

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

---

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

---

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

**American Association of  
Community Theatre AACT  
NewPlayFest Winning Plays:  
Volume 3 (2018)**

*Finishing School* by  
ELAINE LINER

*Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets* by  
PAUL ELLIOTT

*Eternity* by  
MICHAEL COCHRAN

*Mynx & Savage* by  
REBECCA GORMAN O'NEILL

*Treehouse* by  
JOE MUSSO

*Sweet* by  
DENISE HINSON

**Dramatic Publishing Company**  
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

©MMXIX by  
DRAMATIC PUBLISHING

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*

(AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY THEATRE AACT  
NEWPLAYFEST WINNING PLAYS: VOLUME 3 [2018])

ISBN: 978-1-61959-195-0

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”



**American Association of Community Theatre  
AACT NewPlayFest Winning Plays:  
Volume 3 (2018)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
Foreword.....	7
<i>Finishing School</i> .....	9
<i>Making Sweet Tea and Other Secrets</i> .....	51
<i>Eternity</i> .....	119
<i>Mynx &amp; Savage</i> .....	179
<i>Treehouse</i> .....	249
<i>Sweet</i> .....	309
Author Biographies.....	371

## INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to present the six winning scripts and playwrights of the third AACT NewPlayFest cycle. AACT NewPlayFest is an initiative by AACT to address the critical need for new, high-quality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe. It has been embraced by playwrights and theatres across the country, bringing exciting theatrical journeys to producing companies and joyful realization and anticipation to playwrights and their work.

AACT is pleased to partner with Dramatic Publishing Company for this program. AACT NewPlayFest is unparalleled in new play competitions, providing full productions of the winning scripts, plus publication and rights representation by a major theatrical publisher.

This third cycle of AACT NewPlayFest, ending in 2018, proved even more successful than the first two. More scripts were submitted, and six theatres across the country produced world premieres of winning scripts. This festival continues to benefit the producing theatres by giving them the excitement of bringing new works to their patrons, and the playwrights by experiencing quality productions of their work, and publication and representation by Dramatic Publishing. The benefits of AACT NewPlayFest will expand as additional theatres produce these top-notch plays.

We hope you will consider one of these plays for your next season.

Break a leg,

Quiana Clark-Roland, Executive Director  
American Association of Community Theatre

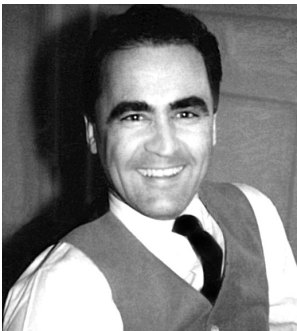
The American Association of Community Theatre is the resource connection for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas. To learn more about AACT NewPlayFest and AACT go to [aact.org](http://aact.org).

## FOREWORD

Jack K. Ayre, born in Pittsburgh on July 9, 1921, celebrated his 90th birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party in Sunnyvale, Calif., he sang with a barbershop quartet—one of his favorite activities—and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years, and continued that interest when he moved to California.

Frank, a chemical engineer by profession, was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* for a children's theatre production, and penning *McSteg*, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation has been created by the children of Frank as a tribute to their father, who passed away in August 2012, and a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre.



**Jack K. Ayre**



**Frank Ayre Lee**

*Photos: Courtesy of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.*

# **Eternity**

By  
MICHAEL COCHRAN

*Eternity* received its world premier production at Stage III Theatre in Casper, Wyo., on Jan. 26, 2018.

CAST:

Jeff Lane.....Adrian J Guillen  
Zoe Phillips ..... Dawn Anderson-Coats  
Abe..... Ron Richard  
Edith..... Pat Greiner  
Tony ..... Willam T Wallace  
Freddy ..... Jason Magnuson  
Dinky..... Heather Rankin  
Priscilla ..... Elizabeth Address  
Elvis ..... Rob Tate

PRODUCTION:

Director .....Clint Saunders  
Scenic Design..... Kris Kontour  
Costume Design .....Fathom Swanson  
Lighting and Sound Design ..... Scott Johnson  
Stage Manager .....Rita Butler  
Assistant Director.....John Ordiway  
Crew ..... Amber Ordiway, Sami Saunders,  
Tanis Saunders, Ben Sorby, Tyler Ballard,  
Fay Ballard, Fay Hall, Christine Kiefer,  
Tanya Baures, Kiaya Johnson

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Eternity* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest by Stage III Community Theatre in Casper, Wyo.”

