

The Poet

A rock musical in two acts

Book, lyric & music by Martin Haslinger

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DRAFT: 2.1

CHARACTERS

CLAYTON	A published poet with several poetry books under his belt. Thirty something.
PHIL	Clayton's childhood friend, as well as the creator of the reality TV show "Star Attraction". Thirty something.
TERRY	An attractive television network makeup artist. Late twenties.
RONDA	Clayton's publisher and good friend. Talks fast and laughs often, mostly laughing at her own jokes. Early forties.
ARTIE	Host of the TV show "Star Attraction", where he flaunts his overly dynamic personality. Fifty something.
JAMIE	A stunningly beautiful and charming professional actress. Late Twenties.
JOHN	Clayton's old friend, as well as the illustrator for one of his books. Thirty something.
PIERRE	Jamie's ex-fiancé. He is French, with a thick French accent. Late twenties.
MARGARET	Relationship expert on the TV show "Star Attraction", where she often displays the brash side of her personality. Late sixties.
ROWAN	The proud host of his own TV talk show, "The Rowan Coaster Show". Forty something.

SETTING

Clayton is backstage at a New York City television studio, soon to appear on a live TV show. He will appear in front of 50 million viewers, as well as a live studio audience.

Note: Clayton's home city of Buffalo, NY is frequently referenced, but Buffalo may be substituted with the name of the city hosting the musical.

TIME

Current time, in the evening.

SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1	Network green room, NYC	Current time (evening)
Scene 2	Coffee shop, Buffalo	3 years into the past
Scene 3	Network green room, NYC	Current time
Scene 4	Clayton's home, Buffalo	6 weeks into the past
Scene 5	Phil's network office, NYC	6 weeks into the past
Scene 6	Network green room, NYC	Current time
Scene 7	Clayton's network apartment, NYC	6 weeks into the past
Scene 8	Network green room, NYC	Current time
Scene 9	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	6 weeks into the past
Scene 10	Network green room, NYC	Current time

ACT II

Scene 1	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	Current time
Scene 2	Diner date video flashback, NYC	6 weeks into the past
Scene 3	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	Current time
Scene 4	Motorcycle date video flashback, Buffalo	4 weeks into the past
Scene 5	Video rental video flashback, NYC	3 weeks into the past
Scene 6	Night club date video flashback, NYC	2 weeks into the past
Scene 7	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	Current time
Scene 8	Lunch phone calls video flashback, NYC	11 days into the past
Scene 9	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	Current time
Scene 10	Argument video flashback, NYC	8 days into the past
Scene 11	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	Current time
Scene 12	"Rowan Coaster" video flashback, NYC	7 days into the past
Scene 13	"Star Attraction" TV show set, NYC	Current time
Scene 14	Clayton's network apartment, NYC	Current time (late evening)
Scene 15	Clayton's network apartment, NYC	Current time (early morning)
Scene 16	Phil's network office, NYC	Current time (morning)
Scene 17	Phil's network office, NYC	Current time (afternoon)
Scene 18	"The Rowan Coaster Show", NYC	1 year into the future

SONGS

ACT I

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| (1) "If You Could Be Anybody, Part I" | Clayton |
| (2) "Lone Poet" | Ronda, Clayton |
| (3) "999" | Clayton |
| (4) "Face Each Day, Part I" | Clayton |
| (5) "Face Each Day, Part II" | Clayton |
| (6) "To Let Go" | Phil, Clayton |
| (7) "Long Way Home" | Clayton |
| (8) "I Was a Poet" | Clayton |
| (9) "I.O.U." | Jamie, Clayton |

ACT II

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| (10) "Oasis" | Clayton, Jamie, Artie |
| (11) "I Lost All Expression" | Margaret, Clayton, Artie |
| (12) "My Very First Poem" | Jamie, Clayton |
| (13) "Jilted Lover" | Clayton, Jamie |
| (14) "Face The New Day" | Clayton |
| (15) "Long Shadows Of Dawn" | Jamie |
| (16) "If You Could Be Anybody, Part II" | Terry, Cast |

“The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression.”

Essay, “The Poet” (1844)
By Ralph Waldo Emerson

ACT I

SCENE 1

AT RISE:

(Stage right, there is a makeup chair in a TV studio green room. TERRY is a makeup artist standing behind the makeup chair waiting for CLAYTON, who she will be working on. There is a low table in front of the chair with a small mirror on it. The time is current time, in the evening.)

PHIL

(PHIL walks in the green room with CLAYTON following behind him. PHIL is happy to see that TERRY is already in the green room.)

Hello Terry.

TERRY

Hi Phil.

PHIL

Clayton, this is your makeup artist Terry. Terry, this is Clayton.

TERRY

(TERRY initiates hand shake with CLAYTON. CLAYTON stands between PHIL and TERRY.)

Hi Clayton.

CLAYTON

Pleased to meet you.

PHIL

Terry is new with us. She's replaced Sylvia, who worked with you the last time you were here. Sylvia is still with the network, but working a few blocks over in our Times Square studio.

(Points finger as to provide direction.)

Terry, I know you weren't working here yet, but did you happen to catch any of Clayton on the show?

TERRY

(Disappointed.)

No ... it's been months since I've had time to watch.

PHIL

That's okay, Clayton's never watched the show before, ever. At least as far as watching it on TV.

(CLAYTON gives TERRY a guilty smile.)

But he'll be live and in person tonight, so he'll have the best seat in the house. Terry, you'll be watching from backstage, and keeping an eye on him.

(Looks at his watch.)

Clayton, you have about an hour before I come get you. If you need anything, Terry will be happy to get it for you.

(Briefly grabs CLAYTON'S arm.)

And while you're waiting, she'll be putting all kinds of gunk on your face to make you look a little less ugly, right Terry?

TERRY

(Touching CLAYTON'S face.)

Only corrective gunk. I'll hide some minor imperfections and compensate for the stage lighting.

PHIL (off)

Talking about hiding imperfections, I'm going to go hide in my office the best I can before the fires start burning. Clayton, my friend, sit back, relax, enjoy being pampered, and I'll see you in about an hour.

CLAYTON

Thanks Phil, I appreciate all of your help.

(PHIL exits stage right. CLAYTON sits in the makeup chair and starts talking to TERRY.)

So, you're new, huh?

TERRY

(TERRY talks while putting a protective bib apron over CLAYTON to protect his cloths. She is standing behind CLAYTON, looking over his shoulder. She talks to him through the mirror, and swings her head around occasionally to talk face to face. Her answer is upbeat, but with little confidence.)

Actually, today's my first day.

(Trying to sound assuring.)

But don't worry, I've been a makeup artist for years, I won't make you look like a clown.

CLAYTON

That's a relief. Believe me, I do well enough making myself look like a clown. It looks like you landed an exciting job here, working with celebrities all day.

TERRY

(Talking while working on CLAYTON'S hair.)

Yeah. I've been doing makeup for actors and models for years, but I've never worked with actual celebrities, like what the network attracts. Of course, a lot of stars travel with their own makeup artists, but I'm sure I'll be working with some pretty big names. I can't wait.

CLAYTON

I'm sorry you had to start off with an average Joe like me.

TERRY

I am a makeup artist, maybe I can mold you into someone famous. Who do you want to be?

CLAYTON

Oh ... I'm not picky. Why don't you just turn me into your favorite actor?

TERRY

I'm a big Danny DeVito fan, so you're going to have to crouch. Actually, I'm under enough pressure with being new, I don't think I'd be comfortable working with a big name celebrity my first day on the job. I do have to ask, though, if you're not a celebrity how did you get on the show? It is called "Star Attraction" and its premise is to fix-up celebrities for dating?

CLAYTON

Well, I grew up with Phil, who of course created the show, so that played a large part. You know ... that whole ... "it's who you know" thing.

TERRY

That's okay, it never hurts to know the right people.

CLAYTON

On top of that, I used to be a published poet. I wrote a number of poetry books. None of them were popular enough to earn me celebrity status, but it's part of the reason why I'm here.

TERRY

See, I think being a published writer qualifies for at least some level of celebrity status. When I was nine or ten years old, I had dreams of being a famous writer. I would draw my own book covers with crayons and put them over real books, and pretend that I wrote them.

CLAYTON

That's funny, do you remember the titles?

TERRY

I remember one of them.

(Says title slow, with drama.)

"All in a Day's Dream", it was about day dreams.

CLAYTON

Did you ever get past making covers and put down some words?

TERRY

No ... I've always been good at descriptive writing, but my imagination has never been able to carry me through a decent story line. My ideas jump around too much, just like a day dream. How about you, did you write poetry when you were a kid?

CLAYTON

No. I was very dyslexic when I was a kid. Back then, writing anything was a major undertaking, like trying to piece together a puzzle. ...I often wish I could trace my achievements as a poet back to when I was a kid. It's as if I would prove to myself that I was destined to be a poet. But, I wasn't any more brilliant than any of the kids I grew up with. If anything, I was always a step behind.

TERRY

Did you ever dream about being on TV when you were a kid? Officially, you are a TV personality, you know.

CLAYTON

Not that I remember, but Phil did. I've known him since we were this tall...

(Holds hand three feet off the ground to show height.)

...he's wanted to be a television actor or movie star for as long as I've known him.

TERRY

So he grows up to create a TV show that he doesn't even appear on.

CLAYTON

Is that crazy or what? I remember when we were around nine or ten years old. We were hanging out with a bunch of neighborhood kids when a little girl posed one of those standard childhood questions ... "If you could be anybody, who would that person be?" Right away Phil named off a half dozen popular actors, in exact order of who he wanted to be the most.

TERRY

How did you answer the question?

CLAYTON

Me? I can't remember.

(CLAYTON stands up and steps away from the makeup chair. He sings song #1, "If You Could Be Anybody, Part I". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

AS A CHILD I WAS ASKED A QUESTION DEEP
 IF YOU COULD BE ANYBODY WHO WOULD THAT PERSON BE
 I WAS WONDERING WHAT SHOULD I SAY
 ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT DID I SAY
 WOULD I BE A RICH MAN, MAYBE A MOVIE STAR
 WOULD I BE MYSELF FOR YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE
 I WAS WONDERING WHAT SHOULD I SAY
 ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT DID I SAY

(Sits down.)

TERRY

When did you start writing poetry?

CLAYTON

Not until I was in college. I was in my second year, and the whole poetry thing kind of fell on me. I was dating a girl who I was pretty crazy about, her name was Heather Moffitt, but after a few months of dating she started to distance herself from me. I felt so bad, I had to express myself somehow and wrote my very first poem, which I appropriately entitled, "My Very First Poem".

TERRY

(Excited.)

Do you remember it? Can you recite it?

CLAYTON

Let's see if I can remember...

(Pause while thinking, then stands up and recites poem with poetic voice. Lights dim and spotlight focuses on him.)

You are the Sun yet I stand in the rain
 Cold with grief and wet with pain
 When clouds break and you appear
 Comes an end to all of my drear
 Yet wind and time do soon supply
 More clouds to fill the sky
 I ask you oh Sun a question in vain
 How much longer must I stand in the rain

(Sits down. Lighting resumes.)

TERRY

That's beautiful. What did she think about it?

CLAYTON

I never gave it to her. She ended up dumping me, but it was the beginning of a flow of poems that seemed to take on a life of their own. Before long, book stores and libraries all over the country had poetry books on their shelves with my name on them.

TERRY

You mean they weren't other people's books with your covers on them, drawn with crayon?

CLAYTON

Very funny. No, they were the real thing, and they sold well enough where I didn't even have to get a real job after college. I was a poet by day and I sold Lazy Cat reclining chairs by night.

TERRY

You were a poet that sold Lazy Cat reclining chairs?

CLAYTON

King of comfort.

TERRY

Who can romance a chair better than a poet? You must have had one heck of a sales pitch.

CLAYTON

I was pretty good. Eventually, I was able to quit selling and focus on writing. I was a full time poet. I worked closely with Ronda Adler, the publisher that discovered me. We published just shy of 1000 poems.

TERRY

1000 poems? Wow.

CLAYTON

Yeah, well, just shy of 1000. I was being published until about four years ago when I released my last book, "Mountain in the Sky".

TERRY

Why did you stop?

CLAYTON

I never stopped writing poetry, I just haven't been published in a while. After I finished my last book I kind of ... ran out of words ... at least the better words.

TERRY

Writer's block?

CLAYTON

You could say that, but I would describe it as more of a blank than a block. I have a favorite chair in my house from my days as a recliner salesman. When I was being published, I would sit in that chair and burn through poems as fast as my hand could push a pencil.

(Looking up, as if watching a floating object land through an imaginary pencil onto imaginary paper.)

I could see words as they float through time ... lure them in ... through a pencil ... onto paper ... as a poem. That chair was like a satellite dish for the written word. ...Ya see ... words are all around us, and they come to those who are receptive ... those who are locked in on the right frequency ... they come to those who aren't afraid of the truth that they bring ... the poets. ...But after I finished my last book, the connection was broken. I would sit in that chair hour after hour, day after day, staring into space, with nothing to show for except a waste paper basket full of ... waste paper. I soon realized, the best I could do is regurgitated old ideas ... into recycled poems.

TERRY

What did that do to your career?

CLAYTON

It did it in. I still remember my last business meeting with my publisher, Ronda. We met at my favorite coffee shop, back home in Buffalo.

(Lights fade.)

ACT ISCENE 2

AT RISE:

(Stage left, in a small coffee shop in Buffalo, there are a few tables with people sitting at them. CLAYTON and RONDA walk in from stage left holding coffee. CLAYTON is also holding a folder full of loose papers with his poems written on them. They head to an empty table. Scene represents a flashback of the business meeting between CLAYTON and RONDA going back three years into the past, in the late morning.)

RONDA

Clayton, let's sit here.

(Sits down.)

CLAYTON

(CLAYTON sits down across from RONDA.)

We haven't caught up with each other in a while. What's new?

RONDA

Clayton, you don't even want to know. I've been working with Billy and Willy, these two government conspiracy theory lunatics. They want me to publish this book they've just finished. Let me tell you, they're driving me batty. Their book is so outlandish, I'd love to tell them to make like a tree on the grassy knoll and leave, but they have a following for this stuff. So, what can I do? Clayton, they have a whole chapter dedicated to Bigfoot. They say the government has dozens of them in captivity but isn't telling anyone because they want to use them for some secret ... military weapon. The funny thing is they believe Bigfoot is only twenty inches tall.

CLAYTON

Bigfoot is twenty inches tall? They're going to have to change the name.

RONDA

I know ... but they're still ferocious, with sharp fangs. I'm thinking, like a misbehaving chihuahua.

CLAYTON

I'd like to get one to use as a guard dog. Think I could train one to bark at trespassers?

RONDA

No, they're pretty quiet, but they are super intelligent. I think it would just call 911. Anyway, how are you doing, how have you been doing with your writer's block, got anything good for me?

(RONDA points to folder CLAYTON has in his hand.)

CLAYTON

I've come up with some new ideas. I don't know if they're ready for the presses, but I do want your feedback on them.

(Passes RONDA the folder.)

RONDA

Let's see what you got.

(Takes papers out of folder and quickly reads through a few of them to herself. Talks with sarcastic tone.)

New ideas?

(Quickly reads through a few more to herself.)

RONDA (continued)

All of these new ideas that you've been giving me since your last book are all very good, but have one major problem: they're everything but new. Like I've told you before, you just keep re-issuing different versions of your past works over and over and over again. And already, it looks like you're doing it again. Although, your spelling is getting much better, I'll give you that much, my poet who can't spell.

(Holds up a single piece of paper and looks at it as if confused.)

CLAYTON

I realize --

RONDA

(Interrupting.)

What the heck is this one?

(Reading paper she is holding up. It is the beginning of the scat part from song #8, "I Was a Poet", and RONDA talks the part in the same rhythmic pattern as it is sung.)

Do-do ... do-do-do-do ... do-do, do-do, do-do, do-do.

(CLAYTON tries grabbing the paper out of RONDA'S hand, RONDA pulls it away and keeps reading.)

Do-do ... do-do ... dah-dat, dah-dat, dah-dat, dah-dat, dah, dah.

CLAYTON

(With the second attempt, CLAYTON grabs onto the paper and pulls on it. RONDA doesn't let go. CLAYTON rips the paper pulling it out of RONDA'S hands. He puts the part he grabs in his pocket.)

Oh, that's just an experiment with rhythmic pattern, I didn't mean to give that to you.

RONDA

It doesn't say much, but at least it's different ... and it does rhyme. Clayton, I'm picking on you because my boss had a pow-wow with me this morning when he found out I was meeting with you. He reminded me that we haven't published anything new in over a year. He told me to start pressuring you for another book. Of course, he wants something along the lines of your "Lark" release. I didn't have the guts to tell him that I'd be hard pressed to get a dirty limerick out of you these days. And then he started digging into me about your year-to-date total book sales. Sales have been down on all of your books, and whenever sales are down he gives me the old, cost per unit increase with low quantity printing lecture, blah, blah, blah. He had a whole stack of paperwork the corporate bean counters gave him that accounted for every penny the company brought in and every word they printed. He showed me so many pie charts, Clayton, I swear I started to get hungry.

