

Of Love and Song

By William Carlson

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Of Love and Song

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Characters: Jonathan, wealthy man fresh from university; Wilfred, jovial young man; Nathan, a party-loving companion; Garrett, a surly, studious fellow; Jennifer Blackwood, brown-haired, young moneyed lady, Mary Wakefield, blond, high-class young woman; Elizabeth Knight, an uptight, book loving type; Miss Smythe, Jonathan's landlady; a shopkeeper. Marguerite Brown. Governess Beatrice.

Act 1: Scene 1.

(Enter Jonathan, Garrett, Nathan and Wilfred. Entering stage right. Jonathan is the only one who is sober) (Walk mid-stage. 3 walk to center right. Jonathan's abashed/calm, embarrassed)

Garrett: So Mr. Brown, tell us, what did you think of the ball the other night?

Jonathan: I suppose that it was fine Mr. Morris.

Garrett: Oh! Did you hear that lads? It was only fine! He did not *appreciate* our taking him out to meet the ladies of this season!

(Chorus of jokes from friends. Jonathan mutters to himself)

Nathaniel: What was that Mr. Brown?

Jonathan: Nothing...nothing Mr. Smith, I was talking to myself is all.

Wilfred: I know what he was saying! Or rather, *who* he was talking to himself about... He is pining after Miss. Wakefield again!

(Garrett and Nathaniel make exaggerated miming, pretending to be love-struck and crying out Miss. Wakefield's name.)

Jonathan: Come now lads! There is no call for that! You're causing a disturbance. The police will be here before long! (Exit left- in front of others- dismissive.)

Nathaniel: Oh, Miss. Wakefield! My companion's heart mourns for you!

(Laughing, Garrett, Wilfred and Nathaniel enter the pub again.)

-After a moment's pause- Enter Jenifer Blackwood and Elizabeth Knight.

Jennifer: Liz! Did you hear that?

Elizabeth: Yes, I heard it. So?

Governess: Proper ladies! Proper!

Marguerite: So? I told you right! That is what's so!

Jennifer: Exactly! Do you never pay attention?

Elizabeth: To a young lady whom I've only just met? No, I usually tend not pay attention.

Jennifer: Elizabeth, you're far too dismissive of young folk. Marguerite, I am slightly confused... what is it that you just showed us?

Marguerite: That man, the sober one, do you know him? He's my brother, and he *fancies* Miss. Wakefield!

Jennifer: You do not mean Miss *Mary* Wakefield do you? How surprising... When I last spoke to her, she did not speak of this.

Elizabeth: -pause- Why, she's the one who lent you that dress for the Christmas Eve ball on our final year! I did not know that you'd kept in touch with her over the years.

Jennifer: Yes! That's her! As I said though, she never mentioned having a suitor though. Come, we'll call on her.

Elizabeth: Tonight? Don't you think that it is somewhat late to be making house calls?

Jennifer: I suppose. Fine then. (Suddenly) Marguerite, is your brother heading home? May we walk you there? Perhaps we can glean some information from him. (Exunt)

Elizabeth: (Mumbles to herself as Jennifer exits stage) Jennifer, when will you ever grow up? Jennifer! Wait! (Exunt)

Governess: Lady Elizabeth, Lady Jennifer, Miss Brown, wait!!! Oh, what will the master say!! (Exunt)

End Scene.

Act 1. Scene 2.

Scene: In the home of Jonathan, whom is sitting in his chair by the window, reading the morning paper and having his breakfast.

(Knocking off stage.)

Jonathan: (Jumps in surprise, spills tea down the front of his shirt)

Enter landlady: Sir, there are two ladies at the door for you.

Jonathan: (Distracted, trying to dry his shirt his a handkerchief.) Well let them in!
Let them in!

(Exunt land-lady) (Enter Jennifer, Elizabeth and Beatrice)

Jonathan: Good morning ladies.

Jennifer: Good morning Mr. Brown.

Jonathan: I'm afraid you have me at a disadvantage; You know my name, yet I don't know yours.

Elizabeth: I am sorry, Mr. Brown. (Motioning to herself and Jennifer Blackwood.) I am Miss. Knight, and this is Miss. Blackwood.

