

Unreasonable

by

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CHARACTERS

DANNY BALLANTYNE: Late 50s. In the '70s-'90s he was a rock star; he still retains the longish hair, beard and laid-back demeanor.

JANELLE WALKER: Mid-thirties. Casual-yet-edgy style. Eager aspiring journalist.

LEIGH: 50ish. She's outdoorsy in manner and dress. Runs a horse farm.

SETTING

Danny's house in the mountains in Washington State. Living room and adjoining kitchen area reflect a bit of a hippie/new age influence. Rustic, tasteful, expensive, but cozy. He's spent his rock star money well.

And one scene on Janelle's porch in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

TIME

Present day. One week in spring or fall, rainy season.

["Danny's" song lyrics and song titles courtesy of Richard Fogarty, used with special permission.]

ACT ISCENE 1

(A rustic, yet homey house in Stevens Pass, Washington. A living room downstage with a big comfy sofa and a big club chair. Upstage right is a kitchen and kitchen table.

Upstage left are a few steps up to a second level, presumably bedrooms. Front door is stage right. Very lived-in look, decor of someone who has lived through the hippie and new age eras. A Ganesha statue here, a tapestry there. Lots of wood and warm earth tones. Tasteful, yet comfortable.

Sitting at the kitchen table is DANNY BALLANTYNE, 59, playing a banjo. His hair is longish, beard. He's wearing comfortable clothes, jeans and a long sleeved t-shirt. Clearly a bit of an ex-hippie. He plays a bluegrass song. He keeps looking out the nearby open front door. He plays banjo really well, he's picking like crazy and really getting into it.

But every minute or so he cranes his neck to look out the front door. Finally he sees something which makes him abruptly stop, take his picks off and trot to a doorway stage left, exits.

Returns a few seconds later without his banjo, by which time there is a knock on his screen door.)

JANELLE (O.S.)

(through screen door)

Hello?

(Danny crosses to open the screen door for JANELLE WALKER, 35, wearing jeans and a nice shirt.)

DANNY

Hi, come on in.

JANELLE

Hi, I'm Janelle.

(He simply nods and smiles.)

DANNY

Hi.

(His stoic response alarms her a bit.)

JANELLE

Please tell me you got my letters and were expecting me.

DANNY

I did, yes. Please, come in.

JANELLE

Whew.

(She's all smiles as she comes in and instantly takes in the entire room, scanning everything. He takes her coat from her, puts it on the back of a kitchen chair.)

JANELLE

What a cool room.

DANNY

Thanks. Have a seat. Would you like some tea?

JANELLE

Sure! Thanks.

(He gestures for her to sit at the table as he fills an electric kettle with water. She sets her purse and satchel down on the table as she sits. She seems nervous. He doesn't. He arranges the cups, tea, sugar and honey on the table while waiting for the water to boil.)

JANELLE

I have to admit, I'm a little nervous. I've wanted to meet you for so long, I'm so glad to be here.

DANNY

You really didn't need to come all this way.

JANELLE

No, I don't mind! It was a nice drive.

DANNY

You drove all the way from Arizona?

JANELLE

New Mexico. Albuquerque.

DANNY

Wow, that's gotta be, what, over a thousand miles?

JANELLE

One thousand four hundred and twenty-three.

DANNY

You didn't want to fly?

JANELLE

Thought it'd be a nice drive. See a little bit of the country.

DANNY

You really shouldn't have bothered. That's such a long drive.

(She doesn't quite catch his
dismissive tone.)

JANELLE

Oh, it's fine! I'm happy to do it. It's an honor to meet you.

DANNY

Thank you.

(He busies himself with the tea.)

DANNY

How many days did it take?

JANELLE

About three. Stopped at some quaint little hotels along the way. Nice little trip. I've never been to Washington. It's so green up here.

(She is sincerely excited, whereas
his tone is not much more than polite.)

DANNY

Yeah, I guess it's not very green in Arizona.

JANELLE

New Mexico. No, it's pretty dry and crispy. It's gorgeous up here! Though I'm not used to driving in so much rain.

DANNY

It does rain a lot, yes. Especially up here in the pass. The roads get flooded really easily up here. Lots of rural
(MORE)

DANNY (Cont'd.)

dips and nooks and crannies. In fact, that main road you came in on usually floods down by the cafe.

JANELLE

Yeah, actually there's already about eight inches of water down where the road dips. I drove through really carefully. Not used to driving through water! If there's four drops of rain in Albuquerque traffic comes to a halt and everyone freaks out.

DANNY

Yeah, you might have trouble getting out if this rain continues.

JANELLE

Yikes.

(He smiles politely to help pass the awkward silence.)

JANELLE

So. Seattle was cool. I stayed there yesterday.

DANNY

Yes, it's a great city. Great music.

JANELLE

Well, you would know.

DANNY

There are some great little clubs. All types of music. Sometimes I'll go into Seattle just to hear a band. Stay a few hours, then come home.

JANELLE

You ever go into Seattle to play?

DANNY

No, I don't play anymore. I haven't touched a guitar in years.

JANELLE

Aw. That's a shame. Not even to join in with someone you go to hear? I can just imagine the look on their faces if you joined them onstage.

(He shakes his head no as he brings their tea and sits at the table with her.)

DANNY

Nah. I just listen.

JANELLE

Ah. Well. Um, you did get my packet, right? The one with all the articles and essays I've written?

DANNY

I did. Yes. Thanks.

JANELLE

Whew! Right. Just wanted you to know that you'd be in good hands. This article will be great. I want everyone to get a really accurate, in-depth piece on Danny Ballantyne. No fluff. This'll be substantive.

(Danny puts a spoonful of honey in his tea. Mixes it in, then sucks the traces of honey off his spoon.)

DANNY

I'm not sure the world needs a substantive article on me. You really didn't need to come all this way.

JANELLE

Yeah, you keep saying that.

DANNY

So, you're with Counterpoint Magazine? You mentioned them in one of your letters.

JANELLE

Um, well not exactly "with" them. I'm more freelance. I write articles on my own, then submit them to various magazines or websites.

DANNY

So you're not with Counterpoint Magazine, but you've published with them before?

JANELLE

Not exactly.

DANNY

You're not officially affiliated with them in any way?

JANELLE

No.

DANNY

But you told me you worked for them.

JANELLE

No, I said I've written articles for them before. But they didn't publish them. So that's not the same thing.

DANNY

Technicality.

JANELLE

But I've been a fan of yours forever. I can do this, don't worry.

DANNY

So basically you're just a fan who has more or less shown up on my doorstep?

JANELLE

Um...kinda. This tea is delicious!

(A lame attempt at covering her embarrassment. He has to laugh.)

DANNY

You're awfully young to be a fan of mine.

(As she talks Danny gets up to grab a package of cookies off the counter.)

JANELLE

Yeah, I know. I was born the year after *Jupiter Dancing* came out. I had an older brother. He was really into your albums.

(As his back is turned Janelle makes a long, awkward reach across the table, snatches his spoon.)

JANELLE

I used to sneak into his room when he was gone and I'd go through his magazines and listen to his albums. That's when I first heard *Jupiter Dancing*.

(His back is still turned; she puts his spoon in her mouth as if to savor his essence. Then quickly shoves it in her pocket. When he sits back down with their snack, all looks normal.)

JANELLE

I was about 13 when I first heard it. I know it came out in '76, but my brother still had all his old albums so I accidentally got introduced to all this great music. The Who, Pink Floyd, The Doors. You.

(He opens the package of cookies, they both munch on them.)

JANELLE

Jupiter Dancing blew me away. Brilliant album. I mean, I'm not saying anything that others didn't say decades before me, but still. You're a great lyricist.

DANNY

Thank you.

JANELLE

Free of the Forest was the first song I heard and I was mesmerized. "The temple where you flower is where I hoped to pray, that welcomed to your tower I find myself one day." Amazing. Poetry.

(He nods and smiles.)

DANNY

Thanks. Been a long time since that album. A long time.

(She beams.)

JANELLE

Doesn't matter. It exists. It's yours. They can never take that away from you.

(She basks in the memory.)

JANELLE

I know every word.

DANNY

Me too!

(She laughs.)

JANELLE

"Pentagons are levitated, faith is underestimated, a warm reminder, pissing in the sea." What's that about exactly?

DANNY

If I explained it, wouldn't it lose some of its mystery?

JANELLE

My brother wasn't sure either. I asked him, but he just said "Stay out of my room or I'll tell Mom!" I didn't.

DANNY

Actually I had an older brother, too.

JANELLE

You did? I didn't know that. I thought I knew everything about you.

DANNY

I don't mention him much. He died when he was 22. Brain aneurysm. Was absolutely fine, and then --

(snaps his fingers)

-- gone. He was away at school, art school. He got me into music, too. He was into blues and jazz, as well as rock. He's the one who first turned me on to The Beatles in '64. Life-changing!

JANELLE

Wow, cool.

DANNY

Yeah, he was. I doubt I would have ever ended up in the music business if it hadn't been for him.

JANELLE

And I wouldn't have been a fan yours if it hadn't been for my big brother.

DANNY

Here's to older brothers.

JANELLE

To older brothers.

(They clink their mugs of tea.)

DANNY

So how long will you be up in this area?

JANELLE

Don't know. I'm flexible.

DANNY

Don't you have a job to go back to? You work at a doctor's office?

JANELLE

A health insurance agency actually. But nope. Quit. No more day job. I gave my notice, finished out my two weeks, hopped in the car and hit the road.

DANNY

You didn't do all that just to come see me I hope.

JANELLE

(not convincing)

No.

DANNY

Quit your job and hit the road, huh? You sound like a hippie in the '70s. That wasn't a bit rash to quit your job?

JANELLE

Nah. I have another ace up my sleeve.

DANNY

Oo, now who's being mysterious? So...why me? There's plenty of other aging rock stars off in hiding, why me?

(She shrugs.)

JANELLE

No specific reason. I've just been a fan for ages. I'm a writer, wanted to write a great article on you.

DANNY

Yeah, but to come all this way? We could have done this over the phone.

(She just smiles and shrugs.)

JANELLE

That wouldn't have been any fun.

DANNY

Oh, I see, this is going to be *fun*, is it? Not sure about that. For either of us. Not fun for me to dredge up all the crap from the last thirty years. Not fun for you to have to sit here and listen to it. All of the stories of concerts, recording sessions, groupies, road tours. And I really doubt there's anyone else out there who's going to want to...

(He is struck out of the blue with a thought. He stares at her.)

DANNY

Wait a minute.

(He stands up, paces.)

DANNY

You said you were born right after *Jupiter Dancing* came out.

JANELLE

Yeah. I told you, my brother got me into --

DANNY

Are you here...is this....?

JANELLE

What?

DANNY

Are you...?

JANELLE

Am I what?

DANNY

This isn't like...your mother wasn't....

(She's still not with him yet.)

JANELLE

Um...what?

DANNY

Are you my daughter?

(Janelle bursts out laughing.)

JANELLE

Oh my God, no! No, no, no! Wow.

(He breathes a sigh of relief.)

DANNY

Whew!

JANELLE

No, that's not why I came here.

DANNY

You sure? 'Cause you're the right age. Lot of groupies in those days.

JANELLE

Okay, first of all, eewwww. Second of all...

(She digs her iPhone out of her purse, pulls up a photo.)

JANELLE

...these are my parents. This is my mother, who by the way I know has never met you, and this is my dad.

DANNY

(joking)

So he says.

JANELLE

C'mon, look, Mr. Paranoid.

(showing him another photo)

I have my dad's eyes, his nose, and his lips. Yet, somehow I still look like my mom.

(Danny looks at the photo.)

DANNY

Oh yeah, I see what you mean. Dad's eyes.
(he looks at Janelle)
His nose and mouth.
(comparing the photo to her again)
But yeah, you look like your mom. Hm, weird!

JANELLE

I know, right? So don't worry. No scary surprises in store.
Just came by to see you.

DANNY

You make it sound like I invited you.

JANELLE

Well. You didn't say no.

DANNY

I didn't say no? You just sent me letters and then wrote
"I'm on my way!" Was sort of out of my hands.

JANELLE

Your phone isn't listed, I don't know your email.

DANNY

(sarcastic)
But thank goodness you still found my address!

JANELLE

You could have sent a letter back saying "no, don't come."

DANNY

I have a feeling that wouldn't have stopped you.

(He sits back down at the table. He
tries to add more honey to his tea.)

DANNY

Where's my...?

(He glances on the counter.)

DANNY

I just had my spoon a minute ago.

(Janelle slides her spoon over to
him.)

JANELLE

Here, I didn't use mine. I noticed your Wikipedia page
specifically says you were an only child. That's wrong, want
me to change it?

(Danny just shrugs.)

JANELLE

You do know you have a Wikipedia page, right? Come on, you must have Googled yourself. I can go on and edit it for you.

DANNY

Uh, I don't really care.

JANELLE

You don't care? Really?

DANNY

Janelle, I'm not really in the business anymore. My career in rock and roll is over.

JANELLE

But it doesn't have to be.

DANNY

I want it to be.

(Disappointment shows on her face.)

DANNY

Too bad though, you would make an excellent PR person.

JANELLE

Yeah! I always talk you up. I always recommend that people listen to your albums, especially *Jupiter Dancing*. I always do free PR for you.

DANNY

See, here's the problem. I don't WANT PR. In fact, I want the opposite. I want NO publicity. I want to be left alone. I've left the industry. I don't play anymore. Don't sing. Don't write songs.

JANELLE

But Danny, it's not for you. It's for your fans.

DANNY

All three of them.

JANELLE

You have more than three fans.

DANNY

I DID have fans. Most of them are dead now. Of old age.

JANELLE

Oh please. That's not true. Your album is still considered one of the classics. You still have a lot of fans. Like me. I'm not dead. You only had three albums, yet you attained a level success that rivaled Jim Morrison or Bruce Springsteen.

(MORE)

JANELLE (Cont'd.)

But you don't do many interviews. You're elusive. You'd be a "get."

DANNY

I don't want to be "got." The reason I didn't do many interviews was because I didn't want to do interviews! You have the albums, why do you need to know more?

JANELLE

Fans want to know what's behind the lyrics. What do they mean? What inspired them? What were you feeling when you wrote them? We want to know everything.

DANNY

That seems a bit obsessive. Can't you just enjoy the songs as they are? Why do you need to know more?

JANELLE

Because we love them. We love you. We think you're great.

DANNY

That sounds insipid! Why would you give me so much importance in your life? You don't even know me!

JANELLE

Okay, so you think I'm an idiot for worshipping someone I hadn't even met. So if you knew I idolized you why couldn't you just be decent for half an hour, meet me, be nice to me, give me a nice experience, gently tell me no about the interview, then send me on my way? You could go back to being a cranky hermit again as soon as I left. Or is half an hour too long for you to hold off?

DANNY

That's enabling.

JANELLE

That's decency. Have you never heard of sparing someone's feelings?

DANNY

There you go again. You're giving me this responsibility that shouldn't be mine! Why should I care about your feelings?

JANELLE

Wow!

DANNY

I mean, it's not my fault or responsibility to coddle you and your precious idealistic version of me, the charming guy, the one you listened to in your brother's room, the rock star that you know has a heart of gold and always does the right
(MORE)

DANNY (Cont'd.)

thing. That's not me. That's some fake version of me you have in your head. *You don't know me.* It's not my problem that reality is not matching up to your fantasy world.

JANELLE

Jeez! If there was some little kid who believed in Santa Claus, you'd indulge them, wouldn't you?

DANNY

You are not a little kid. You're a grown woman. To come 1400 miles just for, what, a two hour interview? Three at the most? That seems a bit much. You don't see that?

