

PARADISE ENOW

1

2 *(A weeknight in late summer on a city street. JESSE sits on bench, lost in remembering*
3 *the music. FRANKLYN enters)*

4 FRANKLYN: Omigod. That was unbelievable.

5 JESSE: What? Oh, inside, yeah.

6 FRANKLYN: You were incredible. I am so impressed.

7 JESSE: Thanks. Just my old EMS training. Never had a chance to use it before.

8 FRANKLYN: I mean, that guy looked dead. Was he dead?

9 JESSE: Um, I don't really know, but I couldn't get a pulse. Do you know the guy?

10 FRANKLYN: No. He was just ahead of me as we were walking up the aisle and all of a

11 sudden it was like he just collapsed, like a marionette where somebody cut the strings.

12 Was that an MI?

13 JESSE: Myocardial infarction? Maybe. Are you a doctor?

14 FRANKLYN: What? No. My mom is, my brother is, I have an aunt who is. So I picked

15 up some of the jargon. It's so incredibly lucky you were there.

16 JESSE: I'm glad I could help.

17 FRANKLYN: I mean, I was like totally useless. My emotion of choice in stress

18 situations is panic. And his wife is screaming and everybody is just staring and then you

19 come up, forcing your way through the crowd, and *(makes chest-thumping gesture with*

20 *her fists)* get him breathing again. Wow. It was really amazing.

21 JESSE: Um, well, thanks.

22 FRANKLYN: And then when the ambulance guys finally get there, poof, you disappear.

23 Cleaned up Dodge and you're gonzo.

1 JESSE: At that point I was just in the way.

2 FRANKLYN: I am totally in awe.

3 JESSE: Yeah, me too. That's how I live my life.

4 FRANKLYN: (?) Is that what you do, EMS, you're an EMS guy, whatever they call

5 them?

6 JESSE: No. Used to, when I was in college, I worked nights. But now I just do volunteer

7 work for them, like when they need extra help, like after that storm last fall.

8 FRANKLYN: Oh. Like a volunteer fireman?

9 JESSE: A little different. Although I actually do that too.

10 FRANKLYN: Volunteer fireman?

11 JESSE: Yeah.

12 FRANKLYN: Here? In the city? No, they don't have -

13 JESSE: Right. No. I'm from upstate. Bear Lake, do you know it?

14 FRANKLYN: Oh, sure. I've been there. That's way up the Interstate. Wow, you must

15 really like Mahler. That's a long hike for a concert.

16 JESSE: We just never get orchestras up there. Actually, to be honest, I didn't know what

17 I was going to hear tonight.

18 FRANKLYN: Really?

19 JESSE: I just buy tickets when I can. I don't really pay any attention to what's on the

20 program. I know I'm going to love it no matter what they play.

21 FRANKLYN: I like that. Oh god, I just thought of it. How ironic?

22 JESSE: What?

23 FRANKLYN: You know, the Second Symphony. The Resurrection?

1 JESSE: I'm not following you.

2 FRANKLYN: The symphony we heard tonight, it's called the Resurrection. Oooh, just
3 got the chills.

4 JESSE: Oh, that's interesting. I didn't know that.

5 FRANKLYN: (*Exhales strongly*) Man, what a great night.

6 JESSE: Yeah.

7 FRANKLYN: I mean, until the guy...

8 JESSE: Right.

9 FRANKLYN: There's nothing like live music, right? Well, obviously you feel that way.
10 You drove two hours to get here.

11 JESSE: No, you're absolutely right. I get kind of lost in live music, and yet it makes me
12 feel so connected. Weird, right?

13 FRANKLYN: No, I know exactly what you're saying. That happens to me too when I'm
14 listening to a concert. Particularly outdoors. Did you ever go to one of their open air
15 concerts?

16 JESSE: (*Interested*) I didn't even know they did that.

17 FRANKLYN: Yeah. There's one next month at Jefferson Park. It's free, it overlooks the
18 river, and...*I'll* be there.

19 JESSE: (*Smiles*)

20 FRANKLYN: (*Beat*) So why are you sitting on this bench exactly? Is there like some
21 special bus to Bear Lake that stops here?

22 JESSE: I don't think so. No, I just needed some time alone, I guess.

23 FRANKLYN: (*Jumping up*) Oh, I am so sorry, I –

1 JESSE: Hey, hey, no, it's fine. It's fine, please don't go. Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have
2 said that.

