

*The first in the Johnny and Lisa series.....*



## One Love, Shared by Two

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### SATURDAY

It was Saturday morning, around 10am, and the park was crawling with fire fighters. This was the day for the annual Fireman's Jamboree.

"Hey, Roy! Are you ready for this?"

"Yeah, it should be fun this year with all the new games."

"Are Joanne and the kids coming?"

"Joanne said they'd be here around lunchtime."

John nodded. "I'm supposed to work the ring toss this morning. What are you doing?"

"Dunking booth," Roy answered.

"Ah ha!" John smiled and laughed. "You got it this year, huh? Better you than me, man! Well, I gotta run. I'll see you later. Have fun!" John yelled over his shoulder as he headed towards his station.

"Yeah, right," Roy said, dryly.

A short while later the park started filling up with people who were ready to take part in the festivities. John's booth was busy right away, mostly with kids. It was the interaction with the kids that John loved the most.

A boy, about the age of six, was the first in line that day. He extended his arm and gave John his ticket to play the game.

"Hey, buddy! How are you doing today?" John grinned at this cute little kid.

"Fine," the boy answered shyly.

"You get three tries. Are you ready?"

The boy nodded his head.

"Okay, go get 'em!"

The boy missed on the first two tries but made it on the last try.

"Hey! Way to go!" John exclaimed. "Here's your prize. Great job!" John said as he handed the boy a small, toy fire truck and slapped him on the back.

"Thanks, Mister!" the boy exclaimed, beaming, as he ran to show his parents what he had won.

John's booth was pretty steady until around eleven thirty when it started to die down as the public headed to the food stands for lunch. John leaned against a nearby tree, waiting for someone who might come along to play the ring toss. It wasn't long before he heard a voice behind him.

"Is business a little slow?"

John looked over his shoulder to see a pretty blonde approaching him. He turned around and couldn't help but stare at her. There was something different about her, but what was it?

"You don't have to do this all day, do you?" she asked, tucking her hair behind her ear. When he didn't respond, to her question, she asked, "Are you okay?"

Realizing that he was staring, he finally answered her, "Umm, someone is taking over for me at one o'clock." John wondered who this gal was. She was tall, blonde and pretty with big green eyes. And he detected an accent. "You're not from California, are you?" he inquired.

"How can you tell?" She already knew what he was going to say—she was used to this question.

"I can hear an accent," he confessed, a little embarrassed. He hoped he wasn't offending her.

"See, I don't think I have an accent. I think *you* have the accent!" She laughed.

He was relieved by her joke. "Are you from Minnesota?"

She smiled. "That's what most people think. You're close, though—North Dakota."

John nodded his head and smiled back at her. She was so cute the way she tilted her face when she smiled at him. John thought that she had a kind face and he couldn't help but notice how pretty her eyes were. He had heard that the eyes were the "window to the soul" and, from what he could see, this woman was an angel sent from above.

"Have you ever been to North Dakota?" she asked him.

John nodded his head. "I visited the Badlands once as a kid. I remember that it was really pretty."

"Well, I'm from the other side of the state—where it's flat!" she joked. "Are you originally from California?"

"Yeah, born and raised."

They stood there awkwardly for a few seconds until John thought to introduce himself. He extended his hand towards her. "I'm sorry, I guess I should introduce myself. I'm Johnny—uh, John Gage."

She extended her hand to meet his. "Hi Johnny, nice to meet you. I'm Lisa Wilson. Is it okay if I call you 'Johnny?'" She liked 'Johnny' better than 'John'—somehow, it seemed to suit him better.

"Yeah. That's what most people call me anyway. It's nice to meet you, Lisa." He liked this woman; there was definitely something special about her. He was very intrigued by her, to say the least.

"Would you mind if I tried your game?" she asked, handing him a ticket.

"Sure! Here you go." John handed her the rings and stood back.

Lisa made all three tosses. "Yes!" she exclaimed after the last one.

John laughed as he told her, "I don't know that you'll be that excited when you find out what the prize is." He handed her the same toy fire truck he had been giving away to the others.