(She looks like a child being punished. Quiet, still.)

DANNY

Fine. Interview me. I'm sorry. Please, go ahead. Here I am.

(He pushes a pen and paper at her. She doesn't pick them up.)

DANNY

Go on. Ask.

JANELLE

(blasé)

Are you a morning person or a night owl?

DANNY

Morning person.

JANELLE

Do you prefer chocolate or vanilla?

DANNY

Chocolate.

JANELLE

What is your favorite color?

(He thinks about it.)

DANNY

Green.

(She doesn't write his answers down.)

DANNY

Is this your A-game?

JANELLE

No. Why should I waste my A-game on someone obviously contemptuous of giving any sort of real interview? Jesus, all of this for a stupid book. I thought you might be flattered.

DANNY

Book? What book?

(She fiddles with her iPhone,
hesitates to look at him.)

DANNY

Janelle?

JANELLE

Yes, Danny?

DANNY

What book?

JANELLE

Okay. Truth is, I didn't want to just do an article. I wanted to do a book. A biography. An authorized biography of you.

DANNY

I didn't even want to do an article!

JANELLE

Yes, I have sensed that.

DANNY

A book? What the hell for? No one cares about me anymore.

JANELLE

Okay, first of all, that's not true.

DANNY

The women that WERE interested in me are long gone. Grew up, got married.

JANELLE

It's not just for your ex-groupies!

DANNY

Who's going to publish a book on me? You think you just write it and it magically gets published? You have to have contacts, editors, publishers. You have to be a *known* writer, not just a...

JANELLE

Wanna-be?

DANNY

I wasn't going to say that.

JANELLE

You think I'm an idiot? I know all that. There are people who are actually interested in what I write.

DANNY

(disbelieving)

Oh really? Are these the same people who did NOT publish your articles?

JANELLE

No.

DANNY

Uh huh. Besides, you do not need a whole book on me. Six words should be enough.

JANELLE

Okay, but...what? Six words? What six words?

DANNY

Well, you're the writer, you decide.

JANELLE

What are you talking about?

DANNY

There's a story, actually I don't know if it's true, about Hemingway. It was attributed to him anyway, that he bet someone he could write an entire story with a beginning, middle and end in the least amount of words. He won the bet. His story was: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

JANELLE

Aww. That's sad.

DANNY

Exactly. Six words. You do not need a whole book on me.

(She leans back in her chair, thinks for a minute.)

JANELLE

Sensitive singer. Groupies welcomed. Illegitimate spawn.

DANNY

Classy. Is that going to be the general tone of the book?

JANELLE

Hey, you're the one who assumed I was a long lost daughter from some groupie.

DANNY

Because you mentioned you were born right around the time I was getting a lot of...

(She raises her eyebrows, expectantly.)

DANNY

...attention. And you said you've been wanting to meet me for a long time.

JANELLE

Wow. I'm flattered.

DANNY

Flattered that I thought you were my daughter?

JANELLE

Ew, no! That creeps me out. Flattered that you really listen to everything I say.

DANNY

I just couldn't imagine why anyone would come to see me, drive DAYS to see me.

JANELLE

So you automatically thought "well, I've had so many groupies that's the ONLY logical explanation."

DANNY

I didn't have THAT many.
(he smiles)

I had my share though. Wait, why does it creep you out that I thought you could be my daughter?

JANELLE

(ignores his question)

Yeah, I bet you had your share. Landmark album, all over the press worldwide. Critically acclaimed.

DANNY

Yeah, THAT'S why they wanted to sleep with me, the critically acclaimed album. More like "Oh Danny, you are so cute! I really like you!"

JANELLE

So you told them to hit the road.

DANNY

Not exactly.

JANELLE

So you didn't respect them, but you slept with them.

DANNY

Well, yeah!

(She gasps.)

DANNY

Why would I respect them? They come backstage, hang all over me, they talk to me for thirty seconds tops before they offer to go back to my hotel room with me. What's to respect?

JANELLE

But you slept with them?

DANNY

Of course! I was 24 years old, newly famous, and all these sexy women were offering to do all sorts of lewd things to me. I was a normal red-blooded young man!

JANELLE

And now?

DANNY

I'm a regular, red-blooded older man. With much more discriminating taste.

JANELLE

Glad to hear it.

DANNY

Okay, yes, I indulged in groupies when I was younger. But honestly, I went into the music business not so I would have adoring fans that I could take my pick of. I did it because music was how I expressed myself. Believe it or not, I did NOT do it "for the chicks."

JANELLE

How you expressed yourself, past tense?

DANNY

Yes. I'm done with all that.

JANELLE

Why? Was it so bad? Fame, money? And obviously you had your pick of women. Touring to play in front of thousands of screaming fans?

DANNY

I know it sounds cliché, but life on the road IS tough. Playing to a crowd is great, but the touring that goes with it, harsh. Frankly, the gigs I liked the best were the tiny little clubs. Small audience of people who really "got" my music. Hell, I didn't care if only five people showed up as long as they appreciated my music. No groupies, no college kids drunk out of their minds, just true music lovers.

JANELLE

Yeah, I get that.

DANNY

I went and saw Buffy Sainte-Marie once at one of these tiny clubs. Do you remember her?

JANELLE

Vaguely.

DANNY

I went to the show and I was blown away. Tiny stage, no back up singers, no light show, no pyrotechnics. It was fantastic. Just her and her guitar, and then she played her zither.

JANELLE

Her what?

DANNY

Uh, an autoharp. You know, a little stringed instrument you play flat on your lap, you strum it and you use a pick.

JANELLE

Ah yeah, I know what you mean. Like a little harp.

DANNY

Yeah, she was fantastic. Her songs were kind of political, but she just blew me away that night. Her technique on the autoharp was phenomenal.

JANELLE

I was never really into her.

DANNY

Of course not. No male lead singer to obsess over.

JANELLE

Ha ha. No, that's not why. I like female singers too.

DANNY

Like who?

JANELLE

Uh...I can't...I don't...

DANNY

Yup. Thought so.

JANELLE

Shut up. She was just a bit too...folksy for me. Am I crazy or do I remember her being on Sesame Street?

DANNY

Yeah. She was on there in the late '70s. I saw her in a smoky club in New York, you sat in your pajamas watching her teach you the alphabet. Anyway, I loved her. After the show I went backstage, and she was really cool. I couldn't get over her skill on the autoharp. It was a tiny club, I was sitting up front, so I was about five feet from her the whole show, and I could not believe how great she played. People overlook that. They just focus on her singing. I didn't want to stay too long backstage, there were a lot of well-wishers and industry people, so I chatted for a bit, then decided it was time to go. And I don't know what came over me, but as I was leaving I saw one of her picks sitting on her, um, ya know, the counter where she would get ready and do her makeup. And as I walked past I just reached out and snatched it. I knew nobody saw. Or really cared. I mean, it's just a pick, she probably had ten more. And I always kept it. It was like a way of preserving the memory of that night, stealing a little bit of the magic, you know what I mean?

JANELLE

Yes. Yes, I do.

DANNY

I still have it. It's my symbol of pure musicianship, no bullshit, no groupies, just a pure love of music and someone who really epitomized that to me.

JANELLE

Danny, how is that different from idol-worshipping?

DANNY

It is. I didn't steal her pick because I thought she was so hot or sexy. She was a great musician, a great singer and worthy of my admiration.

JANELLE

Ooooooh. I get it.

DANNY

What?

JANELLE

Okay, now I see. It's not my idol-worshipping per se that you object to, you just don't think you're a worthy recipient of it!

(He just sort of shrugs it off.)

JANELLE

Is that it? Just a modesty issue here? So it's not that you think my idol-worshipping is weird, you just don't approve of
(MORE)

JANELLE (Cont'd.)

my choice of idol! You're insulting my taste and being self-deprecating at the same time. Well, that's quite a time-saver. Danny, it's not just me that likes you and thinks you worthy of acclaim. I'm just the only one dumb enough to climb a muddy mountain to come tell you that. Right after it came out Lester Bangs said *Jupiter Dancing* was one of the best-written albums of the past few decades.

DANNY

Yeah...

JANELLE

But?

DANNY

They love the lyrics, but "best-written album"...not exactly the same as talking about Freddy Mercury's powerful voice. Or Robert Plant's.

JANELLE

So what? You think Mick Jagger has a great singing voice? Roger Daltrey's voice isn't the most gorgeous or strong. Bruce Springsteen is a TERRIBLE singer! Don't even get me started on Tom Waits. It's not about who has the best voice. They all have vocal charisma, an indefinable something that makes their voices special. You're in that category too. You know who has a "perfect" singing voice? Christina Aguilera. Most boring singer ever. That melisma style she overuses, God, it's like listening to someone sing their scales. Pick a note!

(He laughs and nods.)

JANELLE

It's not about technique, it's about soul and depth, moving the listener. Look at Pink Floyd. Half their songs are sung by David Gilmour, half by Roger Waters. Gilmour has a strong, gorgeous voice, is the better singer, hands down. But I MUCH prefer Waters' voice. It's thinner, weirder, and downright creepy sometimes. It's fantastic. It's not about having a great voice, it's about telling a story, conveying emotions, baring your soul. You did that on *Jupiter Dancing*, and on *Battersea Sunday* and *Moonhigh* too. On all three albums you kicked ass in that respect.

DANNY

Thank you.

(abruptly out of nowhere again)

So why did you say it creeped you out to think that I thought you might be my daughter?

JANELLE

Oh jeez, this again?

DANNY

You don't even need my permission to write a book about me. Everything is public domain!

JANELLE

I didn't want to write that type of book that just dredges up everything that's already been written before. I wanted to do an authorized biography, one that delves into things more deeply, get your personal stories and input on everything.

DANNY

(facetious)

So this book you want to write, sounds like it'll take a lot more research than just an article.

JANELLE

Yeah.

DANNY

You'd need to really get to know me, hear my stories, know what questions to ask. Gosh, it sounds like we'd have to spend a lot of time together.

JANELLE

(to no one)

His words sound sincere, but his tone....

DANNY

And I live in such an isolated place, it wouldn't make sense to drive back and forth so much, maybe I'd just let you stay here with me for a while. "Gosh, I know it sounds crazy, but after spending so much time together I think I'm falling in love with her." Is that what you're hoping will happen? You thought it was creepy that I thought you were my daughter because...?

JANELLE

Okay! Yes. I thought it was creepy because I've obviously had a thing for you for ages. Yes, I've had fantasies of being with you. That can't possibly be a surprise. I'm sure there were tons of girls who had the same fantasies I did.

DANNY

They didn't show up on my doorstep. They outgrew their fantasies.

JANELLE

Yes, they probably did. They grew up and found real boyfriends and got married and had kids and lives and jobs and houses. They took down their posters of you when they moved out of their parents' house and never looked back. I didn't. I'm a freak. No boyfriend, no husband, no kids, no day job at a bank, no PTA meetings. I kept my passion for music alive and
(MORE)

JANELLE (Cont'd.)

yes, the daydreams of being with you were part of that. But you know what? Had I met you years, decades ago, you and your bitter cynicism would have cured me of all of this! God, it's true what they say, you should never meet your idols!

(A long awkward silence.)

DANNY

Does that mean you still have my poster up on your wall?

JANELLE

What?

DANNY

You said the other girls took their posters of me down and never looked back, but you didn't.

JANELLE

No, I meant I didn't stop looking back. I didn't mean I never took your poster down.

(She laughs, he laughs. He does a comic, exaggerated "whew" gesture.)

JANELLE

But...I do still have it. It's rolled up and stored away. Carefully preserved.

(This makes him laugh even more. He exits into the doorway stage left. A minute later returns carrying a rolled up poster. She laughs when she sees it.)

DANNY

Hey, it was a big deal at the time. I wanted to remember.

(The mood has softened between them.)

JANELLE

Let's see it.

(He groans.)

DANNY

Oh no. Let's not.

JANELLE

C'mon, I haven't seen it in years.

DANNY

Me neither, thankfully.

(She takes it from him, holds the top edge.)

JANELLE

Unroll.

(He grabs the bottom part, slowly unrolls it. They take it in. He cringes.)

JANELLE

Oh. My. God. You were so sexy.

(He looks at her, half-offended.)

DANNY

Ouch. Past tense.

JANELLE

No, no, no. Two minutes ago you reamed me out for being attracted to you, and now you're fishing for compliments? No sir, I'm not falling for that. Pick a position and stick with it!

(He laughs, knows he's busted. He lets go of the poster, it flips up like a window shade.)

DANNY

Put that away.

(She unrolls it again as best she can with only two hands. Gazes at it.)

JANELLE

Shit, I should have brought mine, you could have signed it for me.

(He watches her for a moment as she drinks in the poster.)

DANNY

You have to admit it's not a reasonable thing to think will happen.

JANELLE

You wouldn't sign my poster for me?

DANNY

No, I mean, us. Being together.

(Embarrassed, she turns her attention to rolling the poster back up and putting the rubber band on it.)

DANNY

Is it? Not to mention the age difference.

(She shrugs.)

DANNY

That's what you're hoping for?

JANELLE

Jeez, I just came up here hoping for an interview.

DANNY

Oh, you'll ask the questions, but you won't answer them.
Typical journalist.

(She puts the poster down. Looks
around the room.)

JANELLE

You know, if someone who didn't know who you were came in
here they'd have no idea you were a famous musician.

DANNY

That's the idea.

JANELLE

There's not one thing -- not a Grammy, no platinum albums, no
cover of Rolling Stone, nothing.

DANNY

I've hidden all evidence of my dubious past.

JANELLE

No scrapbooks? No mementoes? You didn't keep anything other
than the poster?

(He shakes his head no.)

JANELLE

Bullshit. C'mon, nothing? You didn't keep any of your first
reviews or anything?

DANNY

Well, my parents did. My mom kept a scrapbook of everything.

JANELLE

Both of your parents have passed away. You still have it,
don't you?

DANNY

No.

JANELLE

Right. You threw it out. Bullshit. Go get it. I bet whatever box this poster was in also contains said scrapbook.

(He sighs. She waves him off.)

JANELLE

Go get it!

(She clears a space on the coffee table and sits on the floor.)

DANNY

I can't believe I'm doing this. Okay, on one condition. We need wine.

(Lights fade.)

ACT I

SCENE 2

(Danny is sitting on the couch with a scrapbook on his lap and a glass of wine in hand.)

Janelle sits on the floor between the couch and coffee table. She too sips a glass of wine.

Scrapbooks and memorabilia cover the coffee table as well as an open wine bottle. They are both considerably more loose and relaxed now.)

JANELLE

Your first press cuttings. Sweet. 1976. "Ballantyne's majestic lyrics lift his folksy rock music to dizzying heights." Aw, Mommy must have been so proud.

(Danny flips through his book.)

DANNY

Ah...the show at the Rooster Room in Chicago. That was a great show.

JANELLE

What year?

DANNY

1992. One of my last shows. I'd just gotten divorced the week before. It was a celebratory week.

JANELLE

You were married for what, seven years?

DANNY

Yeah. Seven year itch.

JANELLE

Oh?

DANNY

She got the itch, not me.

JANELLE

Hm.

DANNY

Hm what?

JANELLE

Just seems like it'd be the famous singer that'd get the itch,
not the adoring wife.

DANNY

Stacey wasn't exactly adoring.

JANELLE

She worked at your record company?

(They both leaf through pages as
they talk.)

DANNY

Yeah. She worked in the A&R department.

JANELLE

"Artists and...."?

DANNY

"Artists and repertoire." She was responsible for finding
new talent, signing new bands.