3 FRANKLYN: It's okay. I totally get why after doing something like you did, you'd
4 need a moment.

5 JESSE: No, no. This is going to sound...I wasn't even thinking of that. I was still just
6 feeling the music.

7 FRANKLYN: "Saved my life for today. What's next on the to do list?"

8 JESSE: I don't mean to trivialize it. I pray that guy's all right.

9 FRANKLYN: Yeah. I don't mean to trivialize it either, I mean your wanting to be alone.
10 It's just my stupid sense of humor.

11 JESSE: (*Somewhat to himself*) Wasn't supposed to be alone anyway, so maybe it's right
12 that you're here.

13 FRANKLYN: You weren't supposed to be alone?

14 JESSE: I was supposed to be coming here with someone and she kind of (*air quotes*)
15 couldn't make it at the last minute.

16 FRANKLYN: Oh man, did she miss a great date.

17 JESSE: Well, I guess. I'm not sure she would feel that way.

18 FRANKLYN: So when you're not saving lives and putting out fires, what do you do?

19 JESSE: I'm a school teacher.

20 FRANKLYN: Oh cool. So am I. So I guess when you're not saving lives and putting out
21 fires, you're saving lives and putting out fires.

22 JESSE: (*Chuckling*) Oh, you got that right. Where do you teach?

23 FRANKLYN: Cobblestone. It's a -

1 JESSE: We've heard of Cobblestone even in Bear Lake. Impressive.

2 FRANKLYN: It's no big deal. What about you, Bear Lake High(?), is there such a
3 thing?

4 JESSE: There is and that's where I teach. Go Bruins.

5 FRANKLYN: What do you teach?

6 JESSE: Biology.

7 FRANKLYN: Oh, me too, me too. Man, this is - I think we're at the point of
8 introductions. Franklyn Bergman.

9 JESSE: Jesse Tyler. Hi. Franklyn Bergman. You said your mom is a doctor?

10 FRANKLYN: Yep. Gynecologist. She actually works at the Coopersmith Clinic. At least
11 for the time being. There's that bill in the legislature, you know -

12 JESSE: Yeah, I know.

13 FRANKLYN: So if they pass that, they'll probably have to close the clinic. It's really
14 infuriating. And now there's all these loonies parading up and down in front, you know,
15 shouting all those terrible things, trying to pressure the politicians, I guess.

16 JESSE: Yeah. Dr. Bernice Bergman, right?

17 FRANKLYN: Yeah. Wow, you know her?

18 JESSE: I know who she is. *(Beat)* I'm one of those loonies. My church helped organize
19 that demonstration.

20 *(Awkward pause)*

21 FRANKLYN: Let me be the first to say: whoops.

22 JESSE: Sorry.

23 FRANKLYN: Wow. Major bummer. We were really on a roll there for a while.

1 I mean, really? You're nothing like what I think of when I see those guys.

2 JESSE: I don't know if that's good or bad, but I am one of those guys. That is my
3 church.

4 FRANKLYN: Including that guy with the Tea Party hat? I mean, he says some pretty
5 terrible things.

6 JESSE: That would be Carl. Carl definitely has issues. But he's all talk.

7 FRANKLYN: Yeah. All talk. Anyway, you did a really, really great thing tonight and
8 I'm so glad I saw it and...that I met you.

9 JESSE: Me too. Sorry about the clinic thing, and your mother.

10 FRANKLYN: Yeah. Sorry about the loony comment. You know, classical music
11 concert, I saw you there and I guess I just made some assumptions.

12 JESSE: Yeah. We make different assumptions in Bear Lake I guess.

13 FRANKLYN: Yeah, I suppose I should have known that. *(Takes a few steps to leave)*
14 You know what I remember about Bear Lake? My folks took me up, I must have been
15 like eight or nine. It was pretty windy and the water was cold. We were with a few other
16 people, but nobody had a kid my age so I kind of wandered off and I saw this really
17 funky looking boathouse.

18 JESSE: Stralman's. Still there, still being run by the same guy.

19 FRANKLYN: Wow. This is 20 years ago. Anyway, I saw this guy in a kayak, and I'd
20 never seen one before. And he was having trouble with the wind, I guess, 'cause he
21 pulled into shore in the swimming area and got out and left the paddle and walked over to
22 the boathouse. And I was just fascinated with the thing. Two sided paddle; how cool was
23 that. So I grabbed it and got in and started paddling around.

1 JESSE: And you were nine? Gutsy.

2 FRANKLYN: I didn't know what I was doing. And it was really scary as I got out on the
3 water, and I knew I wasn't supposed to be doing it. But that just made it irresistible.

