

# **Jack, Wanda, and Ben**

by Mike Mariano  
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## Jack, Wanda, and Ben

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*(JACK walks into the house carrying groceries. He looks around.)*

**JACK:**

Wanda! Wanda!

*(He waits; no response.)*

Wanda?

*(Slowly, WANDA steps out of the kitchen. She looks terrified and confused.)*

**WANDA:**

Jack?

**JACK:**

Wanda! Are you OK?

**WANDA:**

Oh, Jack!

*(She hugs him tight, nearly in tears. JACK, confused, squirms underneath her and the groceries.)*

**JACK:**

Wanda...is everything all right?

**WANDA:**

*(She releases him:)*

Oh yes, yes Jack. Everything's fine, now that you're here.

*(JACK puts the groceries on a chair and scratches his head.)*

**JACK:**

What, is there a spider in the kitchen; you want me to....

*(He trails off. WANDA continues to stare.)*

Well, I'm back from the supermarket...back from the bank....

**WANDA:**

Oh, Jack, you've been gone so long....

**JACK:**

Well, I was an extra five minutes at the bank....

**WANDA:**

Oh Jack, for me it was so much longer! It was a lifetime!

*(She looks up.)*

Why, Jack? Why did you leave me for so long?

**JACK:**

Well honey, I wasn't gone for more than forty-five minutes. It's ten minutes there, ten minutes back, and then the time for shopping; I think I made pretty good time, actually....

*(He looks at her. He is at a loss.)*

I—I missed you....

**WANDA:**

Oh Jack, I missed you! I more than missed you, I—

*(She stops and holds her hand to her face.)*

Oh.

**JACK:**

What?

**WANDA:**

Jack...Jack, things have changed since you've been gone.

**JACK:**

I know; Detroit got a field goal. I was listening in the car.

**WANDA:**

No, things have changed for me; for...us.

**JACK:**

Wanda, what are you getting at?

**WANDA:**

It's so hard to say, I...Jack, you were gone!

**JACK:**

For forty-five minutes!

**WANDA:**

You were gone, and I didn't know if you'd be back....

**JACK:**

Wanda, I'm really confused. I was gone, but now I'm back. What does all this mean?

**WANDA:**

Oh Jack, I don't know how to tell you this, but-

**BEN:**

*(From offstage:)*  
Wanda? Wanda, are you there?

**JACK:**

*(Looking up:)*  
Who's that?

*(BEN walks onstage. He puts his arm around WANDA.)*

**BEN:**

Who's that?

*(JACK is reeling. WANDA gasps.)*

**WANDA:**

Oh, Ben....

**JACK:**

Ben?!

**WANDA:**

Ben, this is Jack...my first husband....

**JACK:**

First?! Wanda!

**BEN:**

Oh...I thought he disappeared.

**WANDA:**

He did!

**JACK:**

I didn't!

**WANDA:**

Ben, I thought he was gone; you knew that!

**BEN:**

I know, Wanda, I know....

*(He hugs her and eyes JACK. JACK explodes.)*

**JACK:**

Wanda! An hour ago we were sitting in the kitchen, eating dinner! Together! Are you trying to tell me that in forty-five minutes you had me declared missing, then dead, then remarried?!

**WANDA:**

Well I never declared you remarried, though for all I knew...

**JACK:**

Wanda! You married...?

*(He motions to BEN.)*

**BEN:**

Ben?

**JACK:**

Ben?!

**WANDA:**

Jack, what else could I have done? You were gone, and I couldn't stay a widow forever....

**JACK:**

Forever?! It was FORTY FIVE MINUTES!

*(He puts his hands on his knees and his head down, and takes a deep breath.)*

**JACK:** (cont.)

Wanda, I'm sorry, but I'm just so confused....

**WANDA:**

I know Jack, so am I....

**JACK:**

I don't understand what could make you think I wasn't coming back...I don't understand him!

**WANDA:**

Ben?

**JACK:**

Ben! Where did he come from?

**WANDA:**

Well...Jack...Ben helped me deal with your disappearance. He was there for me when no one else was. Jack, one thing led to another, and....

**JACK:**

One thing led to another?! Wanda, I barely had one thing lead to another! I went from the bank to the store!

**WANDA:**

Jack, Ben is my husband now....

**JACK:**

Forty-five minutes.... Wanda, our wedding ceremony alone was longer than forty-five minutes!

**BEN:**

Jack.

**JACK:**

*(Still to WANDA:)*

This makes no sense to me, Wanda. I have no idea-

**BEN:**

Jack.

**JACK:**

-how you could come up with a new husband in an hour. That's like getting a pizza-

**BEN:**

Jack!

*(JACK turns. BEN slaps a hand on his shoulder.)*

Let up a little, OK?

**JACK:**

Yeah, I'm sorry, Wanda. I just....