# Eternity

## CHARACTERS

JEFF LANE: A young man in his 20s. Zoe's boyfriend.

ZOE PHILLIPS: A young woman in her 20s. Jeff's girlfriend.

ABE: An older man. Edith's counterpart.

EDITH: An older woman. Abe's counterpart.

TONY: A young streetwise male in his late teens.

FREDDY: A Las Vegas hotel detective in his late 30s or early 40s.  
Dinky's boyfriend.

DINKY: A cocktail waitress at a Las Vegas hotel in her 30s. Freddy's girlfriend.

PRISCILLA: The co-owner of the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel.  
She is in her 20s or 30s with a Priscilla Presley look. Doubles as  
GIRL IN THE PARK.

ELVIS: The white-jumpsuit Elvis impersonator in his 30s or 40s  
and reverend of the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel. Doubles as  
HOMELESS GUY.

## SETTING

The action of the play takes place during the course of a single day in the spring. The settings for each scene can be extremely simple or as elaborate as needed. The most fully realized location is the final scene in the Viva Las Vegas Wedding Chapel.

## SCENES

### ACT I

Scene 1: City bus, early morning.

Scene 2: City park, midday.

Scene 3: Private chartered airplane, mid-afternoon.

### ACT II

Scene 1: Construction site outside a casino in the early evening.

Scene 2: Inside the wedding chapel a few minutes later.



# Eternity

## ACT I

### Scene 1

*(A section of a city bus during the early morning commute. A young couple, JEFF LANE and ZOE PHILLIPS, are seated together and on their way to work. JEFF is scrolling through Twitter on his cellphone. A young skateboarder, TONY, is asleep on the seat in behind them with his headphones on. In the seat behind TONY is an older man, ABE, with a bearded, long-haired HOMELESS GUY wearing a hat who has a cardboard sign around his neck that reads, "The End Is Near!")*

ZOE. I want to do something fun. Let's go someplace special.

JEFF *(focused on his phone; agrees without meaning it)*. Uh-huh.

ZOE. We should get away ... a nice romantic vacation ... somewhere warm. I saw this great deal on resorts.

JEFF *(still doesn't look up)*. Great! Now even Brian has a job. Brian, who asked me to write his resume for him, has a job!

ZOE. Let's do it, Jeff. Let's get away. I've got vacation time coming. I can slip into that new swimsuit you liked and we can lay on the beach drinking margaritas.

JEFF *(still on phone)*. Look at this self-satisfied tweet! "I'm the featured chef and get my own signature dish. Hashtag sweet." What a twit! And here I am working any food job I can get just so I won't default on my student loans. How about I tweet that life is just one giant disappointment! Hashtag failure.

ZOE. It's not Brian's fault he got a good job.

JEFF. Oh sure, take his side.

ZOE. Jeff, I don't care what kind of job you have right now. You're smart; you'll be successful someday. I'll bet you'll even own your own restaurant.

JEFF. I doubt it. I should have been hired a year ago. We should have a nice apartment by now instead of living in a third-floor walkup. We shouldn't have to ride on this smelly bus to go to and from work every day. Life sucks.

*(The HOMELESS GUY slowly pokes himself on the top of his hat with his finger and then slowly starts to poke ABE on the top of his head. ABE calmly reaches out to stop him.)*

ZOE. Wait, are you saying our relationship sucks?

JEFF *(finally looks up)*. No. I'm sorry. I've just got a lot on my mind.

ZOE. What is it that you want?

*(The HOMELESS GUY slowly starts to reach out to poke JEFF on the head, and ABE calmly takes the guy's arm and puts it back into his lap.)*

JEFF. I feel like shit, OK? I put applications in every day and they tell me I'm—

ZOE. Overqualified or don't have enough experience. I know.

JEFF. I feel like I'm dying here.

ZOE. Besides, I'm not talking about your employment. I'm talking about us. Do we—

JEFF. Do we have to have this argument now? Can't it wait until tonight at home?