4 JESSE: What happened?

5 FRANKLYN: Some guy came out in a rowboat and pulled me back in, yelling at me in
6 some language that I'm sure would have been charming to listen to under other
7 circumstances.

8 JESSE: That would be Norwegian, if it was the old man, who wouldn't have been that
9 old then, I guess.

10 FRANKLYN: And then my parents yelled at me in a language I did understand. But it
11 was so worth it.

12 JESSE: I love kayaking. I like the outdoors a lot. I built this nice cabin in the woods by
13 the lake.

14 FRANKLYN: Really? Sounds wonderful. Man, this sucks.

15 JESSE: *(As a suggestion, not a statement)* I still take a kayak out on the lake every
16 Sunday after church.

17 FRANKLYN: *(Incredulous look)*

18 JESSE: I mean, I'm thinking God brought us together for a reason. *(FRANKLYN smiles*
19 *a broad smile)* Oh gosh, did I really say that. I don't know what I was thinking. I'm
20 trying to put your mom out of business. There's no way you would go out with me.

21 FRANKLYN: Yeah. I can't imagine how it could possibly work. *(Beat)* So let's do it.

22 JESSE: Umm, really?

1 FRANKLYN: I mean, my sister-in-law is ardently anti-abortion, and my mom loves her.
2 Of course, she's not marching up and down trying to close down her clinic.

3 JESSE: Well, if it's any comfort, I won't be back demonstrating once school starts next
4 week.

5 FRANKLYN: Okay. It's a start. And for my part, I'll never stand you up for a date, you
6 can be sure of that. Whoops, sorry, I may have made another bad assumption.

7 JESSE: No, that's okay.

8 FRANKLYN: I didn't mean to rub it in.

9 JESSE: You didn't.

10 FRANKLYN: I may be a little out of control tonight. What with the music and the
11 *(makes a pounding on a victim's chest gesture)*, you definitely know how to show a girl a
12 good time.

13 JESSE: Well, you couldn't be more wrong about that.

14 FRANKLYN: Really? I don't get that. You may be hanging around with the wrong
15 people.

16 JESSE: Trying to convert me already?

17 FRANKLYN: Isn't that what relationships are all about? All these little attempts to
18 convert your partner?

19 JESSE: I wouldn't know. Sunday at five?

20 FRANKLYN: I'll be there. And while you're in church Sunday, pray for a miracle,
21 because we're going to need one.

22 *(As FRANKLYN exits, JESSE looks skyward and mouths "thank you")*

23 -o0o-

24

1 (*The lake Sunday evening. JESSE and FRANKLYN enter*)

2 JESSE: Do you want to sit here?

3 FRANKLYN: Looks good. Oh, am I going to be sore tomorrow.

4 JESSE: You handled yourself great. You really haven't kayaked since you were a kid?

5 FRANKLYN: Nope.

6 JESSE: I'm really impressed. (*Beat*) You're sure you don't want something to eat?

7 FRANKLYN: Yeah, I'm sure. Let's just sit and chat. It's so pretty; you don't get stars

8 like this in town.

9 (*They look at the stars*)

10 JESSE: Are you cold? We can go into the café.

11 FRANKLYN: Can't see the stars in there. If I get cold, I'm sure you'll figure out a way

12 to warm me.

13 (*JESSE breaks out in an embarrassed smile and slightly shakes his head in mild disbelief*)

14 (*More star-gazing*)

15 JESSE: I have to be honest with you. I was afraid you wouldn't come.

16 FRANKLYN: Just another thing we have in common. I was afraid I wouldn't come

17 either. Wow, that sky is really sensational. And very, very romantic. Don't you think?

18 JESSE: I have to warn you, I'm a black belt if you can't behave yourself.

19 FRANKLYN: Am I really that wanton?

20 JESSE: No, no. That was a dumb thing to say. It's just the girls up here take things a

21 little slower. At least with me.

1 FRANKLYN: Yeah, I typically ignore the speed limit, and most other rules too. Why
2 didn't you think I'd come? I said I'd never stand you up. Did you think I'd rethink the
3 whole clinic thing?

4 JESSE: I put a lot of effort into thinking about what I'm thinking about. I don't really
5 have the energy to do a lot of thinking about what other people are thinking. So no, it's
6 not that. *(Beat)* I guess it's just my history with girls. Which is that I don't have any
7 history.

8 FRANKLYN: You shouldn't've told me that. Now you're definitely going to have to
9 resort to martial arts to keep me away.

