

THE CAPITALIST VENTRILOQUIST

\_\_\_\_\_A New Musical\_\_\_\_\_

Book & Lyrics By Tom Attea

Contact:  
Tom Attea  
Phone: 917.647.4321  
Email: [tattea@gmail.com](mailto:tattea@gmail.com)  
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ERIC PORTLY.....CEO OF A WALL STREET HEDGE FUND

STANLEY COLE.....ERIC'S BIGGEST INVESTOR AND BRENDA'S FATHER

BRITTANY.....ERIC'S SECRETARY

MARGO.....ERIC'S WIFE

JULIE..... ERIC AND MARGO'S BRITISH MAID

ALAN.....ERIC'S SON, A RECENT MBA AND VENTRILOQUIST

BRENDA.....ALAN'S GIRLFRIEND AND STANLEY'S DAUGHTER

SAM DEVON.....A TALENT AGENT

RANDY.....ALAN'S DUMMY

EMPLOYEES OF THE HEDGE FUND AND VARIOUS RESTAURANTS

SETTINGS

THE HEDGE FUND

THE PORTLY LIVING ROOM

ALAN'S APARTMENT

A COMEDY CLUB

RESTAURANT TABLES

## SONGS

## ACT I

I'M THE MASTER OF WALL STREET.....	ERIC
DO YOU THINK WE EVER COULD BE POOR?.....	MARGO & ERIC
CAN YOU?.....	ALAN
INSEPARABLE.....	ALAN & RANDY
THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE.....	ALAN
JUST A LITTLE TIME FOR LOVE.....	ALAN & BRENDA
TELL ME.....	ERIC
IF ONLY I KNEW WHO YOU ARE.....	RANDY
I MAY NOT LOVE YOU.....	ALAN
WHERE ELSE?.....	OFFICE STAFF
IT'S A NETTLE WORLD.....	RANDY
FOR MY SON'S OWN GOOD.....	ERIC
DON'T TAKE ME FOR GRANTED.....	BRENDA

## ACT II

WOULD YOU?.....	RANDY
JUST LIKE THE GUY.....	STANLEY
I WISH YOU HAD A LIGHT SWITCH.....	BRENDA
I NEVER HAD A MILLION BUCKS.....	SAM
HOW CAN THEY PUT LOVE FIRST?.....	ALAN
WHAT IS GREATER, LOVE OR KINDNESS?.....	ALAN
STANLEY COLE IS COMING TO TOWN.....	STANLEY
PERFECT FOR ME.....	BRENDA & ALAN
REPRISE.....	CAST

## PRODUCTION NOTES

It would be ideal to have a true singing ventriloquist in Alan's role. If such a lead is not available, Alan may be played by an actor who learns to work with the dummy while the voice of the dummy is prerecorded or by an actor who is not a great ventriloquist, in which case the dummy would make an occasional comment, as Charlie McCarthy used to make to Edgar Bergen, that he moves his lips -- and has to stop if they're going to be a big success. (Example dialogue if the third choice is selected:  
Randy: Can you stop moving your lips? How can we be a big success if you can't?  
Alan: I'm an amateur ventriloquist. Randy: You can say that again.)

ACT I

Scene 1

Portly's Hedge Fund. The office of the CEO, Eric Portly. He's seated at his desk, while Stanley Cole, his largest investor, is pacing back and forth.

STANLEY

Let me make a tactful understatement. The returns on my 5-billion-dollar portfolio have been less than ideal.

ERIC

We were doing great until the economy took a nosedive.

STANLEY

I do not consider a one-percent return great. And that is the best your hedge fund has ever performed, at least, for me.

ERIC

As soon as the economy turns around, your profits will skyrocket.

STANLEY

I'm not so sure. Your lackluster performance is even beginning to impact my charitable giving -- the annual handful of golden wheat that I sprinkle to the clamoring hands of deserving recipients from the great granary and enormous silos of my wealth. I like to give away money. It's the most interesting and rewarding thing a billionaire can do. Philanthropy is the distinguished consolation for having one's entire life defined by the possession of enormous amounts of money. But to continue at my accustomed level of philanthropy, I need to make even more billions. Got it? The truth is, I'd pull out of this bottomless sinkhole if my daughter wasn't engaged to your son.

ERIC

Glad you brought up my son. As you know, he's a mathematical genius.

STANLEY

Sometimes I wonder at unfathomable depth of the gene pool. He must have inherited his genius from your wife's side of the family tree.

ERIC

Actually, most people say he looks a lot like me. But, wherever he got it, he has it. And, as I assured you, he's developing a new and entirely revolutionary trading model. Once he has it, we'll bring firms like Goldman Sachs to their knees.

STANLEY

My daughter mentioned his project. Let's hope it works.

ERIC

No need to worry about that. The statistical variables of trading are child's play for him. And, once he delivers the new model, it will be feast, not famine, for all of us.

STANLEY

It better be. I need returns. Big returns! That is, if I'm going to keep the hog's share of my money here. Goldman and the rest of the rapacious pack court me all the time.

ERIC

I know that, Stanley. But you do want to be here when we start to lead the wolf pack. And that's just what's going to happen. I know my son. There's no way the high-speed computers the other funds have lined up in New Jersey will be able to compete with the trading model he comes up with.

(sings)

I KNOW YOUR RETURNS HAVEN'T BEEN  
 QUITE WHAT WE HOPED THEY'D BE.  
 BUT STICK WITH ME AND SOON  
 THEY'LL GROW LIKE A RED INK TREE --

(spoken)

Excuse me. Of course, I meant to say "like a red oak tree" -- a giant red oak tree!

(sings)

HOW FORTUNATE YOU ARE  
 THAT MY INVESTMENT ADVICE  
 MAKES TRUSTING ANYONE ELSE  
 AS RISKY AS THROWING DICE.

IM THE MASTER OF WALL STREET --  
 SO ADEPT AT HIGH FINANCE  
 I ALWAYS LAND ON MY FEET  
 AND SELDOM LOSE MY PANTS.

I KNOW THE RED AND GREEN  
 STOCK QUOTES THAT FLASH ALL DAY  
 ACROSS MY TRADING SCREEN  
 SEEM LIKE A CASINO IN PLAY.

BUT DON'T YOU WORRY. DESPITE  
 THE OCCASIONAL SHORTFALL,  
 MY EXPERIENCE AND FORESIGHT  
 CAN EARN BILLIONS FOR US ALL.

(spoken)

Oh, yes --

(sings)

IM THE MASTER OF WALL STREET --  
 SO ADEPT AT HIGH FINANCE  
 I ALWAYS LAND ON MY FEET  
 AND SELDOM LOSE MY PANTS.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING.  
 IF A BET GOES SOUTH, MY FRIEND,  
 OR WE GET A MARGIN CALL,  
 WE'LL COME OUT AHEAD IN THE END!

WHY, DUE TO OUR DEEP RESEARCH  
 AND UNCANNY INVESTMENT STYLE,  
 WE HAVE SOME CLIENTS WHO PURCH-  
 ASE THEIR OWN BAHAMIAN ISLE.

YES, THE OUTLOOK WILL ALWAYS BE SUNNY  
 IF YOU TRUST ME WITH YOUR MONEY,  
 YOUR RETURNS WILL BE ROBUST  
 AND, OF COURSE, YOU WON'T GO BUST  
 IF YOU TRUST ME WITH YOU MONEY --  
 TRUST ME WITH YOUR MONEY.

(PATTER)

I'M ADEPT AT STOCKS,  
BLUE CHIPS AND PENNY,  
I GO LONG OR SHORT  
AND TAKE PROFITS ON MANY.

I CAN PICK A BOND,  
TREASURY OR JUNK,  
AND WHATEVER THE YIELD,  
I CAN STILL EARN A CHUNK.

I CAN LOOK AT A FUND,  
EVEN ONE THAT'S COMPLEX,  
AND SEE RIGHT THROUGH  
RIDDLES OF SPECS.

I WAGER ON FUTURES  
AND GRAB IPO'S.  
I DARE ON OPTIONS  
AND OUTGUESS ALL THE PROS.

I GOBBLE UP TECHS,  
NEWLY EMERGING,  
AND DECISIVELY SELL  
ONES QUICKLY SUBMERGING.

I BET ON THE EURO  
OPPORTUNELY SOLD,  
SPECULATE IN SILVER,  
AND GAMBLE ON GOLD.

I SEEK OUT MARKETS,  
NEAR AND FAR,  
HOPING TO PROFIT  
WHEREVER THEY ARE!

I DIVERSIFY  
TO HEDGE MY BETS.

THOUGH DERIVATIVES  
CRUSHED ME WITH DEBTS.

BUT DON'T LET THE FATE  
OF LEHMAN AND BEAR,  
MERRILL AND WAMU  
GIVE YOU A SCARE.

THOUGH TRADING IS DONE  
AT LIGHTENING SPEED,  
WITH EMOTIONS IN CHARGE  
CALLED FEAR AND GREED,  
BY NERVOUS HANDS  
RESPONDING TO NEWS  
FLASHED ROUND THE WORLD,  
HOW MUCH CAN YOU LOSE?

THOUGH WE'RE DRIVEN TO  
AND FRO, THIS WAY  
AND THAT, IN RESPONSE  
TO REPORTS AND HEARSAY,  
AND SO OFF A CLIFF  
WE'RE ALL BOUND TO DASH  
FROM TIME TO TIME.  
DON'T TROUBLE YOUR MIND.  
YOU KNOW MOST OF US  
WILL NEVER CRASH,  
SINCE OUR UNCLE SAM  
WILL BE THERE TO CATCH  
US IN HIS MIGHTY ARMS  
AND DUTIFULLY PATCH  
EACH BALANCE SHEET,  
SO WE CAN ASCEND  
ONCE MORE TO THE HEIGHTS  
WHERE WE PLAY THE GAME  
THAT HAS BROUGHT THE STREET  
IT'S FRAGILE FAME.

(spoken)

Ah, yes!

(sings)

IM THE MASTER OF WALL STREET --  
 SO ADEPT AT HIGH FINANCE  
 I ALWAYS LAND ON MY FEET  
 AND SELDOM LOSE MY PANTS.

AND, AS YOU KNOW, MY SON,  
 WHO'S A MATHEMATICAL WHIZ  
 AND YOUR DAUGHTER'S FIANCE',  
 WILL SOON BE JOINING THE BIZ.

THEN YOU CAN REST ASSURED  
 WE'LL HAVE THE SMARTS TO OUT TRADE  
 EVER FIRMS LIKE GOLDMAN SACHS.  
 SO YOU, MY FRIEND, WILL HAVE IT MADE.

(spoken)

Yes, yes, my friend!

THE OUTLOOK WILL ALWAYS BE SUNNY  
 IF YOU TRUST ME WITH YOUR MONEY,  
 YOUR RETURNS WILL BE ROBUST  
 AND, OF COURSE, YOU'LL NEVER GO BUST  
 IF YOU TRUST ME WITH YOU MONEY --  
 TRUST ME, TRUST ME, I URGE YOU,  
 AS A FRIEND, WHATEVER YOU DO,  
 TRUST ME WITH YOUR MONEY!

STANLEY

I'm obliged to believe what you say, Eric, primarily due to the ceaseless intercession of my daughter. I understand Alan graduates this week.

ERIC

Yes, he does. MBA from Wharton, at last. And he reports here for work Monday morning. Are you coming to the graduation?

STANLEY

I'm leaving that social nicety up to my daughter.

ERIC

You should at least come to the party we're throwing at our apartment.

STANLEY

I'll think about it. When do you think the boy genius will deliver his new baby?

ERIC

He only has to double check his calculations. I tell you, I can't wait. Once we have it, we'll trade the gold cuff links off of everybody else.

STANLEY

My daughter has encouraged me to be gullible. Let me just say your son's new trading model better work. Got it, my friend?

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 1

## ACT I

## Scene 2

The Portly home. Eric enters, attache case in hand.  
Puts it down. Julie, the English housekeeper and  
cook, enters.

JULIE

Welcome home, Mr. Portly.

ERIC

Thank you, Julie. Is my wife around?

JULIE

Last time I saw her, she was about to give her flawless complexion a hormone treatment.

ERIC

I like that. She's the only woman her age I know who doesn't have even one freckle,  
thanks to the wonders of cosmetic dermatology.

JULIE

I hope I look as young as she does when I'm her age.

ERIC

You will. Don't worry. All you have to do is breathe the vapors.

His wife, Margo, enters, dressed.

MARGO

Welcome home, dear.

ERIC

Ah, how radiant and youthful you look.

MARGO

You're such a diplomat, darling.

(to Julie)

Did you tell him I was giving my skin a hormone treatment?

JULIE

Yes, I did.

ERIC

That was not what inspired my compliment. It was your perpetually youthful look.

MARGO

Thank you.

(holds out her cheek; he kisses it)

ERIC

Are we eating out or in tonight?

MARGO

I thought we'd eat in. I'm so tired of restaurants -- and you're never quite sure that they wash the vegetables. Julie has prepared a Chateaubriand with a red-wine demiglace, just the way you like it.

ERIC

Great! An evening at home sounds like a welcome relief. The lion in his den, licking the wounds his own kind have inflicted on him during the rabid hunt. What time is dinner, Julie?

JULIE

In just a few minutes.

ERIC

Excellent! May I have a glass of Chateau St. Julien? I could use a glass to ease away the tensions of the day -- off to oblivion on the delectable flow of a succulent red wine. So could my patched-up ticker.

JULIE

I already opened it so it could breathe.

ERIC

Wonderful! I think the most delightful medical discovery of the 21st Century is that red wine is good for your heart. Like some, too, Margo?

MARGO

Yes. But only one glass. Broken capillaries in a woman's nose aren't as readily overlooked as they are in a man's.

ERIC

If they're due to the wine, my dear, I welcome them. Without it to relax me, I would've been the richest man in the cemetery a long time ago. What a nerve-knotting day I had!

JULIE

I'll be right back.

(exits)

MARGO

Tell me about it, dear.

ERIC

Stanley was breaking my hump again. All I can say is, it's a good thing Brenda and Alan are engaged. If he ever pulls out, the fund could collapse.

MARGO

Well, we don't have to worry about that. They're such a happy couple.

ERIC

Thank my all-to-often unlucky stars. I can't wait for them to get hitched. Then I'll finally have a permanent lock on Stanley's billions.

MARGO

I'll be so relieved. I hate to think of us as poor, skid row and all that untidy sort of existence. I don't know that I'd feel at home as a bag lady.

(sings)

DO YOU THINK WE EVER COULD BE POOR?  
I'M NOT SURE HOW GOOD I'D BE  
AT ABJECT POVERTY  
AND SCRUBBING SOMEONE ELSE'S FLOOR.

ERIC

(sings)

DO I THINK WE EVER COULD BE POOR?  
YOU MUST BE KIDDING, DEAR.  
YOU KNOW ONCE OUR SON IS HERE  
WE'LL MAKE MORE THAN EVER BEFORE.

MARGO

YOU'RE SO RIGHT. WE NEVER WILL BE POOR.  
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO  
WITHOUT FIFTH AVENUE.  
HAVING NEVER SET FOOT IN A WALMART STORE.

ERIC

DON'T WORRY, DEAR. WE'LL NEVER BE POOR.  
I'M QUITE A TALENTED MAN  
WITH MANY A BACKUP PLAN,  
INCLUDING THE WEALTH I STASHED OFFSHORE.

ERIC

OH, I'M SO HAPPY WE'LL NEVER BE POOR.  
BUT DO PROMISE YOU'LL NEVER DREAM  
OF STARTING A PONZI SCHEME.  
LIVING IN JAIL WOULD BE SUCH A BORE.

BOTH

OH, IT'S GREAT TO KNOW  
WE'LL NEVER BE POOR.  
AND A SHAME THAT MANY MUST BE.  
BUT WE DO GIVE TO CHARITY.  
SO WE'VE EARNED THE LIFESTYLES WE ADORE.  
YES, IT'S GREAT TO KNOW WE'LL NEVER BE POOR  
AND HAVE EARNED THE LIFESTYLE WE ADORE!

ERIC

But I must tell you, dear, I prefer Wall Street before electronic trading took over. Up one second, down the next. My trading screen is like a casino in Las Vegas. It's enough to drive a sane man to ...

(notice as Julie enters with a tray that has  
two glasses of wine on it)

... exquisite red wine.

JULIE

Emergency services.

ERIC

Ah, just in time.

(takes wine glasses)

Thank you, Julie.

(hands wife glass)

Here you go, my dear.

MARGO

Thank you, sweetheart.

(Margo and Eric toast.)

ERIC

To a relaxing evening.

MARGO

To you, dear -- my returning knight, his armor dented, but otherwise intact.