"Thanks, but I really don't know what I'll do with this—." She scanned the area and spotted a small child with his family nearby. "Excuse me for one minute, Johnny."

John watched her as she walked over to the family and offered the toddler the firetruck. The child was thrilled and the parents thanked her profusely.

As Lisa walked back over to John, she could see him grinning.

"That was great, what you just did."

She smiled. "Well, what am I going to do with a toy firetruck? I think that little boy would have more fun with it than I would." Hesitantly, she said, "Well, I'd better get back. It was nice to meet you, Johnny." She didn't really want to leave—she was enjoying John's company. It was the first time, in a long time, that she had had a pleasant conversation with a man. And it didn't hurt that he was extremely cute—and handsome. "Bye," she said as she stepped back to leave. She turned around and started walking away. She just couldn't help herself—she had to look back one more time at this man who gave her such an indescribable feeling.

"Bye," John answered as he watched Lisa leave. What was it about that her that captivated him so much? *Damn! Why didn't I ask her for her phone number? I've got to get it after I'm relieved from my shift if she's still around. Hopefully she will still be around.* He looked at his watch—45 minutes to go.

When his replacement came, John quickly left his station and walked through the crowd of people looking for Lisa. He saw her standing by the dunking booth. "Hi," John said, as he approached her.

Lisa turned around and she smiled broadly when she saw it was John. "Hi, Johnny. You finally get to join the party, huh?"

John blushed. "Yeah. Um, say, I was wondering—," he stammered.

Just then he heard a deep, loud voice from behind him. "Lisa! You ready to go?"

John looked behind him and saw a man in a fireman's uniform approaching them. The man scowled at John as he approached the two of them.

John stood there, not sure of what he should do. He glanced down at Lisa's left hand and saw that she was wearing a wedding band. He had missed that earlier.

"Let's get going, Lisa," the man ordered.

John saw Lisa's eyes quickly change from happy to sad.

"I've got to go, Johnny. It was nice to meet you." And then she turned around and headed towards this man with the big, demanding voice.

As John watched Lisa leave, Roy came up from behind him. "Hey, junior. How'd the ring toss go?"

"Huh? Oh, hi Roy. Fine."

"What are you looking at?" Roy asked.

John didn't hear Roy's question.

"Johnny? Johnny!"

John looked at Roy. "What?"

"What are you looking at?"

"Oh, I just met someone." John looked closer at Roy. He noticed that Roy's hair was wet but that he had changed clothes. "Looks like you had some activity at the dunking booth."

"Yeah. A little too much activity, if you ask me," Roy sarcastically replied.

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## **TWO WEEKS LATER**

"Hey, John! Long time no see!"

"Hey, Rick," John answered as he walked into Station 18's locker room.

"Are you subbing for Greg while he's out?"

"Yep." John would be subbing at Station 18 for at least the next couple of days. As John dressed he heard a booming voice coming from behind him.

"What's your name?"

That voice sounded familiar. John turned around and immediately recognized this man.

"John Gage from 51. I'm subbing for Greg."

The man grunted in response and headed towards his locker.

It was only a few minutes before the claxon sounded and they were off to their first run. It had been a rough fire and the guys were tired and sooty when they got back to the station. While the rest of the guys headed for the showers John headed for the kitchen to grab a bite to eat.

John was standing next to the counter eating a sandwich when he heard a knock on the door. He walked over to it, opened it and saw a familiar face. "Hey, Lisa!" John said, through a mouthful of food. He gestured for her to enter the room. "Come on in."

Lisa smiled at this unexpected, but pleasant, surprise. "Hi Johnny! I didn't expect to find you here! How are you?"

He swallowed his food and answered her. "Fine, just fine. You?"

"I'm good. Did you just get back from a run?"

John looked down over his dirty clothing and answered, "Yeah, we just got back from a big fire. Ah, are you looking for your husband?"

She blushed. "Yes." Lisa thought about apologizing to John in case she misled him into thinking she wasn't married when they first met. But, secretly, when she first met Johnny, she *had* wished that she wasn't married. She had found herself wishing that more and more, lately.

