

①

♣ Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune

.....TERRENCE MCNALLY

CHARACTERS: JOHNNY (late 30's, 40's), FRANKIE (30's)

SETTING: FRANKIE's one-room apartment in New York's West 50's, the present.

FRANKIE is a waitress in a restaurant where JOHNNY is the new short-order cook. They have just made love for the first time. While they both have had a great time, JOHNNY is more forthright about expressing it and he's very direct in general. FRANKIE is more hesitant and wary. Now, she's made him a meat loaf sandwich and insists he must leave when he's finished eating it. It's turning into a long good-night snack.

JOHNNY: Your meat loaf is directly from Mount Olympus. Your father was a very lucky guy.

FRANKIE: It's his recipe. He taught me.

JOHNNY: Yeah? My old man was a great cook, too.

FRANKIE: Mine didn't have much choice.

JOHNNY: How do you mean?

FRANKIE: My mother left us when I was seven.

JOHNNY: I don't believe it! My mother left us when I was seven.

FRANKIE: Oh come on!

JOHNNY: Boy, you really, really, really and truly don't know me. Just about the last thing in the entire world I would joke about is a mother who wasn't there. I don't think mothers are sacred. I just don't think they're especially funny.

FRANKIE: Me and my big mouth! I don't think you realize how serious I am about wanting you to leave now.

JOHNNY: I don't think you realize how serious I am about us.

FRANKIE: What us? There is no us.

JOHNNY: I'm working on it. Frankie and Johnny! We're already a couple.

FRANKIE: Going out with someone just because his name is Johnny and yours is Frankie is not enough of a reason.

JOHNNY: I think it's an extraordinary one. It's fate. You also said you thought I had sexy wrists.

FRANKIE: One of the biggest mistakes in my entire life!

2

- JOHNNY: It's gotta begin somewhere. A name, a wrist, a toe.
- FRANKIE: Didn't they end up killing each other?
- JOHNNY: She killed him. The odds are in your favor. Besides, we're not talking about ending up. I'm just trying to continue what's been begun.
- FRANKIE: If he was anything like you, no wonder she shot him.
- JOHNNY: It was a crime of passion. They were the last of the red hot lovers. We're the next.
- FRANKIE: You're not from Brooklyn.
- JOHNNY: Brooklyn Heights.
- FRANKIE: I knew you were gonna say that! You're from outer space.
- JOHNNY: Allentown, Pennsylvania, actually.
- FRANKIE: Very funny, very funny.
- JOHNNY: You've never been to Allentown.
- FRANKIE: Who told you? Viv? Martin? I know, Molly the Mouth!
- JOHNNY: Now who's from outer space? What the pardon-my-French fuck are you talking about?
- FRANKIE: One of them told you I was from Allentown so now you're pretending you are so you can continue with this coincidence theory.
- JOHNNY: You're from Allentown? I was born in Allentown.
- FRANKIE: Very funny. Very funny.
- JOHNNY: St. Stephen's Hospital. We lived on Martell St.
- FRANKIE: I suppose you went to Moody High School, too.
- JOHNNY: No, we moved when I was eight. I started out at Park Lane Elementary though. Did you go to Park Lane? This is incredible! This is better than anything in Shirley MacLaine.
- FRANKIE: It's a small world and Allentown's a big city.
- JOHNNY: Not that small and not that big.
- FRANKIE: I still don't believe you.
- JOHNNY: Of course you don't. It's one big pardon-my-French again fucking miracle and you don't believe in them.
- FRANKIE: I'll tell you one thing: I could never, not in a million years, be seriously involved with a man who said "Pardon my French" all the time.
- JOHNNY: Done. Finished. You got it.
- FRANKIE: I mean, where do you pick up an expression like that?
- JOHNNY: Out of respect for a person. A woman in this case.
- FRANKIE: The first time you said it tonight I practically told you I had a headache and had to go home.
- JOHNNY: That's so scary to me! That three little words, "Pardon my French," could separate two people from saying the three little words that make them connect!