10 *(JESSE just stares at FRANKLYN)*

11 FRANKLYN: What?

12 JESSE: Trying to get the feel of you. You're really quick, you're really smart, you're
13 really pretty, you're really funny. But underneath it all you seem somehow really...

14 FRANKLYN: Unbalanced?

15 JESSE: No. Frightened? Is that it?

16 FRANKLYN: Frightened? Of you?

17 JESSE: I can't imagine that. But maybe you're afraid of the silence?

18 FRANKLYN: I thought you didn't think much about what other people think.

19 JESSE: Like right now. You couldn't just leave what I said out there, absorb it, see if it
20 resonates. You needed to fill the silence with something.

21 *(Pause. They're looking at each other)*

22 FRANKLYN: *(Raising hand)* Can I talk yet?

1 JESSE: (*Broad smile*) I didn't say you had to change anything. I'm just sharing what I'm
2 feeling.

3 FRANKLYN: I think that you're right, I *am* afraid of the silence, I'm afraid that silence
4 will suck me in and I'll lose control of who I am, which any notion that I actually know
5 who I am is pretty laughable.

6 JESSE: Okay. Whatever works for you.

7 FRANKLYN: Let's not panic here. Nobody said anything about things working for me.
8 But for what it's worth, every single interchange we've had so far – except that which
9 shall not be named - has made me feel closer to you. So something is sucking me in. And
10 I would just add, the fact that you nailed me like you just did on the silence thing is
11 spooky.

12 JESSE: This is all in a couple of hours of knowing me?

13 FRANKLYN: It just feels good to be with you. I question virtually everything in my life,
14 but no matter what answer I come up with, feeling good usually trumps it.

15 JESSE: It feels good to be with you too. I'm sorry if I was too forward in what I said.

16 FRANKLYN: You're apologizing to *me* for being forward?

17 JESSE: The thing about the silence – this may get us into a rocky area.

18 FRANKLYN: About time.

19 JESSE: For me, God fills that silence. That's how I hear Him best.

20 FRANKLYN: So I'm drowning out god?

21 JESSE: No, certainly not. I just wonder for you, what it – sorry, I guess I shouldn't go
22 there.

23 FRANKLYN: No, go ahead.

1 JESSE: What it would be like to experience the silence, not the literal silence, but the
2 quiet place inside, the way I do.

3 FRANKLYN: I've tried that. It disintegrated into chaos pretty quickly.

4 JESSE: Well, being born again feels pretty chaotic at first. You let go of everything
5 familiar and you're ready to reconstruct yourself, to move on. Sorry, preaching without a
6 license. Anyway, that's how I see it. A way to find God. It's out there, if you're ever
7 interested.

8 FRANKLYN: Is that part of the package?

9 JESSE: (?)

10 FRANKLYN: Is that a condition of being with you?

11 JESSE: No. I'm guessing you may not be a believer.

12 FRANKLYN: True. I am an atheist. Well, sometimes I'm a secular humanist, but then
13 you have to go to *their* meetings, so I revert to atheism again.

14 JESSE: Okay. I get that. But still you might want to come to our church sometime and
15 hear some of the stories.

16 FRANKLYN: Let me ask you, if I was making the same pitch to you, about you letting
17 go of what you believe in...

18 JESSE: Okayokay.

19 FRANKLYN: Look, Jesse, I think there's certain places we just can't go. But as long as
20 we stay in the demilitarized zone, maybe, you know, we'll be okay.

21 JESSE: Yeah. I'm sorry. I'll drop it. Like I said, it's not a condition of our being friends
22 or whatever. I don't have conditions.

23 FRANKLYN: I do.

1 JESSE: Oh? Like what?

2 (*FRANKLYN leans in to kiss JESSE. At first it's light and romantic, then it becomes more*

3 *sexual and more passionate. JESSE finally breaks away*)

4 JESSE: I'm sorry. We make this promise.

5 FRANKLYN: No, *I'm* sorry. I knew that.

6 JESSE: You did?

7 FRANKLYN: I checked you guys out online. (*Beat*) Feeling stalked?

8 JESSE: No. Maybe. You certainly are one of a kind.

9 FRANKLYN: Yeah, that's what my students tell me. Speaking of which, how did *you*

10 get interested in biology?

11 JESSE: (*Smiles*) Well. I'm going to be a little self-conscious when I'm talking about

12 spiritual things with you.

13 FRANKLYN: It's okay. It's part of who you are. That's why I'm here, to get to know

14 you.

