

JACEY'S Jazz Joint
by Joe Hanrahan

Stage - small table. a chair. bottle of bourbon. a glass. stool.
Stage is set for JACEY

BAND enters casually, one by one. Short warm up by each. Some inside baseball musician talk.

BAND plays two instrumental, intro number.

JACEY enters during music, says hi to the band. Looks over the crowd. pours herself a drink, sits and listen.

JACEY: Hi, everybody! Welcome to Jacey's! (sting from BAND) How 'bout my band!

I'm Jacey...(short salute from THE BAND) (to BAND) Thank you, gentlemen.

(to crowd) This is my place...and I'm so happy you're here with us tonight. (toasts with her glass) We're hoping you all have a real good time.

How's your drinks? Our courteous staff are always ready to come by with a refills (takes a healthy drink)

Aren't waiters great? Ask them for something, they bring it to you. What a deal!

Don't forget to tip big! They're here to please you.

As am I.

Most important, I want you to just sit back and get ready to enjoy the evening.

You're going to hear some of Jacey's favorite songs tonight. Some of yours, too, I hope.

And as the evening goes on...(takes another sip, looks at band, laughs, trades a comment)... you might just hear...a story or two.

They come along with the songs. Like memories.

The stories are free.

MUSIC: Piano underscore Jacey acknowledges

This is Jacey's Jazz Joint, so you're going to hear...that's right...some pretty nifty jazz tonight. Y'know like they say...they say..."jazz can be learned, but it can't be taught."

You usually learn it the hard way. I did.

I started like most young girls. Church choir. (Mock angry stance) Oh, yeah, you don't think I look like a choir girl? Thank you.

High school musical theatre - (Belts out "The Hills Are Alive With The Sound Of..."

I didn't do that part. I was one of those little bastard Von Trapp kids.

Then rock 'n roll.

Sang with a bunch of bands.
Slept with a lot of drummers.
(NOISE/STIR from drummer in band)
I'm finally over that.
I could scream like Robert Plant. Screech like Jagger.
But there were the drummers. And the drugs.
And that was life.

So when it slowed me down, I started hanging out with different folk.
Getting in with different music. "Jazz."

The songs I sing are favorites, 'cause they hit home. Songs bring you back to a time...and a place...in your life, when...(pause)

Let's just say...a lot of the songs I sing...most of the songs you hear...are love songs. Now you may think you know all about it, but by the end of this night, but you may just learn a thing or two about...(JACEY sings this line) this crazy thing called love. And one of us...might just be singing a different tune.

Why don't we hear one of those different tunes right now?
(to BAND) Guys.

(MUSIC BAND does intro to FROM THE START)
JACEY sings FROM THE START

JACEY: Thank you. Cute song to start us off, hey? That song is called, appropriately enough, From The Start. It's a new song.
You going to hear some older songs tonight. Standards. Tunes from the Great (or very good) American Songbook. I love those songs. Beautiful melodies, simple, but oh so wise words. (to the band) But we like to take those standards and do them just a little different, don't we?

MUSIC: Sting from the band

Our first song was cute, a little bittersweet, perhaps.
But I'm going to do my best to keep things totally sweet tonight. To keep you smiling and maybe ready to celebrate something...maybe with another cocktail? Anybody ready?
Because we have to celebrate, don't we, every day? Toast Life. (takes a sip). Celebrate life and ourselves, making it through these tough, tough days. And sometimes...sometimes for brief moments...if you're lucky...you even get to celebrate...love.

MUSIC: JACEY sings ALMOST LIKE BEING IN LOVE
(With solos, JACEY introduces the band...Wild Bill on piano, Lucky on drums, Pancho on bass)

JACEY: Sometimes when you celebrate...sometimes you're just wishing...to just...almost...be in love.
You know the feeling.
All you need, all you're looking for... is somebody real.

And you're in that state - oh, that state...where you wind up dreaming...dreaming of what being in love...feels like.

You gotta be careful, though. When you're in that state, you're open, aren't you...vulnerable...easy to hurt.

And all this comes out in the songs.

Like they say, "jazz is like life. Change is always, always happening."

MUSIC: JACEY sings WHEN I FALL IN LOVE

JACEY: That's perfect, isn't it? Those moments when you're dreaming...about the perfect love affair? Oh, everything's going to be so great, isn't it?

(pause, takes a drink)

Everybody doing OK? Good time? Let's liven things up a bit.
I'm not a comedian, but I bet I could play one on tv. Have you heard this one?

A Frenchman walks into a bar and on his shoulder is this little cat with a baseball cap on his head. The bartender says, that's so cute. Where'd you get him? And the cat says "France, they got a million of 'em there."

Oh, thank you. Stop me if you heard these. An amnesiac walks into a bar. Sees a beautiful blonde at a table, walks up, and says "So, do I come here often?"