STANLEY

Thank you, Margo. I remember with fondness the analog age, when life was much more sedate - when home was a quiet place where parents were the leading influence, not the cacophony of television and the distractions of computers or smart phones, and when the value of stocks was kept track of on a blackboard with red and green chalk. Today the world reminds me of a place my guide told me about one year when I was fly fishing on the Madison River in Montana. He pointed to a high, reddish cliff and said, "You know what that's called? Buffalo Jump." I asked why, and he said Indians used to corral buffalo on the plain above and drive them over the cliff. Then the squaws would move in and butcher the carcasses at the bottom. Today, it seems to me that the bulls and bears of Wall Street are being herded one way or another by instantaneous economic and political news that's flashed around the world. They're driven this way and that, and it's inevitable that at one time or another they're all going to run off a cliff. And what's waiting at the bottom, but death for most and government aid to save the ones that are too big to die, with government investigators and assorted pickpockets to plague the rest. It's frightening and I don't know that there's an answer other than human wisdom, which has so far not shown itself to be responsive to the dangers of this terrifying moment-to-moment herding.

MARGO

Dear me. I do hope we'll never be destitute.

ERIC

Or in jail. It saddens me to think how many of my former colleagues are behind bars. Freedom in America these days is a very narrow walk. One misstep after a lifetime of dedicated work can land you in the lockup. If it gets any worse, America will have to run its economy from the hoosegow.

MARGO

Don't even say that. I don't know what I'd do if you were in jail. I understand wives are allowed to visit, though. I read last week that an inmate's wife even gave birth. What do you suppose it would be like to make love in a jail cell?

ERIC

Let's not go there, OK? Besides, we're on the way to greater wealth than we've ever known. All I need is for our genius son to deliver his new trading algorithm.

MARGO

I just know he will. Should we go to his graduation in the limo or the Learjet?

ERIC

Let's just fly. I need to take life easy. I'm at a point where even red wine doesn't relax me the way it used to.

(drinks the balance in his glass; calls)

Julie, another glass of emergency nectar, please.

(to Margo)

I can't tell you how glad I am that this stuff is good for your heart!

END OF ACT I

Scene 2

## ACT I

## Scene 3

Evening. Terrace of Alan's apartment. He and Brenda are sitting on a park bench he has there.

BRENDA

I'm so happy you're finally graduating. I've been waiting for so long.

ALAN

Thanks, dear. So have I.

BRENDA

My daddy would be so upset with me for suggesting this. But I think before you go to work we should take a trip together to celebrate.

ALAN

Why would your dad kill you?

BRENDA

He's depending so much on you to help your dad's hedge fund trade better.

ALAN

I know. I'm so torn. You know I didn't want to study business. I just agreed to do it because my dad insisted. I have other interests.

BRENDA

I never talk about them with my father. You're so lucky that you have a major fund you can just move into and one day inherit.

ALAN

I appreciate that. I'm just not sure I want to use my mathematical ability on Wall Street. Just think! Maybe I could use it to figure out a new incentive paradigm where self-interest and social benefit pay more than self-interest alone. We all know what happens when the state owns your meal ticket. You're the slave of the state. So economic freedom is foundational. The question is, is there a way to incentivise dynamic people to go beyond the immediate goal of making money, at the expense of everything else, to an incentive system that more greatly rewards self-interest, moderated by social interest, and, overall, life-enhancing business decisions? Maybe for starters there should be an Economic Bill of Rights. It would guarantee freedom of enterprise and economic justice.

But, to paraphrase Plato, maybe we can only have it when politicians become saints or saints become politicians.

BRENDA

You are so unrealistic, Alan.

ALAN

But that's one reason I like myself. Take patriotism. Is it just for politicians, the military, and everyday citizens. What about business leaders? Should every decision be based on getting something made for the lowest possible price? Where is the concept of economic patriotism? Admittedly, you can't go overboard. But what's wrong with at least having a patriotic disposition, so it comes to bear on the close calls? I'm sorry. I can't help it. You know how I am. Despite being a spoiled rich kid, I'm a bit of an idealist.

BRENDA

Make piles of money and you can be more idealistic, like Bill Gates and Warren Buffet. You can give away a few billion to good causes, and I'll help you, as long as we save enough for ourselves to live luxuriously. I like the best things in life, and they're getting more expensive all the time.

ALAN

I know, dear. But it's not like we'd starve, whatever I do. I'm not even sure if I should stick to business. My math professor thinks I should become an astrophysicist.

BRENDA

Why would you want to become one of those?

ALAN

Well, maybe I could be the exemplary human being who finally figures out the ultimate secret of the universe -- perhaps even traces it back to its source.

BRENDA

My Einstein.

ALAN

Well, he's always been one of my heroes, even if he did have to seek out help with the mathematics of relativity. I would have been able to do the math in a flash. My calculus teacher said he never saw anybody who could do complex math the way I do. But then, I'm not even sure I want to do math. As you well know --

BRENDA

-- not that again.

ALAN

Why not? It's a special talent I've had since I was a kid. I kind of like the idea of being a singing ventriloquist. So does Randy.

BRENDA

Please, Alan. Anything but that. I don't know if I'd be happy married to a ventriloquist, even a singing one.

ALAN

Why not? I wouldn't be just another ventriloquist. I have a lot to say. And I've always been musical. You've seen me perform over the years at parties and stuff. As chance would have it ...

(sings)

I'M NOT THE BUTTONED-DOWN BUSINESSMAN  
I APPEAR TO BE.  
I'VE GOT A LOT OTHER THINGS  
COOKING IN ME.

(spoken)

So let me ask ...

(sings)

CAN YOU LOVE A GUY WHOSE CLOSEST FRIEND,  
HIS PERFORMING PARTNER SINCE CHILDHOOD,  
HIS ALTER EGO, IF NOT HIMSELF,  
IS ONLY MADE OF CLOTH AND WOOD?

CAN YOU LOVE A GUY WITH STARS IN HIS EYES,  
WHO TAKES THE STAGE AND ENTERTAINS  
AN AUDIENCE WITH WIT AND CHARM  
AND MIGHT BE ACCUSED OF HAVING BRAINS?

TELL ME, SWEETHEART, TELL ME NOW,  
WILL YOU BE THERE FOR ME  
IF I TURN OUT TO BE  
A SELF-DETERMINED GUY WHO CAN WOW  
PEOPLE WITH WHAT'S BETWEEN MY EARS  
WHILE I STILL LOVE YOU THROUGH THE YEARS?

CAN YOU LOVE A GUY WHO CAN CRACK A JOKE  
AND SING A SONG, EVEN DANCE A BIT,  
AND DO IT ALL WHILE HE THROWS HIS VOICE,  
OR SHOULD I REPRESS MY TALENT AND WIT --  
AND LIVE FOR THINGS LIKE A STOCK TO SPLIT?

BRENDA

Darling, I think you're amazing. But you can't be serious about making a living as a ventriloquist? Not with the education you have -- and the opportunities?

ALAN

Well, I have to think about it. I told you, I'm torn. My take is that the world could use an insightful ventriloquist. There's just too much that's being left unsaid that, given voice, might provide entertaining content for people to find common ground and comfort in.

BRENDA

I know you'll make the right decision, Alan. My daddy and your daddy are depending on it. To tell you the truth, so am I. I want to be like your mother -- the wife of a successful Wall Street investment banker. I've dream of our lives together that way every since we met.

ALAN

I know, my sweet. And I promise you, I'm considering what you want. In fact, I'm considering what everybody wants. That's what makes the decision so darn tough. It's as if I'm in an intersection, with all these roads out of it -- and one of the most critical intersections of my life. My decision will determine every other intersection I arrive at for my entire career. Oh, if only life were easy. But then it would be boring, wouldn't it? Complexity is so enthralling. I mean I love it -- the more complex something is, the more it enchants me. Take our relationship. Talk about complexity! But then, if relationships weren't complex, would they be as confoundingly interesting?

END OF ACT I

Scene 3

## ACT I

## Scene 4

The next morning. Alan's apartment. He enters and goes to a black trunk. Unlocks it and takes out his dummy, Randy. Puts it on his lap.

ALAN

Good morning, Randy.

RANDY

Good morning. About time you got me out of solitary confinement. Where have you been?

ALAN

Sorry. I've been busy with school -- final exams and papers. Today's the big day. I get my MBA. Then I'm done with grad school forever. From now on it's the open road of self-education and confronting the illimitable blue sky that invites our imaginations and finally measures us all.

RANDY

Great. Then can we finally get this show on the road? I can't wait. Showbiz, Vegas, illimitable women! How about you?

ALAN

I'm considering every aspect. But I am engaged.

RANDY

Fine. Leave the babes to me. What else is there to think about? You have a great talent. Therefore, so do I.

ALAN

Thanks, Randy. I'm in an intersection and don't know which road to commit to.

RANDY

So what else is new? You'll always be in one intersection or another. It's part of how you know you're alive.

ALAN

But this is a really definitive one. I could be deciding what I'll be doing for the rest of my life.

RANDY

Trust me. I know the answer. You're going to be a witty and wise singing ventriloquist. What more could you ask for?

ALAN

I'm just not sure I'll be making the most of my talents.

RANDY

Don't tell me you still thinking about joining your dad's hedge fund? Compared to a great new ventriloquist, investment bankers are a dime a dozen.

ALAN

But my dad is kind of depending on me to help him out. I promised him a new trading algorithm.

RANDY

How's it coming along?

ALAN

I haven't put as much time against it as I should. But, if I decide to do it, it shouldn't take me long to see through to a comprehensive formula.

RANDY

Are you sure about that? Maybe you should be more modest.

ALAN

In math? Come on. I'm sure the variables involved in trading, while quite extensive, can still be accounted for through mathematics. It's just that there are more variables than other well-intentioned wizards have been able to accommodate in their formulas.

RANDY

Well, then why don't you just set aside a little time, knock out the answer, and then we'll hit the road?

ALAN

I guess it's a matter of motivation. I can only do original math when I'm inspired. As you know, I'm considering a variety of other career choices.

RANDY

I know all too well. First, you don't want to spend your time figuring out a new incentive system that makes idealism in business pay off, unless you can get it done asap.

ALAN

I'm afraid that would be a bit daunting. I'd have to become a professional economist for anyone to listen to me, like Paul Krugman or Ben Bernanke.

RANDY

Then where would I be? Back in solitary. How can you even consider such a fate for me? Haven't we been inseparable since you were five years old and I was fresh off the shelf?

(sings)

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW? IT APPEARS  
 THAT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS  
 WE'RE INSEPARABLE!  
 INSEPARABLE  
 AS A TEAM CAN BE,  
 LIKE THE LAND AND SEA.  
 AND THE SWEETEST OF BLENDS,  
 WHEN LOVERS ARE FRIENDS.

ALAN

(sings)

WE'RE INSEPARABLE!  
 INSEPARABLE  
 AS MY THOUGHTS OF YOU  
 BRIGHTEN ALL I DO --  
 JOINED LIKE BUDS AND SPRING  
 AND BELLS THAT RING.

ALAN & RANDY

YES, SURE AS THE SKY IS BLUE  
 WHEN THE SUN IS SHINING THROUGH,  
 INSTEAD OF NEEDING TO GO  
 FROM ONE TO YET ANOTHER,  
 WE CARED ENOUGH TO KNOW  
 WE OUGHT TO STOP FOR EACH OTHER.

AND SO IT SEEMS THAT WE  
 HAVE BEEN WISE ENOUGH TO BE --  
 YES, IT SEEMS IRREPARABLE  
 THAT ...

WE'RE INSEPARABLE!  
 INSEPARABLE  
 AS FEELINGS AND LOVE  
 AND FROM FAR ABOVE  
 THE LIFE-BLESSED GLOBE  
 AND ITS BLUE-WHITE ROBE.  
 INSEPARABLE!  
 YES, IT'S IRREPARABLE  
 THAT WE'RE INSEPARABLE!  
 INSEPARABLE!

ALAN

OK, Randy. But what do you think if I go for my PhD in math, maybe doing post-doc research in astrophysics.

RANDY

Astro-what? Why would we do that?

ALAN

Imagine, billions of stars, trillions of them. Sometimes, I think the whole universe is alive, teeming with planets just like the earth. Just think. Life at every stage of history, alive somewhere -- dinosaurs walking, legions marching, civilizations like ours and ones that are billions of years older. And what if I can be the one who finally figures out the ultimate secret of the universe -- discovering, not only the how of things, but the very why of them. Specifically, the greatest question of all time: Why is there something, instead of nothing?

RANDY

You really want to know. I'll tell you.

ALAN

You will? OK, tell me.

RANDY

Because whatever's behind it all decided that something is better than nothing.

ALAN

Interesting. And decided it with such finality that nature abhors a vacuum.

RANDY

So do I. What do you think I am -- a housekeeper?

ALAN

But, Randy, what really interests me is the math behind everything. It's infinitely responsive. You know that just by watching water tumble down a hillside. There's no resistance to perfectly natural movement. Mathematics is lovely and has its own demands, infatuations and inspirations to the very edge of being, as if I'm peeking into realms heretofore hidden and lighting up the room of being to see what wonders it contains. What an invitation to achievement -- reading the given backward toward its ultimate source, solving the mysteries behind gravity, the circumnavigation of the planets, the expansion of the universe --

RANDY

-- What do you want to do that for?

ALAN

What do you mean?

RANDY

All the money's down here.

ALAN

How can you even think that way, Randy? Sometimes, you sound like my father.

RANDY

What can I tell you? I'm a hollow man.

ALAN

I'd like to think better of you.

RANDY

So would I. My self-esteem depends on it.

ALAN

Then think about this.

(sings)

WHEN WE NUMBER EVERY STAR  
AND THINK HOW BIG THINGS ARE,  
IT CAN MAKE US ALL  
FEEL AWFULLY SMALL  
AND EVERYTHING WE DO  
SEEM INSIGNIFICANT, TOO.

RANDY

Sometimes, it can feel that way.

ALAN

Of course, little man.

SO REMEMBER THIS LITTLE THOUGHT  
ABOUT THE THINGS WE'VE GOT:

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE,  
THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE,  
THE MORE IMPORTANT BY FAR  
THE LITTLE THINGS BECOME.  
LIKE THE INCIDENTAL FACT  
SOMEHOW WE'RE EACH ALIVE  
ON THIS LOVELY LITTLE EARTH,  
WHERE ALL KINDS OF LIFE CAN THRIVE.

YES, WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE,  
THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE,  
THE MORE IMPORTANT BY FAR  
THE LITTLE THINGS BECOME.  
LIKE THE TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED FACT  
THAT I'M SINGING A HAPPY RHYME  
WHILE THE EARTH IS MOVING ME  
SMOOTHLY THROUGH SPACE AND TIME.

IN FACT, IT SEEMS THE BEST  
 THE STARS AND PLANETS CAN DO  
 IS MAKE A PLANET THAT'S BLESSED  
 WITH LIFE, TELLTALE WHITE AND BLUE,  
 SO MAYBE IT OUGHT TO BE  
 GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU AND ME.

YEP, WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE,  
 THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE,  
 THE MORE IMPORTANT BY FAR  
 THE LITTLE THINGS BECOME.  
 LIKE THE HARDLY NOTICED FACT  
 THAT OUR HEARTS BEAT WITHOUT A MISS,  
 AND SOMEHOW WE CAN THINK AND FEEL,  
 SEE AND TOUCH, LOVE AND KISS.  
 JUST THINK OF ALL THIS,  
 AND YOU WONT FEEL SMALL,  
 NO YOU WON'T, AT ALL.

Randy pretends he's sleeping.

ALAN

Randy, wake up.

RANDY

I was thinking.

ALAN

With your eyes closed?

RANDY

I often do. It helps me see better.

ALAN

What were you thinking about?

RANDY

Big stuff.

ALAN

Like what?

RANDY

How about mortality? Every time you get optimistic, I can't help it.

ALAN

Why is that?

RANDY

Because I know that, no matter how spectacular our achievements are, we're chained to mortality. Inescapable prisoners of it. Yep, when all has been said and sung, we're still going to end up in time's big dumpster -- and be no more than the scraps of our former selves.

ALAN

That's pretty negative. Let me ask you this? Do you think you were born to live or to die?

RANDY

How about both?

ALAN

But, Randy, it only takes a moment to be born and a moment to die, with, say eighty years in between. Don't you think that means something?

RANDY

Yeah. It's a little roundabout. But it still means curtains -- curtains for us all.

ALAN

True. But look at it this way, once you've had enough happiness to be glad you were born, it helps you deal with that. You have your share of life. Then you pass on and make room for others. It's a brilliant concept. Or else the world would have been filled up a long time ago. Just think. Everybody alive today owes their lives to it.

RANDY

Speak for yourself. I was not born. I was merely assembled. Can I ask you something?

ALAN

What?

