## Tell Me Something

A 10-minute play by Jake Lewis

<u>Characters</u>: CARL & MEL -- 70s+ -- best friends

<u>Setting</u>: A Dunkin' Donuts (or similar coffeeshop)

<u>Time</u>: Now Lights up on:

CARL and MEL are sitting in a Dunkin Donuts, sipping their coffees, not talking to each other, but still enjoying each other's company as old friends tend to do.

CARL: Tell me something.

MEL: Huh?

CARL: I said, tell me something.

MEL: Tell you something?

CARL: That's what I said.

MEL: Tell you something? This coffee is good. What do I know?

CARL: No, no, no.

MEL: No? How do you know this coffee isn't good?

CARL: I know the coffee is good. We come here everyday! Why would we come here everyday if the coffee was garbage?

MEL: You tell me!

CARL: No, I want you to tell me something.

MEL: I just did, you old fool! Who are we, Abbott and Costello?

CARL: That's not what I wanted you to tell me.

MEL: How the hell am I supposed to know what you want me to tell you?

CARL: If you'd let me finish, you schmuck, you'd know.

MEL: I thought you had finished. I counted to three after you said, "Tell me something."

CARL: So sue me, I was breathing. Takes me a few seconds.

MEL: Well, I know how that is.

Both men chuckle.

CARL: Anyway...

MEL: What's that?

CARL: Would you just let me talk?

MEL: Isn't that what you're doing?

CARL: Just shut your piehole for a second, will ya?

MEL: The floor is yours, chief.

CARL: Jesus, you made me lose my train of thought.

MEL: That train left the station long ago.

CARL: Can't argue with that. Anyway...We've known each other how long? At least sixty years, no? And in all that time, we've probably talked to each other every day, I think.

MEL: Well, there was that one time you and I got into a disagreement over who the better singer was, Frank Sinatra or Dean Martin, and you wouldn't talk to me for two weeks--

CARL: Mel! Here I am trying to tell you something--

MEL: I thought you wanted me to tell you something.

CARL: Jesus H., never mind.

Silence as they both sip coffee.

MEL: Go ahead.

CARL: I have your permission to speak, my liege?

MEL: Granted, peasant.

CARL: You're ever so kind. As I was starting to say before I was so rudely interrupted....ehhh....(forgets)

MEL: Frank Sinatra.

CARL: Right, Frank--no, that's what you said. What I was saying was, we've been friends for almost our whole lives.

MEL: Not counting those two weeks.

CARL: Even during those two weeks, we were still friends, and you know it.

MEL: I do.

CARL: And in all that time, have you ever thought about love?

MEL: Have I what?

CARL: Thought about love.

MEL: Love?

CARL: Shit, you're as deaf as a dodo. Yes! Love!

MEL: With who?

CARL: With anyone!

MEL: Would I make love to anyone? What kind of question is that?

CARL: Not the question I asked. And you and I both know you couldn't get it up even if they injected Viagra right into your liver-spotted dick. No, I mean, have you ever been in love?

MEL: Sure I've been in love. I was married to Edie for 48 years, you'd think that's love!

CARL: I'm not talking about your wife, you schmo. Of course you loved your wife. And your kids or grandkids or anything like that. Have you loved anyone nor related to you?

MEL: You asking me if I'm having an affair, Carl?

CARL: You're busting my balls. That's what you're doing here, right?

MEL: What's going on with you, lately? We usually just sit here, drink our coffees, exchange a few words, but mostly just sit in silence.

CARL: Nothing's going on with me. God forbid I try to have a conversation with my best friend about something other than the latest bump you found on your ass.

MEL: Alright, alright, don't work yourself up into another heart-attack. I just wasn't expecting to have a philosophical conversation to go with my donut at 7 in the morning. (*Beat.*) I mean, yeah, of course I've loved more than just Edie and the kids. I love this cup of coffee. I love that last night I only

had to get up to pee four times. I love that my neighbor finally mowed his goddamned lawn.

CARL: He did? Thank God. That thing was starting to look like the Amazon.

MEL: Well, I mowed his lawn, to tell the truth.

CARL: And you lived to tell the tale. But what about people? Who else do you love? And I'm not talking about Denise over there, either.