A five dollar bill walks into a bar. And the bartender says "You can't come in here. This is a singles bar!"

It's a good thing everybody's always walking into bars, huh? Or we wouldn't have any jokes. A guy comes into a bar, orders ten shots of Johnnie Walker. Starts knocking them back, the bartender says Whoa, you're drinking them pretty fast. Guy says you'd drink 'em fast too if you got what I got. Bartender says What have you got? Guy says, about 75 cents.

Finally...Thank you, thank you...a giraffe, an astronaut, a mime and Taylor Swift walk into a bar, and the bartender says, "What is this, a joke?"

Thank you, thank you, I'm here all week, try the smash burger.

Ya gotta laugh, huh? What else can you do? (pause, drink)
Especially when... life hands you something...or someone...you feel, at first, is very real.
But then you wonder, is this real? Whether it is or not, ya gotta laugh.
Let's let the music talk.

Like they say, "jazz is like life. It's best when you improvise."

(to band) What are we gonna play? Surprise me.

MUSIC: JACEY sings EMBRACEABLE YOU

JACEY: (pause, drinks) Y'know, you can be a...fool for love. Me, too. Big surprise.
(up and walk about a bit) I've had this joint a couple of years now. Named it Jacey's. Jacey's Jazz Joint. It's here for you, a place for you to hear some good music. And it's my job to keep that music coming.

I've always been a singer. And y'know, it's like they say. "Jazz singers get old fast. 'Cause they live a lotta years in one day." That's jazz.

But now I have my own stage. But the ones you want to hear are the ones that love the music. Though they've played some of these songs dozens of times, when they play it, it's like playing it - and you're hearing it - for the first time. So this is my band.
And this is my place. Thank you.

We've been doing OK. Thanks for your patronage.
Like I said, we've been here a couple years. I was able to open it with a little bit of money that came my way.
From a time I spent with a guy. Johnny.

Typical. Over the moon at first. You always question that, don't you? If you have half a brain. Then...OK, this is worth a try, I'm going to try to go all the way with this. Then...now that I'm into it, how do I get out of this with my life? I don't mean, with my heart. I mean, with my life. Gangsters, guns, deals gone wrong. For a time, you feel you're living in a cheap Netflix movie. More on that later.

But at first, you are way over that moon. So, right now, I'm going to sing to it.

MUSIC: JACEY sings FLY ME TO THE MOON

JACEY: (another drink) That was the song I was singing. Some club downtown. When Johnny walked in. I noticed him. I know he noticed me.
He sat at a table, down front. Nursed a drink, watched me. All night long.
And after my set, he came up. Invited me to his table. Ordered a bottle of their very best champagne.
And we talked. Until they closed the place down, and kicked us out of there.

But we kept going, found a place for coffee.
I don't remember what we talked about. For some, long moments, we just...stared. It was OK, we were never uncomfortable, not for a moment.
And I was...so...into the moment. I never thought...this can't be, can it?

MUSIC: JACEY sings THIS CAN'T BE LOVE

JACEY: It can't be, can it? Maybe it can.

It was amazing at first. We saw each other every day. Every night.
Every night I'd sing. He'd come and listen. Lead the applause.
Every day we'd be together. Lunch. A movie. Walk in the park.

He never seemed to have to be anywhere. Like work. Said he was in...import/export.
And when I had the time, we'd go. Clubs, all over town. Late late after after parties
at some hidden places. Incredible dinners in amazing dining rooms.
Room service. We took some trips. Vegas. New York City. Mexico.
And some places you never heard of.
But I never questioned...anything. I thought, this was it.

MUSIC: JACEY sings MISTY

JACEY: I thought this was...it. I thought that for a while.
But then, some things...like calls he'd get...he'd have to leave the room, fast, to talk.
When he'd finish, sometimes he'd be really upset.

Then some people we'd run into.
They were kind of...friends. More like associates.
There were the older ones. Smaller, slimy types. Frightening smiles.
Bosses. I guess
Those guys, he treated with the greatest respect. I think it was fear.
The fear came honestly.
Cause then there were the guys with the bosses. Mean looking.
Mountain-sized. Gorillas.
They didn't talk much. They didn't need to.

Then, Johnny...he'd...just...be gone. For days, sometimes a week. No calls. Nothing.
No explanation, or when he came back he'd begin to tell me something, and then change the
subject with a piece of jewelry or a big night out.
And, sometimes...we'd walk into a place...and then have to get the hell out of there,
fast. No explanation. Just, "let's split this popsicle stand..."

Most of the time, Johnny would be his usual self - paid attention to me, seemed to care.
But then there'd be the times when he'd be quiet, so distant.