RANDY

When we can talk about show business?

ALAN

All right, all right. Tell me, what do you really want -- fame or money?

RANDY

Do I have to make a choice? When we're successful, we'll have plenty of both.

ALAN

I guess. The question is, will I be happy?

RANDY

What about my happiness? Can we spend a little time thinking about that?

ALAN

I'm sensitive to your needs. They do overlap my own somewhat. I just need to think my way through to the right answer.

RANDY

I've already done the thinking for us.

ALAN

And what have you decided?

RANDY

Contributing some sane humor to this generally sad and uncertain world is the most meritorious thing we can do. But I need you to agree. So think about it this way. If the career police stood you up against a wall and threatened to shoot you unless you could tell them what you want to do for the rest of your life, what would you tell them.?

ALAN

Do I have to make up my mind right now?

RANDY

Only if you don't want to be shot.

ALAN

Then I'd have to say -- oh, God, why can't I be just another underachieving trust-fund baby, swaddled in the unearned comfort of my parents' wealth? OK.

I'd say I want to be ... Actually, I have to be ... a singing ventriloquist. I mean, it's all I ever really wanted to be.

RANDY

Great. Now, we can have the future we always dreamed of.

ALAN

(looks at cellphone)

And a whole lot of problems we didn't have before you threatened me with summary execution. Oops, time to go pick up my MBA. We can talk more about the future later.

RANDY

OK. Can I go to the graduation?

ALAN

No chance. My dad will be there. He'll go nuts if he sees you with me. He thinks I've put ventriloquism behind me.

RANDY

I know, I know. I remember the day he tried to strangle me. Lock me away again -- for my own safety.

ALAN

OK, buddy. I won't forget about you.

RANDY

I'm depending on it. What would I be without you? But then, what would you be without me? Come on, answer me!

ALAN

I know, Randy. I'd be lost. A man bereft of his own alter ego. We have been together a long time.

RANDY

Yes, we have. And the best is yet to come, baby!

LIGHTS FADE DOWN

END OF ACT I

Scene 4

## ACT I

## Scene 5

The Portly living room. Party setting. Eric, Margo, Stanley, and Julie. Champagne toast.

ERIC

I can't tell you how long I've waited for this day!

MARGO

To our son's final graduation.

ERIC

(to Stanley)

And the dawn of a new trading model.

STANLEY

I'll drink to that. But not too much. I've already drunk way too much because of my lousy returns.

MARGO

Oh, you don't have to worry about a thing, Stanley. When it comes to mathematics, my son has no peer.

ERIC

You got that right. Einstein, Oppenheimer, Heisenberg, Feynman -- my son is right up there with them. And when it comes to business math, they can't hold a candle to him. Alan is the whiz kid of whiz kids.

(Alan enters with Brenda)

ERIC (CONTINUED)

Ah, here's my favorite genius and his lovely finance now!

(to STANLEY)

Your daughter looks gorgeous. Absolutely gorgeous!

STANLEY

I know that. She's my baby. Let's hope your son always does right by her.

ERIC

Oh, you don't even have to think about that. Just look how much they love each other. Inseparable, I'd say.

(raises champagne)

To the new MBA from Wharton and his beautiful finance!

(raises Blackberry)

Hold it right there!

(takes snapshot of them)

Great!

(shows screen to Stanley and others)

Look.

Julie presents a tray of champagne to Brenda and Alan. They take their glasses.

ALAN

(toasting with Brenda and then with the others)

Thank you.

(to Stanley)

Thanks for being here.

STANLEY

Glad I could make it. Your father tells me you're working on a new trading model.

ALAN

Yes, I am.

STANLEY

Good. He could use one. Do you think it will actually work?

ALAN

Absolutely. I'm almost done with it. Just considering the mathematics in retrospect to see if I get any further inspirations.

STANLEY

Excellent! We're counting on you. All the newfangled high-speed computer trading seems to have left your father in an analog age. When do you suppose you'll have it market ready?

ALAN

Shortly. But I can't say exactly when. High math comes from a mental level that's a one-way street. Either the concepts drop down into your consciousness, like pieces of a puzzle on a higher shelf than you can reach with your plodding rational mind, which can only receive and humbly assemble them, or they remain forever inaccessible. It's the same thing with music. Either the little bird in your soul can jump onto the branch of a tree and sing its own sweet song or it can't and then all you can do, no matter how much you know, is sort of arrange notes like bones that rattle along but can never express the authentic movement of the human soul. That's what music does, you know? It's why Beethoven called himself a tone poet.

MARGO

You're such a well-rounded young man, Alan, especially for a mathematician.  
(kisses his cheek)

I'm so proud of you.

ALAN

Thanks , Mom.

ERIC

I'll tell you, having him around the office is going to be like a breath of fresh air.  
(raises glass toward Alan)  
To Monday -- and your first real day on the job.

ALAN

Monday?

ERIC

We're all counting on it.

BRENDA

But we were thinking of taking a vacation first.

ERIC

Now?

ALAN

Sort of a pre-nup honeymoon to celebrate my graduation -- and take a break from the usual craziness.

STANLEY

(to Brenda)

How long were you thinking of being away, my sweet?

BRENDA

Just a couple of weeks.

BRENDA

I'VE GOT AN IPHONE.

ALAN

(sings)

AND I'VE GOT A BLACKBERRY.

BRENDA

AND I LIVE ON MY PHONE.

ALAN

AND I'M A REAL CRACKBERRY.

BOTH

SO, INSTEAD OF THE ABOVE,  
WE THOUGHT WE MIGHT TAKE,  
DO YOU MIND IF WE MAKE,  
A LITTLE TIME,  
JUST A LITTLE TIME FOR LOVE?

ALAN

I'M ON MY LAPTOP.

BRENDA

I PREFER MY I-PAD.

ALAN

I CLICK, CLICK NONSTOP.

BRENDA

I TAP, TAP LIKE MAD.

BOTH

SO, INSTEAD OF THE ABOVE,  
WE THOUGHT WE MIGHT TAKE,  
DO YOU MIND IF WE MAKE,  
A LITTLE TIME,  
JUST A LITTLE TIME FOR LOVE?

BRENDA

I SOCIAL NETWORK.

ALAN

I SURF ALL THE NEWS.

BRENDA

I TWEET LIKE A JERK

ALAN

I TEXT JUST TO SCHMOOZE.

BOTH

SO, INSTEAD OF ALL THE ABOVE,  
WE THOUGHT WE MIGHT TAKE,  
DO YOU MIND IF WE MAKE,  
A LITTLE TIME,  
JUST A LITTLE TIME FOR LOVE,  
A LITTLE TIME FOR LOVE?

ERIC

Understood, of course. But, let me ask, why not take your happy holiday after he finishes work on his new trading algorithm?

BRENDA

Who knows how long that will be?

ERIC

Well, what do you think, son? Got an ETA?

ALAN

It's hard to say. Who knows? I might get the final inspiration while we're away.

STANLEY

I wouldn't count on that. My daughter can be a lovely distraction.

BRENDA

Thank you, daddy. You're so sweet. But don't worry. Alan thinks all the time. Sometimes, even when he's supposed to be thinking about me in a really intimate way, he gets an idea and stops to make notes.

MARGO

Bless you, child. I have no idea how you can put up with it. But he's been that way since he was a child. Why, once he was standing in the middle of the street with the traffic buzzing by and I had to run out and get him. When I grabbed his arm and said, "What on earth are you doing?" he snapped out of his daze, and said, "Oh, just thinking."

BRENDA

I'm glad you understand. I need us to go on a vacation, before he forgets we're engaged.

MARGO

Where are you going?

ALAN

Greece.

BRENDA

We're going to visit Athens and cruise the islands.

MARGO

How sweet.

ERIC

But why Greece? They've been having a pretty rocky economic time.

ALAN

I want to experience the eternal presence of Pythagoras, Euclid, and Archimedes.

STANLEY

Good, good! Let's hope they help with your calculations.

ERIC

Just assure Stanley of one thing, son. As soon as you're back, you'll report for work.

(to Stanley)

I already have an office set aside for him, right next to mine.

ALAN

All right, Dad. It's a deal.

STANLEY

Whatever Brenda wants, daddy wants.

(toasts the young couple)

To your eternal happiness.

(to Eric)

Cheer up. If I can wait, so can you.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 5

## ACT I

## SCENE 6

Alan's apartment. Morning. Alan is sitting with Randy.

RANDY

I can't believe you're going without me.

ALAN

It's only for two weeks.

RANDY

Waiting, waiting, waiting -- that's all I do. I feel like the patient wife of an ancient mariner, looking out the window every day for a sail, a sail!

ALAN

I'll be back before you know it.

RANDY

Fine. You go to Greece with your beautiful finance' while I go into the trunk and battle with dust mites. Just tell me one thing? When are you going to tell your father what you really want to do, so we can finally get this act out of the trunk and onto the road?

ALAN

I plan to think about that while I'm away. I have to be as considerate as possible.

RANDY

If you were really considerate, I'd be on my way to Greece, too.

ALAN

How do you think Brenda would react to that?

RANDY

Who's more important -- Brenda or yours truly?

ALAN

You're both important, but in different ways.

RANDY

Does she know you're going to be a ventriloquist?

ALAN

She suspects I might.

RANDY

Don't worry. If she dumps you, you can just thank her for making it necessary for you to date other women.

ALAN

How can you even say such a thing? You know I love her.

RANDY

(swivels head around)

Who, me? It must've been somebody else. Look at it this way. No matter what happens, you'll still have me -- and show business!

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

Scene 6

## ACT I

## SCENE 7

The investment bank. Two offices next to each other -- Eric's and the one he has reserved for Alan. Eric's secretary, Brittany, is at her desk, apparently working on the computer. She's an attractive, educated woman in her twenties. Alan is already in his office and seems to be doing calculations. Eric enters near Brittany's desk.

ERIC

Good morning, Brittany.

(glances at her computer screen)

Shopping for shoes again?

BRITTANY

(flustered)

Sorry, Mr. Portly. I was just taking a coffee break. I've been typing financial reports since I got here.

ERIC

Good for you. My son get here yet?

BRITTANY

A few minutes ago.

ERIC

Finally! Did tech e-mail his login info?

BRITTANY

(hands him Post-it)

Yes. Here.

ERIC

Great. Let me go welcome him.

(crosses to Alan's office; attempts to  
open door and discovers it's locked.

Calls)

Alan, are you in there? Open the door.

ALAN

(gets up and opens door)

Hi, Dad.

ERIC

Welcome back! Why was your door locked?

ALAN

I was doing some calculations.

ERIC

Excellent! Keep working.

(hands him Post-it)

Here's the info you need to start trading, so you can get some hands-on experience with your new trading model. I set you up with an account. You have twenty-five million to get started. Make a few bucks, and I'll double it. Now, here are a few tips. Trade but with acumen. Pick good stocks when they get beaten down. Then watch for your entry point. When they rebound, take the profit. Avoid weak stocks. They can crash and not rebound. Remember, every pullback is a buying opportunity. And don't short anything till you talk with me. Even a lousy stock can release good news and blow out the shorts.

ALAN

Pretty basic stuff, Dad. Thanks.

ERIC

How was your vacation?

ALAN

Great. I love Greece. I picked up the resonance of its ancient greatness like a tuning fork. We went to the temple of Poseidon, and I saw the stone that Byron carved his initials in.

ERIC

Oh. When your mother dragged me to Poseidon, I took a side trip to an ancient silver mine. How about Brenda?

ALAN

She had a great time, too. When we went to Delphi, she sat on the ground in front of the ruins of the temple of the Oracle of Delphi for a long time.

ERIC

What for?

ALAN

She said she asked the oracle a very important question.

ERIC

What?

ALAN

She wouldn't tell me. She just said it was about us.

ERIC

Don't tell me she believes in all that hocus-pocus?

ALAN

Who knows? I told her that we live in a perfectly natural world -- a world so exact we can write equations to describe it -- and that's it's actually a great blessing that unnatural events don't occur. Or how could we plan anything? Or be responsible for our actions? But she just said I take everything too seriously and just to relax. She was only having a little fun.

ERIC

Ah, women, sometimes I think they use illogic to charm us.

(sings)

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU KNOW,  
EVEN FREUD HAD TO PUNT  
WHEN HE GAVE UP AND ASKED,  
WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

TELL ME, DO WOMEN BEHAVE  
THE WAY THEY DO TO CONFOUND US  
OR COULD IT BE THEY BEHAVE  
THIS WAY TO CHARM AND ASTOUND US?  
I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE,  
BUT LOVE THEM WHATEVER THEY DO.

THEY BELIEVE IMPRACTICAL THINGS  
LIKE THE ORACLE OF THIS OR THAT,  
AND YET EACH LOVELY HAT  
SITS ATOP A MIND SLY ENOUGH  
TO MAKE US FORGIVE SUCH STUFF  
AND BUY THEM WEDDING RINGS.

THEY ENJOY THINGS THAT A GUY  
WOULD SELDOM PURSUE,  
AND OFTEN SIMPLY CAN'T DO,  
LIKE YOGA POSITIONS THAT SEEM  
SO POSITIVELY EXTREME  
NO MAN WOULD EVEN TRY.

I BELIEVE IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
AND WANT THEM TO REACH THE HEIGHTS.  
AND I KNOW TO SUBORDINATE  
THEM DENIES YOU A TRUE MATE.  
I JUST WISH EQUALITY  
MEANT THEY THINK MUCH MORE LIKE ME.

YES, THE WAY THEY SEEM TO THINK  
ISN'T QUITE AS DIRECT AS I  
LIKE TO BE WHEN I LOOK IN YOUR EYE  
AND DECISIONS THAT THEY ARRIVE  
AT WHEN WE TALK COULD DRIVE  
ME TO TAKE AN EMERGENCY DRINK.

THEIR HAIR MAY BE STRAIGHT OR CURLED.  
THEY MAY BE IN BUSINESS OR NOT.  
BUT INSIDE THEIR HEADS THEY'VE GOT  
THE CLEVERNESS TO TOSS  
MEN THE BONE THAT WE'RE THE BOSS  
WHEN, IN FACT, WOMEN RUN THE WORLD.

SO TELL ME, DO WOMEN BEHAVE  
THE WAY THEY DO TO CONFOUND US  
OR COULD IT BE THEY BEHAVE  
THIS WAY TO CHARM AND ASTOUND US?

I HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE,  
BUT I LOVE THEM WHATEVER THEY DO.

ERIC & ALAN

WE HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE,  
BUT WE LOVE THEM WHATEVER THEY DO!

ERIC

We're on the same page, son. Now, tell me, did you make any progress on the project?

ALAN

A bit. I was just sorting through my notes.

ERIC

Good, good. Well, don't let me interrupt you. Let me know as soon as you're ready to have a meeting with the software guys. They're itching to implement whatever you come up with.

ALAN

Sure thing.

ERIC

Great. Now, back to work on that algorithm. The market has been terrible this morning. The value of our portfolio is down 3% for the day. I can't take it. My hair is falling out from the tension, and I don't have that much more to lose. Or money. I'll close the door for you. But, as a general policy, we don't lock doors around here. People may suspect you're doing something you shouldn't be doing. But, since Brenda is nowhere to be seen and my secretary is firmly ensconced at her desk, eagerly surfing the Internet between assignments, I know better. So think any way you like but think hard. The entire fund depends on your breakthrough!

(exits, closing door behind him)

Alan seems to experience a bit of anguish. Then he goes to his closet and takes out the trunk he keeps Randy in. He crosses back to his desk, sits, and opens the trunk. He takes Randy out.

RANDY

(spins head around)

Don't tell me we're at work?

ALAN

It looks that way.

RANDY

I thought we were going straight from your vacation to showbiz heaven?

ALAN

I wish. How can I disappoint my dad?

RANDY

Easy. Invite him in here and I'll give him the happy news.

ALAN

No, no. I'll do it when the time is right. First, I want to give him the new trading model he needs.

RANDY

How's it coming?

ALAN

Not as well as I thought. There are just too many variables. I allow for a bunch of them, and a whole bunch more show up. The most intractable difficulty is predicting human behavior. How can I describe mathematically how greedy or frightened millions of traders will be at any given moment?

RANDY

Don't ask me. You're the mathematical genius. I am a mere player upon the stage of life. I wish you'd become one, too. What are those two big screens for?

ALAN

Trading.

RANDY

Oh. One's not enough?

ALAN

Not for a long time -- I mean, if you're a pro.

RANDY

Is that what you want to be -- sitting here all day, thinking about nothing but making loot? Think about the great principle of natural justice in Plato: you become what you do.

You decide to be a trader, you'll be a trader. Wouldn't you rather decide to be a ventriloquist?

ALAN

Of course.

RANDY

So when do we start to work on the act?

ALAN

Here?