ZOE. You've been walking around with this big chip on your shoulder and I don't know if I can take it anymore. You don't want to get married, you don't want kids.

JEFF. Not while I'm in this shitty job, a shitty apartment and shitty life.

ZOE. Are you saying your life with me is, what, worthless?

JEFF. No. It's not—

ZOE. And don't say, "It's not you, it's me." *(Pauses to gather her thoughts.)* Look Jeff, I need you to make an effort. You've been in this, this mood for months now, and I can't be the positive one all the time. I can't keep doing this.

*(JEFF's phone chirps. He looks it, makes a face and then answers it.)*

JEFF. Hi, Brian ... yeah, I saw your tweet. Congratulations on the job.  
 Sure, sure you're welcome. What? This weekend? Let me check.  
*(To ZOE.)* Do we want to go out and celebrate this weekend?

*(ZOE nods yes. He then speaks into the phone.)*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. We're busy this weekend.

*(ZOE mouths the words, "No we aren't.")*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. I think we're going to have to pass. Sorry. Maybe some other time. Take care and say hi to Laura.

*(JEFF hangs up. ZOE stares at him.)*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. I'm sorry I just couldn't do it. I'm not up to hearing about how great he's doing.

*(We hear the sound of the bus slowing down, and they both jerk forward in reaction to it.)*

ZOE. Here's my stop.

JEFF. See you at lunch at one o'clock?

ZOE. I'll be about fifteen minutes late today.

JEFF. Want me to bring you anything?

ZOE. No. I ... I don't think I'll have very long for lunch today.

JEFF. Are you mad at me?

ZOE. No. *(Pauses, as if making a decision.)* I have a lot on my mind. We'll talk at lunch.

*(ZOE exits. JEFF's phone chirps as the bus noise indicates the bus is moving again.)*

JEFF. This is Jeff ... I'm almost there now ... What? A new flavor ... What is it? Chocolate chip.

*(ABE lowers the paper and looks at JEFF.)*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. Why can't I get my supplies from the old distribution point? That means a trip downtown right after I clock in ... OK, OK I got it.

*(JEFF hangs up the phone. Looks up.)*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. Just kill me now, OK?

*(ABE frowns and raises the paper. All passengers jerk forward as the bus comes to a stop. JEFF and ABE both get up to go. JEFF exits. ABE turns to the HOMELESS GUY next to him.)*

ABE. Let's go.

*(The HOMELESS GUY gets up, and his hat falls off revealing a brick sticking out of the top of his head that was hidden by the hat. He pokes himself on the top of his head again and then exits with ABE. The stage is empty except for the sleeping TONY. We hear the bus start moving again. Suddenly there is a horn sound and tires screeching.)*

OFFSTAGE VOICE. *Ten cuidado imbecil! (Watch out, stupid idiot!)*

*(TONY wakes and looks out the window. As the bus starts up again, he shrugs and then goes back to sleep listening to his music.*

*Blackout.)*

## Scene 2

*(A path through a park. ABE and EDITH are seated on a bench. They eat from brown paper bags. It's a beautiful spring day.)*

EDITH. So what happened with your appointment this morning?

ABE. Nothing much. Helping out a homeless guy. What happened with you and the girl?

EDITH. So, there I was trying to give her directions and she turns her back on me trying to take a selfie.

ABE. You want my banana?

EDITH. Sure.

ABE. Damn things give me gas, don't know why I brought it.

EDITH *(not willing to give up the subject)*. Can you imagine the nerve? She's lost, I offer help, and she acts like I'm invisible.

ABE. It's a crazy world. Not like the old days.

EDITH. How can people talk so much and say so little?

ABE. Twitter tweets, Snapchat and Insta-thingy.

EDITH. Apps and Androids. Five hundred channels and still nothing on. And reality TV—

ABE. Honey Boo Boo, the Kardashians ...

EDITH & ABE (*looking at one another*). Donald Trump!

(*Both shiver.*)

ABE. The internet is like a worldwide lynch mob. Nobody stops to find out the truth before they yell, “String ’em up!” What happened to the truth? What happened to the family?

EDITH. That’s easy. When was the last time anyone sat down around the table for dinner? They’re all staring at their phones like they might miss the second coming. No one has conversations anymore.