*(He looks at WANDA in total desperation. WANDA is very uncomfortable.)*

**BEN:**

Wanda, why don't you finish up in the kitchen? I'll talk here with Jack.

*(She nods.)*

**WANDA:**

*(To JACK, with sadness:)*  
It's just been so long....

*(WANDA exits. JACK slowly turns to BEN.)*

**JACK:**

Ben, Ben, this is insane....

**BEN:**

It must seem that way, Jack.

**JACK:**

Yeah, I don't think you know how confused-

**BEN:**

I think I do, Jack. You seem as confused as Wanda was when I first met her.

**JACK:**

*(Sighs:)*  
When you first met her. Fort-Forty-five minutes ago....

**BEN:**

Granted, it was a whirlwind romance. But when I first saw her, standing there so helpless...I just fell for her immediately. She's just got those eyes. And when she smiles....

*(Snaps back into focus:)*

Well, I guess you would know.

**JACK:**

*(With contempt:)*

Yes, the memories are fresh in my mind.

**BEN:**

Jack, it's tough! But she had it tough, too.

**JACK:**

She had it all spelled out for her! I told her I was going to the store! I told her I'd be back in half an hour!

*(Beat:)*

I told her I loved her.

*(He sighs.)*

How...how's she been?

**BEN:**

Excuse me?

**JACK:**

Wanda. You said she was distraught before?

**BEN:**

Yeah. She really missed you. But she got over it.

**JACK:**

She's...she's happy with you?

**BEN:**

Yeah.

**JACK:**

So...where do I fit in?

*(BEN exhales.)*

**BEN:**

To tell you the truth, Jack, I don't really know.

**JACK:**

I know—I know this seemed like forever for Wanda. But Ben, you've got to understand; this is all happening so fast for me.

**BEN:**

It must be.

**JACK:**

I didn't expect so much to happen in the time of one car trip. And then to come home and...I really don't know if I'm coming or going....

*(He looks around and sighs.)*

I...I guess I'm going.

**BEN:**

*(Nods:)*

That's what's probably for the best. She's got her life.

**JACK:**

Ben, take good care of her. For me.

**BEN:**

These things happen, Jack; good luck....

*(JACK nods and heads for the exit. He takes one last look before going offstage. BEN shakes his head.)*

Poor guy....

*(WANDA reenters. She goes to BEN.)*

**WANDA:**

Ben?

Jack just left.

**BEN:**

Ben, oh my God....

**WANDA:**

What?

**BEN:**

*(From offstage:)*  
Vonda? Vonda are you there?

*(STEVE enters and puts his arm around WANDA.)*

**WANDA:**  
Ben, I have something to tell you....

**BEN:**  
*(Dismissive:)*  
No....

**WANDA:**  
No?

**BEN:**  
Wait a second.

**WANDA:**  
Wait?

**BEN:**  
Just wait, Wanda.

**WANDA:**  
No, Ben; this can't wait. This is important!

**BEN:**  
Important? Wanda, this is a joke!

**WANDA:**  
A joke?

**BEN:**

*(To STEVE:)*  
What's your name?

**STEVE:**

*(Extending his hand:)*  
I'm Steve.

**BEN:**

*(To WANDA, ignoring STEVE:)*  
You want me to think there's something going on between you and Steve. I understand; after you've been married for so long you feel there's a tendency to act out. A seven year itch. Give or take seven years.

**WANDA:**

Ben, I don't understand. I'm married to Steve.

**BEN:**

Oh, I'm not going to believe that.

**WANDA:**

Ben, you disappeared from my life! I had to move on.

**STEVE:**

Come on Ben; leave Linda alone.

**BEN:**

You've picked a winner here, Wanda.

**WANDA:**

Oh, Ben, how can you be this cruel?

**BEN:**

Honey, you're repeating yourself. Remember Jack?

**WANDA:**

Remember Jack? Of course I do. And he was much kinder than you're being right now. And even he ran out on me—twice! But Ben, you act as if you just don't care.

**BEN:**

I'm finding it hard to sympathize, Wanda. In those dozens of seconds that we spent apart, I never stopped loving you. But in that time, you doubted me. And then this happened.

*(Indicating STEVE:)*

**BEN:** (cont.)

And Steve, if you don't mind, I'd like a private moment with my wife.

**STEVE:**

But—

**BEN:**

Just go on back to the kitchen and wait for her there.

**STEVE:**

I know—

**BEN:**

It's the least you can do for me.

**STEVE:**

But she'll forget about me.

**BEN:**

Third time's the charm, Steve; try your luck.

*(BEN shoves STEVE towards offstage. STEVE takes WANDA's hands.)*

**STEVE:**

I'll be right here for you.

**WANDA:**

I know, Steve.