RANDY

Where else -- since this is where we seem condemned to be -- until we launch our career.

ALAN

I just don't feel right about it, I mean, when my father is right next door, thinking I'm working on the trading model.

RANDY

Is that what really kindles your spirit?

ALAN

OK, OK. We'll start to rehearse after work.

RANDY

You'll be too tired.

ALAN

Then we'll get up early in the morning and put in a couple of hours before we have to leave for work.

RANDY

You stay out too late with Brenda. Let's face it. You can't climb two trees at once. You have to pick one and climb it, that is, if you want to get as high up it as you can. Think of us, enjoying the height of success in the wonderful world of entertainment!

ALAN

Well, Randy, I can't argue with your logic. It's sentiment that's stopping me.

RANDY

Sure, sure. Then go ahead and start trading. Come on. I want to sit here and watch you.

ALAN

(picks up Post-it)

Maybe I will.

(turns to computer and types in trading  
password and ID)

Behold, a world of value, before our eyes. Buy, sell, take a profit or a loss. Research this, research that. Trade this, trade that.

RANDY

Churning bucks, without creating any new value?

ALAN

Not true. Our clients invest a certain amount of the profit.

RANDY

You mean what's left for them after your dad's fund takes its share?

ALAN

Stop it, will you? It's not that bad, Randy. When we do well, our clients do well, too.

RANDY

I know. Loaves of bread for the hedge fund, crumbs that fall off the table for your clients.

ALAN

This company is not as excessive as some. My dad invests a certain amount in mergers and acquisitions, too. And our employees spend a lot of their income, which helps propel the economy and create jobs.

RANDY

OK, I'm convinced. So go on and trade. You know there's another human being at the other end of every trade. So go ahead. Screw your fellow man. Go on. Screw him for fun and profit. What a life? I can't even stand to think about it.

ALAN

There's probably another institution at the other end of the trade, Randy. These days individual investors are becoming rarer and rarer.

RANDY

That's because they've already had their pockets turned inside out by all the resources that aren't available to them.

ALAN

A lot of people still think this is a great profession.

RANDY

I'm sure it is. But it's not for me. How about you? Come on, you know you can talk to Randy. What really plucks the strings of your soul -- trading or entertaining people with quips and songs?

ALAN

What do you think, Randy?

RANDY

Then come on. Let's rehearse. How about a song of wanderlust -- a man in quest of his love?

ALAN

All right. Let's hear it.

RANDY

(sings)

NO HIGHWAY IS TOO LONG  
NO OCEAN IS TOO WIDE  
NO MOUNTAIN IS TOO HIGH  
TO KEEP ME FROM YOUR SIDE.

I'D TRAVEL THEM ALL TO BE WITH YOU.  
THE ONLY THING THAT'S KEEPING ME HERE  
IS I DON'T HAVE DIRECTIONS TO  
YOUR HOME, WHICH HOPEFULLY MIGHT BE NEAR.

OH, I WISH I KNEW WHO YOU ARE  
AND YOU'D GIVE ME YOUR ADDRESS  
THEN NO DISTANCE WOULD TOO FAR  
TO KEEP ME FROM YOUR CARESS.  
NO DISTANCE WOULD BE TOO FAR  
IF I ONLY KNEW WHO YOU ARE.

RANDY

What do you think?

ALAN

We'll work on it. I suppose we could slip in an hour or two a day.

RANDY

Great, great! That's all we need. Pretty soon we'll be ready to hit the clubs and be discovered! Then there's no stopping us. So come on. Hit it!

ALAN

You win! We work on the act every day and then --

RANDY

-- that's entertainment!

Eric hurries to the door of Alan's office and tries to open it. Realizes it's locked again and knocks.

ERIC

(calls)

Alan, open the door.

Startled, Alan puts Randy in the trunk, which he leaves behind his desk, and hurries to the door. Opens it.

ALAN

Hi, Dad. What's up?

ERIC

Stanley is on the line. He wants to know how you're doing with the new algorithm.

ALAN

Tell him I'm working on it.

ERIC

I did that. He wants to hear it from you.

(calls to Brittany)

Please, transfer Stanley's call in here.

(crosses toward Alan's desk, as phone starts to ring; leans over to pick it up; sees trunk; into phone)

Hi, Stanley. He's right here.

(hand over speaker; points to trunk)

What is that relic of your infancy doing here? Just take the call.

(hands him phone; Alan takes it)

ALAN

Hi, Mr. Cole .... Yes, great vacation .... You bet, sir, working away on it .... It's hard to say. If it's going to be foolproof, I have to allow for every possible variable .... The moment I have it .... Thank you, Mr. Cole.

(attempts to hand phone back to Eric, who waves his hands to say no thanks; back into phone)

Bye, now.

(hangs up)

ERIC

Thanks.

(points to trunk again)

Now, tell me, what is that dummy doing here? Come on. I've know that trunk since the day I mistakenly bought you that mischievous product of the dollmaker's art.

ALAN

I just like to have him around, Dad.

ERIC

You're a little old for that sort of nonsense now, aren't you? You remind of your mother with her childhood doll. It took me five years to persuade her not to sleep with the damn thing. Don't put me through the same period of withdrawal. I don't care what you do after work. But the office is no place for your beloved Rudolph.

ALAN

Randolph.

ERIC

Whatever! Now, are we all right on that?

ALAN

Yes, we are.

ERIC

Thank you. You know I'm depending on you. Now, back to your mathematical wizardry.

END OF ACT 1

Scene 7

## ACT I

## Scene 8

City street. Night. Brenda and Alan and strolling along.

BRENDA

So tell me, sweetheart, how was your first day at work?

ALAN

All right, I guess.

BRENDA

Just all right?

ALAN

My dad saw that I took Randy to the office.

BRENDA

You took Randy? That's awfully silly, isn't it? Why would you do that?

ALAN

I like having him around. Jealous?

BRENDA

Don't be silly. But work is work. My Daddy is depending on you. So is your daddy.

ALAN

I know that.

BRENDA

So am I. I love you. And I want what's best for us.

ALAN

I know.

(kisses her)

BRENDA

I love the way you kiss. I get so excited. I think I'll be that way for the rest of my life.

ALAN

Thank you, dear. I love kissing you, too. And, it's because I love you that I have to be honest.

BRENDA

About what?

ALAN

I'm not sure I'm going to be happy being an investment banker.

BRENDA

Not that again?

ALAN

I'm sorry. I think of all kinds of things besides Wall Street. I mean, what if people would just start to ask the right questions instead of pretending to have all the answers. For instance, are we alive or aren't we? And since we apparently are, how should we behave?

(realizes his mind has wandered)

OK. Back to the subject at hand. I have to ask you a very significant question.

BRENDA

What?

ALAN

I can only ask it if you promise not to tell your father, at least, not yet. Do you promise?

BRENDA

Oh, all right.

ALAN

Will you still love me if I decide to become a ventriloquist?

BRENDA

Somehow, when I was growing up, I never thought the man I love would ask me that question. You're not really serious, are you?

ALAN

What if I were?

BRENDA

If you want to know the truth, I'm not sure I could deal with it. If you were me, what would you rather be, married to a successful banker or to a struggling ventriloquist?

ALAN

I wouldn't do it if I thought I'd be struggling forever. What about the third choice -- being married to a successful ventriloquist?

BRENDA

I don't know. I never thought of it that way.

ALAN

Well, could you deal with that?

BRENDA

Do I have to?

ALAN

I'd like to know you'll be there for me.

BRENDA

We'll see. But what about my father? If he had the slightest idea that you're thinking of doing that, he would totally lose it.

ALAN

Then don't mention it, at least, until I'm successful.

BRENDA

You're not thinking of giving up your day job, are you?

ALAN

No, no, at least, not yet.

BRENDA

Then when are you going to become a successful ventriloquist?

ALAN

I'll just start to do open-mike nights at the comedy clubs. Want to come some nights?

BRENDA

I'll think about it. It's not really my style.

ALAN

I know. But when I'm a success, maybe it will be. People like what I say and sing. Lights, camera, action, red carpets, award shows!

BRENDA

It all seems a little silly to me. My daddy says it's better to have power without fame than fame without power. He won't be a happy camper, even if you are successful.

ALAN

Can we cross that bridge when we come to it? When you anticipate, it's like running ahead of yourself and putting roadblocks in your way. I've learned just to do what I can about causes and let effects take care of themselves.

BRENDA

Is that thoughtful?

ALAN

I'm being as thoughtful as I can be. Trust me. If I wasn't, I'd just quit my job and work on the act a hundred percent of the time.

BRENDA

You can't do that. My daddy would tell me to break up with you. That's the last thing I need. It's not exactly what your daddy needs, either.

ALAN

Tell me about it. OK. Then it's settled. I'll be an investment banker by day and a ventriloquist by night. What an unlikely dichotomy! But what can I say? Everything new is different by definition.

BRENDA

And you certainly are the very definition of different, sweetheart.

ALAN

Thank you. Not by intention, though. Merely by inclination. An inner voice I can't resist, lest I kill off my finest potential and spend the rest of my life outwardly successful but inwardly dead, my true talent thwarted by my own hand and allowed to wither unnoticed. What a thought! I can't allow it! I must live -- and live with you, my sweet!

BRENDA

You are such a ham. Maybe you should be a ventriloquist.

ALAN

Maybe? Does Niagara Falls flow down or up? I must listen to my inclination, which is at least as great a driving force as that inimitable cataract, as it thunders toward its splashy destiny.

BRENDA

Oh, sure, Alan, and where does it land? We've been there. Come on. Tell me. Right onto the rocks.

ALAN

Let's not talk about that. Kiss me, my love, and let the mighty Niagara of our lives flow on to the sea.

BRENDA

It goes into Lake Ontario.

ALAN

A mere stopping point, my dear -- on the way to the ultimate expanse of the ocean wide. And, my sweet, rest assured: I love you with the very same intensity that self-determination enchants me.

(sings)

WHEN THE EARTH DOESN'T SPIN,  
AND THE SUN DOESN'T PEEP,  
WHEN AIR ISN'T THIN,  
AND OCEANS AREN'T DEEP.  
THERE'S A CHANCE, IT'S TRUE,  
I MAY NOT LOVE YOU.

THE DAY SNOW IS WARM  
AND RAIN IS DRY  
THE DAY BEES DON'T SWARM  
AND LOBSTERS FLY,  
THERE'S A CHANCE, IT'S TRUE,  
I MAY NOT LOVE YOU.

IF SOMEHOW, PERHAPS, MAYBE OR IN  
 THE UNLIKELY EVENT  
 THE WORLD IS SO BENT  
 THAT UP IS DOWN AND VIRTUE IS SIN,  
 THAT LEFT IS RIGHT AND NORTH IS SOUTH  
 AND WE SPEAK WITH OUR EARS, NOT WITH OUR MOUTH  
 THEN THE LOVE I PROMISE YOU IS TRUE  
 MAY VANISH AS QUICKLY AS MORNING DEW.

YES, WHEN ROBINS DON'T SING  
 AND TROUT DON'T SWIM  
 WHEN LINT DOESN'T CLING  
 AND NEEDLES AREN'T SLIM,  
 THERE'S A CHANCE, IT'S TRUE,  
 I MAY NOT LOVE YOU.  
 OH, SOMEHOW, PERHAPS,  
 MAYBE OR IN  
 THE UNLIKELY EVENT  
 THE WORLD IS SO BENT,  
 THERE'S A CHANCE, IT'S TRUE,  
 I MAY NOT LOVE YOU!

BRENDA

Alan, you are so you! I don't know how you can ever strap yourself to a desk chair for the rest of your life. You are hopeless. Hopeless!

ALAN

I know, my dear. But canny enough only to be hopeless with you -- and when I'm on the stage with even more hopeless Randy. Kiss me now, and kiss me again! I feel like Cyrano de Bergerac, only instead of a passionate heart, expressed to the accompaniment of another's fingers on an instrument of wood and strings, I have one expressed through the manipulation of an alter ego of wood and cloth. Ah, yes, mere wood and cloth, but nevertheless alive with my own inspirations! So kiss me now, Brenda, and whatever you do, don't tell your father of my after-hours devotion, at least, until I can spirit you away to a life of wealth and fame and, most vital of all, the power only intelligent commentary can enable, especially when it's graced with cause for laughter, as sugar makes medicine cherry nectar.

BRENDA

What am I going to do with you?

ALAN

You're going to love me, my sweet, as I love you! I mean, what else would you do -- date and marry somebody usual? What a dreary prospect for your own fluttering spirit, especially compared to taking my hand and being wafted on the wings of fancy, as we flit through regions yet un navigated and sprinkle the world below with the stardust of fresh and nourishing imaginings!

(kisses her)

BRENDA

I do love the way you kiss.

ALAN

And so you're hooked forever, my dear, as my heart is caught inescapably between your own inviting and rapture-instilling lips.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT I

Scene 8

## ACT I

## Scene 9

Hallway outside of Eric's office. Brittany is at her desk. Alan is standing beside her, riffling papers.

ALAN

Why would he be upset, Brittany? I'm here, aren't I?

BRITTANY

He's worried that you're going to become a ventriloquist.

ALAN

He discussed that with you?

BRITTANY

We talk about everything. I've been his administrative assistant for five years.

ALAN

You seem to enjoy it. You know you're very well spoken.

BRITTANY

Thank you. I have a master's degree in English.

ALAN

Really?

BRITTANY

Un-huh. From Amherst.

ALAN

Really? Emily Dickenson's hometown. Then what are you doing working as an administrative assistant?

BRITTANY

Where else can an English major make more than a brain surgeon?

OFFICE STAFF  
(hears conversation; sings)

YES, YES, YES,  
WHERE ELSE CAN AN ENGLISH MAJOR,  
MATH MAJOR, OR ANY OTHER KIND OF MAJOR  
THAT THERE COULD POSSIBLY BE  
PULL DOWN SUCH A SALARY.  
YOU MAY CALL IT WRETCHED EXCESS,  
BUT TO US IT'S BLESSED EXCESS --  
YES, BLESSED, BLESSED EXCESS!

WHERE ELSE CAN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE,  
MASTER'S DEGREE, OR EVEN A DOCTOR'S DEGREE  
RESULT IN COMPENSATION  
THAT INCITES WORLDWIDE CONDEMNATION?  
YOU MAY CALL IT WRETCHED EXCESS,  
BUT TO US IT'S BLESSED EXCESS --  
YES, BLESSED, BLESSED EXCESS!

OH, WE WORK AT THE PEAK  
OF THE ECONOMIC HEAP,  
TRADING VALUE,  
PARADING VALUE,  
AND, ON THE QT,  
OCCASIONALLY  
MASQUERADING VALUE.  
BUT AT TIMES WITHIN THE MESS  
WE GET INVESTORS TO SAY YES  
TO A COMPANY THAT CAN GROW,  
LIKE A PROSPEROUS SEED WE SOW.  
AND WHILE IT'S CERTAINLY TRUE  
YOU CAN GRIPE AND GROAN  
ABOUT HOW WELL WE DO  
AND COMPLAIN YOU WORK FOR LESS,  
AT LEAST YOU, TOO, CAN OWN  
A SHARE OF THIS BLESSED,  
NOT WRETCHED,  
THIS BLESSED EXCESS.

OH, WHERE ELSE CAN AN A STUDENT,  
 B STUDENT, OR EVEN A LESSER STUDENT  
 MAKE A SALARY PLUS A BONUS  
 THAT WHOLE NATIONS VIEW WITH ONUS?  
 YOU MAY CALL IT WRETCHED EXCESS,  
 BUT TO US IT'S BLESSED EXCESS --  
 NOT WRETCHED,  
 BUT BLESSED, BLESSED EXCESS!

ALAN

The salaries around here are amazing. No wonder the investors get upset about their returns.

BRITTANY

If your daddy didn't pay as well as he does, everybody would go work someplace else.

ALAN

I'm sure. But is money the measure of all things?

BRITTANY

No. But it helps when you go shopping. Why would you consider being a ventriloquist?

ALAN

I've been doing it since I was a kid. I also think I have things to say and sing. Disapprove?

BRITTANY

Not at all. Don't you dare tell your father. But I think it's fantastic.

ALAN

You do?

BRITTANY

Wonderful! I love entertainment. It lightens my load. Know what I think? Don't you dare spend your life working here. You won't be happy. But I never said that.

ALAN

Said what? If you like, some night you can come and watch us perform.

BRITTANY

I'd love to. Where?

ALAN

The comedy clubs. We're rehearsing now. I'll let you know when.

BRITTANY

Just don't invite me on a night when your father is coming.

ALAN

You don't have to worry about that. I'm not planning on inviting him anytime soon.

BRITTANY

He would die.

ALAN

Just for starters. Well, I better get back to my trading model. Very nice talking with you, Brittany.

