

## **Act One**

*Lights up. James, the owner of The Magnolia, is at center, holding a bottle of wine with the logo for The Magnolia Ballroom.*

### **JAMES:**

For forty years, Francis Wolverton has been the backbone of the Magnolia Steakhouse, even before we were the Magnolia Steakhouse. He joined us back when we were the Magnolia Ballroom, and we have been and will always be in his debt ever since then. Mr. Wolverton has one of the finest palettes in the country and his work ethic, charm, knowledge, and his heart will always be remembered here. I am honored to have worked alongside him and am blessed to call him a friend. Ladies and Gentlemen, Francis Wolverton.

*Francis Wolverton (who henceforth will be referred to as "Sommelier") comes to the stage and takes the wine from James.*

### **SOMMELIER:**

What is there to say for forty years? So many memories. Tears, laughter, fun, but work. I too am honored to have worked here, to have had the opportunity to serve in my passion for forty years. To have been there for the proposals, for the anniversaries, the first dates, the parties, all of those good nights. To have been a part of this team... this family for all of these years, there is no greater gift in the world. I think back now to all of those people who came through here, all of those with us and gone. I think of Evelynn, our pianist who was with us until the end.

*Evelynn walks onstage and sits at the piano.*

### **EVELYNN:**

Francis, it's good to see you.

*Francis pauses. On the word "memory", Evelynn begins to play.*

### **SOMMELIER:**

Friends you must forgive me, tonight is a very special night and memory is flooding back to me.

*The location shifts to just outside the Magnolia. Several gunshots are heard, with accompanying muzzle flashes. We can see very little, the only light coming from a lamp inside of the window. The lights inside the window fade, we hear the cries of those shot.*

*These are drowned out by the roar of police sirens. Red and blue lights flash. These now are the only illumination. The curtain opens. We see THE OBSERVERS in a line onstage.*

**REPORTER:**

Can you tell me what happened?

**JOURNALIST:**

You say you were outside when the shots were fired?

**ONLOOKER:**

Yes, I was entering the restaurant.

**MAN:**

We had just been served.

**HIS WIFE:**

We had just gotten our food.

**WAITER:**

I was taking an order.

**ALL OBSERVERS:**

Then she fired.

**REPORTER:**

How many shots?

**JOURNALIST:**

Were you scared?

**ONLOOKER:**

I ran.

**WAITER:**

Five or six. Maybe.

**MAN:**

I don't remember.

**HIS WIFE:**

It was just loud.

**YOUNG MAN:**

I dove to protect her.

**JOURNALIST:**

I know. What did she do?

**YOUNG MAN:**

Just shot.

**HIS WIFE:**

She didn't stop.

**WAITER:**

There was blood.

**MAN:**

There was blood.

**ONLOOKER:**

There was blood.

**HIS WIFE:**

Everywhere, red water poured like a river. I couldn't tell the drops of blood from the splashes of wine on the tablecloths.

**WAITER:**

People were dead.

**YOUNG MAN:**

She was dead.

**WOMAN:**

I can't even describe to you what it was like.

**JOURNALIST:**

What did you see?

**WOMAN and ONLOOKER:**

I can't describe it.

**ONLOOKER:**

People ran.

**ONLOOKER and WOMAN:**

They were screaming.

**WOMAN:**

You will never know what it was like.

**REPORTER:**

Can you describe what happened next?

**WAITER:**

It was dark.

**YOUNG MAN:**

It was loud.

**MAN:**

I couldn't breathe.

**HIS WIFE:**

I was terrified.

**WOMAN:**

I lay in a pool of red. I heard someone call out a name, Jennifer, maybe. I couldn't think, I was paralyzed. My lungs weren't working.

**YOUNG MAN:**

We were kids.

**MAN and HIS WIFE:**

We were on a date.

**WAITER:**

I was at work.

**ONLOOKER:**

I came to meet my girlfriend.

**WOMAN:**

I just wanted to have fun.

**YOUNG MAN:**

Then she shot! People who were eating, innocent people just fell to the ground like flies. I grabbed her. It was too late. I cried out. I didn't care. She didn't care.

**HIS WIFE:**

She didn't care.

**PERSON:**

She didn't care.

**ONLOOKER:**

She just shot.

**YOUNG MAN:**

Why didn't she stop?!

**REPORTER:**

I don't know.

**JOURNALIST:**

I'm so sorry.

**REPORTER:**

Thank you.

**JOURNALIST:**

Thank you.

*Set changes to inside the restaurant, before the shooting. MAN and HIS WIFE are seated together. YOUNG MAN and JENNIFER are together, speaking to WAITER. WOMAN sits alone at a table for two, ordering wine.*

**MAN:**

The escargots?

**HIS WIFE:**

That's fine.

**YOUNG MAN:**

Crepes suzette.

**WAITER:**

For two?

**SOMMELIER:**

House cabernet, 2012.

**JENNIFER:**

Just one is fine.

**WOMAN:**

For the bottle?

**SOMMELIER:**

Twenty.

**WOMAN:**

If you'd please.

**MAN:**

Escargots to start.

**WAITER:**

I'll have that out for you shortly, sir.

**JENNIFER:**

This night has been wonderful.

**YOUNG MAN:**

I'm glad.

**JENNIFER:**

Are you sure it's not too expensive?

**YOUNG MAN:**

Positive.

**JENNIFER:**

I have money.

**YOUNG MAN:**

So do I.

**JENNIFER:**

I don't want to be a burden.

**YOUNG MAN:**

You aren't. If anything, you've made it all better.

**JENNIFER:**

What does that mean?

**YOUNG MAN:**

My life.

**JENNIFER:**

In what way?

**YOUNG MAN:**

You light my world.

**JENNIFER:**

Me?