CLAYTON

Sorry I got you in trouble.

RONDA

Well, it wasn't all bad, he was impressed by the total number of sales for "Lark", and pleasantly surprised by the grand total of poems we've published together. Go ahead, guess how many poems you got under your belt.

CLAYTON

Oh, I don't know, 600.

RONDA

600? Much more than 600! How can you not know how many poems you've published?

CLAYTON

I don't know, I don't sit around counting.

RONDA

Guess!

CLAYTON

Okay, 800.

RONDA

(With disappointment.)

More than that.

(With enthusiasm.)

Exactly 999!

CLAYTON

999, huh?

RONDA

That's right. Just think, one more poem and you hit 1000, break your writers block, and most important, start making some money again. When it comes to money, I'm not worried about myself, I have other writers to carry me. If Billy and Willy, my government conspiracy theory lunatics come through for me I'll be rolling in government currency. You're the one I'm worried about, Clayton. You need to either get over this writer's block, or at least go back to pawning off those Lazy Crap reclining chairs.

CLAYTON

I'm well aware of the problem. I ...I don't even care about the money, I pay my bills. Believe me, I'm more frustrated than you are. I wish I could produce, but I can't. It's just the way it is right now.

RONDA

(Low, preaching voice.)

Personally, I think you need to get out and live a little. I think you're turning into a recluse. The problem with that is that you're not taking in the human experiences you need to be writing about. Back when you were pumping stuff out, you were a little bit of a wild man ... at least in your own way.

(Less serious.)

Now, if you were a conspiracy theory lunatic, it would be different. Those guys make a living out of being loners.

CLAYTON

That's good to know, maybe a poetry book about the little big foot monsters would sell. I know there's more to life than poetry, but I'm not interested in anything more right now. I'm just going to keep on trying, and hope my new ideas develop more to your liking.

RONDA

It's not that I don't like your ideas, Clayton, it's that I can't publish them. I don't want you to leave here today thinking I'm not publishing your current work based on personal opinion. If I were to follow personal bias, I'd publish every single page you give me.

(Holds up CLAYTON'S poems.)

Right up to the moment I get fired for do-do, do-do doing so. Believe me, I thoroughly read every poem you give me, often two or three times. I just can't publish something that's, for the most part, already out there. This isn't about me being too picky, it's about you producing fresh work.

(RONDA stands up and starts singing song #2, "Lone Poet". She directs song to CLAYTON, but he tries to ignore her by grabbing his notebook and looking through his poems. Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

LONE POET I HEAR YOUR VOICE, HEAR YOUR VOICE
I HEAR YOUR WORDS INSIDE MY HEAD
EVERY PASSAGE IS JUST LIKE A CHILD, LIKE A CHILD
OH SO LONGING TO BE FED

LONE POET I HEAR YOUR CALL, HEAR YOUR CALL
REACHING TO THE WORLD AROUND
IS IT NOT THAT YOU ARE IN A PLACE, IN A PLACE
THAT'S IN THE OUTSIDE LOOKING ON

LONE POET I CALL YOUR NAME, CALL YOUR NAME
JUST FOR NOW YOUR ONLY FAN
SEEMS SO MUCH IN LIFE THERE IS TO FIND, IS TO FIND
BUT NOW SO BURIED DEEP IN POEM

CLAYTON

(Puts poems down and stands up.)

THERE AREN'T ANY BETTER WORDS LEFT TO SAY
THEY NEED TO RHYME
MAYBE THERE WILL BE A BETTER DAY
IT'S ALL IN TIME

RONDA

LONE POET I QUESTION YOU, QUESTION YOU
WHAT ARE YOU TAKING FROM THE WORLD
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN ALL DID MATTER NOT, MATTER NOT
YOUR POEMS REFLECTED FROM THE SWORD

LONE POET I SEE YOUR FACE, SEE YOUR FACE
LIKE NARCISSUS IN A STREAM
REFLECTIONS MOVE OVER A STEADY FLOW, STEADY FLOW
AS TIME PASSES UNDERNEATH

CLAYTON

(As if needing confirmation.)

Nine hundred and ninety nine?

RONDA

(Confirming.)

Nine hundred and ninety nine.

CLAYTON

(With power and pride.)

Nine hundred and ninety nine!

RONDA

(With equal power, confirming.)

Nine hundred and ninety nine!

CLAYTON

(Sings song #3, "999". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads
for audio recording.)

HEAR ME, HEAR ME, HEAR MY WORDS
MAKE IT CERTAIN I'M UNDERSTOOD
I HAVEN'T USED UP ALL MY LINES
POEM ONE THOUSAND WILL BE DIVINE

NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE

CLAYTON (continued)

NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE

READ ME, READ ME, READ MY POEMS
RECITE THEM LOUDLY WITH FORCEFUL TONE
ALL NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
POEM ONE THOUSAND WILL COME IN TIME

NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE

FEEL IT, FEEL IT, FEEL MY WALL
LIKE A LARK WITHOUT A CALL
IT'S UP THERE SOMEWHERE IN MY HEAD
DON'T SAY FIRE NEED BE FED
DON'T SAY FIRE NEED BE FED

NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE

(Lights fade.)

ACT I

SCENE 3

AT RISE:

(Stage left, back to the green room in current time, TERRY is putting facial treatment on CLAYTON'S face. CLAYTON'S face is covered with thick green gunk and his eyes have cucumbers over them.)

CLAYTON

And that was the last official business meeting I had with Ronda. We still get together as friends, but we rarely talk business. Kind of a sore subject.

TERRY

So, you never published poem 1000?

CLAYTON

Nope.

TERRY

Did you go back to selling Lazy Cat reclining chairs?

CLAYTON

No ... I stashed away enough money in the good years so that I was able to get by.

TERRY

You wanted to focus on trying to get published again?

CLAYTON

Every day, for the last four years ... at least until being on this show.

TERRY

What about being on this show? Are you finally taking Ronda's advice to experience life for poetic inspiration?

CLAYTON

No, when I made the decision to be on the show, I wasn't thinking about inspiration. I hit the bottom of my piggy bank and my ideas had been recycled so many times I could see through them. I decided to see where my past as a poet could take me. It's like a bird being swept up into a strong wind. Sometimes in life it's best just to spread your wings and go where life takes you.

TERRY

I'm amazed at the fact that you went four whole years focused on trying to write poem 1000, with no success. How did you keep your sanity?

CLAYTON

(As if feeling sorry for himself.)

I'm not so sure I did. Commitments can take you on a wild ride. They can accelerate you into obsession and crash you into broken promises. For me, that ride was taken in my favorite chair, sitting for hours on end, day in and day out, trying to write something worth publishing. I'll admit, much of my time was wasted in self pity, while some of my time was spent thinking about possibilities outside of the world of poetry. When all seems lost, there are always possibilities. But, possibilities aside, I wasted the last four years of my life rotting in that chair, right up until I got a phone call from Phil.

(Lights fade.)

ACT ISCENE 4

AT RISE:

(Center stage, CLAYTON is in his home, standing behind his favorite chair. Scene represents flashback of a phone conversation between CLAYTON and PHIL going six weeks into the past, in the morning.)

CLAYTON

(Sings song #4, "Face Each Day, Part I". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

WOKE UP THIS MORNING, GOT OUT OF BED
POEM ONE THOUSAND SPINS MY HEAD
WITH NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY NINE
FOR SO MANY YEARS, FOR SO MUCH TIME

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS SO HARD TO FACE EACH DAY
ON AND ON AND ON
WE'RE BORN, WE LIVE, WE DIE
I TRY SO HARD BUT CANNOT WRITE A LINE
I WONDER IF IT'S WORTH
ALL I GIVE AND WHAT DO I DESERVE

(CLAYTON sits in his chair, picks up a pencil and a piece of paper, puts down pencil and crumples up paper and throws it in the trash.)

WITH PENCIL AND PAPER AND ANXIOUS SOUL
I AM A POET SHORT A POEM
ANOTHER DAY HAS COME AND PASSED
SCRIBBLES ON PAPER MEET THE TRASH

(Stands up.)

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS SO HARD TO FACE EACH DAY
ON AND ON AND ON
WE'RE BORN, WE LIVE, WE DIE
I TRY SO HARD BUT CANNOT WRITE A LINE
I WONDER IF IT'S WORTH
ALL I GIVE AND WHAT DO I DESERVE

(The phone rings right at the end of the second chorus. The music stops. CLAYTON waits several rings before answering, even though he is near the phone. He starts to reach for the phone and backs off a couple of times, but finally answers it.)

Hello.

PHIL

(Far stage left, PHIL appears. He is standing in his office in New York City calling CLAYTON on the telephone.)

Hi, is this Clayton Pritchard?

CLAYTON

I'm sure trying to be.

PHIL

You'll never guess who this is, so I'm just going to tell you. It's Phil Parks.

CLAYTON

Phil Parks! Hey Phil, it's been a long time. How are you doing?

PHIL

I'm doing okay. I've been very busy these days, but doing okay.

CLAYTON

Are you back in town?

PHIL

No, no, I'm calling from New York City. I recently moved here. I stumbled onto an opportunity to work with one of the major TV networks, so here I am.

CLAYTON

That's excellent! Sounds like those years as a struggling actor paid off.

PHIL

I guess you could say that, they did in a round about way. Actually, I'm working behind the scenes right now.

CLAYTON

Nothing wrong with that.

PHIL

Yeah, I came up with the idea for a reality TV show, it's in production. It's called "Star Attraction", have you seen it?

CLAYTON

Really! Congratulations, good for you. I haven't seen it, but I haven't been watching much TV lately.

PHIL

You know, if I wasn't involved with it, I probably wouldn't watch it either. It's one of those matchmaking shows that guys like us pass when we're channel surfing, but it keeps me busy. How about you, do you have any new poetry books coming out?

CLAYTON

No, but I'm still hacking away at it. I haven't been published in a while, but I keep trying. That's the way it goes.

PHIL

Are you still finding time to ride your motorcycle?

CLAYTON

Oh yeah ... I try to take it out every day the sun comes out, it's been a nice summer. Did you get one yet?

PHIL

I've been talking about it for years, one of these days I'll surprise you, I just don't have any time right now. What else is going on, are you dating anyone?

CLAYTON

(Cautiously answering.)

Dating? No, not right now.

PHIL

(Excited.)

Hey Clayton, I want to fly you to New York City tomorrow. I need help with the show. I've run into a roadblock, and I think you might be able to help me. At the very least, it will be a good get-away for you, and the network will pay for everything.

CLAYTON

You want to fly me to New York City tomorrow? What kind of help do you need that I can give you?

PHIL

Hang out with me tomorrow and we'll find out. I may even have a temporary position to offer you, if you're interested. The network has a vacant guest apartment, so you can stay the night and I'll have you back the following day.

CLAYTON

Uh.

(Pause.)

PHIL

Clayton, I really need your help, can I count on you?

CLAYTON

This is a little bizarre, but I have to keep in mind who I'm dealing with. Yeah, why not? I can be there tomorrow, what the heck.

PHIL

I don't mean to hijack you, but you'll be doing me a big favor. Hey, I'll get off the phone and have our travel agent call you right back with the arrangements. I'll see you tomorrow, and we'll continue our conversation face to face.

CLAYTON

Sounds good Phil, I guess I'll see you in New York City tomorrow.

PHIL (off)

Bye Clayton.

(Hangs up the phone and exits stage left.)

CLAYTON

Bye Phil.

(Hangs up the phone and shakes his head with pleasant disbelief. Music resumes and CLAYTON sings the final verse of song #5, "Face Each Day, Part II". He is excited and dances around while singing. Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY
I'LL STUDY POSSIBILITIES WITHOUT DELAY
STUDY POSSIBILITIES
STUDY POSSIBILITIES
STUDY POSSIBILITIES
STUDY POSSIBILITIES

(Lights fade.)

ACT ISCENE 5

AT RISE:

(Stage left is PHIL'S television network office. It has a desk and chair, with a guest chair stage left of it. PHIL is sitting behind his desk focused on paperwork. Scene represents flashback of the meeting between CLAYTON and PHIL going six weeks into the past, in the early afternoon.)

CLAYTON

(From stage left, stands by door, peaks in office, and clears his throat to get PHIL'S attention.)

Ah-um.

PHIL

Clayton! Glad you could make it on such short notice.

(PHIL stands up and walks to CLAYTON, shakes his hand aggressively and welcomes him in.)

CLAYTON

No problem, I had an opening in my schedule.

(Looks around.)

Nice office.

PHIL

Yeah, it used to be a sound studio. It's mine until someone needs it.

CLAYTON

I'm anxious to hear what you've gotten yourself into.

PHIL

As I mentioned on the phone, I've come up with the idea for the reality TV show "Star Attraction".

CLAYTON

Yeah, what's it about?

PHIL

We fix celebrities up with each other and show videos of their dates. Nothing new, but our show is the only one of its kind that actually gets A-list celebrities.

CLAYTON

I'm still surprised to see you behind the scenes. How did you go from a struggling actor to creating a reality TV show?

PHIL

You remember when I moved to Hollywood. My acting career never took off, but I started an actor's workshop that did quit well. It was called "Act 24-7", it was open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The hours made it attractive to some of the biggest stars in Hollywood. They would use it to brush up on their lines before they went to work. With actors being most impressed with each other, the workshop turned into, kind of a meeting place for single celebrities. After four years of playing matchmaker of the rich and famous, I finally got smart and put my rolodex to work for me. I pitched the idea for a celebrity dating show to the network, and they ate it up.

CLAYTON

Wow, that's incredible.

PHIL

Well, it was incredible. I've completely exhausted my rolodex, and I'm having a heck of a time finding new celebrities. Clayton, this problem is threatening the success of the show, and that's why I called you.

CLAYTON

You want me to help you book celebrities for your show?

PHIL

(Dramatically stated.)

No Clayton, I want you to be on the show.

CLAYTON

Me, on your dating show? Seriously ... how can I help you?

PHIL

I am serious. I wouldn't fly you here for a prank. I found an actress who wanted to be on the show. But like I said, I exhausted my rolodex, so I didn't have anyone lined up for her to meet. While trying to play matchmaker, I had a freaky conversation with this actress, where your name came up. She knew of you through your poetry books, and of course, I've known you forever. As it turns out, she was inspired by one of your books and is a big Clayton Pritchard fan. She's dying to meet you.

CLAYTON

An actress ... wants to meet me?

PHIL

Yes, you ... on the show.

CLAYTON

(Trying to uncover a possible prank.)

You said the show is about celebrities, I'm not a celebrity.

PHIL

You have a few books out there, good enough for me.

CLAYTON

Phil, my books are poetry books ... poetry. You live in the world of exposure ... and ... overexposure. The average person has never heard of me or my books.

PHIL

A lot of thought went into this. I wanted to dig into the dreaded celebrity “B” list, but the network wouldn’t let me. They didn’t think people would watch. They think the show will keep its ratings as long as our matches are made up of one anchor celebrity.

(Spreading his hands as if featuring a marquee.)

One celebrity with true star power. It’s all about star power. Clayton, we have an actress for our anchor, we just need you to jump on board.

CLAYTON

You are serious. This is crazy, you really know how to stir things up, that’s for sure.

PHIL

Well, don’t make a decision until you hear me out. Here’s what you would have to do. You go on live TV for an introduction segment. You get introduced to the audience, introduced to the actress, and you answer questions about yourself to let everyone get to know you. No big deal.

CLAYTON

Who is she? The actress?

PHIL

We don’t reveal that until the show, but if you don’t watch much TV, you’re probably not going to know who she is anyway.

CLAYTON

Okay.

PHIL

After that, you hang out with your match here in New York City. It won’t cost you a penny, the network takes care of everything. We schedule your dates for the first week, which gives us a chance to plug our sponsors. After that, you can go anywhere you want, and do anything you want, just as long as you give us enough footage to make the show work.

CLAYTON

Footage? You mean, video cameras following us around?

PHIL

Oh yeah, this is reality TV, you’ll have cameras on you quite a bit. After your first appearance, there will be five weekly segments where we air prerecorded videos of your dates. We introduce a new couple every week, so these segments run quick.

CLAYTON

So, how many live shows are there?

PHIL

Only two. Six weeks after the introduction segment, there is a second live segment to wrap things up. You know, questions about how well you got along, funny stories, that kind of thing. After that, you're on your own. Whether or not the relationship lasts past that is up to cupid, your commitment to the show is finished.

CLAYTON

Can you tell me anything about the actress?