BRITTANY

Thank you. Same here. Tell Randy I said hello.

Alan reacts and heads for his office. He enters, locks the door, and sits at his desk. He reaches under it and pulls Randy out.

ALAN

Hi, Randy.

RANDY

Hello. About time you remembered I was in the trash basket.

ALAN

I need someplace to keep you.

RANDY

What took you so long? I thought you were done with math for today.

ALAN

I am. I was just talking with Brittany?

RANDY

Brittany? Tell me more.

ALAN

She's my dad's secretary.

RANDY

Is she cute?

ALAN

Actually, she's quite beautiful. Smart, too.

RANDY

I've heard enough. Why not introduce me?

ALAN

Do you want to risk your life?

RANDY

Don't tell me a lovely lass would harbor enmity for an innocent child of lumber and cloth such as I?

ALAN

No, no. I meant what might happen if my father saw you here again. She actually likes the idea that I'm a ventriloquist.

RANDY

Nice somebody around here does. Tell me more. I need good news to salve my ever-patient soul.

ALAN

I invited her to come to see us some night, and she said she would.

RANDY

I'm ready. What night?

ALAN

When I invite her.

RANDY

I can't wait. So let's get to it. The sooner we rehearse, the sooner we can hit the clubs.

ALAN

I guess we can squeeze in a bit of rehearsal time now.

RANDY

Excellent. What should we work on?

ALAN

How about your favorite song of heartfelt sadness.

RANDY

“It’s a Nettle World?” I love that song. It’s the perfect reflection of my tormented existence.

END OF ACT I

Scene 9

## ACT I

## Scene 10

A comedy club. Alan and Randy are on the stage.  
Brittany is in the audience. Sam Leary, the agent, is  
in the audience, too.

ALAN

Now, as our concluding number, we'd like to do a song that has a special place in  
Randy's heart. It's about the pain he experienced when he was just a tree.

(to Randy)

Go for it.

RANDY

(sings)

IF I HAD MY CHOICE,  
I'D WANT TO LIVE  
IN A ROSE PETAL WORLD.  
BUT I LEARNED WHEN I  
WAS VERY YOUNG,  
JUST A SAPLING IN  
A FOREST WHEN  
I FIRST UNFURLED  
MY FRAGILE LIMBS,  
IT'S A NETTLE WORLD.

YES, EVEN A TREE  
KNOWS IT CAN BE  
A NETTLE WORLD.  
WHERE SHARP THINGS PRICK,  
AND SCRAPE AND NICK  
AND SOMETIMES CUT  
YOU TO THE QUICK.

SO YOU LEARN YOU LIVE  
IN ANYTHING BUT  
A ROSE PETAL WORLD.

OH, EVEN A TREE  
KNOWS LIFE CAN BE  
A NETTLE WORLD.  
BUT I WISH, OH HOW  
I WISH I COULD LIVE  
STARTING RIGHT NOW,  
IN A LOVELY, SOFT  
WORLD HIGH ALOFT,  
ABOVE EVERY THORN  
FROM THE DAY I WAS BORN.  
OH, WHAT I WOULD GIVE  
IF WE ALL COULD LIVE  
IN A ROSE PETAL WORLD,  
NOT A NETTLE, NETTLE,  
NETTLE WORLD.

SOME PEOPLE THINK  
THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH PAIN.  
BUT IF YOU'RE MADE OF WOOD  
YOU KNOW IT'S A NETTLE WORLD,  
WITH SHARP THINGS ALL AROUND  
THAT CAN SCRATCH AND PRICK YOU.  
BUT OH HOW I WISH  
IT WAS A ROSE PETAL WORLD.

Applause. Alan and Randy leave the stage. Soon  
they appear where the audience is.

BRITTANY

I loved it! Thank you so much for inviting me.

ALAN

Nice of you to come. Thank you!

Sam makes his way to Alan.

SAM

Great, kid! Delightful, original, and, best of all, salable! Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Sam Leary, agent to the stars.

ALAN

You're an agent?

RANDY

I like it. Talk to me.

SAM

I haunt the clubs every night. And, every once in a great while, I see an act I gotta represent. And you're it, kid. Alan, right? And Randy? Pleased to meet you.

RANDY

Thanks. Our pleasure.

ALAN

(referring to Randy)

He speaks for both of us.

SAM

Great, great! Does he sign contracts, too? Where else are you performing? Weddings, Bar Mitzvas? I can take you way beyond such trivial engagements -- to dinner clubs, TV appearances, and who knows what else.

RANDY

How about Las Vegas?

SAM

That, too! The big time! It can all be yours!

BRITTANY

(gives Alan a spontaneous hug)

Oh, that's so wonderful!

ALAN

Thanks. Yeah, I agree. I just didn't think it would happen so soon.

RANDY

I told you, Alan. All we had to do is get out of the trunk and into the limelight. Wow, I am psyched!

(to Sam)

Promise me you'll never leave us. Where's the contract? I'm ready to sign!

SAM

(reaches into pocket and takes out paper)

I always come prepared. You know what this is? An exclusive right to represent. Take it. Read it over. Think about it. Then sign it and get it back to me. Here's my card.

(hands him card)

RANDY

What's to think about? Got a pen?

ALAN

We'll get it back to you tomorrow.

RANDY

Tomorrow? What's wrong with right now? I'm ready to sign.

ALAN

We have to do as Sam said, Randy.

RANDY

Maybe you do.

ALAN

Don't pay any attention to him. He has everything but patience.

SAM

I don't think he'll need much of that anymore. Just sign that when you're comfortable with it -- and this act will be on its way to greatness!

RANDY

Hold that thought! Wow, am I ready or what?

END OF ACT I

Scene 10

## ACT I

## Scene 11

Office. Eric at Brittany's desk. Eric holds out a Post-it that is stuck to his finger.

ERIC

Can you tell me what this is?

BRITTANY

(looks at it)

What?

ERIC

I was working late yesterday and happened to notice this stuck to your monitor. I only want to know one thing. Did you or did you not go?

BRITTANY

Where?

ERIC

To see Alan perform?

BRITTANY

At a comedy club?

ERIC

I don't care what you call it. Did you go?

BRITTANY

I couldn't resist, Mr. Portly. You son invited me. I just couldn't say no.

ERIC

How can you do this to me?

BRITTANY

I'm sorry. You know I like entertainment.

ERIC

But to encourage my son --

BRITTANY

-- I didn't encourage him. He just invited me.

ERIC

How did he do?

BRITTANY

You won't believe it. Incredibly well.

ERIC

Dammit. There goes the new trading model.

BRITTANY

Why?

ERIC

How can he work on it when he has his mind on show business? Let's just hope he realizes that his comedy club appearances are the slow boat to nowhere. You don't think he'll actually succeed, do you? Come on, you can be honest. I can take it.

BRITTANY

Well, if you really want to know, he already has an agent.

ERIC

Don't tell me. My artificial heart valve can't take it.

BRITTANY

OK. I didn't say it.

ERIC

What do you mean, "He already has an agent"?

BRITTANY

It happened last night. After he was done performing, an agent named Sam came up to him and told him he'd be a star and he offered to sign him.

ERIC

Tell me you're joshing me.

BRITTANY

OK. I'm joshing you.

ERIC

Don't tell me my son believed him?

BRITTANY

I think I said enough. You should talk to Alan. He's so excited.

ERIC

Is he here?

BRITTANY

He was. But Brenda came by and they went out to lunch.

ERIC

Perfect. Thank you. There is no way I can allow such counterproductive juvenile behavior. The fate of the entire business is at stake, including your job!

He heads for Alan's office. He tests the door. It's open. He enters and looks behind the desk. He thinks. Then he goes to the closet. Opens it. Sees the trunk with Randy in it. Takes it out. Looks to see if the coast is clear. Then he hurries out of the office with the trunk.

ERIC

(as he passes Brittany, stops and sings)

JUST REMEMBER, WHATEVER I DO  
TO THIS MONSTER MADE OF WOOD,  
I'M DOING IT, NOT FOR MYSELF,  
BUT FOR MY SON'S OWN GOOD.

I AM, AFTER ALL, A LOVING PARENT,  
WHO BY HIS VERY NATURE DAREN'T  
DO EVEN THE SLIGHTEST THING THAT WOULDN'T  
BE JUST FOR HIM. I SIMPLY COULDN'T.

SO SHOULD ANYONE INQUIRE ABOUT  
THE FATE OF THIS PERSISTENT PEST,  
I AFFABLY ADVISE YOU BLOCK OUT  
HE'S OFF TO HIS ETERNAL REST.

BUT REMEMBER, WHATEVER I DO  
TO THIS MONSTER MADE OF WOOD  
I'M DOING IT, NOT FOR MYSELF,  
BUT FOR MY SON'S OWN GOOD.  
YES, EVERYTHING I DO I DO  
ONLY FOR MY SON'S OWN GOOD!

(spoken)

And you didn't see a thing. Don't forget. It's getting to be Christmas Bonus time.

(imitates Santa Claus)

Ho, ho, ho! Got it, Brittany? Otherwise, it's going to be "Bah, humbug!" Or worse!

(heads past her, flashing the keys to his  
car; to Randy)

As W. C. Fields said to Charlie McCarthy, "I have a warm place for you -- in my  
fireplace!"

END OF ACT I

## ACT II

## Scene 1

Eric's office. He's on the phone.

ERIC

I don't care what your daughter let slip, Stan. My son is not going to become a singing ventriloquist ... I'll tell you how I know. I kidnapped his dummy .... Why not? I bought it for him. So I can take it back. It's for his own good .... I don't know. Maybe donate it to a sawmill .... He was here this morning, working on the math and guess where he is right now. Having lunch with your lovely daughter. I'm sure their relationship is as solid as a T-bill .... Yeah, yeah, any changes I'll keep you posted .... Bye.

Alan enters with Brenda, hand in hand.

ALAN

(to Brittany)

I have to prove to her that I still have an office here.

(opens door to office)

Step right in, my love.

BRENDA

(steps in; looks around)

Thankfully. Where's Randy?

ALAN

Randy?

BRENDA

I know you two are inseparable. You'd never be here all day without him.

ALAN

You know me too well. I have to be honest. Sometimes we rehearse here. When else am I going to do it? Most evenings I'm with you. Some mornings, too. Don't worry. I will not give up my day job until I can make a living as a ventriloquist. But be prepared. I seem to be on the verge of unprecedented success. Why don't you come and see us sometime? The act is really great now.

(closes door; as he heads for closet)

I'll show you.

BRENDA

That's OK. I'll take your word for it.

ALAN

Oh, come on. Just one number. It's about us.

BRENDA

Oh, all right.

ALAN

(opens closet; puzzled. Crosses to desk and looks behind it. Perplexed. Drops into desk chair)

*Tres* strange.

BRENDA

What's wrong?

ALAN

I'm thinking. Could I have left him at home? I swear I brought him. We were going to rehearse this afternoon.

(stands)

In fact, I know I brought him.

BRENDA

Maybe he fell into a pencil sharpener.

ALAN

Thanks.

(calls out)

Randy, where are you? Talk to me!

(to Brenda)

Excuse me a moment.

(crosses to door; opens it and goes hurriedly to Brittany's desk)

Brittany, have you by any chance seen anybody go into my office?

BRITTANY

(weakly)

Why?

ALAN

Because ...

(sotto voice, with eye on door to father's  
office)

... Randy is missing. You see, it's rather urgent, because without him, I'm all washed up.

BRITTANY

You mean you can't just buy another dummy?

ALAN

How can you even say that? We're a team. We've been together almost all my life.

(leans toward her)

So let me ask you one more time. Did you see anybody go into my office -- a maintenance person, the cleaning lady or my father? Does my father have a key to my office?

BRITTANY

He does have a passkey.

ALAN

Say no more! Where is he?

BRITTANY

(points to Eric's office)

Where else?

ALAN

Ah, ha! Thank you!

(crosses to door)

Father!

(tries knob; door opens)

Can we talk?

ERIC

About what?

ALAN

Where is he?

ERIC

Where is who?

ALAN

You know what I mean. Where's Randy?

ERIC

How should I know? I thought I told you not to bring him to the office anymore. Don't tell me you disobeyed me?

ALAN

You know I need to rehearse. It's part of the deal.

ERIC

I don't know what you mean.

ALAN

Our unspoken bargain. I come here to work, but I also take time out to rehearse my act.

ERIC

I was not aware that we had that bargain.

ALAN

Come on, Dad. We've had it all my life. I agree to do the things you want me to do, but I also get to have my life as a ventriloquist.

ERIC

That was all well and good when you were a child. I was even willing to look the other way when you were in college. But it's time for you to outgrow such silliness and concentrate on business. The fate of this whole company rests on your willingness to do that.

Brenda enters. Eric sees her.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Oh, hi, Brenda. Nice of you to drop by.

BRENDA

(to Alan)

So?

ALAN

He took Randy. I know he did.

ERIC

Did I say that?

ALAN

Who else would have done it?

(to Brenda)

All he wants me to do is work on his damn trading model.

ERIC

All I said is I think it's high time he grew up.

BRENDA

Well, Alan, maybe he's right.

ALAN

How can you even say that?

(to Eric)

Tell me where he is, or I stop working on the new trading algorithm.

ERIC

That's not fair.

ALAN

No, it isn't. It's what you call hardball. I mean it. Either you return him or I pack up and I'm out of the office forever.

BRENDA

(to Eric)

He doesn't actually mean that.

ALAN

Think about me, OK? Can you do that for once?

ERIC

Calm down, son. Remember, you love her.

BRENDA

Sometimes I wonder.

(to Alan)

Who's more important to you -- Randy or I?

ALAN

The circles don't overlap.

ERIC

Of course, you're more important to him than Randy. You're his fiance'. Randy is just an immaterial carry over from his childhood. Isn't that right, son?

ALAN

I said there's no comparison. Stop it, will you?

BRENDA

You stop it! I'm leaving.

ALAN

I'll call you later.

BRENDA

Don't bother! I want to be married to a responsible businessman, like your father and mine.

ERIC

Good girl, Brenda. Tell it like is!

(to Alan)

Do you hear that? Now, apologize to the her.

ALAN

(without much thought)

Sorry.

(immediately back to Eric)

Now, tell me where Randy is.

BRENDA

(sighs)

I can't stand it any more!

(sings)

DO I LOOK AS IF I'M MADE OF WOOD?  
A PLANK THAT MIGHT BE IN THIS FLOOR?  
NO, NO, I'M MADE OF SOMETHING MORE:  
AND IT'S TIME, MY DEAR, YOU UNDERSTOOD.

DON'T TAKE ME FOR GRANTED,  
BECAUSE YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU.  
BUT TREASURE AND LOVE ME, TOO.  
IT'S NOT AS IF I'M PLANTED  
BESIDE YOU LIKE A TREE.  
I'M A WOMAN, SUPREMELY FREE!

DON'T TAKE ME FOR GRANTED,  
BECAUSE WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN  
SO CLOSE WE CAN'T BEGIN  
TO SEE OURSELVES ENCHANTED  
BY ANYBODY WHO  
MIGHT BE, OF ALL THINGS, NEW!

YOU CAN TREAT OTHER PEOPLE  
ANYWAY THAT YOU CHOOSE  
BUT, NOT THIS YOUNG LADY,  
OR YOU COULD LOSE  
THE WOMAN WHO LOVES  
YOU WITH ALL HER HEART;  
AND THE WOMAN WHO LOVED  
YOU FROM THE START.

DON'T TAKE ME GRANTED,  
IF YOU ALWAYS WANT ME HERE  
TO LOVE AND CALL YOUR DEAR.  
THE GROUND IS NOT SO SLANTED  
I CAN'T WALK UP TO YOU  
ONE DAY AND SAY WE'RE THROUGH!  
SO DON'T TAKE ME FOR GRANTED.  
I WARN YOU, MISTER,  
DON'T TAKE THIS SWEET SISTER,  
DON'T TAKE ME FOR GRANTED!

(runs off in tears)

ERIC

Now look what you've done?

ALAN

We'll make up later.

ERIC

What if she tells her father what happened? You don't have to sit here and listen to him rant about his returns and threaten to pull out if it wasn't for the fact that his daughter loves you.

ALAN

He's also here because he's hoping my trading --

ERIC

-- an idea I sold him on -- and which you have so far failed to deliver.

ALAN

And will fail on purpose, unless you deliver Randy. Come on, Dad. No Randy, no breakthrough trading model.

ERIC

All right, all right. You can have the troublesome thing back. He's in the trunk of the limo.

(picks up phone)

Brittany, tell Gus to bring Randy up from the parking garage.

(hangs up; to Alan)

I did it for your own good, son.

ALAN

Don't you think it's time you let me decide what's for my own good?

