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The Single Man – A Murder Mystery

A Murder mystery in 2 acts

by Don Zolidis

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Cast of Characters

The Detective:

HENRI POISSON, the famous French detective. He has a phenomenal mustache. Perhaps wears a tweed suit and a bowler.

The Producers:

TODD, the production manager
LUKA, another production assistant – any gender.
BARRY, the lead producer – any gender.
HENDRICKS, the lead writer – any gender.
MINNIE, an intern – female.

The Single Ladies:

GABRIELLE, kicked off the show.
ANDREA: she's from Texas, y'all. Outdoorsy.
MELANIE: a career woman. Can she have it all? Competitive.
SUNRISE: a sweetheart from North Dakota. Loads of insecurity.
NATALIA: LOUD. But she is so much FUN. She wants you to know that she has FUN.
ELEANOR: Sweet. Rescues dogs in her spare time. The nicest person in the world.
SHANI: The crazy one. Creates so much drama. We hate her.
BAILEY: An actress struggling to get her big break.

Other characters:

JEREMIAH, dreamy, the first single man.
HOST: the host of the show. (male or female)
MILAGRO: a dance instructor (male or female) – may be played by the same actor as JEREMIAH
EARL, Sunrise's father. Thinks he's funny. – may be played by the same actor as BARRY
JESSICA, Sunrise's mother. Nice. – may be played by the same actor as GABRIELLE.
CHARLES, Shani's Canadian boyfriend. Super nice. May be played by the same actor as HENDRICKS

Act One

The set of "THE SINGLE MAN."
The final moments of the episode.
JEREMIAH, dressed in a tuxedo, holds a single rose.
Two women, SHANI, and GABRIELLE, are holding each other's hands in anticipation.
Upstage, the other six contestants all hold a rose and watch the action unfold.
Dramatic Piano music plays, underscoring how absolutely MOMENTOUS this moment is.

JEREMIAH

Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE waves slightly.

Shani.

SHANI waves more aggressively.

I have one rose left. This has been the hardest decision I've had to make here on the SINGLE MAN, sponsored by Purina Dog Chow. And I need to remind the viewers that Purina Dog Chow is the choice for attractive people everywhere. If you want your dog to love you like you deserve – Purina Dog Chow. Otherwise your dog will probably die young.

Back to the action, dramatically.

Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE *(so hopeful)*

Yes?

JEREMIAH

Shani.

SHANI *(hopeful, yet still aggressive)*

Yeah?

JEREMIAH

I never thought I would feel this way about anyone. Especially someone I just met on a television show three weeks ago.

He takes a moment. This is so hard. He tears up.

And I'm so sad I'm going to have to say goodbye to one of you, because you're both pretty hot. But I don't make the rules of the show. If it were up to me, I'd marry all eight of you. But I guess that's "illegal" so I can't do that. So, Gabrielle…

GABRIELLE *(so hopeful)*

Yes?

JEREMIAH

Shani…

SHANI *(hopeful, yet still aggressive)*

Yeah?

JEREMIAH

If you have anything to say at this moment I'd like to hear it.

GABRIELLE steps forward.

GABRIELLE

Jeremiah: I think I loved you from the first moment I saw you in the promotional materials for this show. I love that you're really attractive and you have a lot of money. But mostly I love you for your heart. I love your beautiful, beautiful, really good-looking heart. And I know that we haven't had a lot of time together, and I have grown so attached to these other girls – you guys are like family! You are!

The other CONTESTANTS react.

I would totally live in a weird commune with all of you! I mean it! I don't even like my real family! You guys are so awesome! Except for some of you but you know who you are. And Jeremiah… if you give me that rose, I promise you that I will always, always care about you.

JEREMIAH

Thank you.

SHANI steps forward.

SHANI

Two words: Hot. Tub.

She steps back.

GABRIELLE

Um, excuse me, you can't just do that. You can't just say "hot tub." What does that even mean?

SHANI

Jeremiah knows what it means.

GABRIELLE

I have true feelings here! I have heart! We went on a walk together and petted fluffy dogs! Did you pet fluffy dogs? No! You didn't connect, you didn't do anything!

SHANI

Hot. Tub.

GABRIELLE

Stop saying that! Jeremiah – I will be there for you, I will –

JEREMIAH

Okay, thank you. I think I've made my decision.

The dramatic music becomes even more DRAMATIC.

This is so hard. This is the hardest decision I've made in my life.

Even more dramatic.

Gabrielle.

Pause.

Shani.

Pause. JEREMIAH is PAINED by this decision. It's so difficult.

Shani will you accept this rose?

SHANI

HECK YES I WILL! WOOOO!

SHANI runs up and grabs the rose. She hops up and down, perhaps does a little victory dance, and joins the other contestants upstage.

GABRIELLE

NOOOOOOO! MY LIFE IS OVERRRRR!

The HOST enters.

HOST *(to the audience)*

And that's all for this week's thrilling episode of… THE SINGLE MAN. Tune in next week as the final six will be chosen after a night of romantic dates. I can't wait!

Lights change slightly.

TODD, the production manager, accompanied by several others, charge out onto the stage.

TODD

That's a wrap people!

Clapping for them all

Good show! Good show! So much *drama*!

LUKA

Remember to hang your costumes up – call tomorrow is at 7 a.m.

TODD

Let's move those booties! I want to see booties moving! I am not SEEING them! True love waits for no one!

The contestants start moving off, chatting with each other.

GABRIELLE *(to TODD)*

Can I talk to you for a second?

TODD

Sweetheart, my hair is on fire right now and I cannot cater to your insecurities. Deal with it. See a therapist. My advice to you: forget your life here, create a personality for yourself that people enjoy, and move on. All right? I love you. Wonderful talk.

TODD continues to move around quickly.

GABRIELLE

I need to stay.

TODD

You need to GO. Little secret: This show is garbage. Be thankful you're out.

GABRIELLE goes up to LUKA.

GABRIELLE

It's just that –

LUKA

I have no power on this show. I am a servant.

LUKA continues herding everyone else.

Let's go let's go let's go! I need you all beautiful tomorrow! I want y'all to get a good night's sleep tomorrow so you are prettier than usual!

LUKA finishes getting everyone off-stage as MINNIE enters with coffee.

GABRIELLE charges at her.

GABRIELLE

But you saw that -

MINNIE

Hi. I'm an intern. I'm here to get coffee.

GABRIELLE

But you saw that right? You have eyes?

MINNIE

Yes, I do and –

GABRIELLE

That was a travesty. That will DESTROY the ratings on this show. Everyone tells me that I am the best contestant – the producers forced Jeremiah to make that decision, if I could just talk to him for a second. Pass him a note from me, please.

MINNIE

Literally, my entire job description is coffee.

BARRY, the director, and HENDRICKS, the lead writer, enter, in discussion.

BARRY

The girls are just too nice to each other. I think that's our issue. We need more conflict.

HENDRICKS

I'm sure the production assistants can tell some lies to get them angry. Like, `Melanie thinks you're trash, what would you like to say to her?' Stuff like that. `Melanie said that your feet look like potatoes. What vegetable do her feet look like?'

BARRY

That's no good.

HENDRICKS

I'm brainstorming, don't short-circuit my process. We'll come up with something nastier.

GABRIELLE interrupts them.

GABRIELLE

Hi. Um…

BARRY

We are really busy right now, honey.

GABRIELLE

Okay, but there was a terrible mistake that just happened on the show and I want to bring it to your attention.

HENDRICKS

Melanie said she thinks your eyes give children cancer.

BARRY *(to HENDRICKS)*

No. What is wrong with you?

GABRIELLE

I'm sure you think what you're doing is important, but why was I not picked? Why was Shani picked?

BARRY

We don't make these choices.

GABRIELLE

But I am America's Sweetheart! They said that in People magazine! I WAS IN PEOPLE MAGAZINE AND SHANI WAS IN DOG MAGAZINE!

BARRY

Ooh that's good! Let's use that insult.

HENDRICKS

Done!

GABRIELLE

Maybe the mistake was inside Jeremiah's brain. Was he hypnotized? Was he drugged? What did you do to him?

BARRY

We're very busy, okay? You need to go home and let us run the show.

HENDRICKS
We have a great parting gift for you – The Single Man Board Game.

GABRIELLE
I DON'T WANT THE SINGLE MAN BOARD GAME I WANT TO BE HIS TRUE LOVE!!! But I guess I will also take the board game.

BARRY
Intern!
MINNIE approaches

MINNIE
Just to remind you, my name is Minnie and –

BARRY
Nobody cares about your name. Get this girl a board game and I'll take a latte.

HENDRICKS
Make that two lattes.

MINNIE
Of course, sir.
MINNIE escorts GABRIELLE off.

GABRIELLE
Some day I'm going to be super rich and I'm going to build a house directly on top of your house! And I'll build a giant car that goes on top of your car so you'll never see the sun again! You will live in eternal darkness and I will laugh forever!
MINNIE gets GABRIELLE off-stage.

BARRY
Man.

HENDRICKS
Where was that crazy energy when she was on the show? I totally would've kept her around.

BARRY
So sad.
Lights change to a backstage area.
TODD and LUKA enter mid-conversation.

LUKA
So we're thinking cat circus for one of the next group dates – all the girls train one cat specifically, and then put on a show for a group of elementary kids.

TODD

Can we make sure the kids are hopped on sugar so it's a total trainwreck?