PHIL

As far as the actress goes, you'll have to trust me. This isn't like the days of me trying to fix you up with my cousin the vampire woman. We're talking prime time goods. This is the girl guys watch on TV and dream about dating. What do you think so far?

CLAYTON

I don't know what to think.

PHIL

I'll talk about compensation, maybe that will help your thinking.
(Stated dramatically.)

How does \$125,000 sound to you?

CLAYTON

\$125,000?

PHIL

\$125,000, plus, all expenses paid. Now, what do you think?

CLAYTON

I'm impressed, but I'm going to need some time to digest all of this. I have to tell you, though, my initial reaction is to turn tail and run. I don't think I'm cut out for TV. I don't even like people taking my picture ... and I have to come clean with you Phil, I haven't published a poem in over four years.

PHIL

It doesn't matter to me when you were last published, but if you don't have anything new out there, even more reason why you should do this. It's easy money and the change of pace might do you good.

CLAYTON

Talk about change of pace, from poetry to pop television.

(Pause.)

After I die, I want to be remembered as a respected poet. Maybe even one of the great American poets. Not a...

(Stops himself from saying anything bad about the show.)

PHIL

Who knows how that stuff will play out, your existing work may have already secured your legacy. And dreams will always be dreams, they never come true exactly the way we envision them, even when they do come true. You know how much I wanted to be a professional actor. If I would have held firmly to those dreams, I'd still be back in Hollywood scrambling for auditions. I may not be an actor, but I let go of that dream to grab something real. And this show, Clayton, is real.

(Starts to sing song #6, "To Let Go". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

AS I LOOK BACK AT THE YEARS THAT PASSED ME BY
I REMEMBER ALL THE PAINS AND JOYS OF LIFE
I REMEMBER ALL THE FAIRYTALES I'D DREAM
DID IT TURN OUT THE WAY I WANTED LIFE TO BE

TO LET GO OF DREAMS WE HOLD
TO LET GO AS WE GROW OLD
TO LET GO, TO BE UNTRUE
TO LET GO OF ASPIRATIONS WE PURSUE

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE CAUGHT UP IN THE PAST
DON'T THEY KNOW THERE'S NO WAY OF GOING BACK
THERE ARE OTHERS, WHOM THE FUTURE THEY DO DREAM
WHAT IS CERTAIN, THE HERE AND NOW WE CANNOT LEAVE

TO LET GO OF DREAMS WE HOLD
TO LET GO AS WE GROW OLD
TO LET GO, TO BE UNTRUE
TO LET GO OF ASPIRATIONS WE PURSUE

CLAYTON

DO-DO DO-DO DO, DO...
TO LET GO, TO LET GO, TO, NO...

PHIL

THEN UNTIL NOW, IS ALL WE WERE THEN WHAT WE ARE
LIFE'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND THOSE SKELETONS AND SCARS, NO
OUR MOMENTUM FINDS DIRECTION IN OUR DREAMS
OUR OBSESSIONS WILL ALWAYS ALTER WHAT WE SEE

TO LET GO OF DREAMS WE HOLD
TO LET GO AS WE GROW OLD
TO LET GO, TO BE UNTRUE
TO LET GO OF ASPIRATIONS WE PURSUE

CLAYTON

So, how much time do I have to think about it?

PHIL

Unfortunately, we're down to the wire on this one. I need your decision first thing tomorrow morning. I'm short one bachelor, and the show goes on live tomorrow night.

CLAYTON (off)

What? Tomorrow night? You're asking me to be on a live TV show tomorrow night?

PHIL (off)

You have me at your mercy. If you don't do it, this week's show will be the first show to air without a new couple, and there will be a lot of hate mail for me to open. If you decide to do it, Clayton, you'll be a lifesaver ... or at least a show saver. Come on, I'll find someone to take you to your apartment so you can get settled. Hopefully, tomorrow will be a big day for you.

(CLAYTON looks like he's in shock. PHIL and CLAYTON walk out of the office together, exiting stage left. Lights fade.)

ACT ISCENE 6

AT RISE:

(Stage right, back to the green room in current time, CLAYTON is still in the makeup chair. TERRY is applying makeup to CLAYTON'S face.)

TERRY

Obviously you accepted, you're here.

CLAYTON

It wasn't as easy as you think. Sure, I wanted to help a friend ... and meeting an actress sounded exciting ... who wouldn't want to pocket \$125,000? But I wanted no part in committing myself to a reality TV show. I felt it conflicted with my commitment to be a respected poet. I've always believed, the commitments we make are only as good as the commitments we mix.

TERRY

Yeah, but that kind of money would be a tough thing to walk away from.

CLAYTON

True. After using up my savings, I did realize that I had to do something. Regardless of my artistic commitments, I still had the commitment to eat. Everything was coming at me so fast. I was overly cautious, I was overly desperate, I just needed to sit and think. I spent the rest of the day in the network apartment, sitting in an ugly, uncomfortable chair, obsessing over it. Finally, I called Ronda for advice. She pretty much made the decision for me.

(Lights fade.)

ACT ISCENE 7

AT RISE:

(Stage left, CLAYTON is in his furnished New York City guest apartment sitting in a small, ugly chair. He moves around in the chair as if it is uncomfortable in every position. He picks up the phone next to him and calls RONDA. RONDA appears far stage right. She walks into her living room in Buffalo and answers her phone. Scene represents flashback of phone conversation between CLAYTON and RONDA, six weeks into the past, in the evening.)

RONDA

Hello

CLAYTON

Hi Ronda, it's Clayton.

RONDA

Clayton, how are you.

CLAYTON

I'm not sure how I am, I need your advice.

RONDA

Advice? Just plead insanity, Clayton, it worked for me.

CLAYTON

No, I'm not calling from jail. I'm just a little confused and need to bend your ear for a couple of minutes.

RONDA

(More serious.)

Go ahead Clayton, my ear is open for business.

CLAYTON

I'm calling from New York City, I've been given the opportunity to be on some celebrity dating TV show called "Star Attraction".

RONDA

"Star Attraction", I love that show, I watch it every week. That's for celebrities, why do you think they want you?

(Talking as if talking to a child.)

Clayton, did a big thingy fall on your head?

CLAYTON

(With stressful excitement.)

No, really, I grew up with Phil Parks, the guy who created the show. He booked some actress, but he couldn't find anyone to match her with. Somehow, he found out that she was inspired by one of my books. So, this actress wants to meet me, on live TV!

RONDA

My gosh, you are serious. When do you go on? Can you get me tickets to be in the audience?

CLAYTON

It would be tomorrow night's show, I think it's a little late for tickets, and I didn't accept yet, that's why I'm calling you. You know this isn't my kind of thing. I can't get myself to commit to it.

RONDA

Will it be worth your while, how much are they offering you?

CLAYTON

\$125,000.

RONDA

\$125,000! ...and you have to think about it? You should plead insanity! Clayton, this isn't a choice, this is divine intervention.

CLAYTON

I know, but there's something about this that isn't right. It just doesn't fit into my plans. People didn't even know Emily Dickinson was a poet until after she died, yet I'm going to go on national television and make a fool out of myself because I can. How much respect will that pay me?

RONDA

Clayton, I'm telling you, don't even think about this, just close your eyes and jump in. This is not the time to be stubborn, trust me on this one. We haven't published anything in four years. Unless you've been robbing banks without me, you have to be hurting for money. Not to mention the fact that you're social life has been that of ... well, Emily Dickinson. Clayton, tell them you'll do it.

CLAYTON

Can you promise me that I'm not going to spend the rest of my life being that idiot poet that appeared on a stupid reality TV show?

RONDA

You know, maybe it will cheapen your reputation, but you can overcome that by creating greater things in your life. People can re-gain their reputation, you know. Being more than the guy who was on a pop TV show will be difficult. It will be an even higher mountain to climb than merely overcoming your writer's block by itself. But you were never one to back away from a challenge. You not only climb a mountain because it's there, Clayton, you climb the biggest mountain because it's rare. There's only one biggest mountain in your life right now, and it's appearing on this show and overcoming any possible criticism it may bring you.

CLAYTON

(Pause. Stands up.)

Thanks, Ronda. You always come up with a unique way of looking at things.

RONDA

You're welcome. Does this mean you're going to do it?

CLAYTON

No ... but it means I'm going to genuinely try to talk myself into it.

RONDA

Fair enough, but if you do go on the show, make sure you plug your poetry books. This show can give you more exposure than I can ever give you.

CLAYTON

(Subtle laugh.)

I will.

RONDA

I'm serious.

CLAYTON

Okay, I will.

RONDA

Clayton, I hate to change the subject, but I got some bad news this week and I feel compelled to fill you in. I've always kept you updated on my father's health problems through the years. Unfortunately, it's finally caught up to him. The doctor is giving him about three months to live, and there's nothing they can do.

CLAYTON

I'm sorry Ronda, that's terrible.

RONDA

It's not a huge surprise to anyone, he's been sick for over five years and I've been lucky to have him around this long. I guess it's all how you look at it. Perhaps this isn't the perfect time to tell you this, but it makes me appreciate how short life is, and I want you to share that appreciation. We're not here very long, Clayton. When the Sun shines in your direction, you have to take in as much of it as you can.

CLAYTON

Yeah, It sure puts things in perspective.

RONDA

I know you called me for advice, I hope I didn't give you too much perspective. It's already getting late, you should try to get some sleep, you have a lot going on right now and you'll need your sleep.

CLAYTON

Okay Ronda, thanks.

RONDA

But feel free to call me any time. ...Bye Clayton.

CLAYTON

Bye.

(Sings song #7, "Long Way Home". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

IT'S A LONG WAY HOME, IT'S A LONG WAY HOME
 HEAR ME SAYING ON THE TELEPHONE, IT'S A LONG WAY HOME
 AM I THE SHOULDER TO LEAN, AM I THE SHOULDER TO LEAN
 AT THE FOOT OF A MOUNTAIN FALLEN FROM A DREAM
 AM I THE SHOULDER TO LEAN
 IT'S A LONG WAY HOME, IT'S A LONG WAY HOME
 AWAY WALKS THE POET FALLEN FROM A POEM, IT'S A LONG WAY HOME
 (Lights fade.)

ACT I

SCENE 8

AT RISE:

(Stage right, back to the green room in current time, CLAYTON and TERRY are standing. CLAYTON no longer has the bib apron on, and is straightening his cloths. TERRY is finished with the makeup and holding CLAYTON'S suit coat. She helps him put it on as they talk.)

TERRY

Ronda gave you good advice.

CLAYTON

I have to admit, I think so too. The next morning I went to see Phil, told him I would do the show. He was ecstatic. His people treated like a king for the day, and I was on live TV that night.

TERRY

Darn, I wish I would have seen it, how did it go?

CLAYTON

It went...

(Lights fade.)

ACT I

SCENE 9

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the "Star Attraction" show stage, with chairs and Cameras. Cast members acting as audience members are planted in the real audience, as the real audience is now the show's studio audience. ARTIE is standing center stage waiting for his cue. Scene is a flashback of CLAYTON'S first appearance on the show, six weeks into the past, in the evening.)

STAGE HAND

(Yelling from off stage.)

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1.

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera.)

Other shows report celebrity gossip, we create celebrity headlines. This is “Star Attraction” and I’m Artie Sky.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

Backstage we have a beautiful actress waiting to meet a guy who has peaked her romantic interest. She doesn’t know of him through his movies or television appearances, like what we see most often on this show. Our beautiful actress was inspired by this bachelor’s poetry. That’s right, “Star Attraction” has its very first poet. He is a world renowned poet who has published numerous poetry books, one of which inspired our actress at the beginning of her career, and made a lasting impression on her heart. As we introduce our poet, keep in mind that he has never had contact with our actress and has absolutely no idea who she may be. Let’s bring him out and see what he’s all about, our poet, from Buffalo New York, Clayton Pritchard.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud. CLAYTON enters stage left. He is very nervous and stays standing as he is confused as to where he should sit. ARTIE has the last seat all the way stage right, and points to the seat next to him, which is where he wants CLAYTON to sit for now.)

You can sit here.

(Both CLAYTON and ARTIE sit.)

How are you, Clayton?

CLAYTON

(Looking around, acting very nervous.)

I’m fine, thank you. How are you?

ARTIE

I’m super fantastic. No need to be nervous, Clayton, we’re all friends here...

(Looking into the camera.)

...and the 50 million people watching you on live TV are all your friends too, I’m sure.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

CLAYTON

(Quickly stands up and sits down out of nervousness.)

50 million people? I've never been on TV before.

ARTIE

That's okay, there's nothing to it. Clayton, is it true that you've never been to New York City before?

CLAYTON

Yeah, it's my first time here.

ARTIE

You've never been to New York City, you've never been on TV, when was the last time you dated a famous actress?

CLAYTON

I've never even seen a famous actress.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

It looks like we have a lot of first times on tonight's show. In a few minutes Clayton, not only will you be seeing an actress, up close and in person, for the first time; you'll also be going out on a first date with her right after the show, so you can get to know each other better. What do you think about that?

CLAYTON

Normally, I'd be nervous about a blind date, but I'm so nervous about being on live TV, I don't have room.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

Once you see the actress we have for you, the last thing you'll be thinking about is live TV. Clayton, I understand that, initially, you were hesitant about being on this show. There are bachelors out there that would give their right leg to be in your left shoe. Why were you apprehensive?

CLAYTON

A lot of people are drawn to the glamour of the entertainment industry, but poets don't try to see glamour, poets try to see through glamour. Poets don't try to entertain, poets try to inspire. Don't get me wrong, I'm open to being introduced to an attractive woman, but doing it on a TV show has been a tough compromise for me.

ARTIE

What made you decide to join us?

CLAYTON

I was talked into it by my publisher, Ronda. I called her last night and she told me to close my eyes and jump in. She told me to trust her advice, and I am. It's been quite a while since we've published anything, and she's always trying to get me to be more social.

(Scanning his eyes over the audience.)

... and this is pretty social.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

How long has it been since you've been published?

CLAYTON

Four years.

ARTIE

Wow, four years. So you're no longer a published poet. Do you have another career?

CLAYTON

No ... ah, no, I'm still writing poetry, I just haven't been published in a while.

ARTIE

But you don't get paid if you don't get published, right?

CLAYTON

Usually not.

ARTIE

So, you're ... self-unemployed?

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

CLAYTON

Well, I work ... I'm living off of my past accomplishments until I can work my way back into the fold. I think of myself as being in between projects.

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera.)

In between projects? Is four years considered in between? You're beginning to sound like my ex-wife. She won't say she's divorced, she says she's in between husbands.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1

(Rudely yelling out.)

Who is this guy, I've never heard of him.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

(Rudely yelling out.)

Where'd you find him, in a book store?

ARTIE

I'm hearing some rumblings in the studio audience, let's go to the audience and see what the commotion is about.

(STAGE HAND walks to AUDIENCE MEMBER #1 with microphone.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1

(Stands up and speaks into microphone.)

My name is Debbie, and I have a question for Clayton. I'm a high school English teacher and I've read a lot of poetry through the years. How come I've never heard of your work? How successful of a poet are you?

CLAYTON

Boy, if I was interested in commercial success, I'm pretty sure I would have focused on something other than poetry. That being said, I'm told that my book "Lark" sold fairly well, as far as poetry books go. Sorry if you missed it.

(AUDIENCE MEMBER #1 sits down. STAGE HAND walks to AUDIENCE MEMBER #2 with microphone.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

(Stands up and speaks into microphone.)

Hi Artie, my name is Candice and I'm a big fan of the show. I waited in line for two hours to be here tonight. I have to tell you, I'm a little disappointed to see someone I've never even heard of. If you're willing to take just anyone, I have a brother who's acted in national television commercials and would love to meet an actress on your show.

ARTIE

I can promise you, our actress will be worth your two hour wait, and Clayton is the guy she wanted to meet so if you have any complaints about his celebrity status, you'll have to take that up with her.

(AUDIENCE MEMBER #2 sits down. STAGE HAND walks to AUDIENCE MEMBER #3 with microphone.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER #3

(Stands up and speaks into microphone.)

I think we should let the poet's poetry speak for itself. If you're such a great poet, let's hear a poem.

(Sits down.)

ARTIE

(Shrugs his shoulders as to agree.)

Clayton?

CLAYTON

(Music starts and CLAYTON looks at the floor from side to side, as if to build up his emotions. He faces the audience and stands up. Clayton sings song #8, "I Was A Poet". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

DID YOU KNOW ME WHEN I WAS A LITTLE STRANGE
UNAPPRECIATED IS THE POET'S WAGE
DID YOU KNOW ME WHEN I WAS SO ALOOF
DID YOU KNOW ME FOR YOU KNOW I KNOW THAT I KNOW YOU

DID YOU KNOW ME
DID YOU READ ME
I WAS A POET
DON'T YOU BELIVE ME

AS A POET I HAD THAT POMPOUS AIR
AND A VISION ALTHOUGH NO ONE REALLY CARES
AS A POET I WOULD KNOW THE TRUTH FROM LIES
DID I DECEIVE YOU FOR MY HUMOR WAS A LITTLE DRY

DID YOU KNOW ME
DID YOU READ ME
I WAS A POET
DON'T YOU BELIVE ME

CLAYTON (continued)

DO-DO DO-DO DO-DO...