ERIC

Just go back to work on the formula. And make up with Brenda. Or there may not be a company left to make use of your overdue piece of mathematical wizardry.

END OF ACT II

Scene 1

## ACT II

## Scene 2

Alan's office. He's taking Randy out of the trunk.

ALAN

Hi, Randy.

RANDY

Where are we? I thought we were on the road.

ALAN

My dad took you for a walk.

RANDY

That's scary. I don't think he's a fan.

ALAN

Not to worry. You're back.

RANDY

OK. So let's rehearse. Our first TV appearance is Saturday. I can't wait. Star Quest! We'll win in a heartbeat -- and then life among the stars!

ALAN

Let's just do our best. Remember, when you anticipate success, you put hurdles in front of yourself that you have to jump over. Now, tell me. What number do you want to work on?

RANDY

How about my favorite new song? Would You? I just love the double meaning.

ALAN

Have you recuperated enough from your unexpected walk to be in good voice?

RANDY

Yes, I have.

ALAN

How do you know? You haven't sung a note. You know when you get upset your voice tightens up.

RANDY

There's only one way to find out.

(clears throat; sings)

WOULD YOU ...

(frog in throat; clears it)

OK. One more time.

(sings)

OH, TELL ME, WOULD YOU LOVE  
ME, WOULD YOU EVEN TRY,  
THOUGH I'M NOT QUITE THE SAME  
AS THE USUAL KIND OF GUY?

IN FACT, WHEN I HEAR PEOPLE  
SAY GENERALLY SPEAKING  
OR WORDS LIKE TYPICALLY,  
I KNOW THEY SIMPLY CAN'T BE  
TALKING ABOUT SOMETHING  
THAT HAS A LOT TO DO  
WITH LITTLE ME.

OH, TELL ME, WOULD YOU LOVE  
ME, WOULD YOU EVEN TRY,  
THOUGH I'M NOT QUITE THE SAME  
AS YOUR USUAL KIND OF GUY?

I'M AFRAID WHEN SOMEONE SAYS  
SOMETHING INHERENTLY  
INSENSITIVE LIKE NEVER,  
ALWAYS OR INVARIABLY,  
OR EVEN UTTERS THE PHRASE  
"SOMEONE WHO'S JUST LIKE YOU,"  
I WONDER WHO THEY COULD BE  
REFERRING TO WHO'S EXACTLY  
LIKE LITTLE ME.

OH, GENERALITIES  
 ARE OK AND HAVE A PLACE.  
 GUIDELINES ARE HANDY THINGS.  
 BUT THEY INHERENTLY  
 IGNORE THE LOVELY ALBUM  
 OF THOUGHTS AND IMAGES  
 THAT PLAYS INSIDE US ALL  
 AND MAKES UP THE DIFFERENCE  
 THAT WE ALL LOVE TO SEE  
 BETWEEN LITTLE YOU AND ME.

OH, TELL ME, WOULD YOU LOVE  
 ME, WOULD YOU EVEN TRY,  
 THOUGH I'M NOT QUITE THE SAME  
 AS THE USUAL KIND OF GUY?  
 WHEN I HEAR PEOPLE MENTION  
 EVEN MATH THAT AVERAGES THINGS.  
 LIKE STATISTICALLY SPEAKING  
 AND NORMAL DISTRIBUTION,  
 A SURVEY OR RANDOM SAMPLE,  
 I MAY NOT PAY MUCH ATTENTION  
 BECAUSE I KNOW THEY'RE DON'T  
 ENCOMPASS THE PRECIOUS DETAILS  
 THAT ONLY I CAN SEE  
 IN LITTLE ME,  
 OH, TELL ME, WOULD YOU,  
 WOULD YOU EVEN TRY  
 TO SEE THE WONDERS  
 INSIDE OF ME  
 AND LOVE A GUY  
 LIKE LITTLE ME?

(spoken)

So what do you think? Am I ready for Prime Time or what?

ALAN

It's not for me to say.

RANDY

Give me a break, will you? I thought I sounded great.

ALAN

That's exactly what I need. A break! I'm in deep trouble.

RANDY

What's going on?

ALAN

Brenda thinks I care more about you than I do about her.

RANDY

Oh. Well, don't you?

ALAN

Stop it. It's just something I have to work out.

RANDY

Why? Half the people in the world are women. I'm sure you can find at least one other woman you can love.

ALAN

Like who?

RANDY

Let me think. Hey, how about your father's secretary?

ALAN

You really do know how to get a guy in trouble, don't you?

RANDY

You mean, out of trouble. At least, she came to our show.

ALAN

But I love Brenda.

RANDY

Whose problem is that? You're on your own, kid.

ALAN

Thanks.

RANDY

Don't take things so seriously. After we're stars, I promise to leave an occasional woman for you. Now, how about another song?

ALAN

Not now. I have to work on the trading piece. There has to be a mathematical formula that's big enough to account for every relevant variable.

RANDY

If you figure it out, let me know. Maybe everything that happens isn't mathematically predictable, just the framework in which unpredictable events can occur.

ALAN

I'll think about that. It's time for a nap.

RANDY

If you insist. Just keep your eyes on my lock box this time, OK?

ALAN

Don't worry. I learned my lesson. In ya go.

(puts Randy in the trunk; sighs for a moment; then turns to the computer and starts to work)

END OF ACT II

Scene 2

## ACT II

## Scene 3

A restaurant. Brenda is having dinner with her father.

STANLEY

What's wrong, sweetheart?

BRENDA

What do you mean?

STANLEY

You don't seem to be your usual, cheerful self.

BRENDA

I don't want to talk about it.

STANLEY

Why not? You know I love you. You're my precious treasure. You're not having trouble with Alan, are you? I won't cause a problem. I promise.

BRENDA

Oh, Daddy, I think Alan loves Randy more than he loves me.

STANLEY

Randy?

BRENDA

His dummy. They're inseparable.

STANLEY

I thought he stopped playing around with that dummy a long time ago.

BRENDA

I wish. Now, now, he's thinking about becoming a professional ventriloquist.

STANLEY

I thought he was working at his father's office.

BRENDA

He is. But in his spare time, he rehearses. He's even performing at comedy clubs.

STANLEY

No?

BRENDA

It's even worse than that, Daddy. He has an agent now, who says he can get him on television.

STANLEY

Television? It always surprises me that people still watch that -- I mean, with the Internet and all the other distractions you can control, instead of just sitting there and becoming the willing recipient of random junk.

BRENDA

I just don't know what to do. Can you imagine me, married to a ventriloquist? I want to be married to somebody like you.

STANLEY

Thank you, dear. I'm flattered.

(wipes her tears; sings)

WHAT A WOMAN YOU ARE TO SEE  
SO MUCH THAT'S GOOD IN A MAN  
THAT HE'S THE KIND YOU PLAN  
TO MARRY IF YOU CAN --  
ESPECIALLY SINCE THE MAN IS ME.

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WANT A GUY  
JUST LIKE THE GUY  
WHO MARRIED DEAR OLD MOM.

(stands; sings to all)

DID YOU HEAR THE LATEST NEWS?  
MY DAUGHTER THINKS SO MUCH OF ME  
THAT THE KIND OF MAN SHE'D CHOOSE  
IS ONE ON WHOM WE BOTH AGREE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE WANTS A GUY  
 JUST LIKE THE GUY  
 WHO MARRIED DEAR OLD MOM.

STAFF  
 (sings in the style of a barbershop  
 quartet)

WE CAN'T BELIEVE SHE WANTS A GUY  
 JUST LIKE THE GUY  
 WHO MARRIED DEAR OLD MOM.

BRENDA  
 (stands and sings)

YOU BETTER BELIEVE I WANT A GUY  
 JUST LIKE THE GUY  
 WHO MARRIED DEAR OLD MOM!

STANLEY  
 (hugs her; sings)

AH, IMAGINE HOW I FEEL!  
 I'LL APPROVE THE MOST LAVISH WEDDING PLAN  
 AND CONSIDER ANY PRICE A STEAL,  
 JUST KNOWING SHE'D PICK MY KIND OF MAN.

ALL  
 (Brenda sings "I," not "She")

CAN YOU BELIEVE SHE WANTS A GUY  
 JUST LIKE THE GUY  
 WHO MARRIED DEAR OLD MOM?

Brenda and Stanley sit at their table again.

STANLEY  
 Actually, dear, if I could get my hands on Alan's juvenile infatuation, I'd wring its neck.

BRENDA  
 His father already tried to get rid of it.

STANLEY

First smart thing I've heard him do in years. What happened?

BRENDA

It didn't work. Alan threatened not to do anymore work on the trading model unless he returned it. So his dad caved in.

STANLEY

At least, he's still working on it. If he doesn't come up with the answer soon, I may have to make a tough decision.

BRENDA

Don't, Daddy, at least, not yet.

STANLEY

All right. But I got my monthly statement today. I'm down for the year. I'd do better investing on my own, the way I used to, before I had enough money for Wall Street to volunteer to "maximize my returns." My question is, whose returns -- mine or theirs?

BRENDA

I'm sorry, Daddy.

STANLEY

Anything for you, sweetheart. Poor baby, let me wipe your tears.  
(takes napkin and wipes her tears)

BRENDA

Thank you, Daddy. I love you so much!

END OF ACT II

Scene 3

## ACT II

## Scene 4

Another restaurant. Alan's agent is having a bite.  
Eric enters and sees him. Goes to the table.

ERIC

Sorry I'm late. Busy, busy. Christmas bonus time, divvying up the profits.  
(shakes his hand)  
Big profits!

SAM

No problem. Thanks for inviting me.

ERIC

(sits)  
So you think my son has talent, huh?

SAM

Great talent. He'll be a star.

ERIC

Really?

SAM

No question about it. You'll be proud of him. You'll see him on TV. And wait till he plays Vegas.

ERIC

Las Vegas? The last time I got stuck in Las Vegas, I drove out to see Hoover Dam. When you're in the stock market, your whole life is a gamble. How am I supposed to get excited about blackjack?

SAM

Whatever! My guess is he'll make a fortune.

ERIC

That's a very relative term. What do you mean by that?

SAM

Millions!

ERIC

Oh. Do you know how much he has the potential to earn? Billions.

SAM

Well, I'm not sure about that. Most entertainers have to settle for millions.

ERIC

You know he's a mathematical genius, don't you?

SAM

He never told me. I just know him as a performer with great promise.

ERIC

Let me ask you a question. How much would it take for you to tell him you changed your mind?

SAM

What do you mean?

ERIC

I mean in the nicest way possible you tell him he doesn't have as much talent as you thought and he should give up and go back to banking.

SAM

I can't do that. I already have him scheduled for an appearance on Star Quest. It could make him an overnight sensation!

ERIC

(reaches in breast pocket and takes out  
checkbook)

Will you still feel that way if I write you a check right now for a million dollars?

SAM

Did you say a million dollars?

ERIC

Yes, I did. I'll write it off as a corporate expense. Well, what do you say?

SAM

That's not a very nice thing to do to your son. But I forgive you. I'll tell him as soon as the check clears.

ERIC

Excellent. Then we have a deal.

(writes check; hands it to him; picks up  
menu)

Have you decided what you're having for lunch? Your treat.

END OF ACT II

Scene 4

## ACT II

## Scene 5

Another restaurant. Brenda is sitting at the table with a mini-notebook computer. She is typing something. She finishes and puts it in her purse. Alan shows up.

ALAN

Hi, sweetheart.

BRENDA

Hi.

ALAN

I'm glad you're not upset anymore.

BRENDA

(smiles; takes his hand)

Don't be silly. How was work?

ALAN

Same old, same old. I worked on the ultimate formula. Then I slipped in a little rehearsal time. Only three more days before the big night.

BRENDA

Right. My daddy asked how you're doing with the formula?

ALAN

I keep testing it and modifying it. The job is actually a little more difficult than I anticipated. But I'll get it right.

BRENDA

My dad is counting on you. I am, too.

ALAN

I know, dear. I'm doing my best.

BRENDA

Are you?

ALAN

It's the most and the least I can do. Now, what would you like tonight -- red wine or white wine?

BRENDA

Whatever you want, sweetheart.

ALAN

You're being very obliging.

BRENDA

(takes his hand)

That's because I love you, dear. Very much. But I can't help thinking ...

(sings)

I WISH YOU HAD A LIGHT SWITCH  
INSIDE YOUR BRAIN,  
JUST THE RIGHT SWITCH  
I COULD FLIP TO RETRAIN  
YOU SO YOU ALWAYS DO  
JUST WHAT I WANT YOU TO  
TO PLEASE ME.  
IT WOULD BE SO HEAVENLY  
IF YOU WOULD ALWAYS DO  
EXACTLY WHAT I WANT YOU TO  
TO PLEASE ME!

YEAH, YEAH, YEAH,  
 I WISH YOU HAD A LIGHT SWITCH  
 INSIDE YOUR BRAIN  
 JUST THE RIGHT SWITCH  
 I COULD FLIP TO RETRAIN  
 YOU SO YOU NEVER DO  
 WHAT I DON'T WANT YOU TO  
 AND HURT ME --  
 IT WOULD BE SO HEAVENLY  
 IF YOU WOULD NEVER DO  
 TOTALLY WHAT I DON'T WANT YOU TO  
 AND HURT ME.

YOU CAN CALL  
 IT A LIGHT SWITCH,  
 A HOT BUTTON,  
 OR ANYTHING AT ALL --  
 AS LONG AS YOU AGREE  
 YOU'LL ALWAYS DO  
 WHAT I WANT YOU TO  
 AND LOVE ME, LOVE ME, LOVE ME!

I WISH YOU HAD A LIGHT SWITCH  
 INSIDE YOUR BRAIN  
 JUST THE RIGHT SWITCH  
 I COULD FLIP TO RETRAIN  
 YOU SO YOU ALWAYS DO  
 PRECISELY WHAT I WANT YOU TO  
 AND LOVE ME --  
 IT WOULD BE SO HEAVENLY  
 IF YOU WOULD ALWAYS DO  
 PRECISELY, EXACTLY, AND TOTALLY  
 WHAT I WANT YOU TO  
 AND LOVE ME, LOVE ME, LOVE ME!

ALAN

Pretty hot, dear.

BRENDA

Nothing says a classy lady can't rock. I do love you.

ALAN

I love you, too. And, believe me, there's no comparison between you and Randy.

BRENDA

I know.

END OF ACT II

Scene 5

## ACT II

## Scene 6

Night. Alan's bedroom. He and Brenda are in bed. Alan is asleep. There's a bottle of spring water on each of their night tables. She looks at her watch. She gets out of bed and puts on a robe. Then she goes to side of the room, picks up Randy's trunk and goes to the door of the apartment. She opens it. Her father is standing there. She hands the trunk to him.

BRENDA

(whispers)

Thank you, Daddy.

STANLEY

(throws her a kiss and whispers back)

My pleasure, sweetheart. Glad to help.

She throws a kiss back and then closes the door. She returns, takes off her robe, and sits on the edge of the bed. She takes a sip of spring water. Then she slips back under the covers. Alan stirs.

ALAN

Everything OK, dear?

BRENDA

Yes, sweetheart. I just needed a sip of water.

ALAN

Good idea. I could use one myself.

(sits up and takes a sip; turns to her and gives her a kiss)

I'm so happy we made up.

BRENDA

So am I.

ALAN

Good night, sweet princess.

BRENDA

Good night.

They both return to sleeping positions. Lights fade down.

Lights come up on Stanley, slipping through the night with the trunk. Stops. Takes out handkerchief and wipes forehead.

STANLEY

(to self)

The things I do for my daughter. Not to mention my balance sheet.

(to Randy)

You're washed up, kid.

Lights fade down on him. Beat.

Lights fade back up. Alan's apartment. Morning. Brenda and Alan are dressed and ready to go to work.

ALAN

Be right with you, sweetheart. I just have to get Randy.

(looks; scratches head)

BRENDA

Anything wrong?

ALAN

I can't find Randy.

BRENDA

Are you sure you brought him home?

ALAN

Of course, I brought him home, before I went to the restaurant.

BRENDA

Was he here when we got back?

ALAN

I don't know where else he'd be?

BRENDA

What do you think happened?

ALAN

I don't know.

BRENDA

Does anybody else have a key to your apartment?

ALAN

Only you -- and my mother. Ah, ha! I'll bet my father took the key from her and came here while we were out for dinner? He took him again!

BRENDA

Do you think so?

ALAN

I'll tell you this much. If he did, he can forget about his trading formula. My father is hopeless. Hopeless!

They head out of the apartment and he closes the door behind them.

END OF ACT II

Scene 6

## ACT II

## Scene 7

Alan's enters and goes into his office. His mother is there, looking at a family photo he keeps on his desk.

ALAN

Mom, hi. What are you doing here?

MARGO

I want to talk.

ALAN

About what?