JANELLE

So she wasn't star-struck by you.

DANNY

Oh no. She dealt with rock stars day in, day out. Didn't
phase her.

JANELLE

What'd you mean she wasn't adoring?

DANNY

She just wasn't that type.

JANELLE

Your wife didn't adore you?

DANNY

She was very...logical and realistic.

JANELLE

What's that mean?

DANNY

She knew I was on the road a lot, she didn't get jealous.
She knew lots of women would throw themselves at me. I mean,
she was in the business, she knew about groupies and life on
the road. She didn't get jealous.

JANELLE

You cheated on her?

DANNY

No! I mean, there were a lot of groupies earlier, but by the time I met her I'd been famous about a decade. I was ready to settle down with one woman. I can be faithful.

JANELLE

So what happened?

DANNY

Nothing really. After we married she said she understood if there were other women on the road and it wasn't a deal-breaker for her.

JANELLE

Permission to cheat.

DANNY

Yeah.

JANELLE

Most men would have loved that.

DANNY

I didn't. I guess she thought she was being accommodating or understanding. Or that she was being modern and hip. Thought that was the way to keep me happy. But not caring if I got involved with someone else, that made me feel...

JANELLE

Unwanted.

DANNY

Yeah.

JANELLE

I can imagine. Did she cheat?

DANNY

She says she didn't.

JANELLE

You don't believe her.

DANNY

No. I think she had an affair with a guitarist from another band.

JANELLE

So she was kind of a groupie, in a way.

DANNY

Ha. Yeah, sort of. But on a corporate level.

JANELLE

Man, I don't get that. She gets a great guy like you and then doesn't care if you go with someone else? If you were mine I'd be devastated if you went with another woman.

DANNY

How do you know I was a great guy?

JANELLE

I know, I know. I don't really know you.

DANNY

Typical story. You know, she worked a lot. I was away on tour. We drifted apart.

(He's a bit quiet now.)

JANELLE

Sorry. Didn't mean to bum you out.

(He flips through more pages. Lost in memories.)

DANNY

You've never been married? No kids?

JANELLE

Nope. Not in the cards for me. I think I scare men off.

DANNY

You? Surely not!

JANELLE

Shut up.

DANNY

Show up on men's doorsteps a lot?

JANELLE

No. And I didn't just "show up". I warned you I was coming.

DANNY

Warned? Ooo, Freudian slip. Paging Dr. Freud!

JANELLE

Okay, I "alerted" you to the fact that I'd be coming.

DANNY

No, it's too late, you already said "warned."

JANELLE

Wow, you're strict. You know, I wrote you a fan letter once. When I was about 18.

DANNY

Wouldn't that be funny if it was in here? If my mom got a hold of it and saved it?

JANELLE

Yeah! I doubt it though. I think I sent it to your record company or something. I'm sure I was gushing with praise.

DANNY

Unlike now. Did I ever write back?

JANELLE

You did actually. Well, you signed a photo and sent it to me.

DANNY

I did?

JANELLE

Yup. In fact, it was an 8x10 of this photo here.

(She points out a photo from an old publicity shot.)

JANELLE

But you spelled my name wrong. There's just one N.

DANNY

Oh. Sorry. Want me to sign a new one for you?

JANELLE

I was so thrilled when I got that photo from you. And now here I am in your living room looking at your scrapbooks.

DANNY

What a coup for you.

JANELLE

Hey, I've been dying to ask you something. There's been a lot of debate over the lyrics to *Godnapping*.

DANNY

Yes, I've heard.

JANELLE

And you've been very coy about explaining much. But I was hoping to get some answers straight from the horse's mouth.

DANNY

Okay, what's your question?

JANELLE

There's the line "In an adult world below the streets where Noah shook, I was involved."

DANNY

Right.

JANELLE

Everyone says that Noah refers to the biblical Noah. I think because earlier in the song you mention the sea and his "duty". And obviously the title mentions God. But I think that Noah is just a regular guy. And the reason I say this is because later in the song you mention high school and classmates. And from the context of the last verse I say that Noah was one of your classmates and not the biblical Noah. So? Who is Noah?

DANNY

Noah is whoever --

JANELLE

Don't say "whoever you want him to be"! C'mon, I would like a real answer, please. Is he the biblical Noah or not?

(Danny takes a deep breath.)

DANNY

It could be possible that he is both. In one context he is the biblical Noah, and then later he is the everyman, the guy you went to school with. Your friend. He is both.

JANELLE

I knew you were gonna give me some vague bullshit answer.
(looking in scrapbook)
Mm, in this interview you talk about *Quadrophenia*.

DANNY

Yeah! Blew my mind when that album came out. After the movie came out I happened to be in Brighton doing a show. It's not a very big town, so I was walking around on my own. Ended up down on the beach. You know that scene where they go into the Beach Cafe and the lady who works there says to Jimmy "Get your feet off the seat!"?

JANELLE

Yeah!

DANNY

Get this. She actually works there!

JANELLE

You're kidding.

DANNY

This was in the early eighties when I went. I saw her and said "hey, you were in *Quadrophenia*!" And she said yeah and posed for a photo and everything. She was nice. She was amazed I recognized her.

JANELLE

You groupie.

(They are both a bit tipsy by now.)

DANNY

And I made sure I sat in the same seat that Jimmy sat in in the movie. It looked exactly the same.

JANELLE

Quite the fan you are.

DANNY

Love that album.

JANELLE

About a year ago I was listening to it at work. It's one of my favorite Who albums. I've heard it so many times. I was inputting a bunch of stuff into a database, it was basically just endless cutting and pasting. Didn't require much mental effort. So I put my ear buds in and was listening to *Quadrophenia*. But I was afraid I might not be able to hear my phone or maybe my boss would call for me and I wouldn't hear, so I took one out and was listening with just one ear. My left ear. And I don't know if it's because I was only listening with the left ear and therefore using more of my right brain...or maybe that album was mixed so that when I took one side out I didn't hear some of the musical arrangement, and that forced me to listen to other aspects that I hadn't normally been able to hear as well...I don't know, but for whatever reason, I suddenly heard it so differently! I've heard that Who album hundreds of times, but suddenly I was riveted! I swear I heard things I'd never heard before, there were layers, gorgeous layers of music. I sat there at my desk absolutely dumbfounded, not even doing my work, just LISTENING, and my coworker said "Hey, are you alright?"

(laughs)

She was sitting on my right, the side without the ear bud, so to her it looked like I was just sitting there stupefied for no reason. But that album, it's amazing. I remember which song it was, *The Rock*. There's not even any lyrics to that song! Six and a half minutes of pure musical bliss! And then it bridges right over into *Love Reign O'er Me* with the rain and the ocean noises, that soft piano and then the whole song starts up...oh my fucking God! Look, goose bumps. Another six minutes of musical gold. After that song ends, *Love Reign O'er Me*...you feel like you've really accomplished something! It's emotionally exhausting! Fantastic album. You can really hear new things in albums when you listen to 'em like that. One ear. It's weird...I can't quite explain it.

(He looks at her with new eyes.
Respect.)

JANELLE

Though I have to say, there's too much bass on most of the other tracks. I wish they'd remix it and fix that. Don't get me wrong, I love John Entwistle, may he rest in peace, but they overdid it on the bass. But other than that, perfect album. Pete Townshend, what a musical genius.

(He lets her rant sink in.)

DANNY

I opened for The Who once. Back in '82 I think. Sat backstage with Townshend, we talked for about forty minutes.

JANELLE

I hate you.

DANNY

Had a wonderful conversation with him about religion and spirituality. He was telling me about how he went to visit his guru's grave in India. He was standing there at Meher Baba's grave and for a few precious seconds he felt like a speck of dust, like he felt his true place in the universe and it was a wonderful feeling, the most wonderful feeling he ever had. But it only lasted a few blissful seconds. And he's been trying to get back to that mental place ever since then. He had great insight. It was very inspirational sitting there listening to him. Nice guy.

JANELLE

Hate. You.

DANNY

After he got up I sat there thinking about what he said. He was warming up on the guitar. Roger was there talking with some women. There was some press there. Tons of food and booze. I was watching my hero play guitar, I was going onstage soon to play for fans. I had tons of money, fame, whatever I wanted. I wasn't married yet, there were tons of girls. I looked around at it all and I thought "It doesn't get any better than this. This is my Meher Baba moment."

JANELLE

Wow.

DANNY

Did you study music?

JANELLE

Oh heavens, no. I don't have a musical bone in my body.

DANNY

You just did a four minute rant about *Quadrophenia*!

JANELLE

I can appreciate music, yeah! But I couldn't even begin to imagine how people write music or even play an instrument. How does Pete do it? *Love Reign O'er Me* and *The Rock* are the two most musically complex songs The Who have ever done. They're both epics! I'm in awe of people who are musical. I guess because I don't have that skill when I see it in others it seems all the more amazing.

(She meets his eye.)

JANELLE

I don't know how you do it.

DANNY

I'm hardly in the same category as Mr. Townshend.

(beat)

Why didn't you track him down and appear on HIS doorstep?

JANELLE

(flip)

Couldn't afford the airfare to London. Any more of those cookies or anything?

(She hops off the couch and bounces over to the kitchen area.)

DANNY

My home is your home! Rain's gonna trap you here anyway.

(She pulls some vegetables from the refrigerator. She starts chopping them up expertly.)

JANELLE

I thought you guys were used to rain up here and would have, you know, designed around it.

DANNY

We're out in the boonies. We make our own roads most of the time.

JANELLE

Are you serious? You really think I won't be able to get out?

DANNY

Probably not. Usually fine the next morning. I have a guest room, you can stay there. So we might as well have some more wine.

JANELLE

Sure. Trapped in an isolated house, a cranky singer, alcohol... what could possibly go wrong?

(He joins her in the kitchen as she chops more veggies. He gets a bottle of wine and opens it, refills their glasses.)

DANNY

Wow, I have to say, Janelle, I'm impressed with your cooking skills. I thought you were just over here making toast or something. If the writing thing doesn't pan out you could be a chef.

(She stares at him.)

DANNY

What? I'm serious. You could do this for a living. Look how perfectly these are sliced! Wow, who knew?

JANELLE

"Who knew?" You didn't read any of the articles I sent.

(He freezes.)

JANELLE

You didn't, did you?

(She stops her chopping.)

DANNY

Hey, don't stop. You know how long it's been since I had some homemade snacks?

(He steals a slice of red bell pepper.)

JANELLE

Three of my articles mention that my mom was a top sous chef and taught me to cook growing up. I wrote a whole article about how I almost became a chef myself. You didn't read anything I sent, did you?

(He eventually shakes his head. She puts down her knife, loses interest in the food.)

JANELLE

You didn't read ANY of them?

DANNY

Janelle...

JANELLE

You didn't.

DANNY

I meant to.

JANELLE

Wow. That's great.

DANNY

It was a big packet! You sent a lot!

JANELLE

Because I wanted you to have choices. I didn't mean you had to read them all. God, some of them were only four or five pages long, you could have at least tackled a few of those.

DANNY

Janelle, I didn't ASK you to send them! Something just appears on my doorstep and I'm supposed to say "Oh boy" and get all excited about it?

JANELLE

I thought...I was hoping you'd be flattered. And curious. It's not like you're inundated with stuff from fans.

DANNY

(offended)

Oh, thanks.

JANELLE

No, I just meant you're so isolated up here! It's not like you live right in L.A. and you're on the TMZ bus tour. You're hard to find. You can't possibly get that many requests from fans, to find you fans would have to be really --

DANNY

Obsessed?

JANELLE

Dedicated.

(She abandons her culinary task.
Takes her glass of wine back to the
couch area, leans on the arm of the
couch. He follows.)

JANELLE

(dead serious)

I really hate that word obsessed.

DANNY

Well, I'm sorry, but you have to admit...

JANELLE

That I'm obsessed with you?! I'm a FAN who wants to write a piece on you!

DANNY

Fan is short for fanatic. Do you like that word better? You just admitted earlier that you had, no still HAVE schoolgirl fantasies about being with me, this rock star you've idolized since childhood.

JANELLE

Oh, you poor thing. You have fans. Someone who still finds you attractive is wanting to write a book on you. Poor Danny!

(He puts down the sliced veggies, wipes his hands and comes and stands face to face with her.)

DANNY

Do you know what I was thinking earlier today? When you were sitting at the table? I SHOULD have been thinking "This is a smart woman, a little strange maybe, but she's got some good points...." That's what I should have been thinking. But what I was actually thinking was...I could have this woman. She'd do anything I want.

(He leans in very close to her.)

DANNY

I could bend her over the couch right now and she would love it, she'd think "oh I'm so lucky, my idol wants me!" I wasn't going to ACT on it, but it did cross my mind. I was thinking that if I wanted to, if I was that type of man, all I'd have to do is say the word and you'd willingly, gladly, do whatever I asked of you.

(He looks her up and down.)

DANNY

When you were showing me those photos on your phone I was looking at you. You're an attractive woman. "So Danny, what are you going to do? Take her if you want her, she's yours for the asking."

(He is now tantalizingly close, almost touching.)

DANNY

(whispers, sexy voice)

I could take you upstairs right now. You'd do anything I wanted.

(She's frozen, half-appalled, half-turned on.)

DANNY

Janelle, a man should NOT be thinking that about you. Not any man that you should want.

(She watches him as he backs off,
downs his drink. Sits back down.)

JANELLE

You're mistaking me for a groupie.

DANNY

Am I? What's the crucial difference here?

JANELLE

What do you mean 'what's the difference'?! You're comparing me with some chick who offers to blow you in your dressing room after talking to you for twenty seconds backstage after a concert? Yes, I find you sexy. I admire you and your work. I did hope to get to know you better. Is that bad? Isn't that how most people start relationships? Do most groupies get MacArthur grants and want to use that to develop a piece of work based on your life and your music?

(He's dumbfounded.)

DANNY

What?

JANELLE

What?

DANNY

You got a MacArthur grant?

JANELLE

Yes.

DANNY

When? You mean recently?

JANELLE

Yeah. Now.

(He stares, unbelieving.)

JANELLE

You can check. My name's listed right there on the website. One of 28 recipients this year.

(He can only stare. Dumbfounded.)

DANNY

Holy shit. Why didn't you say so?

JANELLE

I was hoping my writings would speak for themselves. But so much for that tactic.

(He sits, stunned. She uses her iPhone, pulls up a website.)

JANELLE

See? It's alphabetical, I'm at the bottom. There's my name. There's my photo.

(She hands him the phone.)

DANNY

I wasn't saying I didn't believe you.

JANELLE

I know. But you're right, you don't know me. I could be some kook making shit up.

(He checks the website. She goes back to the kitchen, gathers the veggies and arranges them on a plate with some other snacks.)

DANNY

Yeah, there you are. "Meet this year's MacArthur Fellow Janelle Walker, writer, Albuquerque. An emerging talent as a writer --"

JANELLE

You don't have to read it.

DANNY

"-- with a diverse and growing body of work, Walker is setting a new industry standard through her incredibly --"

JANELLE

And not out loud.

DANNY

"-- nuanced and intimate portraits of musicians and bands."

(She brings the food back to the couch. They help themselves.)

JANELLE

Seriously. I already know what it says --

DANNY

Shh! Reading!

(He continues to read for a moment in silence, still deep in thought and shock.)

DANNY

"Acting as a sort of musical archeologist, she demonstrates keen powers of observation and description, capturing subtle complexities that give the readers a deeper understanding of the music and musicians that they have loved for years, even decades."

(He reads silently for a minute, randomly picking out phrases to read aloud.)

DANNY

"...uncovering illuminating details that music fans covet."