AS A POET I WAS ALWAYS KNOWING ALWAYS GLOWING
 AS A POET I WAS EVER SEEING EVER GLEANING
 AS A POET I WAS ALWAYS RHYMING PERFECT TIMING
 AS A POET, DID YOU, DID YOU, DID YOU KNOW ME

DID YOU KNOW ME
 DID YOU READ ME
 I WAS A POET
 DON'T YOU BELIVE ME

DID YOU KNOW ME WHEN I WAS A LITTLE STRANGE
 UNAFFILIATED IS THE POET'S GAME
 DID YOU KNOW ME WHEN I WAS DEEP ENOUGH TO DROWN
 DID YOU READ ME FOR I ALWAYS WROTE MY POEMS DOWN

DID YOU KNOW ME
 DID YOU READ ME
 I WAS A POET
 DON'T YOU BELIVE ME

AUDIENCE MEMBER #4

(Stands up and yells without microphone.)

Has anyone ever heard of a book called "Beyond Success And Failure"? It was written by Clayton Pritchard. That book helped me stop drinking, I've been sober for over five years.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #5

(Stands up and yells without a microphone.)

I've read his book, "The Mark Of Cain", it opened my eyes to how big of a jackass I can be. His book changed my life ... I'm a better person because of that guy.

(AUDIENCE MEMBERS talk amongst themselves and are disruptively loud.)

ARTIE

(Pushes his hands down, signaling crowd to settle down.)

Okay, okay ... silencio, silencio, sentarse.

(AUDIENCE MEMBERS stop talking and sit. Pause)

I guess we do have a poet on our hands.

(Talking to the camera, recovers quickly.)

ARTIE (continued)

Let's ... let's introduce our actress. She grew up in Minneapolis Minnesota, but now lives next door in Hoboken New Jersey. Best known her for her roll as Linda Squire on the hit TV series "Milestone", here is Jamie Ann London.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

JAMIE

(Enters stage left.)

Hi Artie.

(JAMIE shakes hands with ARTIE, but is looking at CLAYTON.)

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, meet Clayton. Clayton, Jamie Ann.

JAMIE

(Walks to CLAYTON and holds his right hand with both of hers.)

So glad to meet you, I'm so happy you decided to be on the show.

ARTIE

(Talking to JAMIE.)

Have a seat right here between Clayton and I, and tell us how you're doing.

(Points to seat next to him. CLAYTON moves down a seat and sits stage left of JAMIE.)

JAMIE

(Sits between ARTIE and CLAYTON.)

I'm doing great, I am so excited to be here.

ARTIE

Clayton, take a good look and a deep breath and tell us what you think?

CLAYTON

(Looks at JAMIE. Pause.)

I was promised that I wouldn't be disappointed ... but, no one told me that I was going to be speechless.

ARTIE

You do know who she is, right? I mean, you've seen Jamie Ann London on TV before.

CLAYTON

I don't watch much TV, but she does look familiar. I'm sure I've seen her.

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, you've seen pictures of Clayton, but this is the first time you're seeing him in person, what do you think?

JAMIE

There's a great picture of him on the inside cover of his book "Lark" and I was hoping he would look just like that picture, and he does. He's a handsome guy.

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, of all the possible celebrities that would love to meet you, we're all interested to know why you asked to be on the show with Clayton Pritchard?

JAMIE

There's a very good reason. My struggle to become a professional actress was by no means easy. I went years without a break and the constant rejection took its toll on me. I was a few auditions away from throwing in the towel, when I stumbled across Clayton's book "Lark". I bought it for my niece's Birthday. See, "Lark" is a children's book and a poetry book rolled into one. When I started reading it to my niece, I discovered Clayton's poetry and it changed my outlook on life. My favorite line is, "sing for the sake of the song, not applause". I'll never forget that line. Clayton helped me realize that my acting career was focused on personal gain rather than the end product ... the story. Once I opened my eyes, I started acting for the glory of the story ... the glory of the story. I repeat those words before every scene. Once I started to pursue acting for the right reasons, my career skyrocketed.

(JAMIE stands and starts singing song #9, "I.O.U." Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

WAKING UP, OPEN MY EYES
TO A NEW SUNRISE
AM I STILL ALIVE
I AM SO ALIVE

IT'S YOU, YOU
IT'S YOU, YEAH, IT'S YOU
I OWE YOU

LIKE A MOUNTAIN IN THE SKY
TAKING IN THE SUNSHINE
ALL THE WIND AND ALL THE AIR
BLOWING GENTLY THROUGH MY HAIR

IT'S YOU, YOU
IT'S YOU, YEAH, IT'S YOU
I OWE YOU
I OWE YOU

JAMIE (continued)

I OWE YOU

WON'T YOU COME ALONG WITH ME
DO YOU FEEL THE WAY I SEE

CLAYTON

(Stands.)

CAN I COME ALONG WITH YOU
DO YOU FEEL THE WAY I DO

JAMIE & CLAYTON

IT'S YOU, YOU
IT'S YOU, YEAH, IT'S YOU

JAMIE, CLAYTON & AUDIENCE MEMBERS

(AUDIENCE MEMBERS stand.)

I OWE YOU
I OWE YOU
I OWE YOU

(Lights fade.)

ACT I

SCENE 10

AT RISE:

(Stage right, back to the green room in current time, CLAYTON is now standing behind the makeup chair, fully dressed. TERRY is now sitting in the makeup chair talking while fixing her own hair and makeup.)

CLAYTON

The show continued from there, but the rest of it was meaningless relationship babble. You know: what do you like? What don't you like? ...As if we were each buying a used car from each other. At least I thought it was meaningless, the audience seemed to be eating it up. By the time I started to get comfortable with being on TV, it was over with. The time went by in a flash, it was a very surreal experience. Kind of like a day dream, but with 50 million people watching.

TERRY

Jamie Ann London is so beautiful, how did your first date go after the show?

PHIL

(Enters from stage right.)

How's it going in here?

CLAYTON

We're doing okay.

TERRY

(Quickly stands up and stands next to CLAYTON.)

We're all set, he looks good, doesn't he?

PHIL (off)

That, he does, you did a great job. We only hire the best.

(Talking to CLAYTON in a serious voice.)

Why don't you come with me Clayton, I'll wait with you until you get introduced.

CLAYTON

Let's get this over with.

(Talking to TERRY.)

Sorry, I don't have time to continue my story, Terry. I guess you'll just have to watch the show like everyone else.

TERRY

I wouldn't miss it for the world. Bye Clayton, and good luck.

CLAYTON (off)

Bye Terry, thanks for everything.

(PHIL and CLAYTON exit stage right. Lights fade.
End of Act I.)

ACT II

SCENE 1

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the “Star Attraction” show stage, with chairs and Cameras. Cast players acting as audience members are planted in the real audience, as the real audience is now the show’s studio audience. The show is broadcast live with video clips shown on stage to the studio audience as well as broadcast. ARTIE is standing center stage waiting for his cue. The scene is in current time and is a continuation of the end of ACT I, in the evening.)

STAGE HAND

(Yelling from off stage.)

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1.

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera.)

Other shows report celebrity gossip, we create celebrity headlines. This is “Star Attraction” and I’m Artie Sky.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

Tonight’s finale segment will wrap up our fix-up with actress Jamie Ann London and poet Clayton Pritchard. Jamie Ann requested to meet Clayton as she had been greatly inspired by his poetry book “Lark”, at a time when she had thoughts of giving up on her acting career ... good thing she didn’t. Clayton agreed to meet Jamie Ann, and seemed to be quite taken by her beauty when they were introduced ... who wasn’t? If you’ve been watching our weekly stargazing segments, you know that our couple has been doing quite well together. Of course, we saved the best videos for tonight’s show, so if you have been watching every week, don’t think you know everything. As our cameras focus on our celebrities, you stay focused on us. Right now, on live television, re-introducing Jamie Ann London and Clayton Pritchard.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud. JAMIE enters stage left with CLAYTON, they each shake hands with ARTIE.)

JAMIE

Hi.

CLAYTON

Hello.

ARTIE

Hello Jamie Ann, hello Clayton.

(ARTIE is sits on the end, stage right. JAMIE sits next to him. CLAYTON sits next to JAMIE.)

Six weeks ago the two of you appeared on the “Star Attraction” introduction segment and met each other for the first time. Of course, we all watched your reactions to each other, which was very positive. After the show, the two of you went out for coffee at a near by restaurant. At the beginning of the date, we gave the two of you a chance to get to know each other one-on-one without our cameras peaking in. So, I’ll have to ask you both, starting with Jamie Ann; thinking back, what was your first-date impression of Clayton?

JAMIE

I was very impressed with Clayton. He was much different than I had expected, but in a good way. I expected him to be ... intense, and I admit I was a little worried that he would be artsy fartsy or an intellectualite. People who take themselves too seriously are never any fun, and I was worried because I know how serious some of Clayton’s poems are. After we talked for a few minutes, I realized that my worries were all for nothing. Clayton is very easy going with a goofy sense of humor. Within minutes he had me laughing hysterically, which isn’t all that hard to do, but it made me feel very comfortable.

(Speaking slowly and cautiously.)

He is a little eccentric, but I find that interesting ... and he doesn’t fake his eccentricities to try to be fashionable, which I see my share of here in New York.

ARTIE

Okay, you liked Clayton, but did you feel any...

(Wheeling his hands as to symbolize moving forward.)

Chemistry?

JAMIE

Yes, there’s a warmth to Clayton that did spark instant chemistry. His sense of humor won big points. He looked great. We shared interesting conversations. What else can I say? There was star attraction.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ARTIE

Fantastic. Clayton, what was your first-date impression of Jamie Ann?

CLAYTON

Jamie is very beautiful. I mean ... stop-traffic beautiful. I'm being literal with this description. During the last six weeks there were times when we would be walking on the sidewalk and people driving by would actually stop their cars in the middle of the street just to look at her. Jamie can actually back up traffic. She's like a school bus that way.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

When we first spent time alone together I was just as nervous being alone with Jamie as I was being watched by millions of people on live TV. But, we enjoyed each other's company and it wasn't long before I felt at ease. Jamie is very passionate about life, one of the most passionate people I've ever met. She lives in the moment, takes in every moment, and appreciates every moment. She's also very bright, but she doesn't make it obvious as to how bright she is. Instead, she takes you along with her and brings you up to her level --

ARTIE

(Interrupting to move the show forward.)

It sounds like the two of you did okay on your own. But, we didn't leave you alone the whole date. Later that night, we gave each of you a question to ask each other. Let's take a look at the first date video.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 2

AT RISE:

(Stage left, CLAYTON and JAMIE are sitting at a table inside of a restaurant. JAMIE is holding two envelopes. The scene is assumed to be a pre-recorded video playing on the "Star Attraction" stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback six weeks into the past when CLAYTON and JAMIE went on their first date, the same evening they were introduced on the show.)

JAMIE

Ready to read the questions?

CLAYTON

I'm ready. You go first.

JAMIE

(Opens envelope, takes paper out, looks at it.)

My question to you ... is...

CLAYTON

Do I win anything if I answer correctly?

JAMIE

The question is supposed to be of a personal nature, so if you answer it wrong you're probably not Clayton Pritchard.

CLAYTON

Put restaurant security on stand-by and ask away.

JAMIE

(Reading question.)

"Clayton, are you romantically interested in Jamie Ann, and if so, what words can you say to her to show your interest?"

CLAYTON

That's a two part question. No one told me it was going to be a two part question.

JAMIE

Well!

CLAYTON

The answer is ... yes, I am very interested in Jamie Ann.

JAMIE

Good answer so far. Once again, I will read part two of the question ... "what words can you say to her to show your interest?"

CLAYTON

(Stares at JAMIE with a blank look on his face, not knowing what to say. Pause.)

Ah.

JAMIE

Clayton, I think this might be a strategically placed question to get you to recite a poem. Maybe you can recite a poem from that poet Clayton Pritchard you're pretending to be.

CLAYTON

Oh okay, he is my favorite out-of-work American poet.

JAMIE

Yea!

(Clapping hands lightly.)

We'll put him to work tonight.

CLAYTON

(Pause, stares upward and thinks.)

Okay, I have one. This is an old poem that never made it to publication, but I think it will work well here. Are you ready?

JAMIE

(Excited, holding hands together on the table.)

I'm ready.

CLAYTON

(Romantically holds one of his hands over JAMIE'S hands and intensely looks into her eyes. He starts reciting the poem in a slow and poetic voice.)

Of all the stars up in the sky
You are the one to catch my eye
Atop Aurora Borealis
The North Star watches, slightly jealous...

(With faster tempo and increased intensity.)

Are you alone, away, so far
Light years from the nearest star...

(Slows to original tempo and intensity.)

If you are ... just twinkle true
And I shall sail the Milky Way to you.

JAMIE

(Clapping.)

That was perfect. This Clayton Pritchard guy you know of is an awesome poet.
(Excited.)

Read my question now.

CLAYTON

(Opens envelope, takes paper out, looks at it.)

Can I read this like Artie Sky?

(Overacts imitation of ARTIE.)

The super fantastic "Star Attraction" question to you is ... "Jamie Ann, how long ago was your last love relationship and how did it end?"

JAMIE

(Pause. Look of unpleasant surprise.)

That's a potent question.

(Pause. Acting nervous.)

This is something I had planned on talking to you about ... I guess now's as good a time as any.

(Pause.)

After two years of dating this guy ... Pierre ... we got engaged. This happened about six months ago. Things didn't work out and we broke up about a month ago. He's a wonderful person, but I just didn't see myself being with him for the rest of my life and I felt it was time to move on.

CLAYTON

Okay.

JAMIE

(Hesitant.)

The love relation ended a month ago, but I think it's important to tell you that we're still friends.

CLAYTON

That's all right.

JAMIE

(Hesitant.)

Well, I've been living in an apartment in Hoboken New Jersey for about two years, which is a quick commute to the studio here in New York, where we shoot "Milestone". When Pierre and I got engaged, he moved into my apartment with me. We figured we would live there once we were married anyway. Since we broke up, we've been friends, nothing more ... but ...

(Cringing as she reveals the truth.)

We're still living together as roommates.

CLAYTON

(With unpleasant surprise.)

You're living with your ex-fiancé?

JAMIE

I realize he needs to move out, but I felt it was only fair to give him plenty of time to find a place to live. So, we're still living together, but just as roommates, nothing more, just until he finds a place to live.

CLAYTON

(Looking off to the side.)

Wow!

JAMIE

(Defensive.)

I couldn't just kick him out onto the street.

CLAYTON

How long did you say you've been broken up?

JAMIE

We had been having problems on and off ever since we got engaged, but we broke up about a month ago.

CLAYTON

(Slightly showing anger.)

A whole month, and he hasn't found a place to live?

JAMIE

He's not even sure if he wants to stay in the area, he's thinking about moving out of town.

CLAYTON

Can't he think about moving after he moves?

JAMIE

Clayton, you have to understand, it's difficult to find a place in New York City. It's a very expensive place to live, and I don't expect him to move into a bad neighborhood, or a building overrun with rats and cockroaches.

CLAYTON

How long do you think he'll be living with you?

(Looks at JAMIE with a blank stare.)

JAMIE

Actually, I think we're getting close to finding a place, it should only be a week or two. We're not a couple any more Clayton, it's just a living situation.

(Pause, looking down at the table.)

That's just the reality of where I'm at in my life right now.

(Pause, looking at CLAYTON, speaking firmly.)

I'm not sure if you're seeing me as I am, or if you're trying to see me as who you want me to be.

CLAYTON

(Being careful not to be too negative.)

No ... no ... I'm okay with you doing what you have to do. It's only a week or two, right?

(Forced smile.)

JAMIE

Yeah, it won't be long. You and I might live to be over a hundred years old, a week or two is just a drop in the bucket.

(Forced smile.)

CLAYTON

You're right. It's not a big deal.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 3

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the "Star Attraction" show stage. ARTIE, JAMIE and CLAYTON are all sitting as they were before they showed the video. Scene is in current time and is a continuation of the live TV show.)

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ARTIE

Clayton, good imitation of me, by the way.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

We saw your reaction to the news about Jamie Ann's roommate. What was going through your head?