MARGO

Close the door, please. I don't want your father to hear.

ALAN

(as he closes door)

Does he know you're here?

MARGO

Yes. I drove in with him.

ALAN

Then can you tell me something? Where's Randy?

MARGO

Don't tell me he's missing again?

ALAN

You don't know? I'm sure Dad did it.

MARGO

I don't think so. That's why I'm here. Can we sit down?

ALAN

All right. What's up?

They take the two seats in front of Alan's desk.

MARGO

I just don't want you to be hurt.

ALAN

I'm already kind of messed up. How can I go on TV without Randy?

MARGO

You don't have to worry about that.

ALAN

What do you mean?

MARGO

Your appearance has been cancelled.

ALAN

What?

MARGO

I need you to promise you won't tell your father I told you. He's thinks I just came to give you a pep talk about working here.

ALAN

Told me what?

MARGO

Where's your promise? You always used to promise your mother when I asked you and, as I remember, you nearly always kept your word.

ALAN

That bad, huh? OK, you have my word. What did he do this time?

MARGO

Don't be too hard on him. He's worried sick about the business. Still, I can't countenance what he did.

ALAN

Mom, if I decided to use my mathematical ability, I'm not even sure I'd work on Wall Street. I'm enthralled by the beauty and grandeur of the universe. Imagine the challenge of reading existence backward to its beginning! And look at you - I mean, the symmetry and functionality. I'm captivated by the beauty of your eyes and the very movement of your hands - all perfectly natural miracles beyond our understanding and, apparently, even our appreciation. Therefore, we neglect, abuse, and destroy them.

(catches himself)

Sorry. Sometimes, I get carried away. Tell me what my father did this time.

Eric enters near Brittany's desk and gestures toward Alan's door. Brittany nods. He heads for the door.

MARGO

You don't have an agent any more.

ALAN

What?

MARGO

Your father had lunch with him. Need I say more?

Eric comes down the hall to the door and tries the knob. The door is locked.

ERIC

Open up in there. I know you're in there, Alan. Margo?

MARGO

Don't say a word. Remember, I only told you so you wouldn't hear it by surprise.

ALAN

(as he gets up)

How can I not say a word?

MARGO

You promised.

ALAN

(opens door)

Hi, Dad.

ERIC

Well, was your mother able to talk some sense into your misguided mind?

ALAN

Where is Randy?

ERIC

Don't tell me I'm not the only one who'd like that dummy out of your life. I don't have a clue. If you remember, I surrendered the monster so you'd get back to work on the math.

ALAN

How can I do that when you took Randy again?

ERIC

I did not take him again. I make it a practice not to make the same mistake twice. Maybe three or four times. But never twice. Tell him, Margo. Did I take Randy again?

MARGO

No, last night he was lamenting that he had to give him back to you.

ALAN

Then where the hell is Randy?

ERIC

He's not in the office for a change?

ALAN

I took him home. But I'll double check.

(looks behind his desk and checks the closet)

Gone.

ERIC

Maybe your housekeeper stole him and traded him for marijuana.

ALAN

She'd never do that. She's a sweetheart.

ERIC

Well, who else has access to your apartment? I'd like to know who to thank.

ALAN

Nobody, except ...

(disbelief)

... Brenda?

ERIC

I always knew that girl was one smart cookie. You should fall down on your knees and be grateful you have her.

ALAN

I can't believe she would do that to me. She's supposed to love me.

ERIC

Maybe that's why she did it.

MARGO

Maybe for her father. He's depending on you, Alan.

ALAN

I'll tell you this much. If she did this to me, we are finished.

ERIC

Don't say that. We need her father's goodwill.

ALAN

I don't give a damn about that or his billions. I can't believe the whole pack of you. Do you ever think about anything besides money?

MARGO

Well, Alan, we don't want to be poor.

ALAN

Mother, trust me. You will never be poor. The only crisis you face is how high you rank on Forbes annual list of the world's five-hundred wealthiest people. But I know you're helpless. It's who you are. So I forgive you.

(takes out his cell phone)

I forgive everybody except my former fiance'.

(dials)

Brenda, sweetheart. Can we do lunch?... Oh, nothing special. I just miss you.... What do you mean, you're busy?... All right, then how about dinner? See you there.

(hangs up)

What a bitch! I still can't believe it! Now, however, that I'm about to get Randy back, I think I'll call my agent.

ERIC

Your agent?

ALAN

Yes, you do know that I have one, don't you? I just need to confirm something.  
(dials on cell)

Lights come up on agent at desk. Phone rings. He picks up.

SAM

Cole here.

ALAN

Sam, it's Alan.

SAM

How ya doin', kid?

ALAN

I'm fine, Sam. Just calling to confirm that everything's set with Star Quest.

SAM

Well, we have to talk.

ALAN

About what?

SAM

I've been thinking, Alan, and I decided you just don't have what it takes to be a star.

ALAN

You're kidding?

SAM

I never kid about things like this. So, to make a long story short, I can't represent you anymore.

Really? ALAN

Did you hear me say that? SAM

Of course, I heard you. ALAN

Excellent. Let me put you on hold. I have to check something.  
 (turns to computer; moves mouse and  
 types; waits) SAM

Great!  
 (looks up at sky and raises hands; to self)  
 I never had a million dollars in my account!  
 (sings)

I NEVER HAD A MILLION BUCKS  
 IN MY BANK ACCOUNT!  
 LOOK AT ALL THOSE ZEROS  
 LINED UP LIKE MY HEROS.  
 HE, HE, HE, HA, HA, HA!  
 I CAN FINALLY DISPENSE  
 WITH IMPOVERISHED PRETENSE!  
 WHAT A GORGEOUS AMOUNT!  
 WHAT A NEW LIFE DELUXE!  
 HE, HE, HE, HA, HA, HA!

NOW ALL FAST FOOD  
 IS JUST PAST FOOD.  
 MY NEW ROUTINE  
 WILL BE HAUTE CUISINE.  
 GOODBYE PARK BENCH;  
 I'M GOING ALL FRENCH!

NO MORE WAREHOUSE SUITS  
 AND BARGAIN BOOTS.  
 I CAN WEAR WHAT I CHOOSE,  
 EVEN PRADA SHOES.

I MAY EVEN BUY  
A GUCCI NECKTIE!

OH, HOW HEAVEN SENT!  
I CAN PAY MY RENT.  
AND MY OLD FUTON  
IS AS GOOD AS GONE.  
I MAY EVEN GO  
FOR A SMALL CONDO!

OH, I NEVER HAD A MILLION BUCKS  
IN MY BANK ACCOUNT!  
LOOK AT ALL THOSE ZEROS  
LINED UP LIKE MY HEROS.  
HE, HE, HE, HA, HA, HA!  
I CAN FINALLY DISPENSE  
WITH IMPOVERISHED PRETENSE!  
WHAT A GORGEOUS AMOUNT!  
WHAT A NEW LIFE DELUXE!  
HE, HE, HE, HA, HA, HA!  
HE, HE, HE, HA, HA, HA!

SAM

(back on phone)

I'm just kidding you, kid. We're all set.

ALAN

We are?

SAM

Yeah. I promised a certain stranger I'd say that. But I didn't say I'd keep my word.

ALAN

Great, Sam! There's only one of you.

SAM

So I've been told. Just remember. Rehearse, rehearse, and then rehearse again.

ALAN

I will. Thanks, Sam.

SAM

Don't mention it, kid. It's just business as usual.  
(hangs up)

ERIC

So how'd it go?

ALAN

Great! I'm all set for my first major TV appearance.

ERIC

You are?

ALAN

Yeah, Dad. Got a problem with that?

ERIC

Who, me? Naw, why would I have a problem with that. But how are you going to go on Star Quest without Randy?

ALAN

I'm about to solve that problem. Just watch.

ERIC

Don't be too hard on her, son. I'm beggin' ya.

MARGO

She's just like your father, Alan. She only wants what's best for you. You forgave him, and you can forgive her.

ALAN

Why am I always the one who's forgiving people?

MARGO

Because you love us.

ERIC

And you know we love you.

ALAN

All I want to know is, can somebody please save me from all this love?  
(exits; heads for office; sings)

ALAN

END OF ACT II

Scene 7

## ACT II

## Scene 8

A restaurant. Alan and Brenda are seated at a table.  
The meal is in progress.

ALAN

I thought you might ask if I found Randy.

BRENDA

I was thinking how much I love you.

ALAN

Really? May I ask you something?

BRENDA

What?

ALAN

Where the hell is he?

BRENDA

What?

ALAN

I think you know what I mean. What did you do with Randy?

BRENDA

I don't know what you're talking about.

ALAN

Come on, Brenda. You're the only one who could've taken him. I know that now. It wasn't my father. He had an even more despicable plan.

BRENDA

What do you mean?

ALAN

I mean I know you took Randy. I don't know when or how. But I know. Now, just tell me where he is and maybe, just maybe, I'll forgive you. On the other hand, if you don't tell me right this minute, I will hate you forever.

BRENDA

Hate me? I thought you love me? How can you say such a thing to the woman you're engaged to?

ALAN

I'm learning. Now tell me, where is he?

BRENDA

(looks around and attempts to quiet him  
down)

Shh. Don't embarrass me, please.

ALAN

Are you going to tell me or not? I'm warning you. Our entire relationship depends on your answer.

BRENDA

I only did it because I love you.

ALAN

I know all about "love." Trust me. Now, where is he?

BRENDA

If you have to know, I sold him on eBay.

ALAN

You what?

BRENDA

I didn't know what else to do with him. So I took a very nice photo of him with my cell phone and listed him on eBay.

ALAN

I can't believe you could do such a thing to me!

BRENDA

Well, I could've just thrown him down the incinerator. But I thought maybe a parent would buy it for some child, who might enjoy it the way you have, before he grows up. Will you please just grow up yourself and get over the silly idea of being a ventriloquist?

ALAN

You are a real bitch. Perfectly focused self-interest. I can't stand it.

BRENDA

I told you, I'm not interested in being the wife of a ventriloquist. I'm way too preppy for that and you know it.

ALAN

Ah, the mere slave of another timely cliché. I thought you had more character than that. Now, as soon as we're done eating, we'll go to your apartment and you'll turn him over to him.

BRENDA

I can't do that.

ALAN

What do you mean, you can't do it?

BRENDA

Somebody already bought him.

ALAN

You're kidding, right?

BRENDA

No, there were three bids on him in less than an hour. Why so many people would want that thing, I have no idea. But I did feel guilty about doing it.

ALAN

You did?

BRENDA

Yes. And I kept thinking I should take him off eBay and bring him back to your apartment. So I had to make a decision before I grew weak. Don't you see, I did it for us?

ALAN

Well, you can just notify the person who bought him that you changed your mind.

BRENDA

It's too late.

ALAN

What do you mean?

BRENDA

I already shipped him to the buyer.

ALAN

You can't be serious?

BRENDA

It wasn't easy. I knew you'd be hurt. So I just wanted to get it over with.

ALAN

Give me the shipping label. Come on. Give it to me right now. I'll simply buy him back.

BRENDA

I would if I could. But I tore it up. I can look online, though. There'll be a record in my FedEx account.

ALAN

Great. Can you access it with your cell phone?

BRENDA

I think so.

ALAN

Then will you please do it right now?

BRENDA

Now, during dinner?

ALAN

Right now, Brenda.

BRENDA

All right.

(picks up her cell phone from the table  
and dials a bit)

ALAN

How did you ship him?

BRENDA

Priority Overnight.

ALAN

Good. That means he'll be there in the morning. Hurry up, will you?

BRENDA

Please, I'm going as fast as I can.

(gets answer; hands him phone)

Here.

ALAN

Thank you.

(takes it; looks; reads)

Great. The guy lives in Queens.

(picks up own cell phone and dials)

Dammit! I'm getting his voice mail.

(presses button to exit call)

I'll call him back in a few minutes.

BRENDA

What if he doesn't want to sell Randy?

ALAN

Trust me. He will. Even if I have to get my father to write a check. And you and I, my sweet, are finished. Do you hear me? Finished! I could never be with a woman who would do something like this to me.

BRENDA

Do you still love your father?

ALAN

Somehow, I'm able to manage that.

BRENDA

Then I don't know what you're talking about. Family is family.

ALAN

We are not family yet.

BRENDA

How long have we been together? Since high school, right? Don't you call that family?

ALAN

I did before you did this to me. I mean, it's inexcusable. But I guess expected.

(sings)

IF PEOPLE ONLY THINK  
OF GETTING THINGS,  
IF THEY'RE TOTALLY IMMERSED  
IN MONEY, CARS AND MINK,  
PENTHOUSES, YACHTS, AND RINGS,  
HOW CAN THEY PUT LOVE FIRST?

BRENDA

(sings)

WHO SAID THAT ALL I THINK  
ABOUT ARE THINGS?  
I'M NOT TOTALLY IMMERSED  
IN MONEY, CARS, AND MINK,  
PENTHOUSES, YACHTS, AND RINGS,  
SO I CAN PUT LOVE FIRST.

ALAN

I'M SORRY IF I'M WRONG.  
BUT IT SEEMS THAT YOU  
THINK IT'S ABSOLUTELY THE WORST  
IF MATERIAL THINGS YOU LONG  
FOR DON'T JUST ACCRUE AND ACCRUE.  
SO HOW CAN YOU PUT LOVE FIRST?

BRENDA

I'M SORRY BUT YOU'RE WRONG.  
THOUGH IT SEEMS THAT YOU  
THINK IT'S ABSOLUTELY THE WORST  
IF MATERIAL THINGS I LONG  
FOR JUST ACCRUE AND ACCRUE,  
I STILL CAN PUT LOVE FIRST.

ALAN (TOGETHER)

HOW CAN SHE PUT LOVE FIRST?

BRENDA (TOGETHER)

I CAN STILL PUT LOVE FIRST.

BRENDA

I'll do what I can to make up for it.

ALAN

You just better hope I get Randy back tomorrow.

BRENDA

You will. Even if I have to drive to Queens with you and ask the buyer to return him myself.

ALAN

You might have to, Brenda.

(takes her hand)

I'm sorry I said I hate you. I just hate what you did.

BRENDA

Don't worry, sweetheart. We'll make everything better tomorrow. But now I have a terrible problem.

ALAN

What?

BRENDA

I don't want to think about it.

ALAN

Come on, tell me.

BRENDA

My dad --

ALAN

-- He knows what you did?

BRENDA

Of course. After all, I did it partly for his benefit. And for your father's. They need you to concentrate on business.

ALAN

I'm doing the best I can. But, much as I dislike admitting it, I may have overstated the simplicity of the project. There are just some things that aren't mathematically predictable. Like why I'm still sitting here with you after the totally inexcusable thing you did to me.

(picks up cell phone)

Let me try the buyer again.

END OF ACT II

Scene 8

## ACT II

## Scene 9

The office. Brittany is at her desk. Eric comes by, wearing his Santa hat.

ERIC

Jingle bells, jingle bells, it's Christmas Bonus time. Chairman Eric is coming to town!

BRITTANY

I wouldn't wear that cap just now. Stanley called and said he'd be here early because traffic was lighter than he thought.

ERIC

Oh.

Just then Stanley enters.

STANLEY

Good morning, Eric. I see you're concentrating on delivering investor value.

ERIC

Oh, just indulging in a little seasonal shenanigans to inspire the troops.

STANLEY

Can we get started? I have a busy day ahead.

ERIC

Of course.

He and Stanley head for Eric's office. Eric closes the door behind them, as he removes his Santa hat. Brenda exhales with relief, as Alan enters.

BRITTANY

Good morning.

(looks at watch)

You're late.

ALAN

I know. I've been on the phone. You're not going to believe this. Brenda sold Randy on Ebay.

BRITTANY

Really?

ALAN

Yes. Thankfully, she 'fessed up. At least, I know who bought him.

BRITTANY

You do?

ALAN

Some guy in Queens. I just can't get him to answer the phone. I'll pay whatever it takes to get him back. But I have to do it asap or I'll have to cancel my appearance on Star Quest. And what could be worse than that?

(hears raised voices from his father's office)

What's going on in there?

BRITTANY

Stanley is visiting.

ALAN

Spare me that today. I've got to drive out and get Randy.

(takes out cell phone)

That is, if I can ever reach the guy who bought him.

(as he heads for office)

What a disaster! And, like most disasters, inflicted by another human being -- and one who's supposed to love me. This is so upsetting! My whole career is on the line.

Goes to office and opens door. Sees Randy sitting in his desk chair. Reacts.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Randy, baby, sweetheart. How did you get here?

(picks him up and hugs him)

I love you, you idiot? What happened?

RANDY

I haven't got a clue. All I know is that I spent the entire night getting bounced around.

(heads back out with Randy)

Brittany, I can't believe it. Look. Randy. He was in my office waiting for me.