**YOUNG MAN:**

When I look at you the shadows are behind me.

**JENNIFER:**

You lie to yourself.

**YOUNG MAN:**

Ditto.

**JENNIFER:**

Well. We are at an impasse.

*Pause.*

I'll be right back.

**YOUNG MAN:**

Is everything alright?

**JENNIFER:**

Yes, just feeling uneasy.

*She exits. YOUNG MAN puts ring box on table.*

**YOUNG MAN:**

You aren't the only one.

**HIS WIFE:**

Look behind you.



*MAN turns sharply.*

Not now! Be subtle.

*He does as commanded.*

Is that a ring box?

**MAN:**

I think so.

**HIS WIFE:**

He's proposing?!

**MAN:**

Or he's going to return it later, we don't know.

**HIS WIFE:**

You're an ass.

**MAN:**

I'm impartial.

**HIS WIFE:**

Well, we'll see who's right when she gets back.

**MAN:**

Twenty bucks.

**HIS WIFE:**

No! We are not betting on someone's chance on happiness, that's wrong.

**MAN:**

Agreed. Twenty bucks says she says no.

*HIS WIFE shoots him a look.*

**MAN:**

What, I just want him to be happy.

*HIS WIFE is taken aback.*

**HIS WIFE:**

I never knew you so regretted this arrangement.

**MAN:**

I don't I just know that no one else would possibly enjoy marriage as much as I do, for there is no one else so wonderful as you, my love.

**HIS WIFE:**

I'll drink to that.

*SOMMELIER returns to WOMAN's table with a bottle of wine.*

**WOMAN:**

Do you see that man?

**SOMMELIER:**

The one over there?

**WOMAN:**

With the ring box.

**SOMMELIER:**

Yes.

**WOMAN:**

Offer him a drink on me.

**SOMMELIER:**

Is there an occasion?

**WOMAN:**

He's been left.

**SOMMELIER:**

By whom?

**WOMAN:**

There was a young woman with him, but she got up and he set the box down.

**SOMMELIER:**

What a shame.

*SOMMELIER goes to leave. JENNIFER sits down across from YOUNG MAN.*

**WOMAN:**

Wait! She's coming back.

**SOMMELIER:**

I will hold off on his pour. But as for you?

**WOMAN:**

Do not withhold.

*SOMMELIER pours the wine.*

**SOMMELIER:**

Are you alone?

**WOMAN:**

No, she should be here any minute.

**SOMMELIER:**

Date?

**WOMAN:**

Friend.

**SOMMELIER:**

Are you celebrating?

**WOMAN:**

Ten years knowing each other.

**SOMMELIER:**

Congratulations!

**WOMAN:**

Thank you.

*Her phone buzzes.*

It's her -- she was stuck in traffic but is now only a few blocks away.

**SOMMELIER:**

Wonderful.

*Sommelier exits, leaving the bottle on the table.*

**WOMAN:**

*Calling after SOMMELIER:*

Ma'am! You left your bottle!

**SOMMELIER:**

Happy anniversary.

**WOMAN:**

Thank you.

*SOMMELIER exits. WOMAN examines the bottle of wine and goes to pour her girlfriend a glass. A shot is heard, WOMAN drops bottle. Blackout, only light is on bottle of wine, which now is on the floor and surrounded by a pool of red. Lights comes up. ONE enters the pool of light. ONE picks up the bottle (or a shard of glass) and examines it. We hear a thud.*

**ONE:**

Who's there?

**ONE:**

*No response.*

I'm armed.

*We hear the voice of VOICE 1 but cannot see him.*

**VOICE 1:**

A bottle?

**ONE:**

A gun.

**VOICE 1:**

Where?

*He steps into the light.*

Just like I thought, a bottle.

**ONE:**

I could have a gun.

**VOICE 1:**

But you don't.

**ONE:**

What does it matter?

**VOICE 1:**

It doesn't, not to me at least. What's in your pocket?

**ONE:**

Nothing.

**VOICE 1:**

Turn them out.

*ONE does, a knife falls on the floor.*

**VOICE 1:**

Why do you have a knife?

**ONE:**

I was hunting.

**VOICE 1:**

Too small. A deer has too thick of a skin.

**ONE:**

I wasn't hunting deer.

**VOICE 1:**

They're the only thing in season.

**ONE:**

No, they're not.

**VOICE 1:**

What do you want to hunt then? Not much you can do with a knife. Too slow to catch a deer, too weak to stop a moose.

**ONE:**

I don't need to catch it.

**VOICE 1:**

Who are you?

**ONE:**

What?

**VOICE 1:**

Who are you?

**ONE:**

I'm...

**VOICE 1:**

Unimportant.

**ONE:**

I'm a...

**VOICE 1:**

Nobody cares.

**ONE:**

I know...

**VOICE 1:**

They don't. You are one. You are one in a crowd of millions. Millions of specks who stand on this planet and crowd it. Millions of people who exist, millions who just sit like ticks on a deer, sucking the lifeblood from each of their fellow men. But you could be immortal. You could be remembered, by one little shot you could be a household name.

**ONE:**

I don't want to be...

**VOICE 1:**

Do not go gentle into that good night, old age will burn and rage against the dying light of a candle at the end of its wick too short to...

*two more voices are heard: VOICE 2 and VOICE 3. They overlap each other forming a loud, muddy noise.*

**VOICE 2:**

Be their God, clean the world of these stains and make it a new world, free of these wretched little lumps who dirty....

**VOICE 3:**

Teach them a lesson, don't let these people just sit by and give you hell, tell them what they have done, make them pay for the pain they've....

**ONE:**

Stop!

**VOICE 1:**

Don't shout! My head.

**VOICE 2:**

Be their god.