(He reads to himself.)

DANNY

"...making her an increasingly powerful presence in the world of music journalism."

(He looks at her with exaggerated awe.)

DANNY

Holy shit, Janelle!

JANELLE

Now YOU'RE reading MY press cuttings.

DANNY

You know the nickname for the MacArthur Fellowship is "the genius grant", right?

JANELLE

(deadpan)

It is? They've awarded the genius grant to someone too stupid to know it's referred to as the genius grant. How ironic! Or is that "moronic"? I get those two words confused.

DANNY

I'm just saying.

(sincere)

Wow, this is a spectacular coup. And a huge amount of money. Congratulations.

JANELLE

Thank you.

(They eat a few more bites in silence.)

DANNY

Ah. Hence the lack of concern about quitting the job, coming up here and paying for hotels along the way.

(She nods.)

JANELLE

Yup.

DANNY

Not your average groupie.

JANELLE

Nope. Though my dad thinks I'm an idiot.

DANNY

You won a MacArthur grant and your dad thinks you're an idiot?

JANELLE

No, my dad thinks I'm an idiot because I quit my job.

DANNY

Does he realize how much money comes with the grant?

JANELLE

Yup, I told him. "Dad, I get \$100,000 a year for five years to do whatever the hell I want!" "Yes, but what happens after those five years are over?" He thinks I should have kept my crappy day job and just do the writing "in my spare time" as a hobby.

DANNY

Hmm.

JANELLE

What, you think I'm crazy, too?

DANNY

No! Hell no! If you're careful you can live on that money for a really long time. Do you have to show progress to the MacArthur people or check in from time to time?

JANELLE

Nope! No restrictions whatsoever on the money, I don't have to do anything or complete any project. They just present you with the money and say "We've had our eye on you, we think you deserve to follow your passion without worrying about your finances, here's some money!"

DANNY

Incredible.

JANELLE

Man, I nearly passed out when I got the call.

DANNY

You didn't know? Didn't you have to apply for it?

JANELLE

No. You don't apply, no one does. There's no application process. Apparently there are secret nominators out there, some big ever-changing pool of people, and they nominate people they think deserve it, and then if you make it to the final level they contact people who know you and get their input. And this is all done without the person even knowing anything yet. And if you win, only then do you get the phone call.

DANNY

That must have been some phone call.

JANELLE

I nearly fell off my chair.

DANNY

You don't know who nominated you?

JANELLE

I do now, but they only tell you after it's all happened. I was writing a lot of articles on bands and submitting them to this online music site called "Sound Ideas." The main guy who ran the site was a nominator. Of course I didn't know that at the time. Said he'd had his eye on me for a few years. He ran a bunch of my articles on his site, even gave me my own section. He was always commenting on how I was always writing and that he'd get emails from me at four in the morning. "Don't you ever sleep?" When I'm excited about an idea I can't sleep.

DANNY

He saw your passion.

JANELLE

I still contribute all the time, and I have a blog on there.

DANNY

Wow, you didn't mention that.

(She turns, glares.)

DANNY

Oh. It was in the packet.

JANELLE

So anyway, yeah. I get paid in quarterly installments. Which is good, you can't go out and blow the whole thing. But my dad still thinks I should have kept the soul-draining cubicle job. He didn't think it was *reasonable* to quit. "You have benefits!" Yeah, big freaking deal, I have a health insurance. Who cares? I can just go to a doctor now, pay the office fee and who cares? Or pay for my own insurance. But Dad thinks it's worth it to keep the job. I said "But Dad, now I have

(MORE)

JANELLE (Cont'd.)

five years free and clear to work on my writings!" He said "And then what? When the five years are up you're going to need a job again and you'll have to start all over." Gee Dad, thanks for your belief in me that I can make it as a writer and not need another day job.

DANNY

I've never had a day job.

JANELLE

Hate. You.

DANNY

I had little jobs in high school, mostly for gas money, pot money, movies. But I've been fortunate enough that I've never had a real job, as an adult. I can't imagine sitting at a desk for eight hours. Or going out and fixing people's sinks all day.

JANELLE

It sucks. It really does drain the soul right out of you. I mean, I guess there are people suited for that. People who love it and will keep their desk jobs for thirty years and retire with a nice little pension, but that'd kill me.

DANNY

We're more the freelance type. And I guess the MacArthur Foundation agrees.

(He tries to refill their empty glasses, but holds the bottle upside down, shows that it's empty. They both make a sad face.)

DANNY

I have more.

(Their sad faces turn into happy faces. He trots to the kitchen, grabs a bottle, then returns.)

DANNY

Actually no more wine, but I do have some champagne!

(He wrangles with it, trying to get the cork out.)

JANELLE

Fancy!

DANNY

Been saving it. I have no one to drink it with.

JANELLE

Aw. Poor lonely super famous singer up here all alone.

(Success with the cork. He pours.)

DANNY

(singing)

"Today it rained champagne. A son was born again."

JANELLE

OH MY GOD. That is my most favorite movie ever!

DANNY

Tommy, yeah! One of the greats!

JANELLE

Pete Townshend strikes again.

DANNY

Such a trippy movie. What year was that, like '76 or '77?

JANELLE

'75.

DANNY

Good memory.

JANELLE

Absolute favorite movie. Roger Daltrey. Ahhh. Dreamy.

DANNY

Ann-Margret! I must have been, what, about 22 or 23 when that came out. Saw it five times. In the theater on the big screen.

JANELLE

I saw it on the big screen too. Many times!

DANNY

HOW? You weren't old enough when it came out.

JANELLE

I wasn't even *born* yet when it came out.

DANNY

Oy.

JANELLE

Midnight movies. One of the theaters in Albuquerque used to run old movies for their "Midnight Movies" on the weekends.

DANNY

Tommy is NOT an "old movie." *Casablanca* is an old movie.

JANELLE

Tommy is an old movie. *Casablanca* is a really old movie.

DANNY

That scene with Ann-Margret rolling around in the soap suds, then the baked beans...wow. That movie changed the trajectory of my sexual fantasies forever.

JANELLE

Oo, do tell, Danny Ballantyne. C'mon, c'mon, I'm your official biographer, tell me everything. I will try and show you in the kindest light. Was it the soap suds that did it for you or the baked beans?

DANNY

Ann-Margret!

JANELLE

Yeah. Roger Daltrey had the exact same effect on me.

DANNY

Of course he did. Idol-worshipper!

JANELLE

Has-been!

DANNY

But I didn't track Ann-Margret down.

JANELLE

Maybe you should have. Maybe you would have hit it off. You could have shown up with a huge can of baked beans. Maybe you were just what she was needing and you could have had a lovely time together. You didn't even try.

DANNY

No, that's YOUR dream.

(She shakes her head.)

JANELLE

Nah. I'm not attracted to Ann-Margret in the slightest. Didn't you play a few songs from *Tommy* at your '76 show at the Mojo Club in San Francisco?

DANNY

Do you have my whole life obsessively memorized?!

JANELLE

I remember what year *Tommy* came out, you say "good memory." I remember what year you played a gig and I'm "obsessed!" Which is it? Pick a position and stick with it! I remember the phone number of my best friend Cathy who went to Oñate

(MORE)

JANELLE (Cont'd.)

Elementary School with me. 298-3554. That must mean I'm obsessed with Cathy, too. Oh no, someone better warn her! It's market research.

(Her jokey rant has not taken his tipsy focus off *Tommy*.)

DANNY

Yeah, whatever. *Tommy*...man, that really was Townshend's great contribution to the revolutionizing of how rock music was done. Great album.

JANELLE

Yeah. Remember Eric Clapton as The Preacher? That guitar!

DANNY

No, I mean the original *Tommy* album, not the soundtrack.

JANELLE

Oh. I prefer the soundtrack.

DANNY

WHAT?!

JANELLE

Yeah! I love the soundtrack. More than the original version.

(He gapes at her. Points to the front door.)

DANNY

GET. OUT.

JANELLE

You said the roads are flooded.

DANNY

SWIM!

JANELLE

Okay, I know the '69 version is considered a pivotal, landmark album, it changed the way albums were made. It was revolutionary. But I saw the movie before I heard the original album. Remember, I'm not as OLD as you are. I fell in love with the movie, that's what got me into The Who in the first place! I saw Roger Daltrey and I was done for. So it's got a special place in my heart. Forever.

DANNY

THAT'S what got you into The Who? The cheesy 1975 soundtrack of *Tommy* with Ann-Margret and Oliver Reed singing?! Not the brilliant, ground-breaking genius version of 1969? That's what you're saying?!

JANELLE

That's what I'm saying, yes.

DANNY

With Elton John wearing huge three foot high shoes? And Jack Nicholson SINGING. Giant pinballs eight feet high scattered across the landscape. This was what got you into The Who?

JANELLE

Yup.

DANNY

I think I need to make a call to the MacArthur Foundation.

(He calms down, sits right next to her. Janelle finishes her champagne. He smiles. She reaches over and touches his face, strokes his beard.)

JANELLE

You still have that same great smile as on the poster.

(This just makes him smile even more. It's a very sensual, lingering touch. He does nothing to stop her. Struck with a thought she switches gears suddenly.)

JANELLE

Siouxsie!

DANNY

Susie?

JANELLE

Siouxsie and the Banshees! I love them. Female lead singer! Ha! See?

DANNY

It took you forever to think of that.

JANELLE

I was under duress. I don't do well under pressure.

DANNY

Duly noted! Can I ask you something?

JANELLE

Night owl. Chocolate. Purple.

DANNY

I've never quite understood the idol-worshipper mentality. What exactly do you get out of it?

JANELLE

Hmm. Good question. I don't know. It's not really something I do on purpose. I don't think about it. It's just how I am. To be honest, if I had a choice I'd choose not to be like this.

DANNY

Really?

JANELLE

Of course! It's weird! I see that! Being completely --

DANNY

Obsessed?

JANELLE

-- *preoccupied* with some man I've never even met? Knowing his life almost as well as my own, reading everything about him, studying his work, it's...yeah, it can be a bit much. But it's my nature. I don't know what I get out of it to be honest. When I was younger it was such a rush to see a bit of footage I'd never seen before, or hear an interview.

DANNY

But why? Why get so excited over something about someone you don't know, you have nothing to do with?

JANELLE

I don't know. I didn't have a boyfriend or anything in high school, maybe if I did I would have focused on him instead. An idol is like some kind of surrogate maybe.

DANNY

It's always an adult male though. Sounds like you have daddy iss --

JANELLE

(cutting him off at "daddy issues")

It really felt like I was getting to know you. And sometimes... okay, this makes me sound a little nutty, but sometimes I would be almost shocked to suddenly remember that you didn't know me. How can that be? I know Danny Ballantyne so well...or I thought I did. I've spent so much time listening to his music, reading his interviews, trying to get inside his head...how can he not know me?

DANNY

One time back in the late '70s I got a letter from a female fan. It really scared me.

JANELLE

Okay, I wasn't even old enough to write yet!

DANNY

She was in England. It was just one of many letters my manager gave to me. She was about 17 or so. I don't remember the exact wording, but she basically said she was madly in love with me and had to come meet me. She was still in school, but she couldn't bare it anymore, she just HAD to come meet me. She said she was going to quit school and since she didn't have any money for a flight she was gonna stowaway on a boat or something.

JANELLE

Wow. Be a stowaway on a boat? That's old school.

DANNY

Yeah, well, you can't really stowaway on a plane, can you? All of this just to come meet me. That freaked me out.

JANELLE

Did you write back to her?

DANNY

I'm ashamed to say that I didn't. I should have. I should have! I should have at least dashed off a note saying "No, I want you to stay in school and stay where you are, and when I tour England I'll send you a ticket to a show." Just to placate her, you know?

JANELLE

Yeah. As a fellow idol-worshipper I can tell you that if I'd gotten a handwritten letter from my hero when I was a teenager I would have done whatever he asked me to do.

DANNY

I should have. Damn it, I don't know why I didn't.

JANELLE

Yeah, you're not very good at answering letters.

DANNY

I didn't know if she was unstable or just overly dramatic or what. I guess I thought that if I wrote to her personally it might just spur her on even more.

JANELLE

Yeah, maybe.

DANNY

It scared me to imagine her quitting school, running away from home and coming to a different country just to meet me. Stowing away on a ship?!

JANELLE

Okay, I've never done THAT. But I decided a long time ago to not fight my nature. Sure, it feels a bit weird sometimes, but who cares? It's how I am. I might as well enjoy it and go with it, make it work for me.

DANNY

I think writing biographies on other people is a pretty good job for an idol worshipper. You're certainly using your quirk to your advantage.

JANELLE

If I could find a job that paid me for fixating on older, famous men, I'd be all set.

DANNY

Can I point something out?

JANELLE

Please don't say "father figure."

DANNY

Well...I do see evidence...

JANELLE

Don't say "father figure!"

DANNY

...that maybe there's some father figure issues here. I'm a lot older than you. Plenty of other young rock stars out there for you to...

JANELLE

Desire.

DANNY

I was gonna say obsess over, but I know how you hate that word. Desire? You still desire me? Even now?

(He can't resist reaching out and touching her hair, her face.)

JANELLE

I want to say yes, but I'm afraid you'll yell at me.

DANNY

(softly)

I insulted you for liking me. I'm far too old for you. Why the hell would you still want to be with me?

JANELLE

(sweetly)

I kind of want to smack you really hard right now.

DANNY

Atta girl.

(He pulls back, but she grasps onto him.)

JANELLE

Wait.

(He lets her pull his hand back to her. For a moment they clasp each other's hand, caressing.)

DANNY

Actually, maybe I'd be better off being a bit more like you.

JANELLE

What do you mean?

DANNY

I dunno. Nothing.

JANELLE

No, come on. Tell me. You were going to say something there.

DANNY

Coming up here was, okay, it was weird. But at least you go after what you want, you didn't worry about what I'd think. Or maybe you did, but you did it anyway. You're doing what you want.

JANELLE

You're not?

(He lets go of her hand, leans back.)

DANNY

I miss performing.

JANELLE

You do? I knew it.

DANNY

Yeah. I have to admit that I do. That club I told you about in Seattle? I go there every so often. I went there a few weeks ago, sat in the back. I was watching them play and I realized I was really jealous of them. In my mind I even visualized myself going up to them afterward, asking if I could sit in. Or just doing a jam session with them later, I don't care if it's onstage or not.

JANELLE

I bet they would have loved that.

DANNY

Yeah, well, I don't know about that. How sad would that be? Me begging to be allowed to sit in with a band I'm not even part of?

JANELLE

Not sad at all. I think that'd be great. Would that make you happy?

(He smiles.)

DANNY

I would love to play again.

JANELLE

Then do it! Find a way and just do it. Join them onstage, or hell, set up your own show somewhere.

DANNY

I haven't played a gig in over a decade. To restart a dead career at this point in the game? Doesn't seem reasonable to start all over again.

JANELLE

Oh my God, you sound just like my dad!

DANNY

(pointed, sarcastic)

Right, but there's no father figure issue here.

(She hops up, finds something to straighten up or fiddle with.)

JANELLE

Okay, let's say for argument's sake this IS a father figure issue here. Hypothetically speaking, let's say that my father didn't show me enough love or affection, or he missed my play one day or one night at dinner I was devastated because he gave me cherry jello instead of lime, or whatever the hell scenario would plant some need in my psyche to seek out a father figure now. So let's say I now need, want, desire the affection slash attention slash love slash approval of an older father figure. What exactly is the problem with me going after what I need?! Okay, so I admit I'm in love with you! Yes, it's probably a father figure issue thingy! But so what? If that's what I need and want, what's the problem?! We all fall in love with who we fall in love with because they fulfill a need we have. If they didn't, then we wouldn't fall for them!