**STEVE:**

I love you, Brenda.

*(STEVE exits.)*

**WANDA:**

Ben—

**BEN:**

Look at me, Wanda.

*(He goes to her, taking her head in his hands. He stares at her.)*

**BEN:** (cont.)

I know it's going to take you a while to get over Steve. He's gone now. But I'm here for you; I always have been. Even when you didn't know it.

**WANDA:**

Ben, what are you talking about? Steve is in the next room.

**BEN:**

Oh?

**WANDA:**

He's waiting in the kitchen. You just told him to.

**BEN:**

Oh.

**WANDA:**

You're the one I have to worry about. Steve is the good husband.

**BEN:**

Wanda, I thought when you turn around—

**WANDA:**

Oh, Ben, listen to me! I have two husbands!

**BEN:**

Three.

**WANDA:**

Oh, God! Ben, I need to ask you—and don't be insulted—but I need to know: Do I just have bad taste in men?

**BEN:**

I never thought so before.

**WANDA:**

And that doesn't mean you're bad, Ben; you're not. But I'm making my life a mess. I move too fast.

**BEN:**

Maybe you do.

**WANDA:**

And now look at me. I'm a...trigamist. Oh, Ben....

*(She begins to cry. BEN comforts her.)*

**BEN:**

Honey....

**WANDA:**

I'm OK. I'm sorry; I'm OK....

*(She dries her eyes.)*

**BEN:**

How long did you know Jack?

**WANDA:**

Jack?

**BEN:**

Before you married him. How long were you together?

**WANDA:**

It felt like a long time; maybe it wasn't. It was less than a year.

**BEN:**

We were together for less than a year.

**WANDA:**

I know some people wait longer, but it felt so certain. We were still a young couple when he went away. You don't think—?

**BEN:**

What?

**WANDA:**

I don't even want to say this; it's so unlike Jack. You don't think he was seeing someone?

**BEN:**

No, Wanda; in the time he was gone? I don't think so.

**WANDA:**

Really?

**BEN:**

He said forty-five minutes? He wouldn't have gotten much done.

**WANDA:**

That would be a relief if it wasn't for everything else that's happened between us. Poor Jack. But Ben, I've learned something: you can't go backwards. You can't.

*(BEN checks his watch.)*

**BEN:**

Remember Steve?

**WANDA:**

Of course I do; he's in the kitchen. Why do you ask?

**BEN:**

*(Losing it:)*

Because—Wanda, we've spent more time talking right now than you've ever spent with Steve.

**WANDA:**

So?

**BEN:**

And you call him your husband?

**WANDA:**

He is.

**BEN:**

I won't believe you, Wanda. I know whose husband you are. And when you were in the kitchen, when you were in the next room, I didn't talk about anything but you. I don't see the difference.

**WANDA:**

Oh, so to you, time apart doesn't seem any different than time together?

**BEN:**

No, Wanda, that's not what I'm say-

**WANDA:**

You think that abandoning me is OK just as long as you give a thought to me every now and then. To your wife!

*(She grabs the groceries and starts offstage.)*

**BEN:**

Where are you going?

**WANDA:**

The eggs are going bad. You didn't put them away.

**BEN:**

Wanda.

*(She stops.)*

We've never fought before.

**WANDA:**

We've never done a lot of things before, Ben.

*(JACK bursts in. He carries a handful of random objects.)*

**JACK:**

Wanda!

**WANDA:**

*(She sinks to her knees:)*

Oh, I can't take another husband!

*(JACK continues straight towards WANDA.)*

**JACK:**

Don't worry about the groceries, Wanda; just stand up. You need to look at this.

*(He fumbles through a series of objects.)*

**JACK:** (cont.)

Now first, this is us. This is a picture of us from last summer. We're together on the beach. So that's within the year. If you want something recent, this is the slip of paper they give you at the bank. I got it tonight—a half hour ago. It has the date right here. And this is an ice scraper. I know it's not recent or sentimental, but it goes in your car, not mine. So I'm returning it.

**WANDA:**

Jack....

**JACK:**

Oh, Wanda! I should have so much more! In the car, I should have more about us, but there's nothing. Then I think maybe it's my imagination. That I'm thinking there's more to our marriage than really exists.

**WANDA:**

Jack, I remember the beach, the ice scraper, everything. And they all have meaning—for us. Only now I have...other meanings, too.

**JACK:**

(To BEN:)  
How could you put her up to this?

**BEN:**

Don't talk to me. Talk to Steve.

**JACK:**

Steve?

**STEVE:**

(Entering:)  
Did somebody call me?

(JACK looks at STEVE, then says to WANDA:)

**JACK:**

Another one?

**WANDA:**

Oh, Jack!

**JACK:**

Wanda, Steve and Ben: these aren't relationships. These are cries for help. You can't love them. Not like we love each other. You can't stay like this.