LUKA

Oh it will be a trainwreck, no worries. Whoah don't step on that.

TODD spots, looks down at the ground which is strewn with rose petals.

TODD

All right what garbage person threw roses all over the ground? This is a health hazard.

LUKA

Wait, don't touch them. They spell something.

TODD

OMG there are words.

LUKA

This is like a romantic message from one of the women!

TODD

My heart is bursting right now. So beautiful.

He mimes his heart bursting.

Burst!

LUKA

They say, "I will kill someone on this show."

Pause.

TODD

That's less romantic than I thought then.

BARRY and HENDRICKS enter.

Don't move!

BARRY

What?

TODD

We've got a death threat!

HENDRICKS

Finally! Call People magazine – I want a four page spread, get some photos –

BARRY

They spelled it out in rose petals?

TODD

Apparently.

BARRY

I'm just impressed by the amount of work that took.

HENDRICKS

Nice attention to detail.

LUKA

There is a dangerous psychopath on the show.

BARRY

You know, when you go into reality T.V., you dream of the day a dangerous psychopath gets on your show.

HENDRICKS

Can you say Season Villain? I can! Oooh.

BARRY

This is like Christmas. I am loving this new twist.

HENDRICKS

Who is the killer? Who is going to be killed? Maybe everyone! Tune in next week!

BARRY

Brilliant. I love us. I love the way we work together.

HENDRICKS

You complete me in a non-romantic way.

LUKA

Don't you think people are going to get upset? What if word of this gets out?

MINNIE rushes in.

MINNIE

I heard about what happened! Oh my gosh there it is!

HENDRICKS

Intern!

MINNIE

Again, my name is Minnie, like Minnie Mouse –

HENDRICKS

What.

Skipping Forward

I'm beginning to think he lied about having a Congressional Medal of Valor.

BARRY

I was all excited – death threats, psychopaths, but that guy just ruined it.

HENDRICKS *(hand on BARRY's shoulder)*

It's not your fault. You couldn't have known.

BARRY

Thanks, Hendricks. You're a special person.

LUKA

What are going to do now? We can't keep filming the show with a murderer and no single man.

BARRY

I mean, we could, I just don't know what that would do to our ratings.

HENDRICKS

Can't we just create a version of Jeremiah using CGI? Then we program him to do whatever we want?

BARRY

Not with our budget.

LUKA

And that's totally unethical, right? That's why we wouldn't do that? Right?

BARRY

Really expensive.

TODD

Then we'll have to cancel the show.

HENDRICKS

No! Before this show I was living in my Mom's basement. You don't know what happened down there! There were bugs – and – doilies – and she had this doll collection! *Their eyes followed you.*

LUKA

We could call the police?

HENDRICKS

I'm not going back to the big house either!

Everyone looks at HENDRICKS.

I mean um… never mind. The big house is what I call my… Mom's house. Cause it was big.

BARRY

No police. And if possible, I would like to make sure the serial killer stays on the set. That is a gold mine.

LUKA

How do you know it's a serial killer?

BARRY

I'm just being optimistic.

TODD

I've got an idea! We get a new single man who is in disguise – a man who can discover the killer before they actually kill anyone. A man who happens to be… the world's greatest detective.

HENDRICKS

You mean Batman?

LUKA

Oooh.

TODD

He's not the World's Greatest Detective.

HENDRICKS

It's literally written on the cover of his comic book.

BARRY

Batman would be a great get. I say let's go for it.

HENDRICKS

Sherlock Holmes then. I hear he's good.

TODD

I can't get Batman or Sherlock Holmes – because they're fictional characters – but I can get someone else…

BARRY

Who?

Lights shift.

Perhaps theme music.

HENRI enters, perhaps in a pool of light. He is wearing a tweed suit, and has a bowtie and a very wonderful handlebar mustache. He speaks with a very strong French accent into an old-fashioned phone receiver.

HENRI

`Allo? Yes, it is I, Henri Poisson, the world's greatest detective.

He listens.
I see.
He listens some more.
I see. Mmm-hmm. Oh la la.
Yes. Oui.
He listens.
Yes I know yes and oui are the same word. I am French. I will do it.
The person on the other end didn't understand him because of his accent.
I said I will do it.
I said "Do" "It". Yes. Do it. Yes, I agree to do it, why can't you understand me? Yes. Oui. I will be there.
Short pause
No I will not bring chips.
Lights change. TODD escorts HENRI to the flowers.

TODD
Thank you so much for coming, Mr. Poisson.

HENRI
Please. No formality. Call me Detective Poisson.

TODD
Yes well thank you –

HENRI
You had pizza this morning, yes? Leftovers. Pineapple and pepperoni?

TODD
That's amazing, nothing escapes you!

HENRI
It is your breath. I smell it. Also a minor stain on your shirt, caused by a tumbling pepperoni – which you then plucked from the floor and ate, citing the "five second rule."

TODD
Wow.

HENRI
Which is, of course, not a rule at all. Merely a suggestion. Prior to this job you worked in the serious theatre, yes?

TODD
How did you figure that out?

HENRI

Google.

TODD

Well – our idea was to have you be our new "Single Man" and figure out who the killer is.

HENRI

But no one is dead. So there is no killer.

TODD

Right, but there could be a killer. Perhaps it would be best to show you.

TODD shows HENRI to the rose petals.

Luka and I found this after last night's taping.

HENRI

I see.

He crouches down to look at the flowers. Takes out a magnifying glass.

Exquisite.

TODD

We were all very impressed.

HENRI

I don't see a lot of death threats written in cursive.

LUKA enters

LUKA

Detective Poisson I am a huge fan!

HENRI

Most people are.

LUKA

So it's my job to transform you into an eligible single man that will make our television audience fall in love with you.

He waves a hand over his stern face and turns into a smile.

HENRI

Done.

LUKA

No I mean I have to give you a makeover.

HENRI

No need. I am already quite irresistible. Look at this mustache.

LUKA

Right, but –

HENRI

Enthralling, is it not? You look at it. You wonder, what is under the mustache? Those lips.

LUKA

What?

HENRI

Lips.

LUKA

Leaps?

HENRI *(pointing to his lips)*

Lips!

LUKA

Oh.

HENRI

They are magnificent, yes? Tender, yet juicy. Like chicken nuggets.

LUKA

Sure.

TODD

Being the new "Single Man" will give you the chance to investigate the suspects: All the Single Ladies.

LUKA *(singing)*

All the Single Ladies, All the Single Ladies…

TODD

What did I tell you about that?

HENRI

Yes. All the single ladies are indeed suspects. But there are others. Such as…

BARRY and HENDRICKS rush in.

BARRY

Is he here?

HENRI

You must be the producer. Your concerns are with making money, because you can't possibly afford that watch you are wearing. Also, your cell phone is an iPhone, which means you care

about quality. So you are dying inside because the show is terrible. Desperate. Perhaps desperate enough to kill a contestant on your show? Yes?

BARRY

He's good.

TODD

The show *is* terrible. And getting worse.

HENRI

And from your awful taste in clothing you must be the head writer. You have a slight injury to your brain from where you were dropped on your head as a small child. Perhaps seven years old. Eight. It eliminated your sense of ethics and made you perfect for reality television.

HENDRICKS

Nailed it!

HENRI

You may swoon now. Do it.

LUKA

I'm swooning.

TODD

Me too.

HENRI

But of course you are.

HENRI paces around the room.

I shall require complete autonomy. I go where I wish. I do what I want. I want little cookies delivered to my trailer every morning.

BARRY

I'm not sure we have that in the budget.

HENRI

You do. I will find your killer, and I will bring her… or him… to justice. Preferably before the murder, but certainly afterwards if necessary.

BARRY

After would be best for ratings, honestly.

TODD

And you'll be our new single man?

HENRI

I am already your Single Man. The ladies may not be able to contain themselves. For am I French. And so so sexy.

He walks out of the room.

Lights change to the show.

HOST

Last Week on… The Single Man.

JEREMIAH enters, in slow motion.

JEREMIAH

Shani will you accept this rose?

SHANI

HECK YES I WILL! WOOOO!

SHANI runs up and grabs the rose. She rejoices in slow motion.

GABRIELLE

NOOOOOOO! MY LIFE IS OVERRRRR!

GABRIELLE rends her hair in slow motion.

HOST

Most of us were sad to say goodbye to Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE sinks and cries. She is driven off the stage, perhaps pulled off by production assistants.

Only seven women remain. Who will claim the heart… of the Single Man?

Theme Music.

The Contestants, dressed in regular clothing this time, come out one by one to say their names dramatically.

SHANI *(super loud)*

Shani!

SUNRISE *(awkward)*

Sunrise?

NATALIA *(seductive)*

Natalia.

ANDREA *(tipping a cowboy hat)*

Andrea.

MELANIE *(professional)*

Melanie.

ELEANOR *(sweet)*

Eleanor.

BAILEY *(dramatic, yet fun)*

Bailey!

Lights up on the casual area of the show. Perhaps a couch and other comfy seating. The HOST enters, looking serious.

HOST

I hope that you all had a restful night.

SHANI

No! Woooo!

She tries to high-five SUNRISE, who flinches.

HOST

But I'm afraid I have some bad news. Jeremiah…

The ladies sigh. Some of the audibly whisper "Jeremiah" breathily.

Has had a family issue.