"Well, he's in the shower. He should be out soon, though. Here, have a seat," he said as he pulled a chair out from the table for her.

"Thanks." It had been a long time since someone had held out a chair for her.

Just at that moment David walked into the kitchen. He noticed that John was eagerly offering his wife a chair and that she seemed a little too happy. He wasn't sure what to make of it. He looked at his wife and barked, "What do you want?"

John grabbed his sandwich again, turned around towards the sink and frowned. *Man, what a creep!*

Lisa got up from her chair. "Hi David. I just thought I'd come down to say 'Hi,'" she cheerfully answered, trying to ignore her husband's mood.

"Well, we're pretty busy," he replied, gruffly. "You can't be hanging around here."

"Oh, okay. I'm sorry," Lisa said, embarrassed. "Well, I guess I'll see you later at home then." She walked over to the door and opened it to leave.

"Bye, Johnny. It was nice to meet you again," John heard her say softly.

John turned around. "Bye, Lisa." He looked at her eyes and it was like a cloud had blocked the sunshine that was there just a few minutes earlier. He could clearly see that she was embarrassed and upset from the scene with her husband and he felt badly for her.

After she left, Johnny turned back around to the sink again, took a swig of coffee from his cup and shook his head in disgust without even realizing it.

David saw John shake his head. "What's your problem, Gage? This is none of your business, you know," David told John scornfully, pointing at him menacingly.

John turned and faced David squarely. "Do you *always* treat her that way?"

"What's it to you, Gage?"

John simply shook his head and headed for the showers, without saying another word.

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### **FIVE DAYS LATER**

"Man, it's nice to be back," John told Roy. They had just made a stop at Rampart for supplies and were heading back to the station in the squad.

"Oh, yeah? I thought you liked the guys at 18."

"I do. Except for David Wilson. Do you know him?"

Roy raised his eyebrows. "Yeah, I know who he is. What happened?"

"He's just a general, all-around jerk. You should see how he treats his wife; he treats her like crap! One day she came over to visit him, just to say 'Hello.' And you know what he did? He barely says anything to her and tells her that she can't stay—that she has to leave. He just barks orders at her." John's voice was getting louder as he relayed his story to Roy.

"Really?"

"Yeah, and I felt really badly for her. She seemed so embarrassed." John shifted in his seat to face Roy. "And, you know, I talked to one of the other guys on the shift and they said she hardly ever stops by, and when she does, that's how he treats her." John shook his head and stared out the window.

"That's rough. I didn't know he was that kind of a guy."

"Yeah, well he is. What I don't get is how she can stay with a guy like that. Or worse yet, how someone can treat their wife that way." John couldn't stop thinking about Lisa, even though he knew she was off-limits. He couldn't get her out of his mind.

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### **SATURDAY—ONE MONTH LATER**

It was Saturday and John was at his neighborhood park, shooting hoops with Chet, Stoker and Roy. They were playing Two-on-Two. It was John and Roy against Chet and Mike.

"Foul!" Chet shouted at John.

"Foul! For crying out loud! What do you mean foul?" John exclaimed wiping the sweat from his face with his forearm.

"Hey, man. You fouled. You charged into me."

"Get real! I did not!"

Calmly, Chet replied. "Gage, you fouled. Now come on, hand over the ball."

John simply shook his head and tossed the ball to Chet. "Foul my foot," he mumbled as he looked at Roy.

"Let's take a break anyway, guys," Stoker suggested.

The guys walked over to the grass and practically threw themselves on the ground.

"Hey, Gage! I hear you had a run-in at Station 18 with Wilson," said Chet.

"Now where did you hear that?" John looked at Roy.

"Hey, I didn't say a word!"

"From one of the guys at Station 18," Chet answered. "So, is it true?"

"Just never mind," John retorted.

"So, it must be true. Hmm. Interesting. Gage versus Wilson. Gee, I wonder who'd come out on top in that one?"

John had had enough of this. "Come on. Let's keep going!" John said as he got up and went back over to the court.