**BEN:**

I agree. You're going to have to choose.

**JACK:**

Choose?

**BEN:**

You've got your pick of husbands, Wanda. Choose one of us and the other two will leave forever.

**JACK:**

But there's only one serious choice. Wanda, really.

**BEN:**

You can make your case first, Jack.

*(JACK approaches WANDA.)*

**JACK:**

I can't say anything else. Just think of the years we've spent together. That's all.

*(JACK steps back and motions for BEN to approach.)*

**BEN:**

*(To WANDA:)*

In terms of experience, I can't compete with Jack. But Wanda, I was your husband in a time of crisis. You know you can count on me. Maybe you can say the same thing about Jack. Or Steve. But you know me, Wanda. And I know you.

*(STEVE approaches WANDA.)*

**STEVE:**

Yolanda, you spun the wheel, it landed on me. I don't know what else to say. Besides, possession is nine-tenths of the law.

*(STEVE turns to BEN.)*

**STEVE:** (cont.)

That's it.

**BEN:**

Well, Wanda: these are your husbands. It's up to you now.

**WANDA:**

Oh, Ben!

*(WANDA collapses into BEN's arms, sobbing. BEN comforts her, but takes this as a sign he's won. STEVE looks dejected. JACK is outraged.)*

**JACK:**

Wanda!

**BEN:**

It's OK, Wanda; it's OK. You've made the right choice.

**WANDA:**

But Ben, I can't make any choice! I've lost you and Jack before. How can I choose to lose you again?

**BEN:**

Wanda—

**WANDA:**

This is too much, too soon. I need time.

**JACK:**

Now she needs time....

**WANDA:**

Ben, Jack, Steve: I'm going away. I'm going on a trip so I can get things sorted out. When I come back, I want you waiting here for me. Except Steve.

*(She looks at him.)*

Sorry.

*(STEVE starts to say something, but decides against it. He slinks out towards the kitchen. WANDA approaches JACK and BEN.)*

**WANDA:** (cont.)

This is hard. I don't like it one bit, and of course, neither do you two. But it's what I need.

**JACK:**

I'd like to say I could understand, Wanda. But if this is what you want, I'll try.

**BEN:**

So will I.

**WANDA:**

Thank you.

**JACK:**

Where will you go?

**WANDA:**

I don't know. Anywhere. Now.

**JACK:**

But you need to pack.

**WANDA:**

No, I'm going to get in the car and drive. And I'm going to do it now.

*(She looks at them.)*

**BEN:**

Goodbye, Wanda.

**WANDA:**

I won't be long.

*(WANDA exits. BEN looks at JACK. JACK begins to unload and sort groceries from the bag.)*

**BEN:**

She's right, you know. It won't take her that long. Especially the way Wanda does things; she may make up her mind before tomorrow morning. So don't get too worried.

**JACK:**

What if she meets somebody?

**BEN:**

What if she meets many somebodies? This is Wanda we're talking about. At this point we just have to trust her.

**JACK:**

Ben, that forty-five minutes I was gone, how long did it feel to you?

**BEN:**

Forty-five minutes.

**JACK:**

Just like any other forty-five minutes.

**BEN:**

No, no Jack; that's where you're wrong. It wasn't like any other period of time in my life at all. Not with Wanda. It felt longer. To her it was longer. And it was long enough to tell me I loved her. How long was it for you? Before you knew you loved her?

*(JACK smiles.)*

**JACK:**

It was love at first sight.

**BEN:**

That's all it takes.

**JACK:**

*(Taking some groceries into his arms:)*

Ben, I had you pegged wrong. I didn't think you could know Wanda. But you do.

*(He motions to the items still on the table.)*

Can you give me a hand?

**BEN:**

Sure.

*(He grabs some of the remaining groceries.)*

What a day, huh?

**JACK:**

What an hour.

**BEN:**

For me it's been an hour with Wanda. It may be the only hour I get. That means something.

**JACK:**

*(Nods:)*  
I wouldn't give up a minute.

**BEN:**

She's beautiful.

**JACK:**

She's captivating.

**BEN:**

She's Wanda.

*(They exit. WANDA returns.)*

**WANDA:**

Jack? Ben?

*(No response.)*

Ohhh, not again...!

*(But before WANDA breaks down, STEVE enters.)*

Steve?

**STEVE:**

Shhh...

*(STEVE approaches WANDA and kisses her. She kisses him back. Silently, they exit. BEN and JACK return from the kitchen, unaware. They grab the remaining groceries.)*

**JACK:**

Ben, no matter what happens, when I was out getting these groceries, I'm glad you were with her.

**BEN:**

Wanda needs someone.

**JACK:**

You make a good someone.

**BEN:**

Thanks.

*(They exit. Lights fade.)*