(He takes a long look at her. Nods.
He stands, approaches her.)

DANNY

But you barely know me. Not really.

JANELLE

Well, that's why I'm here, isn't it? To delve.

DANNY

I guess I just needed to hear you admit it.

(In an excruciatingly slow and sensual manner he holds her hands, caresses her face, her hair. She is mesmerized. Just as they almost kiss there are KEYS JANGLING in the front door.)

LEIGH (O.S.)

Hey Dan, it's me. Hey, your lock is still sticky.

(Danny and Janelle's would-be passionate moment evaporates instantly. Danny jumps back from Janelle as LEIGH, 50ish, plunges into the room, wet rain gear, umbrella.)

LEIGH

Good lord, it's sure coming down out there!

(She shakes off her umbrella and flings off her rain gear. Danny steps over to greet her. Janelle is rooted to the spot.)

DANNY

Hey. Yeah.

(Leigh spots Janelle. She thrusts her hand out for a handshake.)

LEIGH

Hi, you must be the writer Dan was talking about. I'm Raleigh.

JANELLE

(still dumbstruck)

Riley?

LEIGH

Raleigh.

JANELLE

Rowley?

DANNY

"Rolly", like Sir Walter Raleigh.

LEIGH

Just call me Leigh. I'm Dan's girlfriend.

(to Danny)

Hon, you know your lock is still sticky. You have any WD-40?

DANNY

Uh, I dunno. Under the sink maybe?

(Leigh rifles under his sink.)

JANELLE

(to Danny)

Hm! Something else that's not on your Wikipedia page.

(Blackout. End of Act I.)

ACT IISCENE 1

(Later that night. Danny, Janelle and Leigh sit around the kitchen table. Remnants of tea and coffee. Leigh is bubbly and friendly, Danny and Janelle are more subdued.)

LEIGH

So I've been reading the management standards all day, trying to figure out how to get zoned for more horses. At the moment we've got twelve horses. We're only allowed one for every two acres.

(Danny nods.)

DANNY

(to Janelle)

Leigh's land is adjacent to mine, she's got a riding school.

JANELLE

Ah.

LEIGH

(to Janelle)

We also have horseback riding trails, either with a guide or without.

JANELLE

Nice.

LEIGH

We're dying to get more horses, but zoning won't allow for it. And I can't exactly get more land. Well, not yet anyway.

(She gives Danny a private smile.)

LEIGH

So the only other option to get more horses is to change the way we have the drainage system and weed control. After that if we are compliant with the management standards we can then have six horses per acre.

JANELLE

I see.

LEIGH

Of course with that many horses we'll have to do rotational turnout, but it'll be worth the effort. They're so beautiful. I love those animals. Dan goes riding sometimes, don't you, babe?

DANNY

Yup. I do.

LEIGH

So Janelle, what type of article are you writing on Dan? Are you going to listen to him play his --

DANNY

(cutting her off)

Leigh! Shh! I haven't really agreed to do it, yet, I'm not sure I want to.

LEIGH

What'd you have her come all the way out here for then? Honey, that's not cool! Now she's gonna be stuck here all night. Bottom of the hill is completely flooded.

DANNY

Yeah, I figured.

JANELLE

No other way out?

LEIGH

Not without four wheel drive.

JANELLE

So Leigh. You might as well give me your story, how you met. Ya know, for the article. If *Dan* decides to do it.

LEIGH

Oh, not much to tell. My parents had the land next door, but they retired. Moved to Walla Walla about four years ago. So I moved in and took over. Been dating, what, two years?

(He nods.)

LEIGH

I didn't even know who he was when we met. Someone...who was it...? Joe McKenzie I think down at the bank mentioned one day that Dan used to be a singer. Once he said that I kind of remembered who Dan was, I remembered hearing about the album. I was more into country music growing up though, so I didn't really know any of his songs.

JANELLE

I see.

LEIGH

So Dan and I saw each other once in a while, then one time we ended up sitting next to each other in the cafe down at the bottom of the hill. We started chatting. He leaned over and gave me his phone number. The rest is history. It's been about two years.

JANELLE

Two years. Wow. Long time. Any plans to get married?

(Danny shifts uncomfortably, then starts to collect the dirty dishes and transfers them into the sink.)

LEIGH

Well, we've talked about it. We joke that it'd be easy to combine our lands. I've got 25 acres, Dan, you have, what, about 60?

DANNY

Sixty-two, yes.

LEIGH

Oh my, we could run a bunch of new horse trails up through your ponderosas all along the ridge. That would be a magnificent trail. The riders would love the view. And I think the horses would love to climb the mountain.

DANNY AND JANELLE

(sing in unison)

"I get excitement at your feet!"

(Danny and Janelle can't help but laugh. Leigh looks confused.)

JANELLE

It's a line from *Tommy*. My favorite movie. "Following you I climb the mountain, I get excitement at your feet."

LEIGH

Ah. Gotcha. I'm not really into Chris Farley movies. They seem sort of juvenile.

(Janelle can't speak, her head might explode. Danny steps in.)

DANNY

Honey, you're thinking of *Tommy Boy*. We're talking about *Tommy*.

LEIGH

Oh. That Who musical thing?

JANELLE

It's not a musical. It's an opera. A rock opera.

LEIGH

Oh. What's the difference?

DANNY

Oh boy.

(Danny leans against the sink to watch the show. Janelle tries to stay calm.)

JANELLE

An opera is sung from start to finish, no spoken dialogue. Musicals are basically just regular stories and then the characters occasionally burst into song for no particular reason. *Tommy* was the first rock opera ever done. It revolutionized rock music.

LEIGH

Ah. I see. I'm not really into music or movies.

DANNY

Horses are more Leigh's thing.

LEIGH

Yeah, I'm one of those horse people. Obsessed with horses.

(On the word "obsessed" Janelle looks at Danny, who suppresses a smile.)

LEIGH

Which reminds me, Dan, do you need any more manure for your vegetable garden?

DANNY

Sure. That'd be great.

LEIGH

Okay, we'll bring a load over after the rain stops. Your lawn looks really good.

(Leigh misinterprets Janelle's stunned look.)

LEIGH

I know, horse manure isn't nearly as good as cow manure. Or chicken. But it's free, and we've got lots of it! Horses don't digest seeds the way cows do so sometimes horse manure can contain seeds that end up sprouting.

(to Danny)

So you might have to do a bit of weeding. Sorry.

DANNY

That's okay. I don't mind. It'll give me something to do.

(Leigh hops up from the table. Leigh grabs the empty wine and champagne bottles, looks around.)

LEIGH

Recycle bin?

DANNY

Oh, I moved it out onto the porch.

(Leigh pops outside onto the porch.
Janelle is still stunned.)

JANELLE

Did...did she just go directly from *Tommy* to horse shit?

(He laughs.)

JANELLE

She did. We're talking about *Tommy*, then straight to horse shit. Literally.

DANNY

So. A girlfriend appears. *And* she disrespected *Tommy*. Are you going to curse her name now?

JANELLE

Curse her name? I can't even *pronounce* her name.

(Leigh comes back in.)

LEIGH

Gotta go. Got hungry horses waiting for me. Nice meeting you, Janelle. Let me know when the piece runs.

JANELLE

I will.

(Leigh kisses Danny goodbye, grabs
her rain gear and leaves. The
silence weighs heavy.)

JANELLE

Well.

DANNY

Yeah.

JANELLE

She doesn't know your music. Doesn't remember your career. Doesn't care about anything you care about. What can I say, she's PERFECT for you.

DANNY

She doesn't idolize me.

JANELLE

Clearly! She barely knows who you are!

DANNY

It seems healthy.

JANELLE

"It seems healthy." That sounds passionate.

DANNY

Yeah. It's a healthy, normal adult relationship.

JANELLE

Which you conveniently forgot to mention to me.

(beat)

Were you going to kiss me?

DANNY

Can we blame the alcohol?

JANELLE

If you really want to. That'll be a nice memory for me. I almost got to kiss Danny Ballantyne because he was sloshed. That's the only way it could have happened.

DANNY

I don't know what to say. I wasn't sloshed. I'm quite the experienced drinker, actually. I guess....

JANELLE

What?

DANNY

Maybe I just...I was getting used to...okay, I have to admit, it felt good to be with someone with whom I could do no wrong.

JANELLE

But you said you think that attitude is unhealthy.

DANNY

Yeah, for YOU. For ME it's very confidence-building!

(His audacity only makes her laugh.)

JANELLE

Hate. You.

(He laughs at himself.)

JANELLE

I should have listened to my dad. That job I was talking about...sitting in a cubicle all day inputting data in a mindless stupor under fluorescent lighting...that sounds like heaven right about now.

(She plops back down on the couch.
He follows.)

DANNY

(trying to lighten the mood)

I've listened to your stories about your dad and I've come to the conclusion that he is a very wise man. Cherry jello was obviously the better choice.

(She shakes her head.)

JANELLE

No way. Lime. He should have known lime was better.

DANNY

That's just weird. Why would you say lime? Most people would choose cherry. Cherry is always the most popular flavor.

(It escalates into a legitimate fight.)

JANELLE

Yes, I *know* cherry is a very popular flavor, in *general*. With candy or Slurpees. But you'd be surprised at what a big following lime jello has.

DANNY

Oh really?

JANELLE

Yes, really.

DANNY

You know this for a fact? You're a jello expert now?

JANELLE

Lime jello is great. Cherry jello is just good. And I'm not the only one who knows this, Danny.

DANNY

Cherry jello is great! Cherry is a great flavor, I can't believe you think more people would choose lime.

JANELLE

Lime JELLO, not just lime flavor in general. We're specifically talking about jello flavors. A lot of people prefer lime jello to cherry jello.

DANNY

I disagree. I'd go with cherry and I think most people would too.

JANELLE

Duly noted!

(pretends to write in her notebook)

"Prefers cherry jello to lime." See Danny, I have tons of great stuff for the book!

DANNY

(ignoring her now, speaking to no one)
Are we fighting about...*jello*?

JANELLE

He's a morning person who enjoys eating chocolate and loves the color green.

(Danny looks at her fondly.)

DANNY

Leigh and I never fight.

JANELLE

See? I told you, she's perfect for you.

DANNY

You need passion to fight. Leigh and I never fight.

JANELLE

We're not fighting. We're debating.

DANNY

We're debating *jello*.

(just occurs to him)

I don't know Leigh's favorite flavor. Of anything.

JANELLE

Cherry, probably.

DANNY

Seemed nice, not fighting. Not *debating*.

JANELLE

(misses his tone)

Please shut up about how wonderful it is not fighting with your lovely acquiescent girlfriend.

(mimicking him)

"I don't have anyone to drink my champagne with."

DANNY

Because Leigh doesn't drink! She won't ever drink with me.

JANELLE

Technicality.

DANNY

A quiet, calm relationship. That seemed good. I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm getting old.

(She considers this.)

JANELLE

Yeah, maybe!

DANNY

Hey, you're my adoring fan, isn't it your job to say something comforting like "oh Danny, you're not old!"

JANELLE

There you go, giving me the responsibility to make you feel better. That doesn't sound emotionally healthy to me.

DANNY

Yeah. I am old. Old enough to be --

JANELLE

DO NOT SAY IT.

DANNY

It's true.

JANELLE

So what? Seriously Danny, so what? I do NOT think of you in a fatherly way. Believe me. I think you're incredibly sexy.

(She's so close. Right there in front of him. He's clearly tempted.)

DANNY

Getting romantically involved with someone with clear father figure issues would be a very co-dependent thing to do. Fun! But co-dependent.

JANELLE

I see it as a complementary relationship.

DANNY

Dysfunctional.

JANELLE

How about a compromise? "Complementarily dysfunctional."

DANNY

With quite an age gap.

JANELLE

Why can't you just enjoy it? Why do you have to analyze everything?

DANNY

Hi, have we met? I'm Danny Ballantyne!

JANELLE

Oh my God, not THE Danny Ballantyne? I thought you looked familiar. I have all your albums.

DANNY

On vinyl?

JANELLE

MP3.

DANNY

Exactly.

JANELLE

Okay, yeah, you used to have your favorite albums on vinyl, mine are MP3s. But Danny, we're both listening to the *same songs*.

(He nods.)

DANNY

That's very true.

(He looks at her, admiringly. Then forces himself to turn away.)

DANNY

I miss vinyl. I have all the new stuff on CD now, but CD cases and downloads nowadays just don't cut it. Vinyl was so visceral, holding them in your hands. Those big album covers, the pictures, the liner notes. Your brother's collection was on vinyl, right?

JANELLE

Yeah. I loved flipping through them. He had them on the floor and I'd sit there and just constantly go through them. I remember all the great covers.

DANNY

They were great, right?

JANELLE

Are you kidding? I remember every detail to the cover of Moonhigh. You were standing on the beach holding your guitar. You had one foot up on a rock. Bare feet. White shirt unbuttoned, jeans. Your hair was long and it was wet. Long wet hair. You were my Ann-Margret.

DANNY

Oh yeah?

(She nods seductively.)

JANELLE

Oh yeah. You had it all. Intelligence, charm, and you were freaking adorable. You still are. And most importantly you had talent. That was what put you over the top for me. You only needed baked beans for Ann-Margret to do it for you, but I needed more. I could have afforded the airfare to London to track Pete Townshend down. But I chose you. Not because I had your poster on my wall, but because of your talent.

(Danny pulls away from her. Picks up a book from his pile of mementoes. Hands it to her.)

JANELLE

What's this?

DANNY

You'll probably be able to appreciate this. Eddie's journal. My brother. When he was in art school.

JANELLE

Uh, okay. We're changing the subject I see.

DANNY

Not really.

(She flips through it. He wanders to the kitchen table, tidies up.)

JANELLE

"The sunset last night was majestic. Watched it with Linda. Perfect moment. Had some terrific pot and listened to Hendrix." Groovy, man!

DANNY

I thought you'd like that.

(She flips through a few more pages.)

JANELLE

Aw, little drawings, too. Yeah, he was really artistic.

DANNY

Yes, he was.

(She chuckles as she reads, leafs through the book.)

JANELLE

Ah, he mentions you! "Today Danny and Mom came by to visit. Mom had given him a severe haircut. He hated it but he pretended he liked it. Mom could tell he hated it though." Aw, weren't you sweet?

DANNY

She butchered my hair.

(She bursts out laughing.)

JANELLE

Holy shit, there's a photo of the haircut! Ha! Oh, yeah, we're using this in the book. Or article. Or whatever.

(Danny continues to tidy up the kitchen.)

DANNY

Don't get too ahead of yourself.

JANELLE

Aw, he wrote sweet little poems.

(She reads. Danny watches her. She flips to the next page.)

JANELLE

Sweet. Really good. These are really good!

(Next page. Her face changes.)

JANELLE

Uh...

(She looks at Danny, looks back to the book. Flips to the next page. She skims it. Utter shock. Goes to the next page. And the next.)

JANELLE

Danny?

(He wanders over to her. She's now quickly going through all the pages.)

JANELLE

These are all...your brother wrote all these?

DANNY

Yes.

(She shuts the book. Closes her eyes, leans her head back as the implications wash over her.)

DANNY

So I guess it's Eddie you want to write the book on, not me.

(He sits beside her. She's shocked silent.)

DANNY

After he died I was helping my mom clean out his dorm room. I found his journals and I stole 'em. My mom and dad never even saw them. He didn't mean for them to be songs, but yeah, I didn't write them, he did.