15 JESSE: Okay. You asked for it. When I was a kid, I was a loner. The only place I could

16 find any companionship was in the woods or out on a field, sticking my face as close as I

17 could to some funky beetle and actually talking to it, singing back to the birds or the

18 crickets or the frogs, yelling at the rain. So you get why I was a loner. All the other kids

19 thought I was just weird. My parents were concerned about me and went to the minister

20 of their church. I don't know what they said to him, but he took me aside and basically

21 told me that my obsession with nature was Satan's trap for me.

22 FRANKLYN: Oh good god. How old were you?

1 JESSE: I was like 15 or 16. I felt confused, I felt like I was sinning, and I felt like God
2 had abandoned me and I stopped going to church. It was my grandmother who
3 interceded. She was an Evangelical and she told me to speak to the pastor of *her* church.
4 He told me to go back to my most favorite spot and just listen, listen to the sounds of
5 nature until I heard the silence, and then God would speak to me again. I hiked up to
6 Packham's Peak, that's a hilltop at the far end of the lake, you can kind of see it outlined
7 down there. I didn't think anything was going to happen but Franklyn, as I sat there
8 listening, the silence grew and grew until it was like a symphony, and for the first time in
9 my life, I felt like I understood. Because Jesus was speaking to me in the only language I
10 *could* understand. And I trusted Him and gave myself to Him.

11 FRANKLYN: And you found (*tapping her chest*) peace.

12 JESSE: You know, Franklyn, I like to think that on that hilltop, in that silence, peace
13 found me.

14 FRANKLYN: (*FRANKLYN likes this*) You're one of a kind yourself. That was lovely,
15 Jesse. It sounds like a magical place. (*Beat*) And you want to know what I think? I think
16 you *are* weird. (*Beat*) And I really like weird. (*They share a moment of eye contact.*
17 *FRANKLYN gently pulls away*) And I really like hiking.

18 JESSE: Well, you should definitely hike up to Packham's Peak. It's amazing there. Even
19 an atheist can catch a glimpse of God up there.

20 FRANKLYN: Great. When can we go? Next time?

21 JESSE: It's comforting to know there'll be a next time. (*Beat*) Is it true what you said
22 before, that you didn't think you'd come here?

1 FRANKLYN: Yeah. I think you get how neurotic I am, so of course I had severe doubts,
2 given my preconceptions about what guys like you were like. And then I checked out the
3 church website and I freaked out.

4 JESSE: Are we really that awful?

5 FRANKLYN: You're just so...it's not my world, you know that.

6 JESSE: But you came anyway.

7 FRANKLYN: It's like the kayak when I was nine. I've learned when I have choices, I
8 should always opt for the most frightening and intimidating one. Step into your fear,
9 that's my credo.

10 JESSE: I like that.

11 FRANKLYN: But as much as I'm struggling to reconcile our differences, the real
12 struggle is reconciling the guy I'm experiencing with the guys on that website.

13 JESSE: Okay, but that is who I am, those are my people. Maybe getting to know me will
14 help you understand them better as well.

15 FRANKLYN: Maybe.

16 JESSE: Look, I don't know where this is going but I want you to know, I'll never
17 pressure you to change. I know that's kind of part of our mission, conversions, but you
18 should know I don't subscribe to everything on that site.

19 FRANKLYN: That helps.

20 JESSE: Good, I'm glad. And also, even though I pulled away, it felt really good when
21 you were kissing me.

22 FRANKLYN: Was I kissing you? I thought we were kissing each other.

23 JESSE: I guess. But, uh, anyway, I hope it felt good for you too.

1 FRANKLYN: I can't remember. Maybe you could jog my memory.

2 (*JESSE awkwardly leans in and they kiss again. It becomes passionate*)

3 -o0o-

4

1 *(Packham's Peak. JESSE and FRANKLYN with backpacks. It is early summer)*

2 FRANKLYN: Well, it took us, what is it, ten months to get here, but ...

3 JESSE: Yes?

4 FRANKLYN: It's just incredible.

5 JESSE: Isn't it? Gosh, I love it here.

6 *(They take a moment)*

7 JESSE: Feel any closer to God?

8 FRANKLYN: Well, I can tell you one thing. Thinking back on that wonderful story you

9 told me, being here definitely makes me feel closer to *you*, if that's possible. *(They kiss)*