CLAYTON

I think the first thing that went through my mind was that our date was more of a TV show than a real date and that Jamie was more or less acting the part of a single person. When Jamie saw my reaction, she was squirming with explanation, which I think showed a level of sincerity. In the end, I think I was so in awe with Jamie, I was willing to be open-minded and take a chance.

ARTIE

I don't know if that qualifies as manipulation or seduction, but she made you change your tune pretty fast.

CLAYTON

I did, didn't I? Seduction is just a form of manipulation, but it's got to be the best one.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

Moving past the uncomfortable truth about Jamie Ann's living situation, where did the date go from there?

CLAYTON

We left the restaurant and Jamie took me to Staten Island. We sat on a park bench facing out over the water and admired the city skyline. It was like falling into a post card.

ARTIE

Sounds romantic, any action going on there?

(Raising eyebrows as to invite personal information.)

CLAYTON

No, it was quite peaceful.

ARTIE

I mean romantic action. I'm not talking cops and robbers.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh. CLAYTON is quiet and looking around as if avoiding the question. ARTIE gives up on him quickly.)

Jamie Ann?

JAMIE

Well, I had to find out if he's a good kisser, that's important.

ARTIE

Well, was he?

JAMIE

(Very upbeat, smiling.)

Yeah ... he was okay.

ARTIE

Clayton, sounds like Jamie Ann was making the moves on you.

(Talking to audience.)

Looks like our poet is a little shy. What happened next? Clayton?

CLAYTON

We stayed there for about an hour, then we went back to my apartment building, said our goodnights at the door and Jamie headed home.

ARTIE

(Half under his breath and very sarcastic.)

Home to Pierre.

JAMIE

(Defensively.)

I went home to an empty apartment, Pierre was out of town.

ARTIE

(Talking to audience.)

Apparently, he wasn't out of town long enough. Those of you who watch regularly know that our producers plan the first week of dates for all of the couples that appear on the show. We had a "Star Attraction" first when Jamie Ann had cancelled all of these dates. Jamie Ann, what did you do that first week?

JAMIE

I helped Pierre find an apartment, I felt it was the best thing to do. We put in full days looking until we finally found something. I e-mailed Clayton with a lengthy apology for missing the dates. He took it as a good thing and said I didn't need to apologize.

ARTIE

Clayton, sorry to hear your first week in New York was spent more single than promised. Tell us what you did.

CLAYTON

I did a lot of sweating.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

Really, I did. It was during that blistering heat wave. It didn't take long before I started to feel cooped up in my air conditioned apartment, so I ventured out into the city and spent a lot of time walking around, exploring ... and sweating.

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera.)

I remember that heat wave. The Big Apple was more like a baked apple. During this time Clayton e-mailed Jamie Ann a poem, and she asked me if she could read it tonight. Jamie Ann?

JAMIE

(Stands up and takes a piece of paper out of her pocket.)

Thanks Artie. Yes, Clayton sent me an awesome poem that took my breath away. I printed it out and wanted to share it with everyone tonight.

(She reads the poem to the audience in a poetic fashion.)

As the furnace of summer melts my soul
It's more than water my heart thirsts for
One question I ponder, do I see an oasis
Or just a mirage among thousands of faces

It's not just water that has to result
For the ocean's water is spoiled by salt
But a beautiful oasis to quench my thirst
Where my heart and soul will be immersed
As the furnace of summer melts my heart
I follow a vision, for I cannot tell them apart

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud. JAMIE sits down.)

ARTIE

Outstanding.

(Talking to JAMIE.)

How does a woman react to getting something like that?

JAMIE

I love Clayton's poetry, and this poem is very similar to a poem from his first book that stands out as being one of my favorites. So, reading his e-mail was a life experience.

ARTIE

(With slow and taunting voice.)

But, Jamie Ann, if I recall, there was a second memorable e-mail that Clayton sent you during this time. Care to read that one?

JAMIE

(Defensively.)

I will not!

ARTIE

Can you at least tell us about it?

JAMIE

(Pause. Showing disappointment.)

As the week progressed, I could see that Clayton was getting more and more frustrated with his situation and mine. At the end of that first week, I received an e-mail from him that was nothing short of an ultimatum. I couldn't believe my eyes. In so many words, Clayton told me to kick Pierre out of my apartment or he was going to say goodbye to the city, say goodbye to the show, and say goodbye to me.

ARTIE

Wow, our Clayton with an ultimatum?

JAMIE

I was shocked, I couldn't believe it came from the same guy that I had spent so much time with the night we were introduced.

ARTIE

(Talking to audience.)

I have to admit, when it sounded like Jamie Ann had initiated the first kiss, I didn't think we would be seeing a lot of backbone out of our Clayton. Hey, sending an ultimatum to a beautiful actress takes guts.

(Talking to CLAYTON.)

What's with that Clayton?

CLAYTON

Jamie and I e-mailed each other back and forth throughout the first week. As the week progressed, Jamie's e-mails became focused on the turbulence of her home life with Pierre, and had little to do with us. They became more and more emotional, but she wouldn't give me any specific information as to what was going on. It was apparent to me that Jamie and Pierre were still going through their breakup. I wasn't getting anywhere and I was getting sick of hanging out in a strange city all alone, not to mention the heat ... that heat! I guess I wanted to make things go in one direction or another and I put my thoughts into an e-mail.

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, did the ultimatum influence any decisions on your end?

JAMIE

(Agitated by questioning.)

No. Pierre and I put a lot of time into apartment hunting and we found a place that we felt was a good option. Clayton's e-mail did nothing more than make me upset.

ARTIE

Okay, I'll buy that, but let's talk about your relationship with Pierre. Jamie Ann, you stiffed Clayton out of his first week of dates and it sounds like your e-mails were showing some residual attachment to Pierre. I guess it leads us to the big question, was your relationship with Pierre totally over with before you agreed to come on this show?

JAMIE

I'll admit, Pierre and I had some issues we were still working out, that happens when couples breakup; but it all had to do with the past. Our engagement was over. Our relationship was over.

ARTIE

Yeah, but I'm looking at you, Jamie Ann ... and I'm thinking ... you are very easy to look at ... and I'm thinking ... the housing situation in New York isn't that bad. Don't you think Pierre was planting himself in your apartment as an attempt to get back together with you?

JAMIE

(Pause. Grumpy response.)

I don't know. There were times after the breakup when Pierre tried to get back together with me, but the results of those talks were always the same --

ARTIE

(Interrupting.)

To be just friends.

JAMIE

Yes.

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera with a taunting voice.)

And roommates.

JAMIE

No ... well ... we were roommates for a little while.

ARTIE

Okay. Pierre moved out. But there was still that nasty e-mail from Clayton. How did that get resolved?

JAMIE

After Pierre moved out, I called Clayton and told him how upset I was. He apologized and we agreed to get together for coffee. We met at this really neat coffee shop called N.Y.C. Caffeinated. I had promised Clayton I would take him there. It was strange, because we talked about all kinds of things, but we didn't talk about the ultimatum ... or Pierre. I brought it up, but Clayton just ... kind of stared at me with this blank look on his face. But ... he was genuinely glad to see me so I let it slide. It was like we both decided to start all over again without verbalizing it, which was fine with me. Sure, we missed the first week of dates, but Clayton and I started dating regularly after that, and I wouldn't replace those dates for anything.

ARTIE

(Stands up and talks to the camera.)

And our couple worked the bugs out of their relationship to find romance. Our weekly stargazing segments have been showing you all the great times they've shared together. ... Well, not all of the great times.

(As if implying something.)

We never see all of the great times but, we do have some never-before seen footage that we saved for tonight's show. Let's look at that right now.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 4

AT RISE:

(After a brief sound of a motorcycle, CLAYTON and JAMIE appear from stage left. They are dressed in motorcycle jackets and helmets. They are walking from CLAYTON'S motorcycle, in Buffalo, where they just finished taking a ride. The introduction to song # 10, "Oasis", briefly plays as they take their helmets off and stop to talk. The scene is assumed to be a pre-recorded video playing on the "Star Attraction" stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback four weeks into the past when CLAYTON and JAMIE are spending quality time together. The time is early afternoon.)

JAMIE

That was so much fun.

CLAYTON

Were you scared?

JAMIE

When you went really fast I was a little scared, but it wasn't too bad. ...Why? Were you trying to scare me?

CLAYTON

I was just trying to get you to hold on tighter, it felt kind of good.

JAMIE

(Hits CLAYTON lightly.)

No fair.

(Pause.)

It's funny, you're comfortable riding a motorcycle, which can be dangerous, yet you're uncomfortable being on TV, which is usually pretty safe. I still don't get why you were so reluctant to be on the show?

CLAYTON

It had nothing to do with you, I didn't even know who you were at the time.

JAMIE

I know, I'm not taking it personally, I'm just curious.

CLAYTON

We all hold a vision of what our lives could be ... and should be, but “Star Attraction” just didn’t fit.

JAMIE

I guess that makes sense.

(Smiling, as if to tease.)

Do I fit?

CLAYTON

You do fit. I used to think that there was nothing better than riding a motorcycle through an idyllic summer’s day, but now I know, there’s nothing better than riding a motorcycle through an idyllic summer’s day with Jamie Ann London on back.

JAMIE

(Lightly laughing.)

That’s a sweet thing to say. So, now are you glad you decided to be on the show?

CLAYTON

Being on the show means nothing to me, having met you means everything. I’m glad I met you.

JAMIE

I’m glad I met you too.

(JAMIE gives CLAYTON a hug and kiss, and they both head back to the motorcycle, stage left. The intro for song # 10, “Oasis”, plays and continues to play in between scenes 4 and 5 and at the beginning of scene 5. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 5

AT RISE:

(Stage right, CLAYTON and JAMIE are in a video rental store looking for a movie to rent. CLAYTON is looking through the shelves for one of several movies that JAMIE has acted in. The introduction to song # 10, “Oasis”, plays before they start talking. The scene is assumed to be a pre-recorded video playing on the “Star Attraction” stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback three weeks into the past when CLAYTON and JAMIE are spending

quality time together. The time is early evening.)

CLAYTON

Why won't you tell me the names of the movies you've been in?

JAMIE

Because they're all cheesy and you'll want to watch them, and you said I could pick out the movie for tonight.

CLAYTON

I said you could pick out the movie as long as you're in it.

JAMIE

You lie. Look all you want, it's still my turn to pick out the movie.

CLAYTON

Okay, tell me the name of one movie you've been in, I'll still let you pick the movie we watch ... as long as it's not a chick flick.

JAMIE

Wait a minute, you want me to offer up valuable information, and in return you're going to limit my selection?

CLAYTON

Valuable information? I could just ask the guy behind the counter.

(Points to counter, stage right.)

Unlike you, he actually has copies of the movies you've been in.

JAMIE

It's bad luck for an actress to own the movies she's acted in, and if you even talk to the guy behind the counter, you're definitely getting a chick flick.

CLAYTON

I wonder if it's bad luck to own a poetry book you've written. I have dozens of copies of my own books ... someone had to buy them.

(Pause.)

I know why you won't tell me what movies you've been in ... profanity ... violence ... nudity ... strong sexual content!

JAMIE

You wish! Eventually, I'll watch them with you, just not tonight. If you want to see me tonight you get me in person.

CLAYTON

That's not so bad.

(Pause.)

It must be quite a life experience to be in a movie rental store that has, somewhere, movies that you've acted in ... somewhere, on the shelves.

(Aggressively looking on shelves.)

JAMIE

If we were in a library, your poetry books would be on the shelves. It's the same thing.

CLAYTON

No ... poetry books are boring by comparison. Acting in a movie, you get to be someone else for a while.

(Speaking softly, as to himself.)

If I could be anybody, who would that person be?

(Picks up a video, looks at cover.)

I could be a super hero?

JAMIE

And what super hero would you like to be?

CLAYTON

Super Poet. I recite super poems that inspire peace, and stop wrong doers from ... doing wrong.

JAMIE

Up, up, and away Super Poet. I picked a movie. No, it's not a chick flick, and yes, I am in it.

CLAYTON

(Puts his movie back, grabs and looks at the one JAMIE picked out.)

"Psycho River."

JAMIE

I'm only in it for about five minutes, before I get killed off. It's actually quite entertaining for a low budget film.

CLAYTON (off)

Are you sure? I was only joking, I'll watch anything.

JAMIE (off)

Yeah, I've been meaning to watch it again. Besides, someone has to rent it.

(JAMIE and CLAYTON head for the video rental store checkout counter, and exit stage right. The intro for song # 10, "Oasis" plays and continues in between scenes 5 and 6. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 6

AT RISE:

(Stage left, CLAYTON and JAMIE are inside an exclusive dance club, where people are standing around talking and dancing on the dance floor. The music playing in the club is the dance version of the introduction to song # 10, “Oasis”, with a fast tempo and dance beat. The music continues to play as CLAYTON and JAMIE loudly talk over it. The scene is assumed to be a pre-recorded video playing on the “Star Attraction” stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback two weeks into the past when CLAYTON and JAMIE are spending quality time together. The time is late at night.)

JAMIE

This is it, “Cairo Gyro”, the most exclusive dance club in New York.

CLAYTON

I’ve never seen anything like it.

JAMIE

It’s also the home of New York’s strangest. I love people watching here.

CLAYTON

And they love watching you.

JAMIE

It looks crowded, but this is nothing. After midnight, this place will be bursting at the seams with celebrities, jet setters, artists, and a lot of people who know people. Hey, do you want to dance while there’s still room?

CLAYTON

I have to warn you, my dancing technique has been described as a seagull trying to land on a treadmill.

JAMIE

You’ll fit in perfectly, come on.

(JAMIE grabs CLAYTON and pulls him onto the dance floor where they dance. CLAYTON'S style of dancing is very strange, so JAMIE dances strangely as well. All the people standing around see them and join in and dance. They are fast dancing to the dance version of the introduction to song # 10, "Oasis", which is still playing. Shortly after, the music slows and the dance beat stops. All the dancers slow dance to the slower music and CLAYTON starts singing the original version of song #10, "Oasis". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

CLAYTON

WE RODE ON MY MOTORCYCLE

JAMIE

WE WATCHED CHEESY MOTION PICTURES

CLAYTON

WE DANCED IN THE HEAT OF AUGUST

JAMIE

WE SAT AND KISSED ON A PARK BENCH

WHEN I SEE YOUR FACE
I AM IN A PLACE
IS NO BETTER PLACE TO BE

CLAYTON

I JUMPED IN HEAD FIRST
I HAD TO QUENCH MY THIRST
AN OASIS FOR MY SOUL

WE SMILE WHEN WE LOOK AT EACH OTHER

JAMIE

WE PLAY LIKE HAPPY LITTLE CHILDREN

CLAYTON

WE TELL EACH OTHER NOT TO WORRY

JAMIE

WE ARE SO GOOD TOGETHER

WHEN I SEE YOUR FACE
I AM IN A PLACE

IS NO BETTER PLACE TO BE

CLAYTON

I JUMPED IN HEAD FIRST
I HAD TO QUENCH MY THIRST
AN OASIS FOR MY SOUL

ARTIE

(ARTIE appears far stage right and is assumed to be on the “Star Attraction” stage watching the video of CLAYTON and JAMIE. He sings as a narration of the video.)

AND SO THE SUMMER SUN SET FAST
HOW LONG WILL THE WEATHER LAST
SO FICTITIOUS SEEM TRUE STORIES
TO BE CONTINUED DON’T WORRY
FEEL THE THUNDER AS THE SUMMER FADES ... AWAY

CLAYTON

WE MET OUT FOR FANCY COFFEE

JAMIE

WE TALKED BUT WE DIDN’T TALK ABOUT IT
(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 7

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the “Star Attraction” show stage, but the lights are dimmed. ARTIE is with the audience, standing in the aisle and talking to the camera. The scene is in current time and is a continuation of the live TV show.)

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ARTIE

Our couple had experienced some very special times together, but the calm of paradise didn’t last long. About a week and a half ago, each of them experienced a major career change. We have video of a lunch date where each of them took a moment to call their professional managers to catch up. And each received important news at the exact same time. Let’s watch that video.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 8

AT RISE:

(Stage right, CLAYTON and JAMIE are sitting at a table outside of a restaurant after eating lunch. They are both listening to their cell phones, checking messages. The scene is assumed to be a pre-recorded video playing on the “Star Attraction” stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback eleven days into the past when CLAYTON and JAMIE each experience career-changing news. The time is early afternoon.)

CLAYTON

I have to call Ronda back. Since Phil gave me this cell phone, she’s been leaving me these bizarre messages. I think she’s picking on me, she knows this is my first cell phone and she’s always picked on me for refusing to carry one.

(Momentarily pulls cell phone away from ear to show.)

JAMIE

Sometimes I wish I could chuck my cell phone in the river. I have to call Sue back. Her voicemail sounded all dark and depressing, like she’s calling from a morgue or something.

