hasn't invited us once in three months.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

BEN. That's the old Diane. That's Second Trimester Diane.

HARRY. And how is Third Trimester Diane?

BEN. Nesting. The house has never been cleaner. I can't find a goddamned thing. Anyway, you've been together for, what, three months?

HARRY. Give or take a week.

BEN. Really, Harry, it's overdue. Please, let us make it up to you.

HARRY. What's she cooking?

BEN. Pork roast, dude. You gotta come over.

HARRY. Fine. I'll run it by Jim when I see him tonight.

(CROSS FADE TO: Harry and Jim entering Harry's home.)

HARRY. Hey. You're not going to believe this, but— *(Jim embraces Harry, holding on for dear life.)* What is it? Are you okay? *(No response.)* Jim?

JIM. *(Loosens the embrace.)* Yeah. Yeah, thanks. I'm fine.

HARRY. What's wrong?

JIM. It's nothing —

HARRY. Jim.

JIM. *(Looks to Harry, taking in how much he cares.)* Okay, um... It's just... Do you think it's possible to love someone and still be unfaithful to them?

HARRY. I don't know... Why exactly...?

JIM. My parents. Oh! Did you think I was talking about us?

HARRY. I was hoping not.

JIM. I could never. I don't think I could. Which surprises me, given my father.

HARRY. He's unfaithful to your mother?

JIM. Serially. All the while, he says he loves her. Maybe he does.

HARRY. You'd be surprised what people can do to the people they love.

JIM. Am I... doing it right? I mean... Everything I ever learned about love I learned from movies and — and plays and TV. I don't really know how real people who love each other are supposed to act. Like your parents or your sister and your brother-in-law. Sometimes, when I'm with you, I feel like... a fraud.

HARRY. *(Laughs.)* You're actually worried about this?

JIM. I just want to be worthy of you.

HARRY. Of course you're "worthy." That's... And I'm not the only one who thinks so, apparently. Guess who's invited us to dinner?

JIM. Your sister? Get out! To what do I owe the honor?

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

HARRY. I think Diane's finally convinced we're serious. Is this okay? (*Jim smiles greatly.*)

(*CROSS FADE TO: a church office. Harry paces. REVEREND enters.*)

REV. Mr. Wallace? Sorry to keep you waiting. You can call me Reverend Jim; like on *Taxi*, if you remember *Taxi*.

HARRY. Indeed I do. Please, call me Harry. So, I hear you'd like us to design a new church for you: school, rectory, the works.

REV. I want to bring my congregation into a new age, but at the same time honor old traditions. After all, if the Church doesn't honor tradition, who will?

HARRY. I see your point. I must say I'm curious why you requested me.

REV. You come highly recommended.

HARRY. Really? That's nice to hear. By whom?

REV. My son, Jimmy. Whoops. He goes by Jim now. Jim Bennett.

HARRY. Of course. Great kid you got there.

REV. Yes. Yes, he is. I forget, now: exactly how do you know him?

HARRY. He's my landscaper. One of them.

REV. Right, right, right. It's a great summer job for him. Keeps him in shape and out of trouble.

HARRY. He's a very bright young man.

REV. His mother and I are very proud of him. Honor roll. Full scholarship, as soon as he chooses a college. Class president three years running, planning on a fourth. I'm sure you know most of this.

HARRY. Jim's not one to brag. At least not to me. Did you say he was looking at colleges?

REV. Yes. Why?

HARRY. Oh, nothing. I just assumed he was in college. He's very mature for his age. He's what... eighteen?

REV. He started kindergarten early and, competitive soul that he is, skipped the third grade.

HARRY. Which would make him...

REV. Fifteen.

HARRY. (*Beat. "Of course he is."*) Fifteen?

REV. You seem surprised, Mr. Wallace.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

HARRY. I honestly never would have guessed. These kids today; they grow up so fast.

REV. That they do. (*SFX: Door opening and closing.*) This must be him. Son, come in here. You'll never guess who I'm talking with.