BRITTANY

I know.

ALAN

You do? How? Don't tell me Stanley brought him with him? Did my dad or mom do it?

BRITTANY

No, silly. I did.

ALAN

You did?

(goes around her desk and gives her a hug)

Thank you so much.

(to Randy)

What do you say to the lovely lady?

RANDY

Thank you. You saved our act! Mind if I give you a kiss?

(puts his arm out, lends forward and gives  
kisses her; spins head around)

I just love when an urgent situation requires me to kiss a beautiful woman.

ALAN

How did you do it?

BRITTANY

I saw him on Ebay and placed a bid. A bid I knew the buyer couldn't refuse. It took half my paycheck.

ALAN

I love you, Brittany. I'm going to give up Brenda and marry you.

BRITTANY

You can't do that. I'm engaged, too.

ALAN

You are?

BRITTANY

Yes. I bought Randy with my fiance's credit card and had it shipped to him. I didn't want anybody to know who did it, especially your dad.

ALAN

That was so nice of you. What do say Randy? What's greater -- love or kindness?

RANDY

Well, let me think.

(sings)

WHAT IS GREATER, LOVE OR KINDNESS?  
 LOVE CAN BE A SORT OF BLINDNESS,  
 BUT KINDNESS ALWAYS MAKES US SEE  
 THE THOUGHTFUL WAY THINGS OUGHT TO BE.

WHAT IS GREATER, KINDNESS OR LOVE?  
 I WISH THEY WENT LIKE HAND IN GLOVE.  
 OH, WHAT A WORLD IF IT WERE TRUE  
 THEY NEVER CAME AS ONE, BUT TWO!

OH, HOW I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE,  
 AND LOVE WAS ALWAYS KIND  
 OR KINDNESS ALL I EVER NEED --  
 OH, WHAT A WORLD IF LOVE COULD NOT REFUSE  
 GENTLY TO BE DEFINED  
 AS KINDNESS, TOO, IN WORD AND DEED!

WHAT IS GREATER, LOVE OR KINDNESS?  
 LOVE CAN BE A SORT OF BLINDNESS.  
 BUT KINDNESS ALWAYS MAKES US SEE  
 THE THOUGHTFUL WAY THINGS OUGHT TO BE.  
 YET IF SOMEHOW I HAD MY WAY,  
 OH, IF SOMEHOW I HAD MY SAY,

THEY'D GO TOGETHER LIKE FLOWERS IN MAY.  
 TOGETHER, TOGETHER, LIKE FLOWERS IN MAY!

BRITTANY

That's so sweet. I don't know who to thank.

RANDY

Who else?

(to Alan)

What's it time to do?

ALAN

What do you mean?

RANDY

Reward the lovely lass for rescuing me from EBay.

ALAN

I was just going to do that.

(writes check and gives it to Randy)

RANDY

(hands it to her)

Thank you, Brittany. Do you mind if I kiss you again?

BRITTANY

I'd love it.

(puts out her cheek)

RANDY

(kisses it)

Wow! This is the best day I've had since I was just a block of lumber and a bale of cotton.

BRITTANY

Very cute, little man.

ALAN

But how did you know he was on Ebay?

BRITTANY

You know I love to shop.

ALAN

Come on, tell me.

BRITTANY

Brenda called and asked me how to post something on Ebay. I was curious and decided to check what it was.

ALAN

You're amazing. If my father ever says anything again about the way you like to shop from time to time while you're here, let me know.

Eric bursts out of his office.

ERIC

(to Brittany)

Have you seen my son?

(sees Alan)

Ah, there you are. What are you doing with that idiotic thing out here. Put it away. I need you in here instantly!

ALAN

Be right there.

ERIC

Good. And be quick about it!

(goes back into office)

ALAN

Thanks again, Brittany.

(gives her a kiss on the cheek himself)

Ah, much as it breaks my heart, I guess I'll have to settle for Brenda.

RANDY

Just make sure she doesn't get her hands on me again. You don't know what it's like to spend a night in a FedEx box.

BRITTANY

You better get moving.

ALAN

Mind watching Randy for me? I know he'll be safe.

BRITTANY  
(holds out her arms)

Of course, not.

RANDY

Can I sit on your lap?

BRITTANY

I suppose you can.

RANDY

Wowser, Bowser!

Alan hands Randy to her. She puts him on her lap.

RANDY (CONT'D)

How hot is this?

ALAN

Behave yourself, will you?

RANDY

The improbable I can manage. The impossible is just that.

ALAN

I know all about the impossible.

(steels himself and heads for father's  
office; opens door and enters)

Good morning, Stanley.

STANLEY

Good morning. Have you forgiven my daughter yet?

ALAN

About what?

STANLEY

Trust me. I know.

ALAN

I'm working on it.

STANLEY

Just do it. I don't know why, but she loves you. Which is more than I can say about my affections for this company.

(half toward Eric)

I remember when investment firms concentrated on producing income for their investors, not lining up at the hog trough themselves.

(back at Alan)

You can remain her fiance', but I'm pulling my money out. Unless you can tell me you've got the new trading model ready to go.

ERIC

Well, Son, reassure him.

ALAN

I can't.

ERIC

What do you mean you can't?

ALAN

The improbable I can do. The impossible is just that.

STANLEY

How much longer?

ALAN

It's hard to say.

ERIC

Certainly you have some idea, Alan.

(to Stanley)

He's just been spending too much time playing around with that silly dummy.

ALAN

The truth is, Father, I may never figure it out.

ERIC

How can you even say that?

(to Stanley)

As you know, he's a mathematical genius.

ALAN

I'm afraid I've been chastened enough to become modest in the face of infinite mathematics.

(to Stanley)

While I think Carl Jung said an astonishing number of silly things, I think the one time he was smarter than Freud is when he advised the cigar-toting master of the subconscious that the human personality is far too deep for us every to understand completely. And the comparatively low art of trading is analogous, because one of the infinite variables the numbers rely on is the unfathomable proclivities of millions of traders. Yes, generalities can predict but never with certitude. There are also other thorns in the rosebush, like the confounded unpredictability of home values, consumer sentiment, and the impact of world events, for instance, if Greece goes bust or China unexpectedly revalues the renminbi. The best we can every hope for is a bit more probability than we're likely to discern from watching billions of roulette tables simultaneously and attempting to predict where all the marbles will land and, even more challengingly, our winnings.

STANLEY

I assume that's your professional way to say you're stumped?

ERIC

He didn't say that, exactly.

(to Alan)

Did you, Alan?

STANLEY

It doesn't actually matter what he said. I made up my mind when I came in here and caught you in that ridiculous Santa hat. I've decided I'll be better off investing on my own again.

ERIC

Isn't that sort of like deciding to become your own lawyer -- and you know what they say about that?

STANLEY

I know what lawyers say about it. But that's the way I made my fortune, and I've decided to go back to it. It's the only way I can assure that the bulk of my money goes into funding companies with promise and helping to create jobs, instead of fattening up the already lumbering and obese bulls and bears that the current me-first proclivities of Wall Street have produced. Who knows?

I might even be able to fund my charitable foundation with the largesse I was accustomed to before I trusted my wealth management to this incompetent and self-interested institution. As you know, the wealthy can buy a modicum of immortality. They can have things named after them.

(to Alan)

I trust my defection won't influence your love for my daughter.

ALAN

If it did, what kind of love would it be?

STANLEY

Ah, the perfect answer. I like you, young man. And will be proud to give my beloved daughter away to you when the happy date arrives.

(to Eric)

My accounting firm will be in touch.

(rises; to Eric)

And let my defection be a lesson to you. Because it's not from an unwitting savant who would be among the first to be silenced by surrendering the conduct of enterprise to the state, but from a man who values freedom -- values it far too much to acquiesce to its abuse, which makes it a cynical joke on Main Street, instead of a universally beneficial blessing that enables individual enterprise, one hopes, responsibly conducted. The challenge is to be worthy of freedom. My question is, where will freedom find champions wise and courageous enough to distinguish and rescue it.

(takes Eric's Santa hat and puts it on himself; sings)

YOU BETTER WATCH OUT!  
 YOU BETTER NOT CRY.  
 BETTER NOT POUT.  
 I'M TELLING YOU WHY.  
 STANLEY COLE IS COMING TO TOWN!

HE'S MAKING A LIST  
 AND CHECKING IT TWICE;  
 GONNA FIND OUT WHO'S NAUGHTY AND NICE.  
 STANLEY COLE IS COMING TO TOWN!

HE SEES YOU WHEN YOU'RE TRADING.  
 HE KNOWS WHEN YOU'RE A THIEF.  
 HE KNOWS IF YOU'VE BEEN BAD OR GOOD.  
 SO BE GOOD OR COME TO GRIEF!

OH, YOU BETTER WATCH OUT.  
YOU BETTER NOT CRY.  
BETTER NOT POUT.  
I'M TELLING YOU WHY.  
STANLEY COLE IS COMING TO TOWN!

As he concludes, Brenda enters.

BRENDA

(to Brittany)

How cute. I see Alan already drove out and got Randy. I was supposed to go with him.  
Where is he?

Brittany points to Eric's office.

BRITTANY

In there with his father and yours.

BRENDA

Thank you.

RANDY

Don't mention it.

BRENDA

(to Brittany)

How did you do that?

BRITTANY

I have no idea. But it worked.

BRENDA

All Alan's father needs is for you to become a ventriloquist, too.

BRITTANY

I don't think he has to worry about that.

BRENDA

At least, he has something to be grateful for. I'm sure they won't mind if I join them.

She enters the office.

STANLEY

Ah, just in time, my dear, for my departure and Alan's reassurance of his unshakable love.

BRENDA

Daddy, what are you doing with that silly hat on?

STANLEY

Singing a song of financial oversight, my dear.

(does a brief reprise of the song)

And now --

ALAN

-- I think it's time to change the subject.

(takes Brenda's hand)

What do you say, my dear?

BRENDA

Actually, I have an announcement to make. After a harrowing night of self-examination, I've decided I can be happy married to a ventriloquist.

ALAN

I never thought I'd hear you say that, Brenda.

STANLEY

Actually, I was a bit concerned myself.

(to Eric)

If my daughter and I can deal with it, so can you.

ERIC

I give up. At some point, my luck went south.

BRENDA

Maybe not.

(sings to Alan)

I KNEW SINCE THE DAY  
WE MET I'D NO LONGER BE  
SOMEONE WHO COULD SAY  
I NEVER MET SOMEONE  
WHO'S NOT PERFECT FOR ME.

PERFECT FOR ME,  
YOU'RE JUST PERFECT FOR ME!

SOMEHOW, THE PUZZLE PIECE  
I CALL MYSELF,  
WITH ALL ITS QUIZZICAL CURVES,  
AND THE PUZZLE PIECE  
CALLED YOU JUST FIT  
TOGETHER PERFECTLY --  
SO PERFECTLY  
THAT SEPARATELY  
WE EACH CREATE  
THE LOVELY UNITY  
THAT LETS ME SEE,  
YOU'LL ALWAYS BE  
MY PERFECT MATE.

YES, I KNEW SINCE THE DAY  
WE MET I'D NO LONGER BE  
SOMEONE WHO COULD SAY  
I NEVER MET SOMEONE  
WHO'S NOT PERFECT FOR ME.  
PERFECT FOR ME!  
YOU'RE JUST PERFECT FOR ME!

I LOVE YOUR LOOKS AND SENSITIVITY,  
THE WAY YOU THINK  
AND SHOW YOUR LOVE FOR ME.  
I COULD GO ON AND LIST  
THE MILLION FLEETING THOUGHTS  
I'VE HAD SINCE WE FIRST KISSED.  
THEY'VE MADE ME REALIZE  
THAT, THOUGH WE'RE TWO,  
WE GO TOGETHER AS WELL  
AS MY TWO EYES,  
THOUGH SEEING TWO OF YOU,  
SEE ONLY ONE.  
AND SO I'M DONE,  
EXCEPT TO SAY ...

I KNEW SINCE THE DAY  
WE MET I'D NO LONGER BE  
SOMEONE WHO COULD SAY  
I NEVER MET SOMEONE  
WHO'S NOT PERFECT FOR ME.  
PERFECT FOR ME!

BRENDA & ALAN

I'D NO LONGER BE  
SOMEONE WHO COULD SAY  
I NEVER MET SOMEONE  
WHO'S NOT PERFECT FOR ME.  
YOU'RE JUST PERFECT FOR ME!  
PERFECT FOR ME!

END OF ACT II

Scene 9

## ACT II

## Scene 10

Margo is watching television. Eric enters.

MARGO

Hurry up or you'll miss your son on Star Quest.

ERIC

You know I never watch television.

MARGO

Come on, dear. Make an exception. It's your own son.

ERIC

I've been watching his act ever since I bought him that stupid dummy.

(notices her dissatisfaction and the TV)

Oh, all right.

(sits; watches; starts to smile)

Hey, the kid's not bad.

MARGO

I think he's just wonderful. Come on, be honest.

ERIC

I think he may be all right, after all.

MARGO

That's the most you can say?

ERIC

What more do you want me to say? Except, I promise you, despite the blow Stanley dealt me, we will never be poor.

MARGO

Thank you, dear. And just think! If Alan becomes a star, I'm sure he'll always be there to help us along.

ERIC

It will never come to that, Margo. And remember. Stanley still has to give his daughter away. I can twist his arm then and for years to come.

MARGO

Just promise me that, whatever you do, you won't indulge in insider trading or, worse yet, embark on a Ponzi scheme

ERIC

Never, my dear. I'm deterred from such activities by my high ethical standards, along with my reluctance to join the many other businessmen who now find themselves in jail.

MARGO

Oh, look, they're doing the judging now. I hope he wins. He'll be devastated if he doesn't.

ERIC

I'm sure he's a shoo-in. Who else with his IQ would appear on such a stupid program?

Applause from TV.

MARGO

(jumps up and starts to clap)

Oh, he did win! Our son won! I'm so happy for him. Aren't you? We'll have to throw a party to celebrate.

ERIC

(stands up and starts to clap weakly)

OK, OK, a party. Please, remind Brenda to invite her father.

They continue to clap as lights fade down.

END OF ACT II

Scene 10

## ACT II

## Scene 11

Lights come up on party. Sam is there, too. Alan with Randy.

ERIC

I thought you were a man of your word.

SAM

That I am. I told him exactly what you told me to. Did you tell me I couldn't change my mind? Never mentioned it. But don't worry. I'll spend some inconsiderable fraction of it on promoting your kid.

ERIC

My money, going for that?

SAM

Relax. The kid's gonna be a star.

(raises champagne glass)

Here's to ya, buddy -- and to your son's career!

Eric reluctantly toasts. Lights focus on Alan and Randy.

ALAN

Well, it looks as if we're on our way, Randy. What do you say?

RANDY

I like it.

ALAN

What else? Come on, what do you say at a time like this?

RANDY

Oh, I get it.

(looks at audience)

I'd just like to thank everybody who voted for us.

ALAN

And how would we like to thank them?

RANDY

Hmm. Oh, I get it.

(points to orchestra)

Hit it!

(Reprise. All sing.)

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE,  
THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE,  
THE MORE IMPORTANT BY FAR  
THE LITTLE THINGS BECOME.  
LIKE THE INCIDENTAL FACT  
SOMEHOW WE'RE EACH ALIVE  
ON THIS LOVELY LITTLE EARTH,  
WHERE ALL KINDS OF LIFE CAN THRIVE.

YES, WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE,  
THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE,  
THE MORE IMPORTANT BY FAR  
THE LITTLE THINGS BECOME.  
LIKE THE TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED FACT  
THAT I'M SINGING A HAPPY RHYME  
WHILE THE EARTH IS MOVING ME  
SMOOTHLY THROUGH SPACE AND TIME.

IN FACT, IT SEEMS THE BEST  
THE STARS AND PLANETS CAN DO  
IS MAKE A PLANET THAT'S BLESSED  
WITH LIFE, TELLTALE WHITE AND BLUE,  
SO MAYBE IT OUGHT TO BE  
GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU AND ME.

YEP, WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE,  
THE BIGGER WE LEARN THINGS ARE,  
THE MORE IMPORTANT BY FAR  
THE LITTLE THINGS BECOME.  
LIKE THE HARDLY NOTICED FACT  
THAT OUR HEARTS BEAT WITHOUT A MISS,  
AND SOMEHOW WE CAN THINK AND FEEL,  
SEE AND TOUCH, LOVE AND KISS.  
JUST THINK OF ALL THIS,  
AND YOU WONT FEEL SMALL,  
NO YOU WON'T, AT ALL.

RANDY

(waves)

Good night and thanks for coming

ALAN & ALL

(wave)

Good night!

Band takes us to conclusion.

CURTAIN

THE END