ELEANOR

He is so good. He has such a good heart.

SUNRISE

And so brave.

HOST

Right. Well, he would like you to know that he cares for all of you very much – but he cannot continue on the show.

SHANI

WHAT?!

MELANIE

I am highly disappointed.

NATALIA

I win, right? That means I win! He liked me best!

SHANI

Two words: Hot! Tub!

ANDREA

He liked me, y'all. He was outdoorsy. We had a real connection with animals. We liked animals together!

NATALIA

You drove him away! He hated you!

ANDREA

Lies!

SHANI *(standing up)*

I will cut everyone here!

ELEANOR

Ladies, let's not lose sight of our friendship!

SHANI

OUR FRIENDSHIP IS OVER!

NATALIA

This is Andrea's fault! She forced him to ride a horse and it hurt his butt!

ANDREA

What?!

NATALIA

He told me! His buttocks were red!

SHANI

How did you know?!

MELANIE

Ladies, we are better than this!

NATALIA

No we're not! Andrea is a disease!

ANDREA

Bring it! I ain't afraid of fighting! I do mixed martial arts in Texas!
ANDREA is about to charge NATALIA.
Hold me back, y'all. Somebody hold me back. Seriously, y'all.
She forces SUNRISE to hold her back.

BAILEY *(dramatic)*

THIS IS MADNESS!

HOST *(calm)*

Can I finish my announcement please?

BAILEY

What does this mean for the show?! A lot of people know me! And if anyone wants to follow my Instagram, it's Bailey627 – There's a lot of great content there. What happens backstage on The Single Man? Find out!

HOST

The producers of the show have decided to bring in a replacement Single Man. We will continue the show from this point forward – Unfortunately, this means all the dates you've already had no longer count –

NATALIA

Do I get points for making out with him? Cause I did. Twice. Once when he was on a date with Andrea.

ANDREA

You did not! You are a pair of booty shorts made out of lies!

HOST

You don't get credit for anything you've done previously – it's a clean slate.

SUNRISE

Oh thank goodness. I don't think Jeremiah liked me. He kept saying how much he didn't like me and I said, oh, and he just kept saying `why are you looking at me like that? Stop it' and I don't know why I was looking at him like that! I don't know!

HOST

All right. Let's meet our new single man, shall we?

DRAMATIC MUSIC.

SUNRISE

This is like Christmas!

ELEANOR

I hope he's kind. That's my important quality in a man. Kindness.

SHANI

Put a sock in it.

ELEANOR

That's hurtful.

HOST

We'd like you to meet… Jean-Phillipe.

This would be a great time for a fog machine.
The following images can be projected, if you have that capability.
They could also be acted out by the actor playing HENRI.
A third option is to have the women look off-stage and just react.

Jean Phillipe is a money manager from Paris who currently makes his home on a sprawling estate in Connecticut. We have obtained this actual footage of him riding his horse in slow motion.

Oooohs from the women.

Here he is arguing before the World Criminal Courts about the rights of women set to dramatic music.

Oooohs from the women.

And here he is in his spare time, building homes for orphans.

Oooooohs from the women. ELEANOR cries out "yes!"

And here he is wrestling with his Golden Retriever, Buster. Also in slow motion.

ANDREA

Oh I like dogs.

SHANI

Can you shut up for five seconds?

ANDREA

I'll shut you up, I like dogs. I don't care who knows. If you don't like dogs, I don't like you.

HOST

Ladies. Welcome… Jean-Phillipe.

HENRI enters, in slow motion.

The women freak out.

ANDREA

YESSS! YES!

SHANI

WORK IT!

HENRI does a little twirl, perhaps playing with his sport coat.

DO IT AGAIN.

ELEANOR

You look nice.

SUNRISE

Yayyy! Sorry. I'm nervous.

HENRI

Bonjour. My name… is Jean-Phillipe. As you can tell, I am very French.

The women step out to do a confessional.

NATALIA *(to the audience)*

So I looked at the videos and both of my ovaries exploded. Both of them. Pop. Pop.

ELEANOR *(to the audience)*
He's just so pure. I think he's respectful of women. That's important to me. And sort of an inner beauty –

NATALIA *(to the audience)*
I was like, I WILL HAZ UR BABIEZ.

SHANI *(to the audience)*
I can do all sorts of French things.

MELANIE *(to the audience)*
As a professional woman, I appreciate that he –
BAILEY gets in front of her.

BAILEY *(to the audience)*
I've already taken pictures of him shirtless. With my mind. Which I will upload to my Instagram, Bailey 627.

SUNRISE *(to the audience)*
I hope he likes me.

ANDREA
Gene Phillip *(mispronouncing Jean-Phillipe – she always pronounces it this way)* is mine. That's all I gotta say. He was riding a horse, y'all. MAMA LIKEE. And I will trample these other… girls in order to get my man. I will not rest until he is wearing chaps on my ranch. Take it to the bank.
They all return to the couch.

HOST
Let's hear from Jean-Phillipe.
HENRI steps farther into the room.

HENRI
Euh… thank you. I am very excited to be here.

NATALIA *(under her breath)*
Yes…

HENRI
Because I have been so busy with my career and saving orphans –

NATALIA *(growling)*
Grrrr….

HENRI
That I have not found time for love. I am looking for that… special lady –

Skipping Forward

It becomes very sharp once you break it in half, yes? How close are you to breaking, Minnie?

MINNIE

I was actually really well-adjusted before I took this job. I wanted to work in T.V. and –

HENRI

I already know your life story. You need not repeat it. You had a friend who worked on the show – he got you the position – did not tell you that it was unpaid. So every day you are forced to get snacks for fools, while secretly wishing they were getting you snacks. Do you think murdering one of them will get you a job?

MINNIE

I'm not the killer.

HENRI

No one is the killer. No one has been killed.

MINNIE

Well I didn't put the rose petals on the floor.

HENRI

Of course not. I never said you did.

MINNIE

Well I don't know what you're saying then because your accent is weird.

HENRI

Is it? You might think no one can see you, Minnie. But I see you.

He stirs his tea.

I take my tea with two… sugars. Think about that.

MINNIE

I don't know what that's supposed to mean.

HENRI

Two… Su-gars. Leave me. I must prepare for my group date tonight.

MINNIE

Will the killer be there?

HENRI

But of course.

Lights change.

The mansion. ELEANOR, SUNRISE, BAILEY, and ANDREA are waiting for HENRI. They are primping a little bit in their phones.

ELEANOR

Whatever happens tonight, I want all of you to know that I consider you my best friends. Ever. In my whole life. I treasure our time together.

SUNRISE

Me too. I don't really have friends because I'm so shy.

BAILEY

I say we don't even go on the date! Let's just stay here and share our lives with each other. Who needs this single man, anyway?

ANDREA

Great idea. Y'all go home and I'll stay here.

BAILEY

Never!

ANDREA

I thought we were friends.

ELEANOR

It's not worth fighting over. No man is worth ruining a friendship. At all. Even like a passing acquaintance. No man is worth spoiling a good walk. They're basically worthless. All of them. I would totally throw any man under a moving bus for any of you.

SUNRISE

Do you mean that?

ELEANOR

Yes. I love you guys. Group hug! Do I look okay?

ANDREA

Ehhh –

ELEANOR

What do you mean?

ANDREA

I mean you look okay for you. For what you're working with.

SUNRISE

I think you look beautiful.

ELEANOR

Thank you.

SUNRISE

So much more beautiful than me.

Starts crying.

ELEANOR

Honey no!

ANDREA

She ain't lying.

BAILEY

You are so gorgeous. On the inside.

SUNRISE

You're just saying that.

BAILEY

If he can't see past your surface appearance, then you don't want him. You need someone without eyes or senses. There's a man out there for you – maybe he's in prison, maybe he's on the run from the law right now, but he exists. And when you find him, that's going to be true love. He's not going to care what you look like – as long as you can post bail.

ELEANOR

Bailey!

BAILEY

I am a realist. And one of these things is not like the others: Sunrise. Because she's hideous.

SUNRISE

Ah!

ELEANOR

Don't listen to her. She's just trying to wreck your confidence.

BAILEY

Because I care about you, and I don't want to see you get rejected, which is totally what's going to happen in this show. Because, once again, you are not very attractive.

SUNRISE *(crying)*

Ahhhhh!

ELEANOR

I thought we were going to be friends!

BAILEY

Friends tell the truth. And the truth is that Jean-Phillipe doesn't want any of you.

ANDREA

Lie. Gene Phillip is gonna be with me.

The HOST enters.

HOST

Ladies. Your group date is about to begin. Remember: this is your chance to make a first impression with Jean-Phillipe. Be yourselves. But don't be yourselves too much.

SUNRISE *(crying)*

I can't help it!

ELEANOR hugs her.

ELEANOR

You're going to be fine. Jean-Phillipe is a smart man and he will love you.

SUNRISE *(despairing)*

Why would he?

ANDREA

Good question.

HOST

Ladies, without further ado: Jean-Phillipe.

HENRI enters the room, dressed nicely. He elegantly glides around the room, taking pains to look at each girl. Perhaps he holds a snifter of something.

HENRI

Ah yes. I could tell you of my life of adventure. My exploits saving animals from poachers. I could tell you all of this. But instead, I want to hear… about you.

ANDREA

Ha ha ha ha this is a fun date!

SUNRISE

So much pressure!