They played for a couple of hours before calling it quits. As they were walking back to their cars, John thought he saw Lisa. "Hey guys, why don't you go on ahead without me? I'll see you at work tomorrow."

Roy, Mike and Chet watched as John approached a woman sitting alone on a nearby bench. Roy wondered who she was—she looked familiar but he couldn't place where he had seen her before.

"Lisa?"

Lisa looked up, startled. "Johnny! Hi! I didn't expect to see anybody here that I knew." Then realizing what she had said, she apologized. "I'm sorry, that's not what I meant to say. I'm just surprised to see you," she said, trying to smile. When she saw John staring at her face she quickly looked down.

"Are you okay?" It looked to John like she'd been crying.

She nodded and smiled, trying to put on a brave face. "I'm fine."

"Anything you want to talk about?"

"Really, Johnny. You'd be bored to tears with my problems."

John slowly sat down on the bench next to her. "I'm serious. Do you want to talk about anything?" he asked softly and waited patiently for her to respond.

Lisa looked at this man who seemed so genuinely concerned about her and she knew she could trust him. She brought her knees up to her chest and hugged them. "I've left David. I left him over three weeks ago." Lisa bit her lip to keep herself from crying.

"Oh. I don't know what to say, except that I'm really sorry."

"I should've done it a long time ago, I guess. I just always thought that things would get better," she told him, sadly. "And I guess I'm just a little lonesome."

"Well, you know *me*. And I'm a good listener."

Lisa laughed. *This man is so sweet. Why couldn't she have met him a year ago instead of David?*

"Don't say it if you don't mean it. I just might take you up on your offer," she was finding it a little easier to joke now.

"Hey! I'm serious." John stood up. "Come on, let's go for a walk around the park."

Lisa looked up at him gratefully and smiled. "That's a good idea. I need to get off this bench!"

John and Lisa found it extremely easy to talk with one another. Lisa confided in John about the problems in her marriage. She had met David a little over a year ago and had quickly fallen in love. A few months after they married, David's brother died and then David was transferred. Those two factors had put an awful strain on their marriage. During these last few months she had realized what a big mistake it was to get married so quickly to someone she hadn't known for that long.

After some time Lisa turned toward John. "John, I'm so sorry for taking up so much of your time. I'm sure you have things to do and I should get going, too. You've been so kind. I want to thank you so much for listening. It really helped."

John looked down into her big green eyes that were staring back at him. "You're welcome. And call me anytime you need to talk. I really mean that. Will you promise me that?"

"I promise," she laughed, looking down at the ground, shuffling her feet in embarrassment. She looked back up at his kind face. She was truly grateful for this friend she had made. She took his hand and squeezed it, and then stood on her toes and kissed him softly on the cheek. "Thank you, John," she said, quietly.

John was caught off-guard by this show of affection. He watched her walk away until he couldn't see her anymore. He tried to tell himself that he couldn't be thinking about her in 'that' way. After all, technically, she was still married!

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## THE NEXT DAY

"Hey, John. Who was that in the park yesterday?" Roy asked him in the locker room that morning.

"That was Lisa Wilson."



"That's not David Wilson's wife, is it?" Roy asked, dreading what John's answer would be.

"Yep. She told me yesterday that she left him."

"Really?"

"Did I hear someone say David Wilson's name? From Station 18?" Marco piped in. "I hear he's a real piece of work."

"Yeah, well you heard right. He's a real jerk!" John replied.

"And you're seeing his wife?" Chet asked.

"No, I'm not *seeing* her. I know her and we were just talking! Now don't start any rumors that aren't true, for crying out loud!" John scowled at Chet.

"Yeah, well even if David Wilson finds out you're just *talking* with his wife he'll have your butt, Gage!"

"Well, there's nothing going on."

"I'm just telling you that you'd better be careful."

"Well, thanks for the advice, Chester B., but I don't need it!" John slammed his locker door and headed towards the kitchen.

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## SATURDAY—TWO WEEKS LATER

John headed over to the park with a basketball in hand. He went to shoot hoops but was also secretly hoping that he'd run into Lisa there. And he did.