ABE. We should have seen it coming the day the billionth burger was sold.

EDITH. How could we? Don’t you remember all those little wars during the ’50s?

ABE. What does that have to do with fast food?

EDITH. We were distracted and convenience snuck in the back door.

ABE (*disgusted*). Progress.

EDITH. It’s too late to stop it now.

ABE. We could try to start over again.

EDITH (*huffs*). Remember the flood? Didn’t seem to make much difference. You clear out the riffraff and all you do is pave the way for Sodom and Gomorrah.

ABE (*finishes his sandwich*). I’m still hungry.

EDITH. I’ve got half your banana here.

ABE. No, I want something sweet.

EDITH. Remember your diet.

ABE. I think maybe ice cream.

EDITH. Ice cream. What about your diet?

ABE. What about it?

EDITH. Ice cream’s fattening. Why don’t you get some yogurt?

ABE. I don't want yogurt! I want real ice cream. There's a guy who sells ice cream out of a box. I'll get one from him.

EDITH. We haven't eaten lunch here for weeks. How do you know that?

ABE. He's meeting his girlfriend in the park for lunch.

EDITH. So that's why you wanted lunch in the park today!

ABE. I've got a 1:05 appointment across the street.

EDITH. And what time is the ice cream guy coming?

ABE. About one o'clock.

EDITH (*looks at him closely*). You're up to something.

ABE. No, I'm not.

EDITH. You've got that look like you're not telling me the whole truth. (*Pauses to think.*) How did you know the ice cream guy was coming by today?

ABE. I just checked the calendar.

EDITH. So you had this planned since yesterday?

ABE. Not really.

EDITH. Wait, the only way you would have his schedule for today is if he was on your appointment calendar. You're up to something. I know it. What did you do?

ABE. I just ... ah ... moved one appointment.

EDITH. Moved an appointment?!

ABE. It's no big deal. It's not like I delayed the end of the world.

EDITH. Whose appointment did you move?

ABE. A guy named Jeff something.

EDITH (*taps cell to bring up calendar*). A guy named Jeff what?

ABE. You don't have to look it up.

EDITH (*finds the name*). Jeff Lane. Wait a minute. Occupation: ice cream vendor! You changed an appointment so that you could have ice cream!

ABE. I had a craving, all right? I've been on this stupid diet for so long that when I heard him talk about a new flavor I couldn't think straight.

EDITH (*reading*). Jeff Lane was supposed to die in a traffic accident at 9:07 this morning on his way to work.

ABE. So he dies at 1:05 this afternoon. What's the big deal?

EDITH. The big deal is that we don't know what he may have done in the meantime. What if he mortally wounds someone who wasn't on the list?!

ABE. Oh yeah, he's going to hit some little kid over the head with a Fudgsicle.

EDITH. Stop joking! Abe, do you know how serious this is?

ABE. Will you stop, Edith! I told you it'll be all right. Besides, look at the grief I saved that taco truck driver.

EDITH. But what if the guilt caused him to devote his life to something good?

ABE. Already checked. The driver only glanced up to see him step out before I pulled the kid back. He was texting on his phone *before* and went right back to texting *after* hitting the brakes. He's still listed in my calendar for an accident August second, next year. No changes.

EDITH. Wait. How does this Jeff die now? You aren't allowed to just kill him. He has to die on his own.

ABE. See that spot? At 1:03 Jeff Lane will be standing there after I buy my ice cream and be hit by a stray bullet from a gang shooting. I have an appointment at 1:05 with a skateboard kid who gets killed in the same drive-by.

EDITH. But how do you know he'll be here at 1:03? He was supposed to die at 9:07.

ABE. His girlfriend made a date with him to meet for lunch at 1:15 today. She's going to tell him she wants to split up. She's tired of waiting for him to get his life together.

EDITH. Well, at least both of them will be spared the pain of that.

ABE (*looks at watch, then in JEFF's direction*). And speaking of our boy, here he comes right on time.

*(JEFF enters, crosses in front of ABE and EDITH and sits on a bench on the other side of the stage. He carries a freezer box filled with ice cream treats. He sits back and looks at the sky with a big smile on his face.)*

ABE (*cont'd*). Well, I believe it's time for my ice cream. Would you like some? My treat.