HENRI

Right. Let us stroll in the fancy mansion. Can I interest you in a drink of water? It is important to stay hydrated.

HENRI brings over a glass of water to ELEANOR.

ELEANOR

I really appreciate that. I've spent a lot of time digging wells for impoverished people in third world countries, so I understand the importance of clean water.

BAILEY *(to the audience, as a confessional)*
He's so considerate! Giving water to us! Most men don't even think about that.

ANDREA
We got water in Texas too. It's a big thing there. Water. Just um… flowing. Sometimes it falls from the sky. You'd never believe it.

BAILEY *(to the audience)*
Andrea is so desperate. She's sad, really. Her brain is just like Texas – a Wide Open expanse with nothing in it.

ANDREA
If you like my conversating about rain, we can conversate about all kinds of things.

HENRI
Yes. I am interested in hearing your life stories. Perhaps Sunrise could go first? Come with me to a private spot where we can get to know each other.

He takes SUNRISE's hand and walks her to another part of the stage. This would be the moment where they sit by a roaring fire outside if that were possible.

ELEANOR steps out to talk to the audience.

ELEANOR *(to the audience)*
I really hope they connect. Sunrise needs something, she's so… pathetic. You know how sometimes you see a tiny kitten in the street about to eaten by coyotes? And you just stand there and you watch. That's like Sunrise every day.

SUNRISE looks at HENRI. Laughs nervously.

HENRI
You are nervous.

SUNRISE
Your mustache is just so… furry. Like an animal.

HENRI
Oh yes. Watch I can make it dance.

SUNRISE laughs nervously again.

SUNRISE
I'm just shy.

HENRI
And yet your shoes suggest otherwise. A pair that is scuffed ever so slightly on the right heel, indicating that you like to dance. I can only conclude that when alone you dance energetically in

the company of your three cats – since I note that three different types of cat hair are attached to your skirt. Likewise, the bracelet on your left wrist bears certain bite marks made by a larger-than-average tomcat. Perhaps named Buttons. Or… Patches.

SUNRISE

I do have a cat named Patches!

HENRI

Most lonely women do. And is that why you came on The Single Man? Because you are a failure in your social life? Dancing alone, with large cats, and now you feel yourself losing ground to the other single ladies, yes? Enough to make you… desperate?

SUNRISE

You are so observant! Yes, it's everything I've always wanted! I've always been awkward and shy around men and dogs and children, but now… you truly see me!

HENRI

Ehh.

SUNRISE

We can be together! Forever!

HENRI

Perhaps.

SUNRISE

That's all I've wanted to hear!

BAILEY comes over, awkwardly.

BAILEY

Hi-iiii? I was wondering if I could borrow Jean-Philippe ha ha ha!

SUNRISE

We just got over here.

BAILEY

Just that, you know, there's a limited amount of time and this is supposed to be a group date, and you're out here monopolizing him which is totally against the rules and kind of not fair, you know what I mean? So how about I get some time with him?! Okay?! Okay!

SUNRISE *(getting up)*

Sure.

BAILEY

Ha ha ha you are so awesome! Now leave.

SUNRISE *(to HENRI)*

I had such a wonderful time with you.

BAILEY

Monopolizing again! Ha ha ha.

BAILEY hugs SUNRISE away from HENRI.

SUNRISE speaks out to the audience.

SUNRISE *(to the audience)*

He's not like other men. He actually listens and pays attention. I felt like we had this amazing connection even though he hates cats. Which I can work with. He will love them. Eventually.

BAILEY *(to the audience)*

I noticed he was talking to Sunrise and Sunrise is terrible. I mean, really? Sun*rise*. That's your name? Um… desperate much?

HENRI

Shall we play catch? I find it relaxing and romantic.

BAILEY

Oh sure.

HENRI

Behold my ball.

HENRI takes a small tennis ball out of his pocket. He tosses it to her.

BAILEY

I love your ball! It's so… round.

HENRI

Most balls are. Go ahead. Touch it. Roll it around in your hand.

She throws it back to him.

BAILEY

I'm afraid I'll drop your ball.

HENRI

All balls drop over time.*

**This line can be cut.*

BAILEY flirts – flips her hair.

BAILEY

You're so funny! So what's your story, Jean-Phillipe? I love your name by the way.

HENRI

And yet, as you say that, you gestured with your left hand, which indicates to me that you are lying. Your skill with the ball suggests physical training. I also notice your thumbs are slightly callused, which means that you spend quite a lot of time on your phone – mostly on Instagram. I can only deduce that you are an actress, seeking to use your time on The Single Man to gain fame for yourself.

BAILEY breaks down crying.

BAILEY *(crying)*

You're so right! You're right about everything! I've never had anyone in my life like this and –

HENRI

Your crying is, once again, a performance. Not a terribly convincing one.

ANDREA comes over.

ANDREA

Hey y'all. Can I just borrow Gene Phillip for a minute cause I want to look at stars with him?

BAILEY just cries.

I'll take that as a yes.

BAILEY speaks out to the audience.

BAILEY *(through tears, completely unintelligible)*

--It's-like-just-because-I'm-an-actress-I-CAN'T-HAVE-FEELINGS?!

(gets herself together a bit)

And check out my Instagram, Bailey 627.

ANDREA

Come on there, mister sexy. I just love your name. Gene Phillip. Say something in French.

HENRI

Oui.

ANDREA

Ha ha ha you are so funny!

ANDREA points up to the stars.

When I was growing up in Texas there were all kinds of stars. We used to look at `em and say, `there's the stars.' You know that song? THE STARS AT NIGHT ARE BIG AND BRIGHT

Clap clap clap

HENRI

I am quite familiar with that song, I assure you. I am also familiar with the fact that a true Texan would never wear a hat that way. I deduce, from your posture, that you are not from Texas at all. Rather: Oklahoma.

ANDREA gasps.

Spare me your gasp. I guessed the truth the moment I saw you.

ANDREA

How did you know?! Don't tell anyone, please! It's my secret shame!

HENRI
I ask myself, why would this woman pretend to be from Texas? Why this charade?

ANDREA
Nobody cares if you're from Oklahoma! We're a stump of a state. I don't even like football. There's nothing for me there.

HENRI
There there. I do not judge. I merely observe your failure.
ELEANOR comes over.

ELEANOR
I hate to interrupt, but I was hoping to have a word with Jean-Phillipe.

ELEANOR *(to the audience)*
I say this as a really nice person: Andrea is trash.

ANDREA *(to the audience)*
Why does Eleanor come over? What is she trying to do? Doesn't she know HE'S MY MAN?

ANDREA
It's so nice to see you but we're still actually talking.

ANDREA *(to the audience)*
I hope she dies.

ELEANOR
That's so sweet of you to say that but let's share him.

ELEANOR *(to the audience)*
She wasn't raised right. That's probably most of her problem. Not all of her problems, because there are sooo many, but the foundation of it. I say that as a nice person.

ANDREA
Actually, I need to have some more time with Gene Phillip.

HENRI
No need. Come, Eleanor, walk with me.

ANDREA
Okay, y'all have fun and don't fall off a bridge or anything. That would terrible. If you would just die suddenly. Everyone would be so sad. That was a comment for Eleanor by the way.
ANDREA heads off.
HENRI snaps his fingers and MINNIE enters with a tray of food.

ELEANOR

What's this?

HENRI

I shall feed you tiny food. Look at me. Stare into my eyes.

ELEANOR

Is this how everyone dates in France?

HENRI

I could tell you, but you would be shocked by what we do in France. Ah oui. Behold my tiny pickle.

ELEANOR

What?

HENRI

Pickle. Dill pickle. It's a little pickle.

ELEANOR

Oh.

HENRI places the tiny pickle in her mouth.

It's so good.

HENRI

Chew it.

ELEANOR

I am. It's very enjoyable.

HENRI

I thought so. That is enough. I am done with you.

ELEANOR

But we just got to talking! Can I feed you tiny food?

HENRI

No. I shall let you know if I wish to see you again.

ELEANOR

This is certainly surprising.

HENRI

Au revoir.

He steps away.

ELEANOR steps forward.

ELEANOR

What did I do wrong? I chewed his pickle, like he asked me to. I know he has a good heart. I'm sure it's there, underneath his mustache and his accent. I love the French. They just – they try, you know?

All the women come out.

HENRI

Ladies. It is time for me to see the other women. Because on a show like The Single Man –

TODD whispers "Sponsored by Purina Dog Chow" – HENRI looks at him.

Sponsored… by Purina… Dog… Show. Because on this show women are merely a selection of appetizers for a man to choose from. Just like… a dog… selecting Purina Dog Show, which is very good for dogs.

I have had a lovely time tonight, but I must bid you: Adieu.

ANDREA

What?

HENRI

Adieu.

ANDREA

I don't understand what that means.

HENRI

It means Adieu. Get out. Go away.

BAILEY

Ohhhh.

HENDRICKS and BARRY enter opposite, watching the action.

LUKA enters and begins re-applying makeup to HENRI, who tries to protest.

BARRY

I say let's make Sunrise the villain. America hates a loser. *`oh I'm so sad because I'm poor and lame and now I will DESTROY.'*

HENDRICKS

But aren't villains winners? Can we splice together Eleanor talking smack about the other girls?

BARRY

I can make her say whatever you want. How about she hates orphans and then we have one of the other girls admit to being an orphan?