MEL: She makes a perfect cup of coffee! Always smiles when she sees me and calls me Sam.

CARL: But your name is Mel.

MEL: No kidding, but it's a name. Not a bad one, either. I wouldn't want to break her heart correcting her at this point.

CARL: Mel...

MEL: Carl.

CARL: What I'm trying to say is, do you love me?

MEL: Do I love you? As in...you?

CARL: Is there anyone else?

MEL: Ok, Taxi Driver, I get it. You're my best friend. You know more about me than I do.

CARL: Some of it I wish I didn't.

MEL: Ah!

CARL: Can you answer my question?

MEL: I'm not gonna marry you if that's what this is leading up to.

CARL: Ain't that a relief.

MEL: You're not talking about love, like... (does some exaggerated sexual gesture)

CARL: Jesus, would you cut that out? We're in public! That's going to haunt me for the rest of my life, which hopefully isn't that much longer.

MEL: You seriously want me to answer this?

CARL: Forget it.

MEL: (after a beat) Sure. Why not?

CARL: "Sure, why not" he says.

MEL: What's wrong with "Sure, why not?"

CARL: It lacks a little authenticity.

MEL: It's not every day I tell a guy that, you know. The last man I said that to was...well, come to think of it, I don't know.

CARL: I know.

MEL: And we're in public! What would Denise think?

CARL: She thinks we've been lovers ever since we first came in here.

MEL: What? She does?

CARL: Why do you think she always says "It's so sweet you two boys have these dates everyday."

MEL: I've never heard her say that.

CARL: You can hardly hear me and I'm right in front of your face shouting at you!

MEL: What?

CARL: Funny guy.

MEL: I won't quit my day job.

CARL: You don't have a day job.

MEL: Having this conversation with you sure feels like one.

CARL: I'm not afraid to say it. I love you, Mel.

MEL: Alright, knock it off. You got your answer. Let's talk about the normal stuff, like how these lids are worse than having no lid.

CARL: You're not wrong. Let me hear you say it.

MEL: Say what?

CARL: I love you.

MEL: You already told me that. Your memory really has shit the bed.

CARL: No, I mean you say I love you. To me.

MEL: You dying or something?

CARL: Probably! I don't think it's going to happen before I finish the cup of coffee if that's what you mean, but I'm nearer than further.

MEL: No kidding. Did I tell you about this new discoloration I found on my knee?

CARL: I can't keep all your medical problems straight.

MEL: You're really gonna make me do this, aren't you? You looking for me to pour my heart out to you here in Dunks? Heh? Well, fine. Yeah, I love you, Carl. How could I not? You are the only person in the whole world I have left who puts up with me. Ever since Edie died, our mornings together are the only thing keeping me going. I got no one else to talk to. Well, Sandra next door, but her perfume is laid on even thicker than her flirting. You know how Danny doesn't want anything to do with his old man, and who can blame him? Then there's Ashley, who comes and visits me once a week for lunch -- if I'm lucky -- but I think she's doing me a favor out of pity.

Beat.

MEL: I gotta be honest with you, you're scaring me a little bit. You've always been the more, whaddya call it, emotional one of us? Edie and I had nearly the same thing before she went. I can't imagine what my life will be without you. I'm only hoping I go before you do, because as much as I like Denise over there, that won't be reason enough to get my saggy ass out of bed every morning to get a cup of lukewarm coffee-flavored water. So yeah. I do love you. I think I love you more than anyone else I've ever known, as terrible as that is to say, because you've always been there for me. Except for those two weeks. *(Beat.)* But I'm still not gonna marry you.

CARL: Jesus Christ, Mel. Where'd that all come from? MEL: You asked, didn't you?

CARL: Yeah, but I wasn't expecting a monologue. I was thinking something like "You're a good guy, and I like spending time with you."

MEL: You're something else.

CARL: You're not the first to tell me that.

MEL: Anyway....

CARL: Anyway...

MEL: Yeah.

They sip their coffee.

CARL: Thank you.

MEL: You say something?

CARL: Yeah, I did.

MEL: Yes you did.

They exchange a knowing glance, then return to sipping coffee as lights fade.

The End