3

- FRANKIE: What three little words?
- JOHNNY: I love you.
- FRANKIE: Oh. Them. I should've guessed.
- JOHNNY: Did you ever say them to anyone?
- FRANKIE: Say them or mean them? My father, my first true love and a couple of thousand men since. That's about it.
- JOHNNY: I'm not counting.
- FRANKIE: You're really from Allentown?
- (JOHNNY nods, takes a bite out of his sandwich and makes a "Cross-MyHeart" sign over his chest. Then he pushes his empty milk glass towards FRANKIE meaning he would like a refill, which she will get)
- How did you get so lucky to get out of there at eight?
- JOHNNY (Talking and eating): My mother. She ran off with somebody she'd met at an A.A. meeting. My father took us to Baltimore. He had a sister. She couldn't cope with us. We ended up in foster homes. Could I have a little salt? I bounced all over the place. Washington, D.C. was the best. You go through that Smithsonian Institute they got there and there ain't nothing they're gonna teach you in college! That place is a gold mine. Portland, Maine, is nice, too. Cold though.
- FRANKIE: You didn't miss much not staying in Allentown . . . My big highlight was . . .
- JOHNNY: What?
- FRANKIE: Nothing. It's stupid.
- JOHNNY: I've told you stupid things.
- FRANKIE: Not this stupid.
- JOHNNY: No fair.
- FRANKIE: All right! I played Fiona in our high school production of *Brigadoon*.
- JOHNNY: What's stupid about that? I bet you were wonderful.
- FRANKIE: It's hardly like winning a scholarship to Harvard or being the class valedictorian. It's an event; it shouldn't be a highlight.
- JOHNNY: So you're an actress!
- FRANKIE: You mean at this very moment in time?
- JOHNNY: I said to myself "She's not just a waitress."
- FRANKIE: Yeah, she's an unsuccessful actress! What are you really?
- JOHNNY: I'm really a cook.
- FRANKIE: Oh. When you put it like that, I'm really a waitress. I haven't tried to get an acting job since the day I decided I never was gonna get one. Somebody told me you gotta have balls to be a great actress. I got balls, I told 'em. No, Frankie you got a big mouth!
- JOHNNY: Would you . . . ? You know . . . ?

4

FRANKIE: What?

JOHNNY: Act something for me.

FRANKIE: What are you? Nuts? You think actors go around acting for people just like that? Like we do requests?

JOHNNY: I'm sorry. I didn't know.

FRANKIE: Acting is an art. It's a responsibility. It's a privilege.

JOHNNY: And I bet you're good at it.

FRANKIE: And it looks like I'll die with my secret. Anyway, what happened to your mother?

JOHNNY: I tracked her down when I was eighteen. They were still together, living in Philadelphia and both drinking again. They say Philadelphia will do that to you.

FRANKIE: So you saw her again? You see, I never did.

JOHNNY: But how this potbellied, balding, gin-breathed stranger could have been the object of anyone's desire but especially my mother's! She was still so beautiful, even through the booze, but he was one hundred percent turkey.

FRANKIE: Mine was killed in a car wreck about three, no, four years ago. She was with her turkey. He go it, too. I didn't hear about it for almost a month.

JOHNNY: What people see in one another! It's a total mystery. Shakespeare said it best: "There are more things in heaven and on earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Horatio." Something like that. I'm pretty close. Did you ever read *Hamlet*?

FRANKIE: Probably.

JOHNNY: I like him. I've only read a couple of his things. They're not easy. Lots of old words. Archaic, know? Then all of a sudden he puts it all together and comes up with something clear and simple and it's real nice and you feel you've learned something. This Horatio was Hamlet's best friend. He thought he had it all figured out, so Hamlet set him straight. Do you have a best friend?

FRANKIE: Not really.

JOHNNY: That's okay. I'll be your best friend.

FRANKIE: You think a lot of yourself, don't you?

JOHNNY: Look, I'm going all over the place with you. I might as well come right out with it: I love you. I'm in love with you. I personally think we should get married and I definitely want us to have kids, three or four. There! That wasn't so difficult. You don't have to say anything. I just wanted to get it out on the table. Talk about a load off!