Lisa didn't feel like talking about her marriage that day. So, she and Johnny strolled through the park, exchanging stories and jokes, and laughing. What they didn't know was that David was watching them.

David approached the couple by surprise. "What do you think you're doing?" he snarled at John.

"David, don't make a big deal out of this. We're just talking. We're just friends!" Lisa explained. She knew very well what David was like when his temper got out of control.

"Just friends? Looks like you're pretty *good* friends, if you ask me," he said, still scowling at John. "I've heard all about you Gage. You seem to have a thing for the ladies. Just who do you think you are? This *is* still my wife!" David's voice was growing louder and louder.

"David, please—," Lisa pleaded.

"Gage, you had better get out of my sight now before I pound you into the ground!" David started moving in towards John.

"David, stop it!" Lisa exclaimed.

David turned towards Lisa and shouted, "SHUT UP, LISA! This is between me and lover boy!"

Lisa couldn't stand it anymore. "DAVID! Quit it! Please!" The tears started to stream down Lisa's face as she begged her husband to stop this nonsense. "I can't stand this any longer! I don't want to be married to you! You know that! Please don't make this any harder! Please!" Lisa fell to her knees, dropped her head into her hands and sobbed. She was tired of the hatred that David carried around with him everywhere. And he was always taking it out on her.

John's heart ached for Lisa and what she was going through. He wanted to comfort her but knew he couldn't. Not with David there, anyway.

David stood there in shock; he had never seen an outburst like this from Lisa before. This proved to David, finally, how distraught she really was. And seeing her weeping on the ground triggered something in him. He finally realized, after all these months of being married how miserable Lisa really was. How miserable they *both* were and how horrible he had been to her. He had had a tough year with his brother dying and with getting transferred from his old job. But he realized now that these were no excuse for how he had been behaving. He also realized the damage that he had done to this marriage was irreparable. He dropped his head in shame and let out a big breath. "Oh, man," he said softly. He walked over to her, knelt down and rubbed her back. "I'm sorry, Lisa," he told her. "You can have the divorce, Lisa. I won't fight it. I'm just so sorry." Then he got up and walked away, wiping the tears from his own eyes.

As David walked away John knelt beside Lisa, placed a hand on her shoulder and gently squeezed it. "Are you okay?"

Lisa wiped her eyes and looked up, realizing that David had left. She let out a deep sigh and ran her hand through her hair. "Yeah. Yeah, I think I finally will be."

John extended his hand to help her up to her feet.

"I'm sorry for all of that," she apologized.

"There's no need to be sorry. Really." He looked into her eyes; they were still sad. John was determined to see those eyes happy again.

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### **ALMOST FIVE MONTHS LATER**

"Hi, Dix," Roy said as he and John approached the nurses station at Rampart Hospital.

"Well, hi Roy. Hi, John. Are you here for some supplies?"

"Yeah, just a few. So, how have you been? We haven't seen you for awhile."

"Well, I was on vacation," she answered Roy, smiling.

"Hey! That's great! Did you go anywhere?"

"Nope. I just stayed home, got some stuff in order and relaxed." Dixie noticed that John wasn't saying anything, which was unusual. He was gathering the supplies but he still he usually had something to contribute to the conversation.

"Roy," Dixie whispered, "John looks pretty preoccupied. What's going on with him?"

Roy shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. He's been that way the last few days."

John walked up behind Dixie. "Okay everyone, you can stop talking about me like I'm not here. I *can* hear you, you know. Roy, I've got the supplies. Let's go. See you later, Dix." John waved as he started down the hallway.

"Bye, John. Bye, Roy."

"Bye, Dix," Roy said as he turned and followed his partner down the hallway.

John just stared out the window during the ride back to the station. This was not the John that Roy knew. The John that Roy knew would be talking on and on about something, or cracking jokes. Finally, Roy couldn't take it anymore. "Johnny, will you please tell me, once and for all, what's going on in that head of yours?"

John took a deep breath and said, "Okay, Roy. I need your advice anyway."

"Is it about a girl?"