CLAYTON

(Calls RONDA on his cell phone. His call starts at the same time as JAMIE’S call.)

Ronda, how are you?

(Pause.)

I love good news.

(Pause.)

No kidding.

(Pause.)

When?

(Pause.)

What about Crazy John, I can’t do it without him.

(Pause.)

Good.

(Pause.)

Yes, I owe you, no, I’m not going to paint your garage.

(Pause.)

That's why I'm going to take your advice from now on.

(Pause.)

Let me know as soon as you can, I'll get in touch with John and tell him.

(Pause.)

Okay, I will ... Bye.

(Hangs up phone and listens to the end of JAMIE'S call.)

JAMIE

(Overlapping. Calls her agent on her cell phone. Her call starts at the same time as CLAYTON'S call.)

Hi Sue, it's Jamie.

(Pause.)

I'm doing well, I just had lunch with Clayton, I wanted to get back to you.

(Pause. Concerned.)

Yeah.

(Pause. Surprised and disappointed.)

What?

(Pause.)

You have to be joking.

(Pause.)

Really?

(Pause.)

How can they change the ending?

(Pause.)

Yeah.

(Pause.)

I know.

(Pause.)

Well, I thought they were just rumors.

(Pause.)

That's it for me, then, huh?

(Pause.)

They should have told me sooner.

(Pause.)

Still, that's not right. They don't care about anyone but themselves.

(Pause.)

I can meet you there at three, we'll talk more about it then. Bye.

(Hangs up phone.)

CLAYTON

(Talking to JAMIE with concern.)

What's wrong?

JAMIE

(Very upset.)

I've been written off.

CLAYTON

What do you mean?

JAMIE

My TV show, "Milestone", my character Linda Squire has been written off the show ... I've been fired.

CLAYTON

Oh no ... I'm sorry.

JAMIE

There was a rumor going around about this, I didn't take it seriously. But it's all going to happen ... on tonight's show.

CLAYTON

How are they going to do that, didn't you finish shooting the season?

JAMIE

Yes, but I was supposed to be missing for a while and then come back. But now they're telling me my character's body will show up ... dead ... tonight!

CLAYTON

Dead? You won't be on the show ever again?

JAMIE

I have to show up for one scene next season ... to play Linda Squire's dead body.

CLAYTON

That's terrible.

JAMIE

I understand why they want to keep it a secret, but you'd think they'd at least tell me. They give me, what, seven hours notice.

(JAMIE covers her face with her napkin as she cries.
CLAYTON rubs the side of her arm. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 9

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the "Star Attraction" show stage. JAMIE and CLAYTON are sitting,

positioned as they were before they showed the video. ARTIE is sitting next to JAMIE again. The scene is in current time and is a continuation of the live TV show.)

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, you received some bad news, you found out what we all found out that night, that you were written off your TV series, “Milestone”.

JAMIE

Yes, it was very upsetting, as you could see.

ARTIE

Clayton, you received good news, what did Ronda say?

CLAYTON

Ronda told me that my poetry book “Lark” was selling like hotcakes, as she put it. Book stores were selling them as fast as they could put them on the shelves.

ARTIE

Let’s not forget who helped spread the word, we mentioned it here on “Star Attraction” quite a few times.

CLAYTON

Yes, that’s true, thanks for that. Ronda also told me that I was invited to be on “The Rowan Coaster Show” to talk about the book. Of course, we made sure they extended their invitation to include John Cressey.

ARTIE

And John Cressey is?

CLAYTON

I call him Crazy John. He’s an old friend that hand painted the illustrations for all of my books. He lives in a Winnebago and travels the country working as a freelance artist. He was more than happy to come to New York and do the show with me.

ARTIE

Understandably, Clayton, you didn’t tell Jamie Ann about your booming book sales or your appearance on “The Rowan Coaster Show” right then and there, when she heard her bad news. When did you tell her?

CLAYTON

Actually, she found out from her agent. She was a little upset I didn’t tell her.

ARTIE

And we have video on this. Let's take a look at what happened three days after Clayton was asked to be on "The Rowan Coaster Show" and three minutes after Crazy John rolled into town in his Winnebago.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 10

AT RISE:

(Stage left, CLAYTON is standing in an open area outside of his apartment building, waiting for JOHN and JAMIE so they can go out to lunch. JOHN soon approaches from stage right. The scene is assumed to be a pre-recorded video playing on the "Star Attraction" stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback eight days into the past when CLAYTON and JAMIE have an argument. The time is early afternoon.)

CLAYTON

(Sees JOHN approach and is happy to see him.)

Crazy John, how's it going?

(JOHN and CLAYTON shake hands.)

JOHN

Good. I finally found a parking spot for the Winnebago.

CLAYTON

Did you find a place where you're sure you won't get a parking ticket?

JOHN

Yeah, the Manager of your building is letting me keep it next to the loading dock. I told him we were going to be on "The Rowan Coaster Show" and I promised him I'd mention his building on the show.

CLAYTON

(Sarcastically.)

Ingenious.

JOHN

Hey, I can't make it to lunch with you and Jamie Ann.

CLAYTON
(Disappointed.)

No?

JOHN
The building's Super is going to meet me at the Winnebago to hook me up with water and electric.

CLAYTON
No big deal, we'll do it some other time. Can you stick around for a few minutes to meet Jamie, she's on her way.

JOHN
Oh yeah, I definitely want to meet her. I even brought my camera.
(Holds up small camera to show it.)

CLAYTON
(Looking stage left, keeping an eye out for JAMIE.)
She'll be here any minute.

JOHN
While we're waiting, I do have a favor to ask you.

CLAYTON
What's that?

JOHN
I don't know if you're aware of this, but most of the book stores across the country are sold-out of "Lark". Backorders are running several weeks.

CLAYTON
No kidding!

JOHN
Remember you gave me those boxes of books? You know, the misprints. You couldn't bear to throw them out, so I took them off your hands.

CLAYTON
Yeah, the covers were upside down.

JOHN
I had them in storage collecting dust, but with demand being so high right now, I've been selling them on eBay for top dollar. People don't seem to care that they're misprints.

CLAYTON

(Amused.)

Somehow, none of this surprises me. What do you want me to do?

JOHN

I was thinking about selling the books as autographed copies. I figure, if we both sign them they'll be worth more.

CLAYTON

You want me to autograph books with upside down covers?

JOHN

They're in the Winnebago.

CLAYTON

I don't know, I guess I could do that.

JOHN

Thanks.

CLAYTON

(Pause. Looking stage left, keeping an eye out for JAMIE.)

Which way do we sign them?

(Pause.)

Is the inside cover right side up or upside down?

JOHN

I don't know, we'll have to try it both ways to see what looks better.

(Pause. Looking stage left.)

Look at that coming this way. That's Jamie Ann, isn't it? ... Nice!

CLAYTON

Hey, she's still upset about losing her job, so I didn't say anything about us doing "The Rowan Coaster Show". Don't say anything, okay?

JOHN

I won't say anything.

JAMIE

(Walks up to CLAYTON and JOHN from stage left.)

Hey guys. You must be Crazy John, I've heard a lot of good things about you.

(JAMIE shakes hands with JOHN and gives CLAYTON a quick hug and kiss.)

JOHN

Hi.

(Surprised.)

Clayton told you good things about me?

(Looks at CLAYTON with appreciation.)

JAMIE

You guys ready to eat? I'm starving.

CLAYTON

John can't make it, it'll be just us.

JAMIE

(Disappointed.)

Awe...

JOHN

Yeah, I have to get my Winnebago situated. It's not easy parking one of those things around here.

CLAYTON

He did want to meet you and get a picture, though.

JAMIE

Okay, we'll go out some other time.

JOHN

I'll hold you to it. Let me get a picture of the two of you first.

(Tinkering with camera).

JAMIE

(Poses for picture with CLAYTON with their backs facing stage right.)

So John, Clayton says you actually live in the Winnebago all year round?

JOHN

Smile.

(Takes picture.)

Yeah, I was looking to buy a house, but I spend so much time on the road, I figured, why not buy a house I can take with me?

JAMIE

That makes sense. Let me take a picture of you and Clayton.

JOHN

(JOHN hands the camera off to JAMIE. CLAYTON and JOHN pose for a picture with their backs facing stage left.)

Sorry to hear about you, I mean, Linda Squire getting murdered.

JAMIE

That's show business.

JOHN

Do you have any idea who did it?

JAMIE

No, you'll have to wait until next season to find that out.

JOHN

It's Linda's own fault. She shouldn't have been nosing around in her brother's business when she knew he was involved with the mafia. She should have just walked away and let the investigators do their job.

JAMIE

Say cheese.

(Takes picture.)

Yeah, but that was her personality type, don't you think. That's what made her exciting to watch.

JOHN

(Overly serious.)

Sure, but look at where it got her.

JAMIE

(Lightly stated.)

And look at where it got me, I'm out of a job.

CLAYTON

I'll take a picture of the two of you.

JOHN

(Looks stage right.)

Let's get all three of us.

(Points stage right.)

There's a guy standing over there watching us, he can take our picture.

JAMIE

(Looks and sees the guy JOHN pointed to. Nervous.)

Uh ... no ... Clayton can take our picture.

JOHN

(Yelling loud.)

Sir ... you ... can you come over here and take our picture. Yeah, you.

(Normal volume.)

Here he comes.

PIERRE

(Approaches from stage right.)

Yes, I can take your picture. Hello Jamie, how have you been? I was so sad to hear that you will no longer be on your show.

JOHN

There you go, Jamie Ann, another Linda Squire fan.

PIERRE

Yes, I am a big fan.

JAMIE

Ah ... actually ... I know him. Clayton, this is Pierre. Pierre, Clayton ... and John.

(PIERRE shakes hands with CLAYTON and JOHN.)

CLAYTON

(With unpleasant surprise.)

This is Pierre? As in your ex-fiancé Pierre?

PIERRE

That is me.

JAMIE

Yes.

(JOHN is not phased by the situation. He gives the camera to PIERRE and nudges CLAYTON to pose with him and JAMIE.)

CLAYTON

Why do you look so familiar? Are you an actor too?

PIERRE

No, I live in the apartment next to yours. I'm your neighbor.

(Points camera and is zooming and positioning.)

CLAYTON

Oh ... Jamie told me that you found an apartment, but she didn't tell me it was next door to mine.

(Looks at JAMIE, upset with her.)

JAMIE

Clayton, the network rents the two apartments next to each other for the couples who appear on the show. I didn't need mine because I live so close, so I'm let Pierre take it.

PIERRE (off)

Smiles.

(PIERRE takes the picture. JOHN is the only one smiling, and CLAYTON shows his anger. PIERRE quickly gives the camera back to JOHN.)

It was nice to meet you Clayton, John. Take care of yourself Jamie.

(Exits stage left.)

CLAYTON

(Ignores PIERRE and JOHN, talks to JAMIE firmly.)

You could have told me.

JAMIE

(Very angry with CLAYTON for the rest of the scene.)

I couldn't have told you, you would have had a problem with it. And what about you? You could have told me that you and John are appearing on "The Rowan Coaster Show". You could have told me how well your book is selling.

JOHN (off)

(Slowly walks away and waves his hand goodbye as they argue.)

See you later.

(Exits stage right. JAMIE and CLAYTON ignore him.)

CLAYTON

How did you find out about that?

JAMIE

My agent is good friends with the producer. I was on that show myself earlier this year. It's no big deal, you could have told me.

CLAYTON

(Very angry with JAMIE for the rest of the scene.)

The only reason I didn't tell you is because I didn't want you to feel bad. What am I going to say? Sorry you lost your job, and by the way, my career has taken off?

JAMIE

I'm a professional, I can handle losing a job. It's so much like you, not to tell me something like this. What, you don't think I'd be happy for you?

CLAYTON

Don't spin this to land on my shoulders, there's no excuse for not telling me about Pierre. The show ends next week, what happens then? Where does Pierre go after he gets evicted from your bachelorette pad? Does he move back in with you?

JAMIE

My relationship with Pierre is over, can't you see that. If he can't find another place by the end of the show, then maybe I will let him stay in my apartment. It's none of your business who I take in as a roommate. This is only a problem for you because you don't trust me.

CLAYTON

Trust? This isn't about trust, it's about respect! It's about loyalty! Neither of which you have for me.

JAMIE

No, Clayton, it's about me helping someone who was once significant in my life. Someone who moved to this country just to be with me. He has no one else here. Since we broke up, he's been having a difficult time planting roots.

CLAYTON

Difficult time planting roots? This guy's like a weed that keeps popping up, I can't get rid of his roots!

JAMIE (off)

You know, I'm not hungry. You can eat alone Clayton. Enjoy your lunch.
(Exits stage left. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 11

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the "Star Attraction" show stage. JAMIE and CLAYTON are sitting, positioned as they were before they showed the video, but showing strain from watching it. ARTIE is standing, talking to the audience. The scene is in current time and is a continuation of the live TV show.)

ARTIE

Now ... is the name of this show "Star Attraction" or "Stars Attacking"?

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

That was intense ... and it did leave me with one burning question for Jamie Ann.

JAMIE

What's that?

ARTIE

(Sits down.)

How did Pierre like our "Star Attraction" bachelorette apartment?

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

JAMIE

(Embarrassed.)

Oh ... he thought it was overly pink and girly, but he was happy to have it.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

I had to ask. Anyway, that argument didn't sound very healthy, I think we need to call up our relationship expert, Margaret Epperson, who is sitting in the front row watching and listening closely. Margaret, come sit up here and talk with us.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

MARGARET

(Walks up on stage.)

Hello Artie, Jamie Ann, Clayton.

(ARTIE, JAMIE and CLAYTON briefly stand to greet MARGARET. MARGARET gives a small hug to ARTIE and JAMIE, and shakes hands with CLAYTON. MARGARET sits next to ARTIE. JAMIE and CLAYTON slide down a seat.)

ARTIE

Margaret, what do you think?

MARGARET

Artie, as you know, I gain excellent insight into the relationships that take place on this show, as I not only watch all of the video footage taken of our couples, I keep in private contact with each of our guests individually for relationship discussions.

ARTIE

Yes.

MARGARET

Artie, I felt like Jamie Ann and I instantly bonded. She is so personable, I feel like I've known her for years. I thoroughly enjoyed our talks about her interest in Clayton and I like to think I gave her good advice along the way. Clayton, on the other hand, was ... standoffish. When I called him, he didn't cooperate in answering my questions and was obvious in trying to get me off the phone as quickly as he would a telemarketer.

ARTIE

Clayton, you don't like our Margaret?

CLAYTON

I don't dislike her, I just don't know her. When someone I don't know calls me, drilling me for personal information, I'm not going to be very forthcoming.

ARTIE

So, Margaret, give us the bottom line?

MARGARET

Communication is the major issue with our couple. Frankly speaking, Clayton seems to be a poor communicator. I will say, Jamie Ann didn't help matters with her living arrangements with the ex-fiancé, but this was a temporary circumstance.

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, is this observation on target?

JAMIE

Clayton has many positive qualities, but yes, he definitely has a problem expressing himself. Some of the videos may have showed the opposite, but from a day-to-day perspective, he doesn't fully express how he feels about me or how he thinks I feel about him.

ARTIE

Clayton, you're taking some heavy criticism here, what do you say about all of this.

CLAYTON

I ... I --

ARTIE

(Interrupting.)

I guess that says it all. Margaret, help Clayton out here.

MARGARET

In my relationship book "More Together" I've outlined what I call the three relationship Cs: conversation, communication, and confrontation. Conversation may or may not be an

exchange of important information; but, more often than not, we partake in it for the purpose of companionship. A couple might have a conversation about their favorite flavor of ice cream, where the information exchange is unimportant, but the exchange of words is comforting. Communication can happen during a conversation, it's not a separate thing, but there's more to it. It is where we express our feelings, wants, and needs to each other so that we can establish a common ground within the relationship. When couples neglect proper communication, they don't equip each other with the tools necessary to negotiate common ground. Clayton seems to have mastered conversation, but it ends there, and without communication, an eventual confrontation is inevitable. The misalignments of the relationship get ignored until they build up like the inside of a volcano.

ARTIE

And we all know what volcanoes do.

MARGARET

I want to make it perfectly clear that Clayton is not being accused of being abusive or violent in any way. But ... the fury ... the explosion of words between our couple is a textbook example of what happens when communication is limited.

ARTIE

If there's one thing we've learned from this show, it's that couples have to communicate.

MARGARET

That's right, and good communication means expression. Someone once said "The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression."

(Stands up and starts singing song #11, "I Lost All Expression". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

CONVERSATION
COMMUNICATION
CONFRONTATION

CLAYTON

(Stands up.)

I LOST ALL EXPRESSION

MARGARET

JACK AND JILL, SO THE STORY GOES
WENT UP THE HILL
THEY DIDN'T TALK THINGS OUT

ARTIE

(Stands up.)