(She tries to speak, but can't really get anything to come out. They sit in silence for a moment. Finally...)

JANELLE

Did he write...your other albums, did he write those too?

DANNY

No! No, no. I wrote the second and third album. Which is why they sucked and failed so badly. I didn't 'leave' the music business, my membership was revoked!

JANELLE

Danny, they did not suck! They didn't -- Christ, one meltdown at a time, please. Ooooh, my God.

DANNY

I'll just leave you alone to absorb this.

(He hops up, goes back to the kitchen. She rubs her head, her eyes.)

JANELLE

Ooooh my God...

DANNY

You wanted to know the deep, dark truth! Well there you go.

(She joins him in the kitchen.)

JANELLE

No one knows?

(He shakes his head.)

DANNY

You and me.

JANELLE

Not even Leigh?

(He shakes his head.)

DANNY

I doubt she'd even understand the implications. Not exactly something to write a book about, huh? "Landmark *Jupiter Dancing* album songwriter a fraud!"

JANELLE

I don't know what to say. It's still sinking in.

DANNY

Here's your six words: "Excited biographer. Truths revealed. Dead project." Sorry.

JANELLE

Sorry? For me? Well, it's not really me that's...I mean, I feel bad for you.

DANNY

I've had over thirty years to get used to the idea.

JANELLE

Thirty years for the guilt to build and fester. Jesus, no wonder you don't want any press. Is six words really all I'm going to get?

(They sit at the table.)

DANNY

Like I said, I found Eddie's journals, kept them for myself. I always looked up to him. I read and reread them over the years. When I started getting into music I thought it'd be a cool tribute to him to use them for song lyrics. I started playing them for people and they just loved them. Called them poetic and moving and poignant. At first I didn't mention Eddie because I was just playing in coffee shops and stuff. Frankly I just didn't want to go into the whole "these are the lyrics of my dead brother" thing. People were just passing through, I didn't see the point of mentioning it so I just said thank you. I always intended to mention Eddie, but after a while it just grew and I guess to be honest I liked the attention. People liked the music, but it was really the lyrics they most commented on. I kept telling myself "next time I'm going to mention Eddie and start giving him credit," but it never happened. People thought I was this creative genius. It felt good. Well, I guess you know. But you're a genius for real.

JANELLE

Oh my, no. I write articles on musicians and albums. Not even close to doing what you do.

DANNY

What Eddie did you mean.

JANELLE

You said you wrote the other albums though, right?

DANNY

Yeah. Hence their lackluster reception by the music world.

JANELLE

I think you're exaggerating.

(It hits her.)

JANELLE

Ooooh! So...Noah? That was Eddie's poem.

DANNY

I have absolutely no fucking idea who Noah was.

(Janelle bursts into laughter. He eventually joins in.)

JANELLE

Yeah, maybe a tell-all book is not the best idea.

(They revel in their laughter, only slowly does it subside.)

JANELLE

No wonder you kept your answers vague. Seriously though, *Battersea Sunday* and *Moonhigh* got plenty of good reviews. I hear songs from them on the radio all the time.

DANNY

Eh. It just proved to me that I was riding on Eddie's talent. When I tried to do it on my own it wasn't as good.

JANELLE

But Danny, not every album by every band is a home run! Some do better than others.

DANNY

Right. I did one on my own, it didn't do as well. So I tried again and got the same results. It's ME. I didn't have what it took. Sorry to disillusion you even more. Not only am I not the charming guy you hoped for, but I'm not even the author of the lyrics you so love. Yup, it's true! You should never meet your idols!

JANELLE

But you still wrote those other two wonderful albums.

DANNY

Oh come on, Janelle! Stop it! They sucked! It's *Jupiter Dancing* you liked so much. Now all of a sudden you're going to tell me how great the other two are?! Why are you trying to convince me how great they are?! It was decades ago, I'm over it!

JANELLE

Yeah, clearly. It sounds really convincing that you're not upset when you're yelling it. Holy shit. You have any more of that alcohol left? I think I need some.

DANNY

You're going to sit there and tell me that *Battersea Sunday* and *Moonhigh* are as well-written as *Jupiter Dancing*? You - the writer with the genius grant - are going to tell me that?

JANELLE

Jesus, I've had to have this argument before, but I never thought I'd have to have it with YOU!

(She realizes too late what she let slip.)

DANNY

What? You've had to defend my albums before?

JANELLE

Music fans have debated them --

DANNY

See! They suck! Why are you defending them?! Because your idol made the album so you slavishly stick up for them, regardless of merit? Blindly worship whatever he does?

JANELLE

God, you sure don't respect your fans! Your self-esteem is in the toilet so you feel the need to shoot yourself down, but why do you have to take me with you?! Fuck you!

(She gets up, paces around. He puts the scrapbooks back in the boxes. He takes his time, he is calm now.)

DANNY

Do you understand what you're asking me to do? Whether it's a book or just an interview. You're asking me to delve into the most painful and shameful thing I've done. Something I've tried to escape from my whole adult life. I wanted to make a name for myself in music. Poured my heart and soul into my music. Tried to write my own lyrics, and carry on my career on my own. And I failed. And every single time some fan came up to me to gush about *Jupiter Dancing* it made me feel like even more of a fraud.

JANELLE

Shit. How can you stand me?

DANNY

Actually it's a little bit of a relief now. For 35 years not a single soul has known other than me.

JANELLE

I'm kind of honored.

DANNY

Well, don't be. It's horrible. I've just burdened you with a shitty secret. That's not an honor. I only told you because you wouldn't let up. So now you know. You can stop worshipping me now.

JANELLE

I don't worship you.

DANNY

Call it what you want. But you can stop now. Not only is it unhealthy for you to romantically fixate on some father figure, but the guy you really should be a fan of is dead. You can't go hunt him down. You can't back him into a corner, dump your writings all over him and then show up begging for attention and expecting him to fawn all over you because you like something he wrote 35 years ago!

JANELLE

Well, excuse me for having idols.

DANNY

No. You don't have idols. You have *victims*.

(She stands, jaw open, stock still. Then she makes a beeline for the table, gathers her things, shoves them in her purse. He sees this, his body language immediately softens, he jumps up, goes to the table.)

DANNY

Janelle, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

(She continues to pack up her stuff.)

DANNY

C'mon, put your stuff down. I'm sorry. Don't go.

(Fishes her keys out of her purse.)

DANNY

Janelle, don't go. The road is flooded anyway, you can't go. Plus you've been drinking.

(He tries to take her purse away, but she won't let him.)

DANNY

Stop. I'm sorry. That was a horrible thing to say.

(She heads for the door. He snatches her keys away.)

DANNY

Janelle, I'm not letting you go! You can't drive out of here anyway! And it's still raining!

(She makes a lunge for her keys, but he's stronger, keeps them from her.)

DANNY

Sit down, you can't go. I have your keys!

(Without her keys she strides to the front door.)

DANNY

Janelle, I said I was sorry! Please.

(She opens the door.)

DANNY

If you leave I'm not going to come looking for you like in some romance novel. You're on your own! I'm serious. If you go, I'm not going to come after you!

JANELLE

I know. I'm the stalker, not you.

(She leaves, shuts the door quietly behind her. He stands there staring at the door, with her keys in his hand. Blackout.)

ACT IISCENE 2

(Later that night. Leigh sits at the kitchen table with Danny. She reads the paper as they are finishing a meal.)

LEIGH

I was talking to my dad and he says that when he was running the stables back about ten years ago he had to get the zoning changed too.

(Danny fiddles with his fork, noisily rapping it on his plate.)

LEIGH

I think because they were over the limit to how many horses they could have. He was telling me what he had to do to...

(Leigh clamps her hand down over his noisy fork.)

DANNY

Sorry.

LEIGH

Honey, her car's still here, she can't be far. She'll be fine.

DANNY

I know.

LEIGH

She probably walked down to the cafe.

DANNY

I know.

LEIGH

It was smart of you to keep her keys if she'd been drinking.

DANNY

I know.

LEIGH

Why didn't she sleep in the guest room? You offered, right?

DANNY

Yeah. She didn't want to stay.

LEIGH

Dan, what did you do?

DANNY

Why do you think I did something?

LEIGH

She was obviously a fan of yours. She ran off at night in the rain without her car. That's not normal.

DANNY

That's Janelle.

LEIGH

Did you hit on her?

DANNY

That's what you think? I hit on her so she literally ran screaming out of the house into the rainy night?

LEIGH

I didn't say screaming, you did. Hell, I don't know. Fans usually don't make the trek up here.

(Leigh munches food from his plate.)

LEIGH

She was attractive, young. Maybe you couldn't resist. Mm, this pasta is so good, did you use gluten-free stuff?

DANNY

Wow, don't get so upset.

(Danny picks up his banjo, begins to play a bluegrass song.)

DANNY

We had a fight, that's why she left.

LEIGH

A fight? An actual fight? Over what?

DANNY

Jello.

LEIGH

Hm?

(He notices that Leigh has started reading the paper again. He turns his full attention to his banjo, plays a full song on it. Leigh doesn't look up from her paper, even as his song ends. He watches her read. Then...)

DANNY
Leigh, do you want cherry jello or lime?

LEIGH
I don't care. Either's fine.

(She finally realizes what he said.)

LEIGH
You made jello?

(He shakes his head.)

DANNY
No.

(Leigh takes her tea over to the couch and sits.)

LEIGH
Did you play your banjo for her?

DANNY
No.

LEIGH
Why on earth not?

DANNY
I'm not sure exactly.

(She sees the box of scrapbooks and the poster. Danny goes to the front window, peeks out. Leigh notices.)

LEIGH
You have her keys. She can't drive anywhere. Don't worry.

DANNY
I'm not worried.

LEIGH
(laughs)
Yeah, right. You're so cute worrying about her, you would've been a good dad.

(Leigh's dad comment stops him in his tracks.)

DANNY
Ew.

LEIGH
Hmm?

DANNY
Uh...nothing. I just got the "ew" factor.

LEIGH
The what?

DANNY
Nothing.

(She notices the box.)

LEIGH
What's this?

(He sees what she's looking at,
rushes over to get rid of it.)

DANNY
Just some old stuff I was showing Janelle.

(He picks up the box, turns to take
it away.)

LEIGH
Oh, for the article? What's the poster of?

(He stops, turns back.)

DANNY
Me.

LEIGH
You? A poster of you?

DANNY
Yeah. From the good old rock and roll days.

LEIGH
Oh, let's see it.

(He hesitates. Then holds the box
out to her so she can grab the
poster. He puts the box down so he
can help her unroll it as she holds
the poster from the top. It is
unfurled. She takes it in.)

LEIGH
Oh. My. God.
(laughs)
The eighties were SO cheesy!

(He lets go, the poster rolls up.
Blackout.)

ACT II

SCENE 3

(Later that same night. Danny comes out from a back bedroom into the dark living room, he's dressed in sweat pants, t-shirt. Messy hair. He's been sleeping, or trying to.

He turns on a lamp. Goes to a desk, rifles through a stack of mail and paperwork. Pulls out a large packet of papers. Takes them to the couch, sits.

Takes one from the top of the stack. Leans back, gets comfy, reads. Lights fade.)

ACT IISCENE 4

(Sunlight through the windows at last. The stack of articles has been gone through, are scattered all around the coffee table.)

Leigh is folding up a newspaper at the kitchen table when there's a knock on the door.

Leigh lets in Janelle, who looks tired and worn out.)

LEIGH

Hi, come on in.

(Leigh holds the door open, but no one else comes in.)

LEIGH

Isn't Dan with you?

JANELLE

Huh? Uh, no.

LEIGH

He drove down to the diner to pick you up. He didn't give you a ride just now?

JANELLE

No. I walked here.

(Leigh laughs.)

LEIGH

Oh dear. Oh well, I guess he'll figure it out and head back. You walked all the way down the hill last night to have dinner alone? In the rain?

(Janelle nods.)

LEIGH

Did you sleep in your car or what?

JANELLE

Earl let me sleep in a booth at the diner.

LEIGH

Ah. Yeah, they're nice. Earl and Elise. They've owned that cafe for like two decades. You could have stayed here in Dan's guest room.

JANELLE

I needed to get out of the house. Wore out my welcome.

LEIGH

Oh, I'm sure that's not true.

JANELLE

Yeah, you're right. He wasn't all that welcoming come to think of it.

LEIGH

You want something to eat?

(Janelle plops down at the kitchen table.)

JANELLE

No, no. It's fine. Kind of lost my appetite.

LEIGH

Yeah, men'll do that to ya. Dan can be a bit...

JANELLE

Assholish?

LEIGH

(laughs)

I was going to say *prickly*.

JANELLE

Hey, how did you know I was at the diner?

LEIGH

Um. Well. I wasn't supposed to say, but he was worried, was looking for you. Kind of cute, actually.

JANELLE

He was?

(She can't hide her smile.)

JANELLE

He went all the way down there looking for me?

LEIGH

No. But he called.

(Janelle's smile lessens.)

JANELLE

Oh.

LEIGH

He was worried. Just wanted to make sure you were alright.

JANELLE

He called the cafe? How'd he know I was here?

LEIGH

He didn't. That's why he called. Not many places around here, guess he figured you were there or over at the gas station. Which is closed at that time of night.

JANELLE

Right.

(Awkward silence. Leigh continues to straighten up in the kitchen.)

JANELLE

So Leigh...do you live here? I mean I know you said you own the property next door, but...

LEIGH

It seems like I'm always here, right?

(laughs)

No, I don't live here. It just seems like the easiest way to see Dan, popping over all the time. Otherwise lord knows when I'd see him.

JANELLE

Oh.

LEIGH

So how'd the interview go last night?

JANELLE

He's not the most forthcoming of subjects.

LEIGH

Yeah, that sounds like Dan all right! Don't worry, hon, it's not you, he's always like that. Quiet I mean. Or maybe reserved is the right word. But I'm sure you can get a great interview from him.

JANELLE

You're sure about that, huh?

LEIGH

Yeah! Well, you must be pretty good. He said you got some MacArthur grant or something. Said it's a huge accomplishment.

JANELLE

He did?

LEIGH

He sounded, oh, I don't know if "proud" is the right word, but he sounded...yeah, proud of your MacArthur thing. Said only 28 people got one this year.

JANELLE

Huh. I'll say one thing for him, he does actually listen.

LEIGH

He seemed impressed with you. He called the diner looking for you. That's a lot. For Dan I mean. He doesn't suffer fools gladly.

JANELLE

Doesn't seem like Danny does *anything* gladly.

(Leigh laughs.)

LEIGH

I'm sure he'll do a great interview for you when he comes back.

JANELLE

No. I won't be doing any interview. It was a dumb idea. Tomorrow morning I'll be going home. Just came back to get my car.

LEIGH

Why didn't you just call Dan to come get you this morning? That's a hell of a long walk uphill.

JANELLE

Earl gave me a lift.

LEIGH

That was nice of him. But Dan would have gladly come to get you. You should have called him.

(Janelle considers this.)

JANELLE

Wow. I don't have his phone number.

LEIGH

Oh. Well, doesn't matter now.

JANELLE

(a revelation)

I don't have his phone number.

LEIGH

He'll be back soon I'm sure.

(Janelle just stares at her.)

LEIGH

You sure you don't want some tea or something to warm you up?

JANELLE

(Cold, hard fact to face)

I don't have his phone number. Or his email.

LEIGH

Yeah, you keep saying that.

JANELLE

You know how I found Danny?

LEIGH

What do you mean?

JANELLE

He's famous, his address isn't listed.

(Leigh sits.)