10 JESSE: What did you pack for lunch?

11 FRANKLYN: A jug of wine and a loaf of bread.

12 JESSE: (?)

13 FRANKLYN: There's this poem that's been running around in my head:

14 *A book of verses underneath the bough*

15 *A jug of wine, a loaf of bread*

16 *And thou*

17 *Singing beside me in the wilderness*

18 *Ah wilderness were paradise enow.*

19 JESSE: Enow?

20 FRANKLYN: It means "enough." *(Slightly troubled)* It means that this is all we need

21 JESSE: I really like that. *(JESSE gently takes FRANKLYN in his arms)* It is all we need.

22 And again, thank you, thank you, thank you for my birthday present.

1 FRANKLYN: Yeah, I thought you'd like that. I loaded my entire CD collection on there.
2 Those iPods are so great.

3 JESSE: I listen to it all the time now. I never know what I'm listening to, but it's all just
4 wonderful.

5 FRANKLYN: You can always check the screen. I made sure it was all labeled correctly.

6 JESSE: You know, Franklyn, I'm kind of happier not knowing. The connection I feel to
7 the music is so intuitive, so spiritual. For me the details just kind of get in the way.

8 FRANKLYN: Hmmm. That's my Jess. Finished my last class on Wednesday. And your
9 last class was...

10 JESSE: Yesterday. Next up is the Fellowship day camp.

11 FRANKLYN: I'll bet you're wonderful with kids. I'd love to see that.

12 JESSE: Drop by. I certainly love being with them. But actually that doesn't start until the
13 following week.

14 FRANKLYN: Oh? So you're free this week?

15 JESSE: Not exactly. Oh, I'm sorry. I should have checked with you. You've been so
16 busy, I just assumed... but I guess we could have gone away for a few days.

17 FRANKLYN: Yeah. What are you doing?

18 JESSE: Well, Franklyn ,.. I'm going down to the clinic.

19 FRANKLYN: Oh? Really?

20 JESSE: It's part of my commitment to the church. You know where I stand on this,
21 Franklyn. And these are my people.

22 FRANKLYN: I know where you stand on abortion. I get it; you're into saving lives.

23 JESSE: Franklyn –

1 FRANKLYN: I don't want to talk about that. You're with *me* now, and my mother
2 works there. I thought we were trying to compartmentalize our social views and our
3 politics. This is like right in my face.

4 JESSE: (*Beat*) Okay. I think that's fair. I'll get out of it somehow.

5 FRANKLYN: "Somehow," but not by telling them the truth.

6 JESSE: Franklyn.

7 FRANKLYN: Okay. Sorry. That was right in your face.

8 JESSE: I'll get out of it. We can try that white water rafting place you always talk about.

9 FRANKLYN: Clarkson's Lodge. That'd be great, definitely. (*Beat*) Jess, do any of your
10 friends ever ask you about what's going on with you?

11 JESSE: Yeah. Some of the guys have asked. They figured out I'm seeing somebody.

12 FRANKLYN: What do you tell them?

13 JESSE: You know, just that I met somebody special. And they're always on me to bring
14 you to a meeting. So I make excuses about your schedule, whatever. Have you told your
15 friends about me?

16 FRANKLYN: No, not in any detail.

17 JESSE: Right. This has been going on since we met. Why are you asking about it now?

18 FRANKLYN: Why indeed. (*Beat*) I spend most of my time each day trying to imagine
19 what life would be like with you. What's left of the day I spend trying to imagine what
20 life would be like without you. And in the ten minutes I have left over I grade papers and
21 write lesson plans.

22 JESSE: What am I going to do with you.

1 FRANKLYN: That's what I think we need to talk about. We see each other every
2 weekend in this private world that we've created. And honestly, I love that world.

3 JESSE: Me too.

4 FRANKLYN: But something's happening that's going to make continuing to live in that
5 world a tad problematic.

6 JESSE: Oh. You mean the protests down at the –

7 FRANKLYN: No. I don't mean that. (*Reaching into her backpack and producing a*
8 *book*) Our book of verses.

9 JESSE: You carried that all the way up here?

10 FRANKLYN: That's not all I carried.

11 JESSE: "What to Expect When You're Expecting." (*An explosion*) Oh my gosh,
12 Franklyn. This is wonderful. (*JESSE embraces FRANKLYN*)

13 FRANKLYN: (*Caught off guard*) Well, that could have gone worse.

14 JESSE: How did this happen?

15 FRANKLYN: You are a biology teacher, right?

16 JESSE: You know what I mean. I thought we were being so careful.

17 FRANKLYN: Well, after I stopped taking the pill, at your request, I was relying on you.

18 JESSE: Right. Oh. Darn. You know how awkward and clueless I am about making love,
19 I guess –

20 FRANKLYN: Men. You're a wonderful lover. Very intuitive, very spiritual. It's just
21 sometimes you need to pay attention to the details. So let me get this straight. You're all
22 right with this?