EDITH. No, thank you.

ABE. What about an ice pop? I know how much you love them.

EDITH (*weakening*). I really shouldn't.

ABE. Grape ice pop. Your favorite.

EDITH (*struggles, then gives in*). All right. But make it quick. I don't like the idea of messing around with this.

ABE. I'll be right back.

*(ABE starts to walk over to the bench JEFF is sitting on as TONY, with earphones in, whizzes by on a skateboard and almost runs into ABE.)*

ABE (*cont'd*). Look out! (*Continues to yell as TONY moves offstage.*) Watch where you're going! (*Crosses to JEFF.*) I'd like to purchase a chocolate chip ice cream sandwich and a grape ice pop.

JEFF (*standing*). You're in luck. I just got that ice cream flavor this morning. That'll be three dollars, please.

*(JEFF looks through his freezer box and produces an ice cream sandwich and a grape ice pop. He looks at ABE and then suddenly recognizes him.)*

JEFF (*cont'd*). Hey, you're the guy who saved my life this morning!

ABE. Yes.

JEFF. No, I mean it! You saved my life!

ABE. Yes, I know. Quite a coincidence, eh?

JEFF. I thought I was a goner for sure. I wasn't even looking when I stepped off that curb. It's true, you do see your whole life flash before your eyes. I wanted to thank you, but you seemed to just disappear into the crowd.

ABE. I had another appointment to keep.

JEFF. Now, it's like each moment is a gift.

ABE (*glances at his watch*). Yes, and it seems we only have just a few left.

JEFF. So anyway, thank you.

ABE. You're welcome, but no thanks necessary.

JEFF. Sorry. What was it you wanted?

ABE (*points to items already in JEFF's hands*). An ice cream sandwich and a grape ice pop.

JEFF. Oh, sure. Here you go!

*(ABE reaches in his pocket and pulls out his wallet.)*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. No, I couldn't take your money. It's my treat.

ABE. Well, that's very considerate of you. Thanks. *(Another look at his watch.)* Would you do me a favor?

JEFF. Anything, you name it!

ABE *(indicate a spot a few feet away)*. Would you stand right over here for a minute? I'd like to take a picture of you. What's more traditional than an ice cream vendor in the park? I'm kind of a photography nut.

JEFF. Right over here?

*(JEFF crosses to the spot indicated.)*

ABE. Yes. That's perfect. I'm going to get my camera, and I'll be right back. *(Crosses to EDITH.)* See, everything worked out just fine.

*(JEFF walks over behind ABE. Neither ABE nor EDITH see this.)*

JEFF. I just realized I don't even know your name.

*(The sounds of a racing car and gunshots are heard.)*

ABE *(to EDITH)*. Please tell me he's not standing right behind me.

EDITH *(looks at JEFF and then back to ABE)*. Guess again.

JEFF *(looking towards direction of the gunshot sound)*. Wow, did you hear that? It sounded like gunshots!

ABE. No. That was just a car backfiring.

EDITH *(under her breath to ABE)*. No. More like the sound of someone *being* fired.

JEFF. Oh. OK. Anyway, I'm Jeff Lane, and you are?

EDITH *(looking at ABE)*. A dummy.

JEFF. Excuse me?

EDITH. Jeff, meet Abe.

*(ABE's phone begins to beep.)*

ABE. Oh no, my 1:05 is ready. *(To EDITH.)* What am I gonna do?

EDITH. Don't ask me, you're the genius.

ABE. When is your next appointment?

EDITH. Not for another twenty minutes or so. Why?

ABE. Can you watch ... (*Mindful that JEFF is listening.*) I mean *visit* with Jeff for a minute until I get back. (*To JEFF.*) I forgot, my camera is in my car and I just want to run get it. Why don't you two get acquainted while I'm gone? (*Pushes the ice cream to EDITH.*) I'll be right back.

EDITH. Abe, don't you dare—

ABE. Please!

EDITH. All right, but hurry back. You wouldn't want Jeff to leave without taking his picture.

ABE. I'll be just a moment. You two stay right here. Don't go anywhere.