JANELLE

I reread every article and interview since he moved up here, which was about 18 years ago. It took me a few days. I read them all, looked at the photos. I knew he lived in Stevens Pass, he mentioned that when he first moved up here. I knew it was a house up in the mountains, but all the houses up here are in the mountains. I read an article where he mentioned that he lived within hiking distance of a monument that mentioned some guy named Charles Lester. He said he'd hike up there sometimes. I figured "hiking distance" meant within a few miles of his house. So I Googled this area and read all about the hiking trails. Went on all of the National Park sites. Looked at photos. Looked at blogs of people I don't even know if they mentioned a Charles Lester monument. I finally found it. It's up over the ridge that runs through his land.

(Leigh nods.)

LEIGH

Yes. I ride up there sometimes. Beautiful view.

(Janelle ignores Leigh irrelevant comments.)

JANELLE

Danny did an interview about ten years ago. There was a photo of him outside on his land. He was standing in front of his house, but I couldn't see the house, the camera was pointed in the opposite direction. I could see that even though most of his land is natural and wild right in front of the house was a little manicured lawn with a brick border. It was shaped into a perfect semicircle. Beyond that it was rugged and natural, but up near the house it was a perfectly formed half circle of grass.

(Leigh listens patiently. Janelle gets up, wanders around.)

JANELLE

So I went to Google maps and found where the monument was. I knew that perfect semicircle of grass would be a dead giveaway on the aerial views. All I had to do was scan every square foot of land within a mile or so of the monument until I found that perfectly round lawn.

LEIGH

Good lord!

(Janelle puts her finger up, a "wait, I'm not done" gesture.)

JANELLE

Then to be absolutely sure I had the right house and address I went onto Zillow.com.

(Leigh looks confused.)

JANELLE

It's a real estate website. I looked up that address, and they don't tell you who owns the property, but they tell you some details. They tell you when it was last purchased, and that year was correct. They said it was 62 acres, and I knew Danny had mentioned in an interview that he'd bought 60-plus acres. Bingo. I knew I found the right house.

LEIGH

How long did that take?

JANELLE

Several days of obsessive scouring. Obsessive searching.

LEIGH

Wow. Well, you're sure dedicated, I'll say that.

JANELLE

Obsessive. I'd sit there for hours at a time. *Looking.* *Searching.* *Stalking.*

(Janelle looks around.)

JANELLE

You said you met down there at the cafe and started chatting one day? And he reached over and gave you his phone number.

LEIGH

Right.

JANELLE

Sure. Why wouldn't he?

(Leigh just listens.)

JANELLE

I don't have his phone number. Or his email. I only have his address because he hasn't changed his lawn in years. I've been corresponding with him for months. Months. Sending him things, planning my trip, telling him when I was coming. Wouldn't you think he would have given me a way to contact him? In case I changed my itinerary, or if I got lost, or if I needed directions?

LEIGH

All that correspondence and he never gave you his number?

(It hits Janelle.)

JANELLE

It wasn't a correspondence. Correspondence is back and forth. This was just forth. And forth. And forth. No reply. Just me pelting him with mail.

(Janelle sits.)

JANELLE

Of course I don't have a his phone number. Would you give a crazy stalker your phone number?

LEIGH

I'm sure he doesn't think you're a stalker.

JANELLE

Well, he should.

(Leigh doesn't know what to say.
Danny's return saves her from the
awkward conversation.)

DANNY

Oh, good, you're here.

JANELLE

I just came for my keys.

(She goes to him, holds her hand
out for them.)

DANNY

Uh...I went down to the cafe to get you. Earl said he gave you a lift. Sit down.

(She shakes her head. She's very
cool.)

JANELLE

That's okay.

(The tension is obvious. Leigh gets up.)

LEIGH

I've got my truck loaded up with your manure. I'll go pull it around to the side.

(Leigh leaves without Danny or Janelle giving it much notice.)

DANNY

You walked up the hill?

JANELLE

No. Earl gave me a ride.

DANNY

Earl?

JANELLE

He owns the cafe.

DANNY

Oh right. Nice guy.

JANELLE

I slept in a booth.

DANNY

Janelle, please sit down.

JANELLE

I just want to get an early start.

DANNY

Well, you're not going anywhere without your keys. And I'm not giving you your keys until I get a chance to apologize.

(He sits on the couch, pats the seat next to him. She doesn't move.)

DANNY

Okay, I can apologize standing up.

(He stands, joins her.)

DANNY

I'm so, so sorry for what I said. I was just frustrated. I'm so sorry.

JANELLE

(cold)

I accept your apology, thank you.

DANNY

Okay, you accepted my apology, but you still seem mad.

JANELLE

I'm not mad. I never was.

DANNY

You walked out!

JANELLE

Not because I was mad.

DANNY

You *seemed* mad.

JANELLE

That's because you don't know me. I wasn't mad. I don't know you, you don't know me. You don't want to do the book. I got my answer. The water has receded, the roads are passable. Please, give me my keys.

DANNY

If this isn't mad then what is it?

(She thinks a moment.)

JANELLE

Acceptance.

DANNY

Of...?

JANELLE

Of who I am. The type of person I am. I am an obsessive fan who has crossed the line.

DANNY

Aren't you overreacting?

JANELLE

Overreacting? I'm standing here calmly, politely asking for my keys so I can leave you alone with your horse manure. This is the most reasonable and levelheaded I've been since we met.

DANNY

Yes. And it's freaking me out. I think I prefer you the other way.

JANELLE

The other way? Stalkerish?

DANNY

Passionate.

JANELLE

You were right. I don't know you. I fell in love with some idealized version of you I had in my head. And you're not that person. I shouldn't be with someone who doesn't respect me or thinks he can wrap me around his finger. That doesn't make me attractive. You know how I said I got the grant so it was no big deal to quit my job and take this trip up here?

DANNY

Yeah. You GOT the grant, I saw the website.

JANELLE

Yeah, I did. I really did. But. I didn't know about the grant until after I quit my job and planned my big trip up here to see you.

DANNY

Hm.

JANELLE

Yeah, hm. That's why my dad flipped out. Couldn't believe I was quitting a perfectly good job because I wanted to go meet you. Obsessive. Not right. Keys, please.

(She holds her hands out again.)

JANELLE

I'm tired. I barely slept all night.

DANNY

Me too. I read all your writings.

(He points to the coffee table strewn with her writings.)

JANELLE

That took you all night? C'mon, I didn't send THAT much.

DANNY

No. Only took a couple hours. And it was all great. I loved everything. Some of them I even read twice. I'm really impressed with your writing style.

JANELLE

If you'd bothered to read it when I sent it you would have already known that when I first walked in. Perhaps we could have started off on more equal footing.

(He nods.)

DANNY

Yeah, probably. I loved your piece on how *Tommy* reflects the origins of Christ and Christianity.

JANELLE

Not exactly Pulitzer Prize-winning topics, I know.

DANNY

Hey, you're talking to someone who sang songs for a living. And then I couldn't sleep because I was thinking about everything you wrote. Everything you said. And mostly I just felt horrible.

(He reaches out to touch her,
somehow, to make intimate contact.)

JANELLE

Now I'm supposed to praise you for taking the time to read my stuff? You've had it over a month. You just read it because you felt guilty.

DANNY

Wow. You got tough since last night.

JANELLE

Danny, I'm tired.

DANNY

Yet you won't sit down. That doesn't make sense.

(She sits down.)

DANNY

I'm so sorry.

JANELLE

I already accepted your apology. I do. But you're right.

DANNY

No, no I'm not. I'm a jaded ass. Anyone else would be flattered by your attention.

JANELLE

But I just made you feel more guilty.

DANNY

Yeah.

(He sits next to her.)

DANNY

Honestly, I really did intend to tell people that Eddie wrote the lyrics. I was excited to do it, I thought it would give

(MORE)

DANNY (Cont'd.)

him the attention he deserved. But the longer I waited to tell people the more awkward it got. Then it built to a point where I just couldn't do it. The window of opportunity closed. To say anything after that would have been...

JANELLE

Detrimental.

DANNY

Yeah. Damn it! I can't believe I let it get to this point! I'm a fucking idiot! You know, if I had said something earlier, even after the album was released I think it would have been fine. I would have gotten some weird press, but I think mostly people would have thought it was a nice gesture.

JANELLE

It was.

DANNY

Yeah, IF I had actually mentioned it. I've played this over in my head so many times. What I should have said, how long I could have waited and still gotten away with it. My parents, Eddie's parents, don't even know that their dead son has a huge famous album he's written! Don't you think they should have known?! Now it's too late.

(She puts her arm around him to soothe him.)

DANNY

They would have thought it was such an amazing tribute to Eddie. And I hogged it all to myself. I wanted to take all the credit for myself.

JANELLE

No, that's not true. You said at first you didn't say anything because you were just playing to strangers in coffee shops.

DANNY

Yeah, but as soon as I got the album deal and we started recording I should have said something. I could have, easily. No one would have cared. It probably would have been good press!

(She nods.)

JANELLE

Yeah, it would've been. The press would've eaten it up, in a good way.

DANNY

Exactly! It was the perfect time to say "by the way, these lyrics were actually written by Eddie Ballantyne, my genius
(MORE)

DANNY (Cont'd.)

brother who died tragically young, and this album is dedicated to him." Perfect time! But I didn't do it.

(beat)

But you know, I did what I did, Eddie was already gone anyway, so no harm really done, right?

JANELLE

Right. Even if you didn't tell anyone, it was still a tribute to Eddie. I'm sure he would have been pleased.

DANNY

And if it all had ended there I probably would have been able to live with it. I made a lot of money. People loved the album. I got to play to adoring masses. Audiences didn't really care who wrote it, they just wanted to hear the songs played. They wanted to hear them and I wanted to play them. But no. I had to have more.

JANELLE

That's normal, Danny. You don't have a huge hit album and then just go become a math teacher or a dentist.

DANNY

Thing is, I ran out of Eddie's talent. Record labels were clamoring for a second album. Everyone wanted a follow-up to the great *Jupiter Dancing* album. And you know, I think I really did think that I could do it. I thought I could write the second album.

JANELLE

You DID write the second album.

DANNY

I did. That's true. And the third. This is stupid but I thought the failure of the two albums I wrote on my own was some sort of punishment. A very fitting one.

JANELLE

You're the analytical one. You really believe that?

DANNY

I don't know. Karma and all that?

JANELLE

Hippie.

(harsh)

So you quit.

DANNY

Quit? I didn't exactly --

JANELLE

Yes, you did. You quit. You gave up. And I don't understand that.

DANNY

Where's the Janelle who thinks I can do no wrong?

JANELLE

Screw that, you don't want her anyway. She's not right for you. This is the Janelle who is going to ride your ass.

DANNY

Not sure I'm liking this Janelle.

(She stands up, paces a bit.)

JANELLE

(truly mad)

Tough. You told me yesterday "I didn't become a musician for the chicks, I did it to express myself." So what's the problem now? If you want to express yourself, then do it! Who cares if the critics don't like them as much as *Jupiter Dancing*? Who even cares if it gets recorded? You said you'd be happy just playing to a room with five people in it if they "got" your music. So go down to the cafe! Try out some new songs!

(beat)

Your membership wasn't revoked. You bailed out and ran away. You're hiding up on your mountain. It's probably no coincidence you chose a place where the roads are impassable when it rains, which up here is MOST OF THE TIME! At least I'm trying to do something. I knew you probably wouldn't agree to this book. I gave you my email, my phone number, you would have responded if you had been interested. I know that. But I thought I should at least try, at least ask. Come up here and make the effort, plead my case in person. And you're right -- I didn't even need your permission, I can just use public domain information and write a book anyway. I just thought you'd want to help me get the details straight, illuminate things that fans have wondered about for years. But what do you care? The fans aren't your next door neighbors so you probably won't ever have to deal with them. You don't want to come down off your mountain and rejoin life. It's no surprise your girlfriend lives next door. Did you only consider women who live on your road? Did you leave your land to date Leigh or did you just go to your property line and woo her over the fence?!

DANNY

You're just jealous of her.

JANELLE

Yeah! No shit! I already admitted that I'm in love with you!

(An impasse. She fumes, he stews.)

JANELLE

At least I admit when I'm jealous.

DANNY

What's that mean?

JANELLE

All those essays and articles I wrote that you finally read and liked so much? *I actually wrote them.* By the way, THIS...

(She points to herself up and down.)

JANELLE

...is what MAD looks like!

(He soaks in her anger. Both are quiet for a moment. He gets up again, goes to a desk drawer, retrieves her keys. Slowly walks over, gives them to her. She picks her purse up, walks to the door.)

DANNY

Before you go, can I ask you one question?

(She stops, turns to face him.)

DANNY

Do you ever listen to my albums like you listen to *Quadrophenia*?

(This melts her. She puts her purse down, goes to him. Puts her hands on his face. Nearly kisses him, but doesn't quite.)

JANELLE

Do you know what my all-time favorite song is?

(He thinks, shakes his head no.)

JANELLE

Other People Die. "Concluding in the here and now that truth is ever shy, believing in tomorrow when other people die. Launder, scrub and shine now, be wary of perfection, that other people die you know, for you to chase perfection. The headlines back you up on this, their relatives are crying, but feeling's not the art of angels weary with the trying. The dawns ignite complacency, unrealized dreams we fly to. Let's hope it's not a lack of life we find too late we die through."

DANNY

(surprised)

That's from *Moonhigh*. I wrote that one. I really did write that one.

JANELLE

I know. I've been trying to tell you you're talented since I got here. But it isn't sinking in. Maybe I actually do know what I'm talking about.

DANNY

Wait here.

(Danny goes to the spare room, returns with a bunch of papers in one hand and his banjo in the other.)

JANELLE

What. Is. That?

DANNY

And you call yourself a music lover. Sit.

(She does.)

DANNY

Okay. You wanna know what I really would love to do?

JANELLE

Uh...YES!

DANNY

I didn't mention it before, but I've really gotten into bluegrass the past several years.

JANELLE

Wow. Where did this come from?

DANNY

I've always loved it.

(He sits on the arm of the couch, puts his feet on the seat.)

DANNY

A few years ago at one of Leigh's rodeos they had a bluegrass band play, and they were phenomenal. They were local, so I got a banjo, and I've been taking lessons for a few years from the guy in the band. I love it.

JANELLE

Play.

DANNY

Okay, but it's not like it's rock and --

JANELLE

Play. Have I not shown that I am an appreciative audience?

(He holds up one of his picks to show her.)

JANELLE

Ah, the stolen pick. Play.

(He does. He's amazing. He plays his heart out. She drinks in every note. He plays a full song and Janelle is indeed a most appreciative audience. When he finishes the song, she applauds, and beams.)

JANELLE

Wonderful! Danny, that was great! Hey, wait. You said you hadn't played in years.

DANNY

I said I hadn't touched a *guitar* in years.

DANNY AND JANELLE

A technicality!

JANELLE

You looked so happy when you were playing!

(He can only beam a smile and nod.)

JANELLE

Oh Danny, you could get a band together, or do session work. Or do something solo. Do banjo players do solo work? I'm not that familiar with bluegrass. You could do a whole album! Danny, this is great! Did you write that?

DANNY

I did.

(He shows her the stack of papers he has.)

DANNY

And those.

JANELLE

These are all songs you've written?

DANNY

Yeah. Been hiding them for a year or so.

(She flips through them, about nine or ten.)

JANELLE

Some have lyrics.

(He shrugs.)

DANNY

I'm a glutton for punishment I guess.

JANELLE

No, you're an artist. You can't help but create. You ass! You let me scream at you that you've given up on music and then you casually hand me an album's worth of new songs? Why the hell have you been hiding this talent?