Jonathan: Ah. Would you sit down? I'll call for some fresh tea.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

(Exunt Jonathan, calling for Mrs. Smythe)(Exit left)

Jennifer: He's an attractive fellow sure enough, but he seems a bit awkward.

Elizabeth: (Annoyed) How would you react if a pair of ladies showed up at your house first thing in the morning, and without an introduction no less.

Jennifer: Well that's hardly *my* fault! You were the one who stopped me from going after him last night!

Elizabeth: (Exasperated) Last night? You are incorrigible!

Governess: Now ladies, we really should not be here! (Silence as Jonathan enters)

(Enter right)(Enter Jonathan, followed by landlady with a tray of tea. Landlady sets tea on table and exits. Enter Marguerite, stands behind Jonathan.)

Jonathan: (Pouring tea) So then, to what do I owe the honour of your visit, ladies?

Jennifer: We were wondering if you-

Elizabeth: (Interrupting) We were wondering if you might help us with a trifling matter. A friend of ours, Mary Wakefield, is trying to put a small choir together in time for Christmas Eve for carolling. We were hoping you could help us round up some others to take part in carolling. We know it is short notice, tomorrow being Christmas Eve.

Jonathan: (Coughing and flustered) M-Miss. Wakefield? Yes, I know of her. Of course! Of course! I'd be glad to assist in any way I can.

Marguerite: I'm sure you would. All you ever do is sing her praises.

Jonathan: (Sputtering on his tea) (Soto vocé) Marguerite! What are you doing here? Miss Smythe! Should my sister not be attending to her studies?

Smythe: Indeed sir. Come along Miss Brown, lots of work to do.

Elizabeth: Thank you, Mr. Brown. We'll be sure to send a message of when the rehearsal will be. (Getting up) Come along Miss. Blackwood, there are others we must call upon. (Stage whisper) And do stop making eyes at the man!

(Exunt Elizabeth and Jennifer)

End Scene.

Act 1. Scene 3.

Scene: In the street, in front of a bakery. (Enter Right. Jennifer and Elizabeth with Mary.)

Jennifer: Oh! Come now Mary! It would be great fun to go carolling!

Mary: I don't want to go carolling this year Jennifer. I am not in the spirit. Besides, it would be tomorrow! There is simply no time to gather enough people for a choir.

Elizabeth: I hate to side with Jennifer on this account Mary, but it would be fun, and you've been ever so busy lately. You deserve a break.

Governess:

Jennifer: Well nobody asked you, did they?

Governess:

Mary: Hmmmm... fine.

Jennifer: Now, you just leave the choir members to us. (Giggles) We have already found one: a man called Brown. And he promises he will bring his friends.

Mary: Who?

Jennifer: A very handsome young man.

(Ruckus sounds off stage) (Enter Right: Jonathan, Marguerite, Mrs. Smythe, with Garrett, Nathaniel and Wilfred) (Wilfred & Nathaniel tossing hat of Garrett.)

Jonathan: Pardon me ladies, my companions seem to be causing a bit of a disturbance. Lovely seeing you again, Miss. Blackwood, Miss. Knight... M-Miss. Wakefield! Pray excuse me!

(Jonathan, Garrett, Wilfred, Nathaniel. Exit Right.) (Marguerite remains)

Marguerite: I will remain with the ladies then shall I?

Jennifer: (Calls out) Good-bye! (To Mary and Elizabeth) My, he is a handsome one, isn't he?

Elizabeth: Oh, shush Jennifer. Mary? Did you recognize any of those men?

Mary: Yes, that man who stopped a moment, he was an old family friend. I haven't seen him in some time now. What is his name? You seem to know him.

Jennifer: He is Mr. Brown. Mr. Jonathan Brown! His hair is brown, his suit is brown and his eyes are hazel!

Elizabeth: You took the time to notice his eyes?

Mary: It doesn't matter. That lot *would* make a good group for our choir.

Elizabeth: Why are you so keen on it all of a sudden?

Mary: N-no reason, I just thought they would add to the group.

Jennifer: Any one of them in particular?

Mary: you read too much into this ladies!

Elizabeth: You were staring at Mr. Brown a bit there...