23 JESSE: Of course. Now you'll have to marry me.

1 FRANKLYN: Jesse, honey, you know me well enough to know that I would never
2 marry anyone because I had to.

3 JESSE: Okay, I'm not expressing myself well. I'm just so...I mean, is there some other
4 possibility?

5 FRANKLYN: Yeah, I was afraid you were going to ask me that. Jesse, we can't raise
6 our kid in this little world we live in. You're going to want to take him to church.

7 JESSE: Yep, that's right.

8 FRANKLYN: And once he gets there he's going to talk about his baby-killing grandma.

9 JESSE: Franklyn.

10 FRANKLYN: I don't know what I thought was going to happen when we started seeing
11 each other, which I take full responsibility for -

12 JESSE: Don't be silly. We were brought together.

13 FRANKLYN: - but I didn't prepare any lesson plan for this.

14 JESSE: (*Beat*) I know you think I rely almost exclusively on my spirituality to guide me,
15 but when that guy had that heart attack, I didn't just kneel there and pray. I got really,
16 really practical. I am capable of that.

17 FRANKLYN: Well, we're on life support, this would be the time.

18 JESSE: Whether we marry or don't marry, it's still my kid, and I'm still going to take
19 him or her to church -

20 FRANKLYN: Jess -

21 JESSE: - and you're still going to take him to visit your mom. And he'll know his
22 parents don't always agree. And he'll make his own choices. Did your parents agree on
23 everything? I know mine sure didn't.

1 FRANKLYN: And he'll make his own choices?

2 JESSE: Of course. Like everyone does.

3 FRANKLYN: Everyone? Jess, that's just –

4 *(FRANKLYN cuts off her speech when she sees a broad smile spread over JESSE's face,*
5 *maybe he puts his finger on her lips)*

6 JESSE: This might be a good time to listen to the silence.

7 *(JESSE again gently embraces her, reading the book over her shoulder. FRANKLYN*
8 *continues to look troubled)*

9

10 -o0o-

11

1 *(A few weeks later. FRANKLYN enters and crosses to bench. JESSE enters)*

2 JESSE: Oh, Franklyn, I was so worried about you.

3 FRANKLYN: About *me*?

4 JESSE: I'm sorry. How *is* your mom doing?

5 FRANKLYN: She jumps about fifteen feet every time she hears a loud noise, but
6 otherwise I guess she's fine

7 JESSE: So is that where you've been all this time, with her?

8 FRANKLYN: Most of the time, yeah.

9 JESSE: Why didn't you answer my calls or my texts? You just fell off the face of the
10 earth.

11 FRANKLYN: I was maybe a little pushed.

12 JESSE: Okay, I get that. It was inexcusable and I guess you're taking it out on me.

13 FRANKLYN: Let me tell you what was inexcusable. The jerks in the legislature,
14 pressured by, among others, the jerks in your church, passed a bill that effectively closed
15 this clinic because the jerks at Memorial and Kensington General, bowing to pressure
16 once again from jerks like the jerks in your church, stripped my mom of her admitting
17 privileges.

18 JESSE: Okay. That wasn't me. I didn't pressure anybody.

19 FRANKLYN: Oh no? I'm masochistically checking out the Fellowship website, which
20 has gotten to be a really bad habit, and I'm reading the blogs with all the back-slapping
21 and high-fiving going on. And then I follow a link to a video of the celebratory rally, and
22 whose smiling countenance do I see? Jesse Tyler.

1 JESSE: Franklyn, why is any of this a surprise to you? You know who I am. The church
2 is an important part of my life.

3 FRANKLYN: And of course, so am I an important part of your life, and so are the
4 representations you make to me, like when you specifically said you wouldn't go back
5 down to the rallies.

6 JESSE: This wasn't a protest rally.

7 FRANKLYN: No, it was worse. Group gloating. And this is all going on two days after
8 one of your creeps tries to shoot my mom?

9 JESSE: You know how I feel about that. And it wasn't one of our people. He's not in our
10 church.

11 FRANKLYN: Right, he's not in Bear Lake Evangelical. He's in the united church of
12 let's stop the baby killers at all costs of which your Fellowship is a charter member. You
13 enable guys like that, Jesse, you and your people. Go through the website and you'll find
14 that the occasional mention of let's tone down the violence is lost amid the seemingly
15 endless calls for donations to the assassin's legal defense fund. But what's most telling is
16 what's not there. There's not one posting from Jesse Tyler saying: "Hey, guys, this
17 asshole just shot at my kid's grandma. We really need to rethink this." That was your
18 chance to step up, Jesse. That was your chance to maybe save the life of an actual living
19 person. Where were you?