*(ABE exits in a hurry. EDITH looks at ice cream sandwich and ice pop and has lost her appetite and puts them both into her empty lunch bag.*

EDITH. So ... Jeff. I'm Edith. Nice to meet you.

JEFF. Nice to meet you, too.

EDITH. Lovely weather, isn't it?

JEFF. Your friend saved my life today. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here right now.

EDITH. Yes, I know.

JEFF. I guess I was so wrapped up in all my problems that I didn't even see that truck coming. My girlfriend and I have been having some troubles.

EDITH. Breaking up is always painful.

JEFF. We're not at that point.

EDITH. Oh, you never can tell.

JEFF. I guess we were headed in that direction.

EDITH. So you're meeting her for lunch today?

JEFF. Yes, how did you know?

EDITH (*scrambling for a plausible answer*). You're young and in love, it's a nice warm day and, well, it's lunchtime!

JEFF. We are and it is! (*Looking around.*) Isn't the park beautiful? Life is so beautiful. I'm going to ask my girlfriend to marry me.

*(EDITH stiffens as ZOE enters. ZOE is sad yet determined.)*

JEFF *(cont'd)*. There she is now *(Calling out.)* Zoe! Over here, excuse me.

*(JEFF crosses to the other bench to meet ZOE. EDITH turns back to her phone but can't help listening in.)*

ZOE. Jeff, I don't have a long lunch break and I was hoping we could talk.

JEFF. Sure. I've got a lot I want to talk about, too.

ZOE. I've been thinking about a lot of things, Jeff.

JEFF. So have I. Something amazing happened to me today that I want to talk to you about.

ZOE. I want to say this before I lose my nerve. Jeff, I love you—

JEFF. I know, but Zoe, I—

ZOE. No, Jeff, let me say this. I don't want to wait for you to climb out of whatever black hole you've fallen into. Life is good, and I want, no, I need—

JEFF. I know.

ZOE *(puzzled)*. You know? You know what?

JEFF. That life is good. *(Pause.)* Zoe, I almost died this morning.

ZOE. What?

JEFF. This guy showed up out of nowhere and pulled me out of the path of a taco truck and saved my life.

ZOE. Are you OK?

JEFF. I'm better than OK.

ZOE. What do you mean?

JEFF. You were right. You were right! About the job thing and the black hole thing ... I couldn't see what was right in front of me. I had to walk five blocks out of my way, but I stopped at that little jewelry store you like. *(Gets down on one knee and takes out ring box.)* Zoe Phillips I want to spend this good, good life with you. I want to have a real family with real problems and all the crazy and messy things that go with that. Will you marry me?

ZOE *(speechless for a moment)*. This is real?

JEFF. Absolutely.

ZOE *(feeling unsure)*. I came here to ...

JEFF. I wouldn't blame you if you said no, but if you say yes, I will do everything I can to make you the happiest woman in the world.

*(ZOE looks at him long and hard, but then can't help but smile.)*

ZOE. I ... Yes ... yes I will marry you.

*(ZOE and JEFF stand and she leaps into his arms as he spins her around and they kiss.)*

EDITH. Oh, shit!

JEFF. Let's take a carriage ride around the park. I'll call my boss and get someone to cover the rest of my shift. I'll make you a special dinner tonight and then we can put on some of your favorite music, light some candles and ... *(Says the word to indicate they will have sex.)* celebrate.

ZOE. What about my work this afternoon?

JEFF. Go back to your office and tell them the sexiest female account executive just got engaged and you're taking the rest of the day off with your fiancé!

ZOE. Right now?

JEFF. Yes, right now. I'll wait here for you!

ZOE. I can't believe this is happening! I'll be right back!

*(ZOE exits.)*

JEFF *(crosses to EDITH)*. Life is so great! Isn't it wonderful to be alive? Have you ever looked death in the face?

EDITH. Once or twice.

JEFF. Then you know what I'm talking about. Didn't you think, "Everything is fresher and cleaner!"

EDITH *(looking off to see where ABE is)*. Or older and grayer.

JEFF. Do you know how much longer until Abe gets back? I've got to call my boss.

EDITH. He should be right back. I know he wouldn't want you to leave without seeing you.

JEFF. I've got a couple of minutes more I guess. Excuse me.