DANNY

It's not very rock and roll, is it?

JANELLE

Are you kidding? Jesus man, you've got to get with the times! Tons of rock bands these days have a bluegrass influence. Dave Matthews Band, Mumford and Sons. They had a huge hit recently and it had banjo playing in it.

DANNY

You're joking.

JANELLE

No. The Who did "Squeeze Box"! That was a huge hit!

DANNY

That was about an accordion.

JANELLE

Yes, I'm the Who freak, I know it was about an accordion, but Pete Townshend played the banjo in that song. He did a banjo solo!

(He thinks about it.)

DANNY

Oh my God, you're right. He did. I forgot about that.

JANELLE

Pete Townshend was a huge bluegrass fan growing up in London. He played the freaking banjo before he ever picked up a guitar! Damn man, you are in great company here!

(He's looking pretty chipper now.)

JANELLE

Besides, doesn't matter if it's rock and roll or not. You love this. So go do it!

DANNY

That club I was telling you about, the one I go to in Seattle, it's a bluegrass joint.

JANELLE

Well, there you go. You gotta do this, Danny. You could have a whole new career.

DANNY

I guess I could go down there and see if I could sit in with one of the bands.

(Janelle beams.)

LEIGH (O.S.)

Dan? You ready?

(Leigh enters through the screen door. Sees the banjo.)

LEIGH

Oh lord, he's been inflicting that banjo on you, too? Honey, take it easy on her. I've got that manure for you, you wanna help me unload it?

DANNY

(unenthused)

I can't think of anything else I'd rather do right now.

LEIGH

You want some on your grass too?

DANNY

Nah. Lawn's looking pretty good.

JANELLE

And circular.

DANNY

Circular?

LEIGH

Okay, let's go unload this then. It's been sitting in the rain all night.

DANNY

Let me get dressed.

JANELLE

Mm, wet horse manure, that's gotta smell good.

LEIGH

It's a lot heavier too because it's been soaking up the rain.
So I brought the really strong shovels.

DANNY

It just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it?

(Danny exits to his room.)

LEIGH

So you heading home? Did you get what you needed from Dan?

JANELLE

Heading home, yes.

LEIGH

And the article?

(Janelle pulls a paper from her
satchel.)

JANELLE

Actually I have it here. I'll leave it for Danny.

(She puts it on the kitchen table,
face down.)

LEIGH

You wrote it already? Wow. You were sure busy last night.
I see he unleashed his banjo on you.

(Janelle beams.)

JANELLE

Yeah, he's wonderful! I had no idea! I have so many ideas
for him! There are bluegrass clubs he could play. He could
pair up with another band and do a tour. An album. I bet we
could film a live show. And now with YouTube and the digital
media it's a whole new world for him. So many more
opportunities!

LEIGH

He hasn't played in years. It's not like he's gonna march
into the record company and demand a new contract and start
touring. Let's be reasonable. I know the guy who does the
booking for the rodeo up here, I could probably get him a
slot in next year's lineup.

JANELLE

Uh huh. That's great.

LEIGH

But you know Dan, he probably doesn't even want to play in
public anymore.

JANELLE

Mmm. Maybe I do know Dan.

LEIGH

Besides, I like him close to home. Right here next to me. This is off the record, but I'm going to make Dan an offer.

JANELLE

An offer? Offer of what?

LEIGH

You know. Unifying things.

JANELLE

Oh. Oh! I see. Wow.

LEIGH

Yeah, I think it's time. I'm excited.

JANELLE

(trying to be sincere)

That's great, Leigh. Congratulations. Good luck to you both. On your...unification.

LEIGH

So what's next for you?

JANELLE

I've got some grant money, so I have the luxury to do what I want. Take my time and see what I really want to spend my time on. I have a pretty successful blog on another music site, I might expand on that. Write about some bands that deserve some recognition, help 'em get exposure.

LEIGH

You'd be a good manager. Find some new, young band and help shape their career.

JANELLE

I would make a good manager!

LEIGH

Yeah, so passionate about music. And you seem to know how to promote someone. You've got manager written all over you.

(Danny comes back into the room,
tucking in his shirt, hears the
tail end.)

DANNY

What's written all over her?

LEIGH

Manager. Wouldn't she make a good manager for some rock star?

(He looks like he's been hit with a bolt of lightning.)

DANNY

Jesus. Yeah. An excellent manager.

JANELLE

Yeah. Maybe. Or maybe I'll go track down Pete Townshend.

DANNY

Now there's a great rock star.

(beat)

Hmm. Everyone else refers to me as a rock star. Or "aging rocker" or "ex-rock star." "Eighties rock star." But you haven't used the words "rock star" once referring to me.

JANELLE

I haven't?

DANNY

No. You've said "musician" or "singer." Or "lyricist." Never "rock star."

JANELLE

Oh. Is that bad?

(Thoughtful pause from Danny.)

DANNY

Actually, no.

(Janelle smiles. He returns a warm smile.)

JANELLE

I'm going to head out then. It was nice to meet you, Leigh. Raleigh.

DANNY

Wait. Can't you stay a bit longer? We've got things to discuss.

JANELLE

We do?

DANNY

Yeah. Plans. My bluegrass plans. You got me all excited and now you're going to leave?

JANELLE

Don't worry, Leigh's got plans for you. Hers sound much more reasonable. And remember, those *Jupiter Dancing* songs are a personal memorial to Eddie. There's nothing wrong with leaving it that way.

(He nods, sincerely. She goes to him,
gives him a long hug.)

JANELLE

When your new album comes out I will definitely listen to it
like I listen to *Quadrophenia*.

(Janelle kisses him on the cheek,
goes to the door and leaves. Danny
stands there staring at the door.)

LEIGH

What album?

(Lights fade.)

ACT IISCENE 5

(Later that day, Danny and Leigh sit in the Danny's kitchen, the last of their lunches before them. Danny is more animated than usual.)

DANNY

So I figure I can go to that club in Seattle and find some guys to record some demos with. See how they sound. Tweak them a bit. Get the guys' input.

(Leigh nods as she munches the last of her lunch.)

LEIGH

Wow, what got you so excited about this all of a sudden? That writer?

DANNY

Maybe. Everything is digital these days. It's a totally different game to promote an album or a band. Websites, YouTube videos, iTunes. Janelle would have known how to do all that.

LEIGH

Or maybe start a little lower down.

DANNY

What do you mean?

LEIGH

It's been a while since you've played, right? Sweetie, I'm not sure Janelle's article is going to be quite enough to reinvigorate your career.

DANNY

Of course not. I'm not counting on that. I used to do this for a living, you know.

LEIGH

I know the guy who organizes the booths and the entertainment for the annual rodeo. I bet I could convince him to let you have a slot in next year's lineup. Wouldn't a nice little show like that be good?

DANNY

Uh huh. Yeah. One half-hour show. At the Stevens Pass Rodeo. A year from now. That sounds good. Thanks for your belief in me.

LEIGH

Oh, honey, you know I want you to be happy. Do what you want. I just thought it'd be fun to do something together like that. I could show my horses and you could do your music thing.

DANNY

Yeah, but you "do" your horse thing every day. I get one day to do my thing?

LEIGH

You play that thing every single day!

DANNY

Yeah, in my living room! With one person listening. Or not.

LEIGH

Oh, that reminds me. Janelle left her story for you. I put it on your desk.

DANNY

Already?

(Leigh shrugs.)

DANNY

Did you read it? What'd it say?

LEIGH

I didn't read it. It wasn't for me, didn't want to snoop. You know how I want to enlarge the stables and expand the business?

DANNY

Yes, you've mentioned it.

LEIGH

I think, I was wondering if this might be a good time to combine our efforts?

DANNY

What do you mean?

LEIGH

If we get this new zoning I'll be free to expand the business, and maybe it's a good time to make it a joint venture.

DANNY

You want me to invest in your business?

LEIGH

Well, I wasn't exactly thinking of it in strict business terms. But I thought it might be fun to be co-owners. You seem kind of, I don't know, bored lately. Restless. Maybe this would give you something to do.

DANNY

What would I do? Feed the horses and clean out their stalls?

LEIGH

Don't be silly. You could do whatever you wanted. Be involved however you want. A lot or a little. You could lead riders on guided tours. I could teach you to train horses. Or you could focus on the business side of things. Whatever interests you.

DANNY

This is really important to you, this horse business.

(She smiles and nods.)

DANNY

If it's important to you, it should be important to me.

(She smiles even more.)

DANNY

But it isn't.

(Her smile evaporates.)

DANNY

I'm sorry, but it just isn't. I think we need to talk.

(Lights fade.)

ACT IISCENE 6

(Late that night. The living room is dark except for one lamp which gives a nice mellow ambiance to the room.)

Danny sits cross-legged on the couch playing his banjo. He plays an entire song. When he finishes he just sits quietly for a moment.)

DANNY

Oh yeah!

(He jumps up, goes to the desk, retrieves Janelle's paper.)

DANNY

(reading)

"Journalist delves. Secrets uncovered. Unwavering respect."

(He lets that sink in for a moment. Then he pulls out a portable CD player with headphones from a drawer. He goes to a bookcase full of CDs, looks through them.)

DANNY

(sing-songy)

Quadrophenia, where are you?

DANNY

(He finds the CD, comes to the couch, sits down. Loads the CD, puts the headphones on, pushes play. After a few seconds he removes the headphone from his right ear. Listens with just the left. Listens intently. Lights fade.)

ACT II

SCENE 7

(On the apron of the stage is Janelle's front door. Four days later.

Janelle drags her luggage, satchels and purse toward her door. She is really laden down, takes her forever to drag herself to the doorstep.

Though already ridiculously overburdened with luggage she manages to open her mailbox and pull out over a week's worth of mail. With no other options, she puts her mail in her mouth as she attempts to open her front door.

Danny appears behind her.)

DANNY

Why don't you just make two trips to unload the car?

(She whips around, startled, wide-eyed. He chuckles, takes the mail from her mouth.)

DANNY

That would have been too reasonable.

(He tucks her mail into one of her bags.)

JANELLE

You followed me down here? You drove here?

DANNY

No, I flew actually. Been in a hotel near the airport since yesterday morning.

JANELLE

You what?

DANNY

Thought I gave you enough of a head start. Four days. You take the scenic route? I've been taking in the sites of Albuquerque. All three of them.

JANELLE

What the hell are you doing here?

DANNY

Showing up on your doorstep.

JANELLE

Why?

DANNY

So I could talk to you.

JANELLE

Why didn't you just call me?

DANNY

I thought this would appeal to your sense of drama.

(She laughs.)

JANELLE

It does! But this is just too surreal. I just drove four days to get away from you, I get to my front door and you're standing behind me.

DANNY

The modern miracle of air travel.

JANELLE

You came all the way to Albuquerque to see me?

DANNY

Yes.

(She drops every single piece of luggage.)

JANELLE

To talk to me?

DANNY

Yes.

JANELLE

Wow. At least you didn't accidentally drive to Arizona instead. This is kinda cool!

DANNY

You don't even know what I'm going to say.

JANELLE

Doesn't matter. You came down here to see me. I assume you wouldn't come all the way down here to tell me something horrible.

(He shakes his head.)

DANNY

I came down here instead of calling because I thought we could get started right away.

JANELLE

Get started? On what, you mean your new album? You want to start planning out how you're going to --

DANNY

No, no. I thought our goodbye up at my house was cut a bit short. We were talking about "us". You and me, it's...

JANELLE

Not reasonable. I know.

DANNY

Right.

JANELLE

Yep. Hey look, Leigh is nice. I make fun of her, but as you said, that's just because I'm jealous of her. She's actually very nice.

DANNY

Yes. She is. Nice.

(Long pause.)

JANELLE

Well, thanks for coming all the way down here so we could prolong our awkward goodbye.

DANNY

See, that's the thing. I don't think I want to say goodbye to you.

JANELLE

What *do* you want to say to me?

DANNY

What I have with Leigh is nice. Had with Leigh. Comfortable. But I don't think that's enough anymore. I've come to appreciate the weird little dynamic you and I have.

(He touches her face gently.)

JANELLE

Holy shit.

DANNY

Ah, just the romantic response I was hoping for.

JANELLE

You were hoping for a romantic response?! From me?!

DANNY

Yes.

JANELLE

Holy shit.

DANNY

Okay, I see we're going to skip that part.

JANELLE

What about Leigh?

(He shrugs.)

DANNY

Deep down she knew we were no great love affair. She guessed it was because of you. Accused me of needing someone who will fawn over me. But then she accepted it pretty passively. I said that pretty much proved my point I guess. No great passion lost there. I guess I do want someone passionate. Someone who would drive 1400 miles to see me.

JANELLE

Hi, I'm Janelle, your stalker. But you came 1400 miles to see me, too. Okay, you flew, but still.

DANNY

Mm hm.

(He steps closer to her. Touches her face, runs his hands through her hair.)

JANELLE

I...can't...breathe....

DANNY

I'll take that as a good sign. I think I want to try and be unreasonable. With you.

JANELLE

(barely a whisper)

Holy shit.

(He kisses her deeply, passionately. A momentous kiss.)

DANNY

(a bit surprised)

Whoa. I think we may be onto something here.

(She can only nod.)

DANNY

Or we may be completely insane. Or what was your phrase?

JANELLE

Complementarily dysfunctional. But who cares?

(She kisses him again, another
killer kiss.)

DANNY

"Who cares"...was that a Who album?

JANELLE

(barely able to speak)

No. You're thinking of "Who's Next."

DANNY

Right.

(A few more kisses.)

JANELLE

Still not as good as the *Tommy* soundtrack.

DANNY

Oh, you can't possibly mean that!

JANELLE

It has merits I think you are overlooking.

DANNY

Talk about being unreasonable.

(beat)

Shall we go inside?

(He picks up most of her luggage,
she gets the rest. She puts the
key in the door.)

JANELLE

Okay, but wait, let me just run in real quick so I can take
down all of my Danny Ballantyne posters.

DANNY

God, I hope you're kidding.

(She laughs. They go inside. A
lovely bluegrass song plays as the
lights fade.)

ACT IISCENE 8

(Five months later. The same bluegrass song continues to play. The lights come up, it's Danny playing banjo. He strolls around his living room. Janelle is there.)

JANELLE

(on phone)

That's right, I'm Danny Ballantyne's manager. As I'm sure you've heard by now, Danny's got a whole new career gearing up. Mr. Townshend worked with Danny back in the '80s, and we thought he might want to collaborate a bit, maybe play on a song or two. We know Pete loves bluegrass.

(pause)

Well, a long time ago, yes. But the new songs are bluegrass.

(pause)

Oh, I think you might be surprised, sir. Danny's clips on YouTube got over two million hits in eight weeks. Bobby Osborne and Abigail Washburn have already agreed to play on the album.

(pause)

Yes, I spoke to them myself. Pete's in L.A. next week doing a show at The Greek, right?

(Danny stops playing long enough to sneak up behind Janelle. He plants a warm, loving kiss on her neck.)

JANELLE

(on phone)

No, no, that's okay. If you don't want to discuss this with me I'll discuss it directly with Mr. Townshend.

(pause)

Oh really? *Watch me.*

(She hangs up abruptly. Danny laughs.)

DANNY

Oh, Pete, you poor bastard. You don't stand a chance! Run, Pete, run!

(She's already dialling another call. She pivots to face him.)

JANELLE

Hate. You.

DANNY

Love. You.

(He kisses her, then lets her finish her call.)

JANELLE

(on phone)

Hi. Yes, I'd like to book two tickets to Los Angeles please.

(Janelle and Danny exchange a knowing smile. Lights fade. End of play.)