JILL PUSHED TO KILL

MARGARET

THE ACT OF LOVE, THE ART OF WAR
WHAT ARE THE RULES
KNOW YOUR ENEMY, KNOW YOUR LOVER

ARTIE

ALL IS FAIR IS FOR FOOLS

CLAYTON

I NEED TOLERANCE FOR MY SITUATION
MY DISABILITY IS MISUNDERSTOOD

MARGARET

CONVERSATION
COMMUNICATION
CONFRONTATION

CLAYTON

I LOST ALL EXPRESSION

(ARTIE, MARGARET and CLAYTON sit down.)

ARTIE

Clayton, what happened after the argument we saw in the video?

CLAYTON

“The Rowan Coaster Show” was the following day, so I spent the next twenty-four hours being nervous and distracted. After the show, I really missed Jamie. I put aside my feelings regarding ... who should live where, and I called her to apologize. She accepted my apology and we met out for coffee at N.Y.C. Caffeinated.

ARTIE

Clayton, did you talk at all about the argument or Pierre when you were having coffee with Jamie Ann?

CLAYTON

No, Jamie accepted my apology on the phone, and she seemed happy to see me. So, I didn't think it was necessary to open up a can of worms.

ARTIE

Jamie Ann, is there anything wrong with this picture? Clayton apologizes over the phone, the two of you meet-out afterwards, and Clayton acts like the argument never happened.

JAMIE

I don't know if it's wrong, but it's typical Clayton, that's how he is. We probably should have talked about it. Clayton is a great conversationalist, we always have fun talking and joking; but when it comes time for communication, he puts up a blank stare.

ARTIE

Clayton, after you had coffee with Jamie Ann, did you feel like everything was back to normal?

CLAYTON

Well ... no. Ever since Jamie lost her job, normal has been ... abnormal. She's been stressed and distant. She's usually upbeat.

ARTIE

Are you sure she's been acting that way because of her career and not because of problems between the two of you?

CLAYTON

I'd like to think it's because of her career.

MARGARET

(Talking to CLAYTON.)

You mean, you don't want to think she's acting that way because of you. You don't want to think it, but how do you know? Have the two of you at least discussed how Jamie Ann feels about her recent career change?

CLAYTON

Jamie and I have daily phone calls and we always talk about her career.

ARTIE

On the phone? Have you been seeing each other?

CLAYTON

No, but that's only because she's been busy trying to line up auditions.

ARTIE

She has an agent to do all that. Jamie Ann, Clayton sees that you've been acting distant. Tell us, what percentage of that would you say is attributed to setbacks in your career and what percentage would you say is attributed to issues with Clayton.

JAMIE

I don't think I can divide my feelings out into percentages. I will say that I don't define myself by my career. There's a great big world out there, and there's a lot more to it than the show "Milestone". The people in my life mean more to me than my career. I've told Clayton this before.

MARGARET

(Talking to audience.)

Jamie Ann doesn't want to put a percentage on her feelings, yet we hear her express how much more her relationships mean to her than her career. This tells me that Jamie Ann's behavioral changes are related to Clayton.

(Talking to CLAYTON.)

Clayton, you need to communicate to Jamie Ann right now. She is distancing herself from you and you need to tell her how you feel and get her to express how she feels.

CLAYTON

I don't know what to say. I'm confused.

MARGARET

Just say, Clayton, just say ... communicate from your heart.

CLAYTON

(CLAYTON stands up and starts singing song #12, "My Very First Poem". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

I DON'T SEE THE SUNSHINE IN YOUR EYES
I CAN'T FIND THE RAINBOW THROUGH YOUR SMILE
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S CHURNING INSIDE OF YOUR HEAD
TELL ME WHERE'S THE SUNSHINE

JAMIE

(Stands up.)

CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING TO ME

CLAYTON

MY VERY FIRST POEM I RECITE TO YOU

JAMIE

CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING TO ME

CLAYTON

MY VERY FIRST POEM IS THE BEST I CAN DO

AS I ENVISION MEMORIES OF OUR PAST
I CAN SEE THE ENDING FADE IN FAST
I DON'T KNOW IF MY FUTURE WILL BE FILLED WITH YOU
WILL I SEE THE SUNSHINE

JAMIE

CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING TO ME

CLAYTON

MY VERY FIRST POEM I RECITE TO YOU

JAMIE

CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING TO ME

CLAYTON

MY VERY FIRST POEM IS THE BEST I CAN DO

YOU ARE THE SUN, YET I STAND IN THE RAIN
COLD WITH GRIEF AND WET WITH PAIN
WHEN CLOUDS BREAK AND YOU APPEAR
COMES AN END TO ALL OF MY DREAM
YET WIND AND TIME DO SOON SUPPLY
MORE CLOUDS TO FILL THE SKY
I ASK YOU OH SUN A QUESTION IN VAIN
HOW MUCH LONGER MUST I STAND IN THE RAIN

HOPE TO GOD OUR LOVE CAN FIND ITS WAY
DON'T LIKE LIVING UNDER SKIES OF GRAY
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, MAYBE IT'S UP TO YOU
TO HELP ME FIND THE SUNSHINE

JAMIE

CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING TO ME

CLAYTON

MY VERY FIRST POEM I RECITE TO YOU

JAMIE

CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING TO ME

CLAYTON

MY VERY FIRST POEM IS THE BEST I CAN DO

(JAMIE and CLAYTON sit down.)

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera.)

When put on the spot, our poet can pull some fantastic words out of his hat. But, should he be reciting poems of his past to our beautiful actress? I realize Clayton is doing the best he can to express himself, but I question how genuine this is. Is it any more personal than sending a greeting card? This topic came up on Clayton's appearance on "The Rowan Coaster Show" last week, which made for some very interesting television.

(Talking to unseen technical person, stage right.)

Can we run that "Rowan Coaster" clip right now?

(Pause.)

Yes?

(Talking to the camera.)

Let's take a look.

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 12

AT RISE:

(Stage right is "The Rowan Coaster Show". ROWAN is sitting behind a large desk with two empty guest chairs stage right of him. The scene is assumed to be a video replay of CLAYTON'S appearance on "The Rowan Coaster Show" playing on the "Star Attraction" stage and broadcast as part of the show. The scene also represents a flashback seven days into the past when CLAYTON and JOHN appeared on "The Rowan Coaster Show". The time is in the evening.)

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ROWAN

A new book has popped up on the bestseller list. But take a closer look, and you'll find that it isn't new at all. It was written seven years ago, and is finally getting the attention it deserves. The book is called "Lark", and its author is currently appearing on the reality TV show "Star Attraction". He's here tonight, along with the book's illustrator. Ladies and Gentleman, poet Clayton Pritchard and artist John Cressey.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ROWAN

Hello Clayton, hello John.

(ROWAN stands up and shakes hands with JOHN and CLAYTON behind the chairs.)

JOHN

Hey.

CLAYTON

Hello.

(JOHN, CLAYTON and ROWAN sit, with CLAYTON in the middle.)

ROWAN

Clayton, you have a string of exciting events happening in your life. You're on "Star Attraction". They matched you with Jamie Ann London. And your appearance on that show has made your book "Lark" so sought after that it's become nearly impossible to get. Let's start by talking about the book. Tell us about "Lark".

(Hands the book to CLAYTON.)

CLAYTON

"Lark" is two books in one.

(Opens book and points to pages as he talks.)

The right pages are a children's book that tells the tale of a bird named Marcus Lark. John painted the illustrations and I wrote the captions. The left pages are a poetry book that tells the story of a young man. Both stories parallel each other and add up to what one might call a cautionary tale of personal growth.

ROWAN

A unique concept, how did you come up with the idea?

CLAYTON

Actually, John came up with it. John?

JOHN

Ah ... Clayton gave me a copy of the poetry part of the book to see if I could come up with some illustrations. The poems tell the story of a person, so I caught Clayton by surprise when I came up with illustrations of a bird. Clayton decided to add captions and use the bird paintings as a separate part of the book.

ROWAN

You must have done something right, I tried to buy a copy and all the book stores were backordered for several weeks. My assistant found me this copy on the Internet, but something's wrong with it.

(Holds book up, opens it and flips it around.)

The cover is upside down in relation to the print.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh. CLAYTON gives JOHN a dirty look because he knows he sold the book on the Internet.)

I read it and I was impressed and inspired. The first time through, I only read the poetry half of the book, and admit I didn't fully understand it. Then I went back and read the children's story, and a light went off in my head. I got it.

JOHN

To be honest with you, I had a tough time understanding the poetry part of the book myself. In fact, the reason I painted the illustrations of a bird instead of a man was because I didn't get it, I thought the poems were about a bird.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ROWAN

Clayton, over the last few weeks, you went from being a relatively undiscovered poet to a celebrity. How are you handling the overnight fame and fortune?

CLAYTON

I don't know, I think I'm a long way away from fortune and fame.

ROWAN

Don't be so sure of yourself, I mean, you're already dating a famous actress.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

JOHN

Yeah, and he's living in a luxury apartment in...

(Talking to the camera, clearly stated as if an endorsement.)

The Suitor Apartment Hotel, Manhattan's boutique accommodations.

(CLAYTON gives JOHN a dirty look because he knows he's advertising.)

ROWAN

Let's talk about "Star Attraction", Clayton, every week they've been showing videos of Jamie Ann London and yourself. From the looks of it, love is in the air. Is that the case?

CLAYTON

Part of my agreement with the show is to keep quiet until our final show, which will be on live TV next week. But, I think I'm allowed to offer agreement and say that we're doing quite well together.

(Gives confident smile.)

JOHN

I didn't sign anything.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud. JOHN gives CLAYTON a deviant smile. CLAYTON is dreading the outcome.)

I've been hanging out with Clayton and Jamie Ann, what do you want to know?

ROWAN

Wha-da-ya-got John? Give us the scoop.

JOHN

Actually, I only met Jamie Ann once for a few minutes, but I did see her and Clayton get into a good shouting match --

CLAYTON

(Interrupting, trying to get JOHN to shut up.)

Just a minor argument, nothing serious. Everything's fine.

ROWAN

(Talking to the camera.)

We'll find out next week when Clayton and Jamie Ann London conclude their appearance on "Star Attraction", airing on this very network. While we still have Clayton on our show, I want to see if we can talk him into sending a poem out to Jamie Ann?

CLAYTON

I didn't plan on doing that. I don't have anything.

ROWAN

You can come up with something. Jamie Ann's watching, you know, she's a big fan of the show.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

CLAYTON

(Stands up and walks to the front of the stage. Pause.)

Okay, this is the best I can do without forewarning.

(Pause. Recites poem with poetic voice.)

Like soul-mates, exotic fish somehow
find each other in an ocean
Some believe that contact is made
through the water's wade, flow, and motion
But there is an attraction far greater than that
which surely nature provides
It is the same power within gravity which holds
all of the stars in the sky
Passing by the love of your life
would be an act you would ever regret
So nature makes sure that one love is for you

and once seen you will never forget
I say these words to you my love
For you, I will never forget

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud. CLAYTON sits down.)

ROWAN

What a great poem. How do you even start writing something like that?

CLAYTON

I don't remember, it's from a poetry book I wrote a long time ago.

ROWAN

Oh, so you didn't write it for Jamie Ann? Do you remember the girl you wrote it for?

CLAYTON

It was a long time ago ... I don't remember what my inspiration was.

ROWAN

(With contempt.)

It's strange to me that the poem is about meeting your one and only soul-mate, but at the same time you're reciting it to someone other than the person you wrote it for.

(CLAYTON is silent with a confused look on his face.)

JOHN

(With anger.)

You asked him to recite a poem and he did. Who cares what he was thinking when he wrote it. At least he wrote it, I was talking with your writers back stage, and they told me you don't write any of your own material. How strange is that?

ROWAN

(Defensively.)

All shows have writers.

JOHN

Did you make that line up all by yourself? I don't see it on the cue card? You're pretty good --

ROWAN

(Interrupting.)

We have to go to commercial, but we'll be back. We do have the best writers in the world, so stay with us and I'll read what they write, on "The Rowan Coaster show".

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 13

AT RISE:

(Center stage is the “Star Attraction” show stage. ARTIE, MARGARET, JAMIE and CLAYTON are sitting, and positioned as they were before they showed the video. The scene is in current time and is a continuation of the live TV show.)

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ARTIE

(Talking to the camera.)

That was quite a show! Crazy John didn’t pull any punches. Hopefully, he’ll behave himself tonight, he’s here in the studio audience waiting for us to invite him up.

(Looking to JOHN in the audience.)

Crazy John, you’re officially invited, come on up.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud. JOHN walks up on stage, looks all around himself with a big grin as if basking in the lime light. ARTIE, MARGARET, JAMIE and CLAYTON stand to shake his hand.)

JOHN

(JOHN says names as he shakes hands.)

Artie, Margaret, Jamie Ann, Clayton.

(JOHN sits next to ARTIE, and everyone moves down a seat and sits down.)

Before we start, Artie, I just want you to know that I am single and I am available to be fixed up with a gorgeous actress on the show.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

(Talking to camera.)

Calling all eligible gorgeous actresses. If you’re interested in being fixed up with Crazy John, mail him a letter introducing yourself.

(Talking to JOHN.)

John, does your Winnebago have a mailing address?

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

JOHN

No, they can just send it here.

ARTIE

Okay, we'll keep an eye out for that. John, how did you like being on the Rowan Coaster show?

JOHN

He's an idiot.

(STAGE HAND displays laugh sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS laugh.)

ARTIE

Okay...

(Overwhelmed facial expression. Pause.)

You have no comments on the show?

JOHN

Of course I do. Rowan was way out of line ... how petty is it to give someone a hard time over a poem. I talked to Clayton about this.

(Talking slowly and clearly, as a matter of fact.)

Look. The poem Clayton read Jamie Ann on the show was not recycled. The original poem is just a generic poem about soul-mates, it wasn't written for anyone specific. Clayton just changed the ending a little ... to personalize it for Jamie Ann.

ARTIE

Okay, I believe you. We'll give Clayton that one.

(Pause.)

But, John.

(Pause.)

We've been questioning Clayton's communication skills on tonight's show, and we've been building a case against him. John, Clayton has you on his side. Take the stand in his defense and tell us why we're wrong.

JOHN

(Pause.)

I've known Clayton for over ten years, and there's one thing about him that no one here seems to understand. Clayton's just a regular guy. I think Jamie Ann got caught up in the words of Clayton's poetry, and her expectations grew to the proportions of a romance novel. Clayton's not a person who expresses his every thought and feeling with poetic wonderment. The reality is, poets are just regular people and Clayton's just a regular guy.

ARTIE

Good insight John, you may have something there; unfortunately, we don't have time for further discussion. We've reach that pivotal point on this show when we have to kick the lovebirds out of the nest.

(Talking to JAMIE.)

Jamie Ann, it looks to me like the relationship is in your hands. Clayton will go home to Buffalo, and you'll drive home to Hoboken, what plans do you have for seeing Clayton in the near future?

JAMIE

(Pause. Firm response.)

I don't know.

ARTIE

You don't know? Tell us what you do know.

JAMIE

(Coldly stated.)

I hope Clayton and I can meet out for coffee sometime soon; but no, I don't have any plans to see him. My plans are to take time off from dating ... and find new direction for my career. I think that's the best thing for me right now. I do want to make it clear that Pierre and I are not getting back together as a couple or as roommates. We're just friends, and I hope Clayton and I can be friends too.

(STAGE HAND displays awe sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS awe.)

ARTIE

How disappointing. We were so close on this one, but it doesn't look like a happily-ever-after ending. I'm sorry Clayton. Any closing words as we wrap up tonight's show?

CLAYTON

(CLAYTON stands up and starts singing song #13, "Jilted Lover". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

THERE WERE MOMENTS, QUITE A FEW
THERE WERE MOMENTS, NOW WE'RE THROUGH
THERE WERE MOMENTS, YOU FORGOT
THERE WERE MOMENTS, I DID NOT

LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE BLAME
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE

JAMIE

(Stands up.)

YOU WERE WATCHING, WATCHING ME
YOU WERE WATCHING, WHAT DID YOU SEE
YOU WERE WATCHING, STEADY STARE
YOU WERE WATCHING, DID YOU CARE

CLAYTON

LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE BLAME
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE
LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE PAIN
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE, YOU'LL COME BACK TO ME AGAIN

ARTIE

(Stands up.)

THERE WAS FURY, HEARTS TORN

MARGARET

(Stands up.)