20 JESSE: I mean, it was terrible, don't get me wrong, but he wasn't trying to hit her. He
21 was ten feet away from her. He was just trying to scare her. The press always...

22 FRANKLYN: Whoa! Now you're making excuses for him? Is that your contribution to
23 his defense fund? Really, Jesse? Really?

1 JESSE: All right. I know you can outthink me, Franklyn. But you're twisting what I'm
2 saying, or maybe I'm just not saying it right. There was no excuse for what he did. He
3 should be punished. And as for going to the rally, maybe it was a bit insensitive, but I
4 mean the whole church was there. I couldn't not come. We were supporting one another.

5 FRANKLYN: Including our old friend Carl. Which leads me to ask you, was that his kid
6 he hoisted on his shoulders wearing a t-shirt that said "Some babies die by chance; none
7 should die by choice?"

8 JESSE: Uh, no. Carl doesn't have kids.

9 FRANKLYN: Thank god for that. Choice, that's the magic word, remember? Our kid
10 will make his own choices. That's what you said. But how is that going to be possible
11 when they get exposed to things like that. That's my fear, Jesse. You got to understand
12 that.

13 JESSE: I do understand it. *(Beat)* I think it's only fair that I should tell you that that kid
14 on Carl's shoulders was Julie, my niece.

15 FRANKLYN: Your sister's kid? She's not a member of your church. What was she
16 doing there?

17 JESSE: My sister wasn't there. I convinced her to let me take Julie to the rally.

18 FRANKLYN: *(Beat of incredulity)* You brought your seven year old niece to a
19 celebration of, among other things, the shooting of her cousin's grandmother?

20 JESSE: It wasn't like that, I told you. You gotta trust me on this.

21 FRANKLYN: That ship has sailed. *(Beat)* When my mom was shot at, and I saw your
22 website, and you on it, it became impossible to make excuses for you anymore, the kind
23 that lovers always make for each other. And I realized I couldn't trust you because you

1 refuse to take responsibility for who you are. So I made the most painful decision I can
2 imagine I'll ever have to make. I don't question your love for me, Jesse, or mine for you.
3 I wish our love for each other defined who we are, but it obviously doesn't. I can't live
4 with you, Jess. I can't marry you. It's too dangerous. I would never know a moment's
5 peace

6 JESSE: Me? I'm too dangerous?

7 FRANKLYN: I can no longer separate you from the worst elements of that world you
8 live in, because I've become convinced that *you* can't, and worse yet, that you don't want
9 to. And I won't let my child be hoisted up on your shoulders.

10 JESSE: Even if I accepted everything you're saying, Franklyn, which I don't, *your* child
11 is my child. You think I'm going to walk off into the sunset and leave my kid behind?

12 FRANKLYN: That's why I asked you here, Jess. *(Long beat. FRANKLYN is welling up)*
13 I know there were other choices, I considered them all, but they all meant I would
14 eventually get sucked back into a relationship with you. I made the choice that I had to to
15 save the life of the mother.

16 JESSE: *(Horror)* Oh my God, Franklyn, no. Tell me you...no. *(JESSE is totally lost. He*
17 *goes through some combination of disbelief/horror/anger/grief)*

18 FRANKLYN: I am so sorry, sweetie. I never, never wanted to hurt you like this. But
19 there was no other way. It would have gotten so ugly, and we would never have survived
20 one another.

21 JESSE: *(At some point during the above, JESSE silences FRANKLYN with a look. After*
22 *a long beat:)* How could you... *(JESSE walks off, crushed)*

1 FRANKLYN: (*FRANKLYN takes a step after him and weakly calls to him*) Jess.
2 (*FRANKLYN fights the urge to call him back and finally composes herself*) I'm sorry,
3 little one. That's what I get for sleeping with the enemy. Some role model you got. But I
4 had to make sure that he'd never want to have anything to do with us again. I'd love to
5 say I did it for you, but the truth is if you grow up like your daddy, you'd be a sweet and
6 decent and probably happy person, just not one I'd ever want for a son or daughter. I kept
7 hoping we'd find some middle ground. I guess it doesn't exist this side of paradise.
8 (*Looking again in the direction JESSE exited*) Goodbye, Jess. May God be with you.
9 (*FRANKLYN turns and stares forlornly at the empty bench and then exits as the lights*
10 *fade*)

11

12 End of play

13

14