HENDRICKS

Possible.

LUKA

Hold still.

HENRI

I do not need makeup.

LUKA

You'll sit still and you'll like it.

HENRI

Never.

LUKA

Done. Now you're beautiful.

HENRI

I was beautiful before. Now I am a painted pig.

LUKA escorts HENRI off-stage as the lights change to the women's house.

SHANI, NATALIA, and MELANIE enter. They're dressed up. SHANI and NATALIA wear high heels.

SHANI

I wonder where we're going to go on our date. I'm hoping it's the hot tub,

MELANIE

That is not a destination.

SHANI

Um… yes it is. Cause I been there. High five!

No one offers her a high five.

NATALIA

You're disgusting. You're like a lower form of life.

SHANI

I'm a lower form of life IN A HOT TUB.

NATALIA

Like bacteria. Seriously, tons of bacteria in hot tubs. Teeming.

MELANIE steps out.

MELANIE

Skipping Forward

HENRI

A boaat.

NATALIA

A what?

HENRI

Boat boat boat BOAT it's a BOAT.

SHANI

I think he's trying to say yacht.

NATALIA

Ohhh.

MELANIE

I understand you. I understand you so well.

To the audience

Jean-Phillipe needs a woman who can understand him. A woman with a PhD probably, who has her own business –

NATALIA *(to the audience)*

I just love the way he talks. I don't know half the words coming out of his mouth, but I don't need to know them.

HENRI

We shall begin with fly fishing. Who can catch the biggest fish?

SHANI

I can catch you.

She playfully mimes "catching" him.

HENRI

First fish. I will watch your technique. From there I will learn everything I need to know about you.

SHANI

Ooh. Like this?

SHANI mimes casting her pole in a flirtatious manner.

Whoops. Sorry. I mean like this.

She tries again. Fails.

I guess I'll just drop the hook into the water. Ow. These things are sharp.

HENRI

I notice by your technique that you used your left hand, which suggests that you are insecure and your happy-go-lucky attitude is merely a cover. Also, by the protrusion in your pocket, as you check your phone, I deduce you have a boyfriend in Canada.

SHANI

What?!

HENRI

His names is Charles. He is unaware you are on this show.

SHANI

That's ridiculous!

NATALIA

I've heard her say it! She loves Charles!

SHANI

I don't love him he's stupid!

Shock, she realizes what she's said.

Nobody tell please.

SHANI steps out to speak to the audience.

SHANI *(to the audience)*

Okay so yes I have a boyfriend, but he's really lame and wayyy less attractive than Jean-Phillipe. He can't even grow a mustache. So if Jean-Phillipe wants to marry me, then I'll break up with him. Otherwise, I'll settle for Charles.

She reacts to the audience

Oh so it's fine if a man chooses between sixteen girls but a girl can't choose between two?!

MELANIE

Well, for a true catch, you only need to look over here Jean-Phillipe.

She attempts to cast her line. Fails.

Sorry.

(To herself)

Come on Melanie DO IT DO IT

She attempts again. Fails again.

DO IT DO IT DO IT DO IT

She casts the line again.

YES! LOOK! LOOK AT IT I GOT THE THINGIE IN THE WATER! I AM THE WINNER! I AM THE WINNER! I AM ALWAYS THE WINNER!

Stops, realizing she's shaking.

HENRI

And yet you do not have a fish.

MELANIE

Whoops. Um… I'm a little competitive sometimes ha ha ha. No worries. I am fun.

SHANI

Actually I'm fun you can totally ask my boyfriend. But you shouldn't because he doesn't know I am on the show.

HENRI

Ah, Melanie. So concerned with being the winner…

MELANIE

I always win, actually. In business, in my personal life, in… fishing… for things.

HENRI

I can tell by the tension with which you grip the rod, that you spend a lot of time using your hands. Pruning, perhaps? Squeezing the clippers?

MELANIE

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

HENRI

Oh I think you do.

NATALIA

Watch me, Jean-Phillipe!

She tries to cast her line –
*The hook catches MELANIE in the cheek – (*mime this, obviously)*

MELANIE

Aaaaaaaaah!

NATALIA

Whoops!

MELANIE

GED ID OUDDD!

NATALIA

What?

MELANIE

GED ID OUDD!

NATALIA

I can't understand you!

MELANIE freaks out and starts slapping at NATALIA, but she's still hooked through the cheek.

Here let me just –
She yanks the pole –

MELANIE

Aah!
NATALIA yanks again.
Aaaah!
NATALIA yanks really hard.
MELANIE grabs her cheek as the hook comes loose.
AAaaaaaaah!

SHANI

Oh my gosh that was so funny!

MELANIE

YOU DID THAT ON PURPOSE!

NATALIA

No I'm just really incompetent!
MELANIE tries to attack NATALIA.
HENRI gets in between them.

HENRI

This is not the way to my heart.

NATALIA

I'm so sorry, Jean-Phillipe. Her big mouth got in the way!

SHANI

Woo! Yes! I love that joke! If I hooked that fish I woulda thrown it back!

NATALIA

Ha ha ha!

MELANIE

This is not funny!

HENRI

It is a little bit funny.

MELANIE

You better watch your back, both of you!

NATALIA

I got my front right here if you want to go.

SHANI

Bring it!

HENRI

Ladies please!

Lights shift suddenly to BARRY and HENDRICKS watching the action on an iPad.

BARRY

This is the best part.

HENDRICKS

Slow it down.

MELANIE, in slow motion, takes a swing at NATALIA –
NATALIA ducks and MELANIE collides with HENRI, who clutches his face in pain. "Noooooooo."

BARRY

Let's try adding some sound effects in here.

Sound effects.
SHANI charges in slow motion, misses MELANIE, and runs into NATALIA.
They fall backward in slow motion, trying to hold onto the railing.
NATALIA reaches out and grabs hold of MELANIE's wrist.
All three of them fall backwards off the boat.
Lights down on that part of the stage.

HENDRICKS

Some days I love my job. This is the greatest moment in television history.

BARRY

I wonder if we could digitally add sharks.

TODD enters.

TODD

I need you guys to see this!

HENDRICKS

What?

TODD

Look!

LUKA enters with a large diorama. There are seven headless barbies inside, with lipstick stains for blood. The words "SEVEN SINS. SEVEN KILLS" are written in crayon in large letters.

BARRY

What is it?

TODD

It's a diorama. A diorama of murder.

HENDRICKS

Oooh. Nice work, Luka.

LUKA

I didn't make it!

TODD

There are seven barbies in the diorama, and all of them have been decapitated.

LUKA

This reminds me of my childhood.

TODD

And here, in crayon, it's written: "SEVEN SINS. SEVEN KILLS."

HENDRICKS

So we're looking for a child. Everyone round up the children of the crew and we'll start interrogating them!

TODD

Just because they used a crayon doesn't mean they're a child! Come on!

BARRY

Is there a way we can get this on camera? We put this down in front of the group and let them know they're marked for death? So much drama.

HENRI enters, accompanied by MINNIE.

HENRI

Set it down.

TODD sets it down.

Why did you pick it up?

TODD

I found it in my office. I thought everyone needed to see it.

HENRI

And yet no one saw you? You were the first to discover the rose petals as well, yes?

TODD

I'm not the killer!

HENRI

No one is the killer. There is no one dead.

TODD
Poisson, you have to figure this out! What if someone gets murdered?

HENDRICKS *(praying)*
Please let us get it on camera please let us get it on camera
HENRI takes out a magnifying glass and examines the diorama.

HENRI
Once again, exquisite work.

BARRY
I really like this killer's attention to detail. Look she put a heart over the eye in sins.

HENRI
Of course. I know who it is.

TODD
Who?

BARRY
Actually, could you reveal it dramatically? That would be awesome.

HENRI
After my private date. Rest assured, friends, Poisson has solved the case of the person making highly detailed threats who has not yet murdered anyone.

HENDRICKS
Ooh. How about we reveal the killer on the show!
Dramatic music.
The opening of the show.

SHANI, NATALIA, and MELANIE all have bruises on their faces.

SHANI *(super loud)*
Shani!

SUNRISE *(awkward)*
Sunrise?

NATALIA *(seductive)*
Natalia.

ANDREA *(tipping a cowboy hat)*
Andrea.

MELANIE *(professional)*

Melanie.

ELEANOR *(sweet)*

Eleanor.

BAILEY *(dramatic, yet fun)*

Bailey!

Lights up on the casual area, mid-argument.

SHANI

And I'd do it again.

MELANIE

You got lucky, woman.

SHANI

Jean-Phillipe saved me first, so how about that? How about him putting his arms around me and pulling me out of the ocean and leaving you to drown in your own salty mess?

MELANIE

He saved you cause you were the biggest target.

SHANI

Oh that's it!

ELEANOR

Girls! We need to love each other!

She steps out.

ELEANOR *(to the audience)*

We definitely need to love each other. And with these tramps it's never going to happen.

SHANI

I'm gonna love her at the bottom of the ocean!

HOST enters, with a letter.

HOST

Hello Single Ladies.

NATALIA

Except for Shani cause she's got a boyfriend.

ANDREA

Y'all. Cool it.

HOST

I have here a letter from Jean-Phillipe –

NATALIA growls.

BAILEY

I'll read it! I have the best reading voice!

BAILEY snatches the letter. Reads in a French accent.