JIM. Yeah, you wanted me to stop by. What's up? (*Sees Harry and is stunned.*)

HARRY. Hey, Jim.

JIM. Hey. Mr. Wallace.

HARRY. (*As though nothing is wrong.*) Your Dad tells me he's looking for an architect and you referred me. I can't thank you enough.

JIM. No problem.

HARRY. He also tells me you plan to run for senior class president, is that right?

JIM. Yeah.

REV. Jimmy.

JIM. I'm sorry. I meant "Yes, sir. I am."

REV. In fact, Jimmy will be attending his fourth model U.N. this year. He's a natural diplomat. Aren't you, Son?

JIM. I do my best.

REV. Still. Pretty impressive for a fifteen-year-old boy. Wouldn't you say so, Mr. Wallace?

HARRY. I think Jimmy here is a pretty impressive young man, period. I'm sorry; I have to run. I have a dinner engagement.

REV. Mr. Wallace, a pleasure.

HARRY. Reverend Bennett.

REV. Please: Reverend Jim. Or Reverend Jim, Senior.

HARRY. (*Turns to Jim.*) Always good to see you, Young Master Bennett.

JIM. Mr. Wallace.

(*Harry steps off into a large SPOTLIGHT. He staggers, bends over, and takes deep breaths. Jim enters.*)

JIM. Harry. Harry, it's me.

HARRY. Go away.

JIM. I need you to come with me.

HARRY. I can't go anywhere with—

JIM. You're standing in the middle of the street.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

(Harry looks up and SFX flood traffic noises and honking. Jim helps Harry “to the curb and to a bench,” and they sit. The SFX die out.)

JIM. Okay, breathe.

HARRY. I’m breathing fine. Just... Just go. Please.

JIM. I’m not going anywhere. *(Reaches for Harry’s forehead.)* What happened to your face?

HARRY. That was a... stop sign or something. Why are you still here? We can’t be seen together.

JIM. I know this is a bit of a shock.

HARRY. A bit?

JIM. And I’m sorry I lied to you.

HARRY. About what? About being twenty? About being in college, which covers a great many lies. Or about absolutely everything?

JIM. I never lied about how I felt about you.

HARRY. That’s great. That’s just... Were you ever going to tell me?

JIM. I wanted to, but...

HARRY. But you knew I’d react this way?

JIM. I was worried you might. I tried to stay as close to the truth as I could.

HARRY. What the hell is that supposed to mean?

JIM. Like college. I plan on going; I’m just not doing it yet. Everything about my life, everything about you and me: the talks we had about... the important stuff. That was all true.

HARRY. I think I’m going to be sick.

JIM. You know what? I’m glad this happened. I’m glad everything’s out in the open. Now, we don’t have to hide anything. And I promise, I will never lie to you again, about anything.

HARRY. Do you have any concept of how much damage you’ve done?

JIM. We can control the damage.

HARRY. I’m not talking about “spin” here! I’m talking about... Don’t you get it? Yesterday... hell, an hour ago... I was this guy with a quiet life and a great job, who happened to be in love with this beautiful, amazing young man. You’ve turned me into a criminal.

JIM. No.

HARRY. Trust me: statutory rape is still a crime.

MOONLIGHT & LOVE SONGS

JIM. I can't imagine my father, as liberal as he is, would want the world to know he has a gay son, much less one who—

HARRY. I don't know, Jim! I think if I found out some guy my age was fucking my fifteen-year-old son, I'd probably shoot the son of a bitch and worry about the consequences later! If all your father does to me is press charges, I'll consider myself very lucky.

JIM. I consented! Hell, it was my idea! I wanted to have sex. I wanted to get involved with you. You never forced me to do anything.

HARRY. The law doesn't care "why" I had sex with a teenager; it only cares "that" I did. It doesn't care if it was "romantic" or "consensual."

JIM. Then the law is stupid.

HARRY. I can't use "the law is stupid" as a defense, especially when said law exists to protect children from—

JIM. —to protect "minors who are easily duped or manipulated." That's not me.

HARRY. Because you do the duping and the manipulating?

JIM. That's not fair.

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