Mary: Elizabeth! (stammering) I... I, staring?

Jennifer: She's right. You were blushing a bit as well.

Elizabeth: Come now, there's no point denying it any longer, you fancy him do you not?

Mary: I- I haven't seen him in the better part of two years! I highly doubt he would feel the same way for me *if* I did fancy him, and I do not to say that I do... Besides, I am sure he does not recognise me.

Jennifer: Two years is not that long. Come along then! Let's gather our carollers then! (Exit Left)

Mary: You know Elizabeth, Jennifer was right, he is a handsome fellow! (Exit running and laughing with Elizabeth in tow)

Governess: What? Lady Blackwood! Lady Knight! Miss Brown! Oh, what will the masters think of this?

End Scene.

Act 1. Scene 4.

Scene: On a town street, people are shopping.
(Jonathan, Wilfred, Nathaniel and Garrett. Enter right.)

Jonathan: My, my, my, what a good day tomorrow will be lads! Christmas!

Wilfred: Indeed! The food, the bright colours! The happiness filling the air!

Nathaniel: There will be love in the air After tonight, I will warrant!

Garrett: I would not think so. She seemed not to care a whit at the sight of him.

Nathaniel: That was probably because we had set the Bobbies after ourselves... In fact, it was *you* who had set them after us, creating a scene again.

Wilfred: I agree with Garrett, she seemed displeased at the sight of you Jonathan. Perhaps you had best not go carolling with us tonight.

Nathaniel: What are you two on about? Of course he should come with us! We would be fools if we did not try and help him in this endeavour! After all, when was the last time Jonathan showed the slightest of romantic inclinations towards anyone? No offence, Jonathan.

Jonathan: (looking hurt) None taken.

Wilfred: Perhaps, though that charming brunette was a pretty one to be sure...

Garrett: Have you all gone love-sick?

Nathaniel: That she was. Though the bodacious blonde was something to behold as well.

Garrett: Gah! You're all mad! (Exit)

Jonathan: Come along lads!

(Exit left, while calling Christmas greetings to others on the street.)

(Three women at a shop window behind the men turn around. They are Mary, Elizabeth and Jennifer.)

Jennifer: Did you hear that? The handsome one thinks I am pretty!

Elizabeth: (laughing) Jennifer, you think they are all handsome.

Jennifer: Is there something wrong with that?

Mary: None at all Jennifer.

Elizabeth: So Mary, is the Christmas season finally getting to you?

Mary: (Laughs) You might say that.

Shop keeper: Look ladies, this is a right fine conversation you're having, but if you aren't going to buy anything then please step away from the window. I have other customers waiting to see.

Elizabeth: (Moving away from the shop front) Oh! Of course! We'll take four dozen of those dainties, just there. (Pointing though the window.)

Mary: That's quite a lot don't you think?

Elizabeth: Nonsense. Besides, did you not hear? One of them thought I too was rather pretty. We might be entertaining house-guests tonight!

(Exit)

End Scene.

Act 1. Scene 5.

Scene: Same street. Night now.

(Mary, Jennifer, Marguerite and Elizabeth. Enter right.)

Mary: These corsages are absolutely beautiful Elizabeth. How ever did you come by them?

Elizabeth: Oh, I have my ways.

Jennifer: Let me guess, you batted your eyes at the shop owner perhaps?

Elizabeth: (gasps mockingly) Jenny! I never... well... maybe a little... Consider them Christmas gifts.

Mary: I hope Jon- Mr. Brown remembers to meet us here... Jennifer, you remembered to send that letter giving them the right location?

Jennifer: Of course!

Marguerite: What is the matter Mary? A little anxious to see him again?

Mary: Now, let's not start that again.

(Enter men right, dressed in long coats and top hats.)

Jonathan: Good evening ladies.

Nathan & Wilfred: Good evening.

Girls: Good evening gentlemen.

Mary: We were afraid you would not make it. Jen- Miss Blackwood has been known to get addresses wrong on occasion.

Jennifer: I did get it right this time though, as you can see. (Walks forwards and draws out music from her coat.) Come along then, we do not have all night.

(Group form up and begin singing "Good King Wenceslas.")

Fin