Ladeez. I have been much impressed with your personalities –

ANDREA

Can you just read it normal please?!

BAILEY

I'm reading it the way he wanted it read! `Join me for an elegant dinner as beautiful and tasty as you. Eleanor.'

Everyone looks at ELEANOR.

SHANI

Noooo! This is a lie!

BAILEY

That's what it says.

ANDREA

Do y'all think he was drugged when he wrote that? Or tied up? Or tortured?

ELEANOR

I hope this doesn't change anything between us. I still consider you all my friends.

NATALIA

Right.

SUNRISE

I have no friends.

SUNRISE breaks down crying.

BAILEY

There there.

BAILEY pats her back.

You're right.

HOST

Eleanor, if you'll accompany me…

ANDREA *(to the audience)*

Eleanor?! Seriously, Eleanor?! WHAT IS THAT? She's shaped like a coyote, y'all. She has like scabs all over her. Vultures circle over her head and are like, `nah she looks too disgusting.' I don't get it.

Lights up on a little table elsewhere on the stage. Romantically set.
MINNIE and HENRI wait.
(If you could have a violin player here, that would be great.)

ELEANOR

Oh Jean-Phillipe!

HENRI stands.

HENRI

You look lovely tonight.

ELEANOR

Thank you. I was sure you would pick one of the other girls. They're all so wonderful and I'm just me.

HENRI

They are nothing to me. Sit, ma petite chou-chou.

ELEANOR

I don't know what that means.

HENRI

It means little cabbage. You are little and you are a cabbage.

ELEANOR

That's… sweet, I think.

HENRI

Perhaps it is.

MINNIE

Jean-Phillipe has chosen a selection of stinky cheeses for you tonight.

MINNIE sets a plate on the table.

ELEANOR

Oh.

MINNIE

These smell like feet. And these ones here are actual mold. And this one is culled from underneath a goat's tongue.

HENRI

French feet are the best. Go ahead. Eat.

ELEANOR *(taking a bite)*

This is so fancy.

HENRI

Indeed.

ELEANOR *(to the audience)*

So when I tasted the cheese I thought about death. Because death was preferable to the cheese.

HENRI

I would like to take our relationship to the next level.

ELEANOR

Ooh.

He stretches out his hands.

HENRI

Take my hands.

ELEANOR

Okay.

She takes his hands.

HENRI

As I suspected. They are soft, yet hopeful.

ELEANOR

I do a lot of work building houses for charities.

HENRI

And that work involves all of these tiny cuts. Which could only be caused by the thorns of many roses.

ELEANOR blinks.

And I note as well that you have recently scrubbed your hands with pumice stone, as if to wash away crayon and lipstick. Crayon and lipstick you used to write a note, yes?

ELEANOR

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

HENRI

I believe you do. You have made death threats on this show. And now, my dear, I'm afraid, you are busted.

ELEANOR starts coughing.

ELEANOR

Oh this cheese –

HENRI

The cheese is not the problem. Your crimes are.

ELEANOR starts coughing louder.

ELEANOR

I don't feel so good…

HENRI

You have the right to remain silent, you have the…

ELEANOR falls out of her chair.

MINNIE

Are you okay?

ELEANOR

Urrhrhghghg…

HENRI

She's been poisoned!

MINNIE

You mean?

HENRI

Oui. This is a tragedy.

Dramatic pause

I may have been wrong.

Lights down Suddenly.

End of act one.

Act Two

The Hospital.
ELEANOR is lying in a hospital bed, in a coma.
The HOST enters.
The dramatic piano theme of "THE SINGLE MAN" plays.

HOST
On last week's exciting episode of THE SINGLE MAN, Eleanor had an allergic reaction to cheese. Now, in this hospital, she clings to life, perhaps waiting for a kiss from her true love? Only six women remain conscious, vying to marry French bachelor, Jean-Phillipe.
HENRI enters in slow-motion, does a little turn.

The other women on the show come forward to say their names again.

SHANI *(super loud)*
Shani!

SUNRISE *(awkward)*
Sunrise?

NATALIA *(seductive)*
Natalia.

ANDREA *(tipping a cowboy hat)*
Andrea.

MELANIE *(professional)*
Melanie.
Slight pause.
The HOST raises ELEANOR's hand –

HOST *(falsetto)*
Eleanor.

BAILEY *(dramatic, yet fun)*
Bailey!
The women crowd around the bed of the unconscious ELEANOR.

HOST *(to the women, trying to be deep)*
Death. It is the opposite of love. Probably. I know many of you were close with Eleanor, and the doctors are doing everything in their power to keep her alive.

NATALIA *(raising hand)*
Um… this means she loses right? She's out? Because… I care so much about her… and don't want to stress her out.

HOST

What better way to celebrate Eleanor's life than continue our show, THE SINGLE MAN, which will narrow you down until there is only one woman worthy of love?

NATALIA

Um… you didn't really answer my question.

SHANI

Have some respect for the dead!

NATALIA

Whatever, lady.

SHANI

Don't you whatever lady me, I will cut you! This is a solemn occasion!

NATALIA

You been saying `I will cut you' this whole show, but nobody's been cut! So I'm just wondering where this knife is? Go ahead! Pull it out! Let's see you cut somebody!

SHANI tries to strangle NATALIA, pushing her backwards on top of ELEANOR's unconscious body.

ANDREA

Hold me back! Hold me back, y'all!

ANDREA forces BAILEY to hold her back from joining the fight.

MELANIE

Ladies! PLEASE.

SHANI stops.

Let's have some dignity here. A little bit.

SUNRISE

Thank you.

HOST

I think it's important that we have a silent prayer for Eleanor right now.

The women look askance as the HOST bows his head.

SHANI *(to the audience)*

All right so this probably like unpopular for me to say this or whatever, but… if you can't handle the pressure of being on the show, why are you on the show? Go home. Unless you're in a coma or whatever. Then I guess, you know, stay there.

NATALIA steps forward.

NATALIA *(to the audience)*

Skipping Forward

MILAGRO

What is this little whining noise coming out of mouth? What is happening? Am I in whining class or am I in *Tango!* class?

BAILEY

Okay.

MILAGRO

I am still hearing it. Anyone else want to make stupid noises?

SHANI steps out to talk to the audience – MILAGRO notices.

Back!

SHANI

Sorry I was gonna do a confessional –

MILAGRO

I do a confessional. You want me to do confessional about how terrible you are? Stand still.

SHANI

Okay.

MILAGRO

First position! Column of light. Tall. Chin up. Eyes in air. Nose on fire.

He looks at the girls' eyes.

Nose on fire!

SUNRISE

I don't know how to make my nose on fire!

MILAGRO

Do it!

SUNRISE

Aaaaah!

MILAGRO

No. Again!

SUNRISE

Aaaaaah!

MILAGRO

Better. In Tango you do not look at your partner. You look this way – to the sky – to the heavens. That is where you are going. Yess….

SUNRISE raises her hand nervously.

Put the hand down.

SUNRISE puts her hand down.

I did not ask for hands. I did not say, "ohhh let's have stupid question time." IT IS NOT STUPID QUESTION TIME! It is *tango!* time!

He takes a deep breath.

And now we stride. Yes. Stride. Step. Step. Step-step. Step. Follow. I am not here on display for you like piece of meat.

The women try to do the steps as he does them.

Step. Step. Step-step. Step! Again. Step. Step. Step-step. Step. You are donkeys in high heels. In fact, I own a donkey who wears high heels and he is better at this than you.

SHANI

What's his name?

MILAGRO

His name is shut up.

MELANIE

I think I'm getting the hang of this.

MILAGRO

You wish to try the fire?

MELANIE

I don't… um… I'm not sure what you're asking.

MILAGRO

Try the fire?

MELANIE

Sure. I'll try the fire.

MILAGRO

Jean-Phillipe!

HENRI

Milagro was my dancing master when I was –

MILAGRO

I did not tell you to speak!

HENRI

But this is my show and I am speaking –

MILAGRO

I am dancing master.

HENRI

Okay, but… at this point in the show –

MILAGRO

First position!

HENRI snaps to first position.

Yes. You shall dance with donkey lady.

MELANIE

That's me?

MILAGRO

You see another donkey lady?

MELANIE

Like five of them.

MILAGRO

It is you.

MELANIE

All right then.

MILAGRO arranges HENRI and MELANIE together.

MILAGRO

You touch here and here and here. Not here. Okay? DO NOT LOOK AT EACH OTHER. You look off into space here – because why? Why?

MELANIE

I don't know.

MILAGRO

Because you are goddess. Goddesses do not look at mortal men while they are dancing.

MELANIE

All right sure.

MILAGRO *(to HENRI)*

And you… you are brave knight hoping for goddesses favor – She will not give it!

HENRI

But of course she will. I am no ordinary knight.

MILAGRO

All right.

MILAGRO starts the tango music from his boombox.
HENRI and MELANIE try to dance in the Hospital room while the other women watch.

MELANIE *(while dancing)*

I think this might be better outside of the Hospital.

HENRI *(while dancing)*

You wish to leave Eleanor here?

MELANIE *(while dancing)*

Well… she's not in the competition anymore.

HENRI *(while dancing)*

Is that what you wish?

MELANIE *(while dancing)*

She's unconscious.

HENRI

And you hoped she would be dead?

MELANIE

What? No.

MILAGRO

Stop. My eyes can't take any more of this! Out. You. Rabbit Girl.