"Yeah."

"Well, what is it?" Roy asked.

"Roy, I think I'm in love."

"What? Well, that's great! I didn't know you were dating anyone."

"Yeah, well—," John's voice tapered off.

"You make it seem like it's a bad thing."

"Well, it is."

"What do you mean? Do I know her?"

"You know her, alright. And you're right, we're *not* dating."

"I don't get it. What do you mean?" Roy was confused, to say the least.

"The problem is that she thinks of me just as a friend. *That's* what I mean." John clenched his jaw and stared out the window again.

"Are you sure? Who is it?"

"It's Lisa," he admitted. "And yes, I'm sure."

"Lisa?" Roy liked Lisa. "That makes sense."

"What?" John looked over at Roy with a confused look on his face.

"John, I've seen you two together. I suppose you never notice how she laughs at all of your stupid jokes." Roy looked over at John. Roy continued, "Open your eyes, Johnny! Don't you see how she looks at you?"

John looked at Roy with a puzzled look on his face. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, she likes you. She *really* likes you."

"How do you know?" John was more interested in what Roy had to say now.

"I just can tell. Don't you see how she flirts with you?"

"She flirts with me?" John's eyes widened. "Huh! I never really noticed."

Roy shook his head at how dense his partner could be. "When we get back to the station I think you should call her and ask her out."

"Are you sure, Roy? I mean, are you *really* sure?" he stared at Roy intently.

"Trust me. I'm sure. Just do it."

"Well, her birthday is coming up," John thought out loud.

"There you go. That's perfect! Take her out for her birthday."

"Okay! I'm going to do this," John said excitedly. He was pumped up now. "But Roy, where should I take her?"

"What about 'The Gazebo'? I hear that's pretty nice."

John nodded his head and smiled. "The Gazebo. Yeah. I'll take her there. But Roy, if you're wrong about all of this—,"

"I'm not wrong. Just do it." Roy shook his head again in amazement at his partner's lack of perception. John was always chasing after girls that didn't want anything to do with him, and now, here was one who was interested in him and he couldn't even see it.

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Lisa had just walked into her apartment when she heard the phone ringing. "Hello?" she said into the receiver. The familiar voice at the other end of the line made her smile.

"Hi Lis'. I almost hung up. I thought maybe you weren't home."

She liked it when he called her Lis'. "Hi, Johnny. I just got in the door," she explained. "So, what's up?"

"Nothing. I just called to say 'Hi.' How was your day?"

"It was good. Busy, though. Are you at work?" She could hear men's voices in the background.

"Yeah."

"Well, what's on your mind, John?" She was curious as to why he was calling her from work. She and John talked on the phone quite a bit, but he usually never called her from work.

"I just wanted to remind someone that their birthday is coming up this Saturday."

"Please don't remind me that I'm another year older!"

"And wiser," he added, joking. "Anyway, I wanted to take you out for a birthday dinner. Are you up for it?"

John had been a good friend to her. She loved his company. "How can I refuse? You've got a date!" Realizing what she had just said, she was a little embarrassed. She'd had thoughts about her and Johnny being together but he had never made a move towards her. Not even since everything between her and David was finally over. It seemed to Lisa as though John just wanted to remain friends.

"Great! I'll pick you up at seven o'clock. How does the 'The Gazebo' sound?"

Lisa was surprised. "That sounds great, Johnny. I've never been there but I've heard great things about it."

"Okay. Well, I'd better go, Roy needs to use the phone."

"Okay, John. Thanks for calling. Bye."

"See you Saturday. Bye."

Lisa was still in shock as she hung up the phone. *The Gazebo?* She had heard how nice this restaurant was; it was more of an intimate restaurant where couples went. She wondered if John knew that.

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## SATURDAY

Lisa's doorbell rang at seven o'clock on the dot.

"Hi Johnny," she greeted him as she opened the door. Before Lisa stood Johnny dressed impeccably in a dark suit with a red tie. *God, he's handsome!*

"Happy Birthday!" Johnny grinned. "New dress?"