It's like they say. You gotta learn how to leave the table when love's no longer being served.
But I was always there. By his side. Believing.

MUSIC: JACEY (with drink in hand) sings I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT

JACEY: But that light started to fade. Things happened.
One night, Johnny came by. Late. He looked like he'd been roughed up. He wouldn't talk
about it. But I think maybe he'd had some words with some of those mountain-sized men.

Then money got tighter. We weren't going out much. Johnny had a nice place,
but we were spending more and more nights at my apartment. Like he was hiding out.

Then, there were times...he moved some stuff into my place. He didn't ask, just did it,
Said he'd only have to leave it for a while. I don't know what it was.
A few big boxes, heavy. Then some small packages, lots of 'em.
I wanted to check them out, but I didn't. I couldn't.

He seemed more and more worried. Then I found out he...we...were being watched. Couple of police detectives dropped by one day when I was by myself. Lucky, Johnny...and his stuff... weren't there. They asked me a lot of questions. They were good. They could see I didn't know a thing.

Even after that, Johnny wouldn't tell me nothing...about nothing.

I wanted to help. But what could I do? I didn't know anything. At least I could give him my songs.

MUSIC: JACEY sings STRAIGHTEN UP AND FLY RIGHT

JACEY: It all came to a head one night. Real late. I hadn't heard from him in a week...as was usual those days. So he turns up at my place. 3am. Knockin', too hard, on the door. Then kind of scratching at it.

He was messed up, frantic.
"Turn out the lights!" He said. "Be quiet."
(JACEY sits)
We had to sit there. (pause)
He wouldn't let me talk. Said, just "Things'll be fine. Things'll be OK."

Then there was a big knock on the door. Then a lot of knocks. Real hard. Johnny pulled a gun. Then they just came in - knocked the door down. (JACEY stands) It was those gorillas. Or some gorillas. They all look alike. They looked at Johnny's gun. One of 'em said, "C'mon, Johnny, watcha' playin' at? That ain't gonna do you no good." Johnny said "You're not taking me anywhere." And the gorilla said...he said "Look at where our hands are, Johnny. You can't get both of us." Then he glanced at me. "And there are...(looked at me again)...innocent?...(gorilla laughs)...bystanders." He was awfully logical for a gorilla.

I was right in the middle of it. Johnny looked at their hands. Looked at me. Hesitated for a while. Then turned over his gun.

One them of took Johnny's gun, the other grabbed his arm and started to escort him out. Before they took him away, he whispered to me. After they took him away. I checked the pillow where he'd been sitting. Under it, an envelope. With more money in it than...I could imagine. I don't know if he meant to leave it all to me. But he did. And at that moment, I didn't know whether I'd ever seem him alive again. (pause)
Or if I wanted to.

MUSIC: JACEY sings CRY ME A RIVER

JACEY: I did go to see if I could see anything from my window. They were parked a way down the street. I could see them, pulling him towards a car.

And then...then...Johnny was so lucky...lucky he found me...and lucky that night. Sirens. Cops. Close by. Johnny'd always avoided them, but I'm sure he was glad to see them now. Later, I thought...Johnny may have called them himself before he came to my place. Backup.

I visited him during the trial. He told me some, not all. He was involved in...all kinds of stuff. Smuggling. Stolen goods. Money laundering.

As it seems to happen so often in these scenarios, at least from what i see on TV...some of the money involved in those transactions went missing. Why the gorillas, and then the cops, came for him.

The evidence, in court, was overwhelming. Johnny was toast. He did what he had to do, though.

Kept his mouth shut. Prevented any kind of retaliation against him...or me.

He's going to be away for a while.

Am I going wait for him? Who knows.

MUSIC: JACEY sings THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU.

But I hope to see him again. I'm keeping his money safe for him.

Not all of it. I used a bit to start this place. I figure, I earned it. But there's some left.

So our love, I guess, has a happy ending. At this place...Jacey's Jazz Joint.

Where every night, I can sing a song to him...or to us...or to that crazy, crazy thing called love.

So thanks again for coming. Thanks for listening. Sometimes, time...and songs...I know, are a bit of melancholy.

But we're going to have a happy ending. Singin' to all the good things about love...love it or hate it, ya can't live without it...to love, one of the very best things about being alive.

I'm going to dedicate this song to someone. You can do the same.

It's like they say. "When I'm singing, trouble can sit right on my shoulder, and I don't even notice."

MUSIC: JACEY sings UNFORGETTABLE

Lights down and then up for curtain call

MUSIC: Curtain Call music, upbeat version of song from the show.

Bows and acknowledgment of band.

Then, JACEY: Folks, we're doing to do something special tonight. A good friend asked if we'd do this song for her. So we're going to do one more - for Tina!

MUSIC: JACEY sings CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED LOVE