SUNRISE

Me?

MILAGRO

Why is this a question? Are you a rabbit girl?

SUNRISE

I…

MILAGRO

Yes you are rabbit girl get over here.

He arranges her with HENRI.

Here. Here. And here. Now… *tango!*

He starts the music again. HENRI tangos with SUNRISE.

SUNRISE

You dance very well.

HENRI

It is in the hips.

SUNRISE

The what?

HENRI

Hips.

SUNRISE

Heaps of what?

HENRI

Hips!

SUNRISE

Oh.

HENRI

You are very careful.

SUNRISE

I don't want to make a mistake.

HENRI

Is that why you were watching my date with Eleanor?

SUNRISE

What?

HENRI

I observed you hiding behind a frond. This frond was very big - but not quite big enough to hide you.

SUNRISE

You don't miss anything, do you?

HENRI

Never.

SUNRISE

I was just curious.

HENRI

To see if your poison would work?

MILAGRO

Okay that is enough chit-chatting! You do not chit-chat in *tango!* You sigh passionately. Like this.

He sighs passionately.

You.

He grabs NATALIA.

Do the dance. Only passionate sighs.

He arranges her with HENRI.

Now go. Become the *tango!*

HENRI and NATALIA tango.

NATALIA *(passionate sigh)*

HENRI *(passionate sigh)*

NATALIA *(even more passionate sigh)*

HENRI *(passionate sigh that ends in a question mark)*

NATALIA *(confused passionate sigh)*

HENRI *(aggressively inquisitive passionate sigh)*

NATALIA *(defensive passionate sigh)*

HENRI *(even more aggressive inquisitive passionate sigh)*

NATLAIA *(gasp)*

MILAGRO comes over, separates them.

MILAGRO

Very good.

SHANI steps out.

SHANI *(to the audience)*
It was really hard watching Jean-Phillipe dance with Natalia. I'm not saying I was jealous, but if he could've like, thrown her into a large bucket of slop that would've been great. A fitting spot for her. Like a pig trough. Where she can be with her own kind.

ANDREA *(to the audience)*
Y'all, I am praying for Eleanor. Not a lot. But she did not wake up from her coma one bit while Gene Phillip was dancing – which means she doesn't like him that much.
The HOST enters.

HOST
And now, we will return to the house, where Jean-Phillipe will decide which two of you will go on very special dates… to your hometowns.
Music begins.

ANDREA
Whoah. I didn't get to do the tango!

SHANI
Same!
TODD rushes in.

TODD
That's a wrap people! Pack it up!

BAILEY
He can't just tango with three people when there are all of us here – that's not fair!

TODD
I want to see those booties in motion. Emotional booties!
BAILEY rushes after HENRI.

BAILEY
Would you like to watch me tango, maybe we can –
TODD intercepts her and redirects.

TODD
Save it for the camera, sweetheart. Jean-Phillipe is busy. This is like herding cats. Move it!
LUKA and MINNIE enter, changing the set.

LUKA
Check your looks in the mirror, some of you are looking desperate!

BAILEY
I am desperate!

TODD

Intern!

MINNIE

Minnie.

TODD

Whatever. Can you change the set please?

MINNIE

You want me to drag off Eleanor's body by myself?

TODD

Attitude determines altitude. Words to live by. Let's go!

Lights change.

BARRY and HENDRICKS are watching the footage on the other side of the stage.

BARRY

Focus on their faces during the grunting.

HENDRICKS

It's passionate sighing.

BARRY

Can we change the pitch to make it more like grunting, though?

HENDRICKS

Absolutely.

HENRI enters.

BARRY

And I'd love one of the girls to say, "My heart was dying."

HENDRICKS

I can splice that together.

HENRI

You can make them say anything, yes?

BARRY

I can make it look like one of these girls is in love with the devil if I wanted to. Their entire life is in our hands.

HENRI

I see.

HENDRICKS

It's the standard contract for reality television. You sign away your right to be portrayed fairly in order for fleeting fame and exploitation. We make all the money and you suffer all the consequences.

BARRY

I love this job.

HENDRICKS

So you're sure she was poisoned and not lactose intolerant?

HENRI

Absolutely.

HENDRICKS

I hope she doesn't die.

HENRI

Do you?

HENDRICKS

Yes! Can you imagine the negative publicity? Not to mention the lawsuit. The whole show would be shut down if someone died.

HENRI

Indeed. Well, I believe I know who the killer is.

BARRY

I thought you already knew.

HENRI

Be prepared to follow my lead. Also, I have yet to see the little cookies I require. Deliver them to me immediately.

He starts to leave.

HENDRICKS

Where are you going?

HENRI

I am visiting the two hometowns, am I not?

Lights change.

A large open space.

The Host enters, on camera.

HOST *(to the audience)*

Fargo, North Dakota. Immortalized in film by the Coen Brothers as a hotspot for goofy crime, the largest city in North Dakota is a very pleasant place. One hundred miles outside of Fargo, however, is the little town of Plunky, North Dakota. Which is neither pleasant nor interesting.

SUNRISE enters, with HENRI.

Birds chirping.

SUNRISE

So this is the main street. It's very quiet – there's nobody on it.

HENRI

But of course. Growing up here must have been very difficult. The loneliness. The hours spent staring into the distance, wondering if anything would change.

SUNRISE

It was a little tough sometimes.

HENRI

So quiet. So unsuspecting that your life would change. I see. And where did your knowledge of poisons come from?

SUNRISE

I don't have any knowledge of poisons.

HENRI

Of course.

SUNRISE

I just wanted to introduce you to my parents. So you can bond with my family and learn all about me –

HENRI

Yes I shall want to interrogate them as well.

SUNRISE

It's kinda funny, because in Plunky people are pretty much what they appear to be. It's so weird to think of my parents wearing make-up.

HENRI

And you? Are you who you appear to be?

EARL and JESSICA enter, dressed as farmers.

SUNRISE

Mom! Dad!

JESSICA

There she is!

EARL

There's out little Sunrise! Give us a hug!

SUNRISE hugs them, turns back to HENRI.

SUNRISE

We always do this! We hug! We're a family of huggers!

HENRI

I see. And I note by the way you in which you are gingerly hugging your father, that your self-esteem issues stem from his constant disapproval.

SUNRISE *(nervous)*

Ha ha. Ha ha. Mom, Dad, this is Jean-Phillipe.

HENRI

Bonjour.

EARL

He's speaking French. I love it!

JESSICA

So classy. And I love that stache!

HENRI

Everyone does.

EARL

Well I am pleased to meetcha, and I want to thank you for tolerating the presence of our daughter.

JESSICA

Oh Earl?

EARL

I'm just kidding! I'm just kidding! I love and support you honey – even if you are a total screw-up. Ha ha ha!

JESSICA

Oh Earl. You are too much. He kids.

HENRI

And yet his own jokes mask his dissatisfaction with his daughter's life choices. Is it a reflection on you, you think? Have you failed as a parent? Is that why she must go on reality show, waiting to snap, waiting to lash out and kill? Is that your fault? Is that behind your laughter? The ha ha ha really masks a chilling void of despair which opens inside you?

SUNRISE

He's very perceptive!

EARL *(through a grimace of pain)*

I love it. I really do.

JESSICA

You should do your bit. Do your bit, Earl!

EARL

Nah.

JESSICA

Do your bit!

SUNRISE

Mommm.

JESSICA

He's a comedian. So funny.

EARL

It's just a hobby, really. Okay here's one: We'd like to be supportive parents, but it seems like such a waste of effort, you know what I mean?

JESSICA

He's a riot!

EARL

Every time Sunrise tells me, `I have a dream' I say `go back to sleep!' Ha ha ha. Get some beauty rest, cause you need it.

SUNRISE

Daaad.

EARL

I mean it. When she was a child, she was just doggone so cute. Cute as a button. What happened?

JESSICA

Isn't he a hoot?

EARL

Speaking of hoots, you hear her sing yet?

HENRI

I have not had the pleasure.

EARL

It's not pleasure.

HENRI

So I gather that your entire stand-up comedy routine consists of making fun of your daughter?

EARL

Mostly. I'm mostly on the Fargo circuit. Yeah I know Sunrise gets embarrassed. You shoulda seen her at the all-school assembly I performed at. I was doing my bit – just killin – and she's hiding in the back, covering her head, trying to make a break for it. Hoo. That was fun.

HENRI

I see. And you, as the mother, permit this to occur because you secretly long for a better life away from here? Just waiting for your chance to slash the tires on his truck and then drive to Montana, where you will assume a new identity and marry a lumberjack?

JESSICA *(nervous laughter)*

Ha ha ha ha ha no.

EARL

She does talk about Montana sometimes! And that lumberjack calendar you bought… the other… oh jeez… my life is a lie…

HENRI

Yes it is.

EARL

I guess I should go.

HENRI

Please. It will be better for everyone.

JESSICA

I can't wait for Thanksgiving with you! It's gonna be… something.

They exit.

HENRI

Shall we see the rest of the town? I would like to speak to your childhood friends so that I might create a full psychological profile.

SUNRISE

Oh I didn't have any childhood friends!

HENRI

Of course.

HENRI exits.

SUNRISE talks to the audience.