THERE WAS FURY, WOMAN SCORN

JAMIE

THERE WAS FURY, THINGS SAID

CLAYTON

THERE WAS FURY, FIRE BE FED

LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE BLAME
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE
LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE PAIN
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE, YOU'LL COME BACK TO ME AGAIN

THERE IS NOTHING, NOT A THING
THERE IS NOTHING, SONG TO SING
THERE IS NOTHING, CAN THERE BE
THERE IS NOTHING, THERE IS NOTHING
THERE IS NOTHING, THERE IS NOTHING

LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE BLAME
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE
LIKE A JILTED LOVER, TRYING HARD TO TAKE THE PAIN
I MAKE MYSELF THAT PROMISE, YOU'LL COME BACK TO ME AGAIN

ARTIE

(Very fast, talking to the camera.)

We are clean out of time. We're going to have to say goodbye to Jamie Ann London and Clayton Pritchard, thank you so much for being on our show. Margaret and I will be back next week on "Star Attraction".

STAGE HAND

(Yelling from off stage.)

That's a wrap. We're off the air.

("Star Attraction" is over. Everyone is at ease except for CLAYTON, who sits next to JOHN and stares at the floor. JOHN looks at CLAYTON, feels bad for him, and puts his hand on his shoulder. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 14

AT RISE:

(Stage left, is CLAYTON'S New York City guest apartment. CLAYTON walks into the dimly lit apartment from stage left and accidentally kicks a small box on the floor by the entrance. He picks up the box and takes it to the small, ugly, uncomfortable apartment chair. He takes a close look at it, shakes it, and puts it on the table next to his chair without opening it. He sits down and picks up the phone which is on a table next to the chair, and calls JAMIE. The scene is in current time and takes place shortly after the "Star Attraction" live TV show ends.)

CLAYTON

(With desperation.)

Jamie, it's Clayton. I just got back to my apartment and felt I needed to call you. I'm really confused about what just happened. I'm not sure what's real and what's reality television. All I know is that I care about you and I hope you care enough about me to consider seeing me again. Please call me back ... Bye.

(CLAYTON sits and stares into space. The phone rings and he jumps up thinking it might be JAMIE. He starts to reach for the phone and backs off a couple of times before he answers it, but answers it promptly.)

Hello.

RONDA

Clayton, it's Ronda,

(RONDA appears stage right in her living room in Buffalo. She has her phone to her ear and is talking to CLAYTON with a soft and sympathetic tone.)

How are you doing?

CLAYTON

(Very sad.)

I'm doing. How was the show? How big of a fool did I make out of myself.

RONDA

No, you were fabulous. You handled yourself very well. You were intelligent, interesting, ... entertaining. I'm certain everyone who watched it admired you, Clayton. You were terrific.

CLAYTON

You think so?

RONDA

I'm not just saying that, you have nothing to feel foolish about. Hey, did you get my gift?

CLAYTON

I did. I just got in and haven't had a chance to open it.

RONDA

Well, don't expect much. It's the thought that counts, and you're not getting much more than thought on this one. I had the gift shop wrap it up for me and sneak it in your door before you got back.

CLAYTON

I'm exhausted, I need to get some sleep. Do you mind if I open it in the morning?

RONDA

No, open it when you feel up to it, it's no big deal. Have a good night Clayton.

CLAYTON

Good night.

(CLAYTON looks at the box with curiosity. He picks it up, looks at it, puts it down, and picks it up again. He finally opens it to find a pencil and a pad of blank paper. He puts them down on the table next to the chair and stares upward as he thinks. He picks up the pencil and paper and starts writing at a normal speed. His writing slowly increases in speed until he is writing extremely fast. While he's writing, his body moves in an odd and mechanical way. His head frequently and quickly looks up and down as if he is seeing words float in the air and land on his paper. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 15

AT RISE:

(Stage left, CLAYTON is in his furnished New York City guest apartment, sleeping in the small, ugly, uncomfortable chair with the pencil and pad of paper on his lap. Someone knocks on the door. CLAYTON slowly wakes to hear the second set of knocks. He is then quick to stand up, thinking it might be JAMIE. His pencil and pad of paper fall to the ground. He approaches the door, stage left. The scene is in current time and takes place the morning following the “Star Attraction” live TV show.)

CLAYTON

(Under his breath.)

Jamie?

(CLAYTON opens the door with surprise.)

Pierre?

PIERRE

Clayton, I’m sorry to disturb you so early in the morning.

CLAYTON

Come in.

(CLAYTON invites Pierre in, they stand near the door. CLAYTON is still a little groggy.)

What time is it?

PIERRE

It’s almost six o’clock. I have to catch an early flight, I’m going back to France to stay with family for a while. Before I leave, I want to thank you for the show last night. I’ve been staying in New York out of hope that Jamie will come back to me. While I was watching last night, I realized that this is not where I should be in my life, and I made the decision to move on. I felt I should thank you in person.

(PIERRE offers his hand, CLAYTON shakes hands.)

CLAYTON

I don’t know what I did to help, but if you say so. I wish you the best, Pierre. Enjoy France.

PIERRE

And I hope you find everything you're looking for, and sorry again for waking you up so early.

CLAYTON

That's okay. Actually, I'm glad you woke me, I'm leaving the city today too and I need to go to the studio to sign some paperwork before I leave.

PIERRE (off)

Goodbye Clayton.

(PIERRE exits stage left.)

CLAYTON

Take care Pierre.

(CLAYTON closes the door, walks back to the chair and picks up his pad of paper. He leafs through a number of papers to look at what he wrote the night before. He finds one page that interests him and starts to read it as he sings song #14, "Face The New Day". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

I AM WITH A BROKEN HEART
IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST LIKE THE SHOCK FROM A BLAST
AN EXPLOSION OF WORDS
I CANNOT LET GO
WITH DAMAGE CONTROL I JUST DIG DEEPER HOLES
BUT I SURE NEED TO TRY
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH IT
THERE'S NO DRUG FOR THE PAIN
AND NO STOP TO THE TRAIN OF THOUGHT THAT I AM IN
I MUST FACE THE NEW DAY

DAH, DAH, DAH...
NAH, NAH, NAH...

I HAVE STARTED TO GROW
MY SHORTCOMINGS REVEALED, MY LIPS NO LONGER SEALED
I WILL SAY WHAT I FEEL
I HAVE A LINE FOR A POEM
OH WHAT PRICE DID I PAY FOR THESE THOUGHTS THAT HAD STRAYED
THEY COME BACK TO ME NOW
I AM ABLE TO RHYME AGAIN
WORDS THEY COME FROM MY SOUL THERE'S NO STOPPING THE FLOW
NOW IT'S ALL THAT I HAVE
I WILL FACE THE NEW DAY

(Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 16

AT RISE:

(Stage left is PHIL'S television network office. It has a desk and chair, with a guest chair stage left of it. PHIL is sitting behind his desk working as CLAYTON walks in. Scene is in current time and takes place shortly after CLAYTON wakes up, the morning after the "Star Attraction" live TV show.)

PHIL

Hey Clayton, you all right?

CLAYTON

(Slightly distraught.)

Yeah ... yeah ... I'm all right. I'm a little broken hearted, but I'll be okay. This all happened so fast, I can't believe it's been six weeks since I was in here talking to you about appearing on the show. Looking back, I feel like none of it was real, like it was all one big television show.

PHIL

It was real Clayton ... and it was a television show. I know you had a tough night last night, but I hope you don't walk away from this with any regrets. You're about to sign for a \$125,000 bank transfer. Your book sales are through the roof. Your career as a poet is alive and well, and you didn't even have to write anything new. As much as you were concerned about being on TV, you didn't lose any respect. No one will look at you as being any less than what you are, a great poet and a genuinely nice person.

CLAYTON

I appreciate that ... and no, I don't have any regrets. As surreal as the show seemed, it did force me to swallow a healthy dose of reality. I think I needed that more than anything.

PHIL

Good.

(Pause. Opens a folder on his desk and points at paperwork on top.)

You just need to sign here, here and here ... and we'll transfer the funds right away.

(CLAYTON takes a pen off of the desk and signs paperwork.)

Just don't spend it until the tax man figures his cut. Still, not bad for six weeks worth of putting up with us.

CLAYTON

No ... not bad at all. I almost forgot about the money ... thank you.

PHIL

This is it for now

(CLAYTON and PHIL shake hands.)

You have a safe trip back to Buffalo. Sure you don't want me to book you a flight?

CLAYTON

No, I'm good. I'm going back with Crazy John in his Winnebago. He has a wedding to go to, so he'll be in Buffalo for a couple of weeks.

PHIL

Sounds like fun. Is there anything else I can do for you before you go?

CLAYTON

Yeah, there is one thing.

(Takes an envelope out of his pocket.)

Can you get this to Jamie?

PHIL

(Phil takes the envelope and puts it on his desk.)

Absolutely. She'll be in later today. I'll put it right here with her paperwork and I'll make sure she gets it.

CLAYTON (off)

I appreciate it. I appreciate everything.

PHIL (off)

I'm the one in your debt, Clayton. I'll walk you out.

(CLAYTON and PHIL exit stage right. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 17

AT RISE:

(Stage left is PHIL'S television network office. It has a desk and chair, with a guest chair stage left of it. The office is empty

until PHIL and JAMIE enter from stage left.
The scene is in current time and takes place
early afternoon, shortly after CLAYTON
leaves New York City.)

PHIL (off)

(Walks to his desk with JAMIE, picks up the envelope
CLAYTON left for her, and hands it to her.)

Let's see, here it is. This is the letter from Clayton, and you're welcome to hang out in
here for some privacy. I have some running around I have to do.

JAMIE

Thanks Phil.

(PHIL exits stage left. JAMIE sits down in the guest chair
and opens the envelope and takes out a single piece of
paper. As she reads it, she sings song #15, "Long Shadows
Of Dawn". Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio
recording.)

YOU AND I FLY LIKE WIND THROUGH THE TREES OF LIFE
RUSTLING LEAVES WITH THE GENTLEST BREEZE, THEY DANCE
IF YOU AND I TRIED AS HARD AS WE SHOULD
WE'D GET TO THE TRUTH, BE UNDERSTOOD
YOU EVER WILL GLOW AS THE MUSE FOR THE POEM I WRITE
THROUGH LONG SHADOWS OF DAWN

(JAMIE stands up.)

DAY AND NIGHT, WRONG OR WRITE
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT YOU WERE MEANING
RIGHT OR WRONG, WEAK OR STRONG
YOU DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS FEELING
WE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE WE WERE GOING
WE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE WE WENT WRONG
STRONG OR WEAK, TONGUE-IN-CHEEK
BEYOND A POEM BEYOND A SONG
THROUGH LONG SHADOWS OF DAWN

IN THE WAKE OF A STORM, A POET REBORN TO WRITE
THE LARK AGAIN SING AND A SOUL WONDERS FREE THROUGH LIFE
MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB ALL START WITH A STEP
THEY END WHERE THEY START, COMMITMENTS KEPT
I BREATHE IN THE DAY AND EXHALE A POEM THROUGH MY SOUL
THROUGH LONG SHADOWS OF DAWN

DAY AND NIGHT, WRONG TO RIGHT
I WILL SEARCH TO FIND THE MEANING
RIGHT FROM WRONG, WEAK TO STRONG
I WILL SAY WHAT I AM FEELING
I WILL KNOW WHERE I AM GOING
I WILL KNOW WHERE I WENT WRONG
STRONG FROM WEAK, TONGUE-IN-CHEEK
BEYOND A POEM, BEYOND A SONG
THROUGH LONG SHADOWS OF DAWN

(JAMIE sits down and holds her head down as she starts to cry. She holds the poem to her heart. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 18

AT RISE:

(Center stage is “The Rowan Coaster Show”. ROWAN is sitting behind a large desk with two guest chairs stage right of him. TERRY is the guest, and she is sitting next to him. The real audience is now the show’s studio audience. The scene takes place one year into the future. The time is in the evening.)

STAGE HAND

(Yelling from off stage.)

5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1.

ROWAN

Welcome back to “The Rowan Coaster Show”.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

We have makeup artist of the stars Terry Winward here with her new book, “The Poet”, which she co-wrote with the poet Clayton Pritchard.

(Holds up book.)

Terry, Tell us about the book.

TERRY

Today is the official release of “The Poet” and the one year anniversary of Clayton Pritchard’s first appearance on the “Star Attraction” TV show, where he was fixed up

with actress Jamie Ann London. The book tells the story of Clayton's appearance on the show as well as his short lived relationship with the actress.

ROWAN

And it includes his appearance on my show. I'm in the book too ... for better or for worse.

TERRY

Yes, you are.

ROWAN

I read the book and found it to be captivating. It's not a poetry book, but there are several great poems mixed throughout the story. And I have to admit, since I've read the book, I've noticed myself treating my guests with a little more respect.

TERRY

I'm glad you liked it. The poetry is all fresh material from Clayton, and I think it's his best work to date. Clayton has the gift of poetry, but his best gift is his ability to inspire. Really, his poetry is just a vehicle for his inspiration.

ROWAN

Well Put. Let's talk about Jamie Ann London. We all know that Clayton and Jamie Ann went their separate ways after the show, do they keep in touch?

TERRY

They do keep in touch. Before we sent the book to the publisher, Clayton sent a copy to Jamie Ann to make sure she was okay with it. She really liked it and she even made some suggestions that we used in the final draft.

ROWAN

Now, Jamie Ann is going to be starring in a new movie, is that right?

TERRY

Yes, she's in Hollywood right now working on it. It's a love story called "Sea Esta". It's her first leading role in a big budget film, so we all wish her the best.

ROWAN

It's good to see that she's doing what she loves to do. Hey, what ever happened to John Cressey, or should I say Crazy John? He fell off the map since last year, what's he been up to?

TERRY

John painted all of the illustrations in the book, so Clayton and I have been keeping him busy. Now that the book is finished, he's looking forward to some female companionship, John's going to be appearing on "Star Attraction" next season.

ROWAN

Oh, really? That should be interesting.

TERRY

His brief appearance on the show last year brought in more fan mail than what a lot of the celebrities were getting, so the producers promised to have him back as a bachelor. Stay tuned.

ROWAN

I can't wait. So far, you've updated us on Jamie Ann and Crazy John, but tell us about you. I've heard rumors that you and Clayton are having a relationship that exceeds professional status. Any truth to that?

TERRY

(With shyness.)

I ... I can't say.

ROWAN

What do you mean, you can't say. Oh, you can say.

TERRY

(With excited embarrassment.)

When Clayton and I were working on the book together, we were very professional in our conduct, but there was definitely romantic tension between us. Once we finished the first draft, we went out to celebrate and found ourselves ... well ... not so professional. So, yes, I'll go on record as saying that Clayton and I are a couple, the rumors are true.

(STAGE HAND displays applause sign, AUDIENCE MEMBERS applaud.)

ROWAN

And once again, the "Star Attraction" television show makes another match.

TERRY

I met Clayton on the show as his makeup artist, does that count?

ROWAN

Sure it counts.

TERRY

I guess I never looked at it that way.

ROWAN

That's what I'm here for. While you're here, Terry, can you recite a poem from the book for us?

TERRY

I'd love to.

ROWAN

(Gives his copy of the book to TERRY.)

Ladies and gentlemen, a poem by Clayton Pritchard, read by Terry Winward.

TERRY

(Walks to the front of the stage with the book. Talking to the audience.)

When I first met Clayton, we reminisced about our childhood days. In our conversation, Clayton talked about a question he was asked when he was a child. A common childhood question ... If you could be anybody, who would that person be? Clayton was frustrated, though, as he couldn't remember how he had answered that question, asked so many years ago. Recently, his memory returned, and he put his recollection within this poem, appropriately entitled "If You Could Be Anybody".

(TERRY opens the book to read CLAYTON'S poem. She starts to sing song #16, "If You Could Be Anybody, Part II." Go to www.thepoet.org/downloads for audio recording.)

AS A CHILD I WAS ASKED A QUESTION DEEP
IF YOU COULD BE ANYBODY, WHO WOULD THAT PERSON BE

CAST

(All main characters except CLAYTON and JAMIE walk out on stage from stage left and stage right. All sing.)

I WAS WONDERING WHAT SHOULD I SAY
ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT DID I SAY

PHIL

WOULD I BE A RICH MAN, MAYBE A MOVIE STAR
WOULD I BE MYSELF FOR YOU ARE WHO YOU ARE

CAST

(JAMIE and entire cast walk out on stage. All sing.)

I WAS WONDERING WHAT SHOULD I SAY
ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT DID I SAY

CLAYTON

(Last to walk out on stage.)

I CAME UP WITH AN ANSWER, ONE NOT QUITE AS DEEP
AND LIKE A LUNAR LANDING, I TOOK A GIANT LEAP
I SAID I'D BE MYSELF BUT WITH ONE MINOR CHANGE
I'D PONDER BETTER QUESTIONS TO OCCUPY MY DAY

CAST

I WAS WONDERING WHAT SHOULD I SAY

ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT DID I SAY

I WAS WONDERING WHAT SHOULD I SAY

(Curtain, end of musical.)

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