"Yeah. It's my birthday present to me," she joked. She had bought a simple, black dress that brought out her curves. She wanted to look nice for Johnny, even if they were just friends.

"It looks great on you." It *did* look great on her. Then again, he thought she always looked gorgeous.

"Thanks." She was hoping she wasn't turning blushing.

"Are you ready to go?" John asked, as he held out his arm for her. He was so nervous as to how this evening would turn out. Either it was going to be the best night of his life—or the biggest disappointment.

She took his arm and she could feel his taut muscle through the fabric of his jacket. She was melting inside, but she couldn't let it show. She kept trying to remind herself that they were just friends. *Just friends.*

When they got to the restaurant, they were seated almost immediately. John had made reservations—he wanted tonight to go perfectly.

Lisa looked around the restaurant. The atmosphere of the place was very romantic with soft music playing in the background. The lights were very low and each table had a lit candle and a single rose in a vase. "It's beautiful in here. And I didn't know there was dancing," Lisa remarked as she saw a dance floor. Next to the dance floor was a piano and microphone.

After John and Lisa had ordered their food they had a good time talking about the past week's events. They never ran out of things to talk about.

The food came shortly and just as they were finishing their meal the lights dimmed even further as a man started playing the piano and a woman stepped up to the microphone. The woman began singing ballads and soon there were couples dancing.

John and Lisa watched the other couples for a few minutes. It was an awkward situation for Lisa; she wished she was on the dance floor with John, but again, *they were just friends.*

Before she knew it, John had reached across the table and placed his hand on hers. "Lisa, would you like to dance?"

Lisa's heart skipped a beat. She looked at John and found him staring into her eyes. "I'd love to," she told him.

John got up and pulled Lisa's chair back for her, he took Lisa's right hand in his left and he led her to the dance floor. He held her hand up against his chest, wrapped his right arm around her waist and gently pulled her body next to his. They slowly swayed to the song, "Evergreen."

*Love, soft as an easy chair  
Love, fresh as the morning air  
One love that is shared by two  
I have found with you*

Tonight was the night he planned on telling Lisa how he really felt about her. He thought that he would go crazy if he held his feelings in any longer. As their bodies moved as one to the music, John pulled Lisa even more closely to him. He breathed in the sweet scent of her hair, and felt the softness of her skin and warmth of her body.

Lisa softly rested her hand on the back of John's neck and she softly ruffled her fingers through his hair. *Was this really happening? Did she feel the same way?*

*Like a rose under the April snow  
I was always certain love would grow  
Love, ageless and evergreen  
Seldom seen by two*

Lisa felt so secure with John's arms wrapped tightly around her. She was with a man whom she completely adored and, yes, even loved. Johnny meant everything to her. She had never felt quite this way about

anyone before in her life.

When the song ended, John and Lisa clung to each other, neither one wanting to let go. Lisa looked up into John's smoldering brown eyes with tears glistening in her own eyes.

Lisa started to speak. "Johnny — ." But before she could finish, Johnny kissed her softly, letting his lips linger on hers. When their lips parted, he stared deeply into her eyes. "I love you, Lis'."

She kept staring into his eyes. *Did I hear him right? Did he say that loved me?*

John brought her hand to his lips.

*Oh, God. She did hear him right.* She lifted her other hand and gently rested it on John's face. A single tear rolled down her cheek. "Johnny, I love *you*. I love you so much! I had no idea you felt this way; I just thought — ", her voice cracked, "I just thought you wanted to stay friends."

"I want more than that, Lis'. I have for a long time. It's just that I didn't know if you were ready for another relationship. Are you? Are you ready?" His eyes searched hers for an answer.

"Johnny, I've loved you for so long. You have no idea."

"I think I have a pretty good idea, sweetie." He gazed into her eyes as he lowered his lips lovingly onto hers and kissed her longingly. When it was over he wrapped his arms around her, pulled her close to his body and whispered into her ear, "I love you with all my heart."

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*EVERGREEN (Love Theme from "A Star Is Born")*

*Barbra Streisand*

*Written by Paul Williams and Barbra Streisand*