SUNRISE *(to the audience)*

I love North Dakota. I have so many memories there. A few good ones. A few not-so-good ones. A few traumas. Just…

Nearly unintelligible, high-pitched through tears

I-really-hope-Jean-Phillipe-likes-me-because-I-don't-think-he-will-because-I'm-not-worth it.

She gets control of herself.

But it was fun.

Lights change.

HOST

Moose Jowl, Alberta. North of the United States lies a far-off strange land… Canada. There are a lot of stereotypes about Canadians. Nice. Friendly. Good-natured. Enjoy the company of moose. Awful, awful stereotypes. But some people don't fit those stereotypes at all.

SHANI enters.

SHANI

So what do you want to see first? We got a mall, and we got streets, and we basically the same things as you have in the U.S. except here we have Tim Horton's everywhere.

HENRI

What is this Tim Horton's?

SHANI

It's kind of our national identity. That and hockey.

HENRI

Hockey. *(pronounced "ockey")*

SHANI

I'm sorry?

HENRI

Hockey.

SHANI

Okay what?

HENRI

I said hockey!

Skipping Forward

I'm pleased too. I love meeting new people. You seem super nice and your mustache is amazing.

HENRI

It is.

CHARLES

Okay, so. Anyone want to get dinner at the Tim Horton's?

HENRI

Oh I would very much like to experience this Tim Horton's. I have many questions for you.

SHANI

Charles, I'm dumping you because you're stupid.

CHARLES

What?!

SHANI

Jean-Phillipe is my new fiancé.

HENRI

Uhh… this is not accurate.

CHARLES

Oh man… aw jeez… awwwwww… I knew this was gonna happen! You're just too awesome for me. Oh nooooo. Nooooo.

CHARLES is starting to lose it.
HENRI pats him awkwardly on the shoulder.

HENRI

There. There. She is cold, yes? Ruthless?

CHARLES

Awwww… dang it. My heart is breaking now. Awwwwww. Ohhhhhh.

HENRI

Let it out. If you could also let out incriminating evidence that would be good too.

CHARLES

Noooooooooo! Take me back, Shani!

SHANI

No!

CHARLES

Take me back!

SHANI

I'm not doing it!

CHARLES

Please!

SHANI

Sorry no!

CHARLES

Arrrrghghhg… oh man this hurts so bad! Oh noooo. I'll never forget you! You're so magical!

HENRI

In what specific way is she magic?

CHARLES

You're like sunshine and rainbows and other stuff put together!

SHANI

I'm sorry I have to go! Come on, Jean-Phillipe!

SHANI and HENRI run off-stage.

CHARLES sinks to his knees.

TODD enters quickly.

TODD *(to CHARLES)*

Love it. Love what you're doing.

(to the camerapeople)

If we could get a close-up on the tears streaming down his face that would be super. Got it? Great.

SHANI *(to the audience)*

We had a wonderful time in Moose Jowl. I showed Jean-Phillipe my family home – he met my Dad – they really hit it off. Jean-Phillipe had a lot of questions. A disturbing amount of questions, actually. Really really interested in my home life.

CHARLES is stumbling around, out of the light.

CHARLES *(off-stage)*

Shanniiii… I love you!

SHANI *(trying to continue)*

It was one of the most romantic times I've ever had.

CHARLES *(off-stage)*

I'm never gonna forget you!

SHANI *(trying to continue)*
It was great. Um… I think I really made a good impression.

Lights down.

Lights up on the mansion.

BAILEY, ANDREA, MELANIE, and NATALIA are in pajamas, scrapbooking in separate areas.

It is storming outside.

ANDREA
I don't know about y'all, but my scrapbook is gonna be lit. L I T: Lit.

BAILEY
Can I see it?

ANDREA
No.

BAILEY
I just wanted to see it.

ANDREA
You wanted to take my ideas.

BAILEY
I have my own scrapbook, thank you very much. I've been taking photos this whole time if you've even been following my Instagram.

ANDREA
I ain't following your Instagram. Shut up.

BAILEY
None of you are. And it's kind of insulting actually. If you guys had Instagram, I would totally follow you.

NATALIA
Whatever.

MELANIE
You guys have no idea about my scrapbooking skills.

ANDREA
Um, yes we do, cause you won't shut up about it.

MELANIE

I just think it's important that you realize that my scrapbook is going to win Jean-Phillipe's heart. You know why? Because I am a winner. I do not tolerate losing. *Because that is what a winner does. She wins. Always. Over and over and over again.*

ANDREA

You ever thought about seeing a therapist?

MELANIE

Therapists are for the weak.

ANDREA

All right.

NATALIA

Hey can I borrow someone's glitter?

Everyone stops.

ANDREA

Can you *borrow* someone's glitter?

NATALIA

Yeah.

MELANIE

What are you, in fourth grade?

NATALIA

I used all mine.

ANDREA

Then you got a problem, don't you?

NATALIA stands up.

NATALIA

I don't have a problem, because you're gonna give me your glitter.

ANDREA stands up.

ANDREA

Oh I am, am I?

NATALIA

That's right, you are.

ANDREA

Girl, you best focus on your own scrapbook right now, or I'm about to tear you apart.

NATALIA

Bring it, Texas. Or should I say, Oklahoma?

ANDREA

Oh that is *it!* Hold me back, y'all!

Thunder.

The lights go out.

BAILEY *(in the dark)*

What was that?!

NATALIA *(in the dark)*

The lights went out! AAAAAAH!

NATALIA screams as something attacks her.

Whump! Whump! Whump!

ANDREA *(in the dark)*

What's goin on?

MELANIE *(in the dark)*

Stay where you are!

Lights come back up.

NATALIA is on the ground, bashed with her own scrapbook supplies.

MELANIE

Natalia?! Are you all right?!

BAILEY

Somebody killed her!

NATALIA

Oh mann….

BAILEY

Somebody *tried* to kill her!

ANDREA

Why are y'all looking at me?

BAILEY

You were just threatening her! You said hold me back!

MELANIE

I heard you say that! And nobody held you back! And look what you did!

ANDREA

Me?! I was over here! I didn't touch her!

NATALIA

Not cool, Andrea.

ANDREA

I didn't touch you!

BAILEY

I'm telling the producers!

Thunder.

Lights go out again.

BAILEY *(in the dark)*

AAAAAAH!

NATALIA *(in the dark)*

Bailey?!

Lights come up.

Scrapbooking scissors have been stabbed into BAILEY.

ANDREA

Oh my gosh?!

BAILEY gets up, there's blood on her fingers.

BAILEY

WHAT. THE HECK.

ANDREA

Oh my gosh I didn't do that either!

NATALIA

First you hit me, then you *stab* Bailey?

MELANIE

This is unacceptable.

The lights go out again .

ANDREA *(in the dark)*

Oh come on!

MELANIE *(in the dark)*

Nobody better – AAAAAAH!

WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

Lights come back up.

MELANIE is on the ground. She's been hit with a lot of flowers.

ANDREA

Melanie?!

MELANIE

Issues.

ANDREA

I'm not doing it!

NATALIA

You're just getting kicked off the show, psycho!

ANDREA

I'm just standing here! Next time the lights go out somebody's gonna try and kill me.

NATALIA

You'd like that, wouldn't you?

BAILEY

That would be real *convenient* if some just "happened" to try to murder you right now.

Lights go out again.

BAILEY *(in the dark)*

OH COME ON.

MELANIE *(in the dark)*

Aaaah!

ANDREA *(in the dark)*

Something just whizzed by my head, y'all!

NATALIA *(in the dark)*

What's happening?!

BAILEY *(in the dark)*

SHUSH!

ANDREA *(in the dark)*

I'M NOT SHUSHING YOU SHUSH!

MELANIE *(in the dark)*

ANDREA'S FIRING BLOW DARTS AT US!

ANDREA *(in the dark)*

THAT IS A LIE!

Lights up.
BARRY and HENDRICKS have rushed into the room.

BARRY

What's going on?

HENDRICKS

We heard noises!

NATALIA

Andrea has lost it!

BAILEY

She just tried to murder everyone here!

ANDREA

No no no – someone is trying to kill me too!

NATALIA

Did you get hit with a blowdart?

ANDREA

No?

NATALIA

Case closed.

ANDREA

Maybe the murderer is just really incompetent. I bet if they woulda turned on the lights they woulda hit me.

NATALIA

You sure know a lot about killers, don't you?!

ANDREA

I didn't do it! I promise!

BARRY

Ladies, ladies, calm yourselves. No one was hurt.

BAILEY

I got stabbed. There's like literally blood pouring out of my shoulder.

BARRY

Shake it off.

MELANIE
Someone bashed me over the head.

HENDRICKS
Let's not overreact.

NATALIA
It was Andrea! She's a murderer!

ANDREA
I'M STILL NOT GIVING YOU MY GLITTER!

NATALIA
I DON'T WANT A MURDERER'S GLITTER!

BARRY
LADIES! There is a rose ceremony tonight. I suggest you get yourselves ready.

BAILEY
How can we have a rose ceremony if Andrea's trying to kill us?

HENDRICKS
True love is more important than murder. Especially if it's on television. If we stop filming the Single Man, the killer wins.

NATALIA
So… Andrea.

HENDRICKS
ANDREA IS NOT THE KILLER.

ANDREA
Thank you.

HENDRICKS
Probably.

BAILEY
Wait a minute. Does that mean there's an actual killer?

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play or read it in its entirety, visit www.yourstagepartners.com