CHAPTER TWO

*The Girl Was Persuasive*

AUGUST 31, 1995

David called Dennis over to discuss the details of his presentation. After probing for more than two hours, Dennis still had no idea who his coworker had in mind to present to the committee for the opening act of the event. After much aggravation, Dennis gave up and decided to give his coworker the benefit of the doubt. Given his past experience, he had faith that David knew what he was doing.

“So, how are you going to pull this off again?” Dennis asked as he sat on David’s chaise lounge next to him.

“First things first - do you know how to get in touch with Jill Clark?”  
“No but I could find out.”  
“Great, get on the phone and do that now.”

David turned on his TV while Dennis made a few phone calls. He hoped to gain more information about Michael’s special appearance at the event and if his plans to start a world tour had been confirmed. David only had two days remaining to complete the final touches of his assignment. With a little help from the Clark’s, David knew he was on the right path to success.

“Ok, I got it.” Dennis said as he hung up his cell phone. He wrote Jill Clark’s contact information on a notepad sitting on the coffee table.

“Great. Now leave.”  
“WHY?”

“I need to do this on my own. I’ll be too nervous with you around.”

“D, I really think you’re taking a big risk. Jill will be pissed as hell if she finds out you used her own daughter to get the right connections for this show.”

“She won’t find out until after it’s done. Besides, no one ever did anything without a little help. Jill never became the youngest head committee member completely on her own either. Once Aurora gets the approval, she’ll run to her mommy saying she got the biggest entertainer to open for her event.”  
“Alright man. Just be careful. We’ve only got two days. I’ll call you later.” Dennis said as he walked out of David’s front door.

David took a deep breath before reaching for his cordless phone. He mentally prepared himself as thoughts of failing his assignment ran constantly through his mind. Dennis walked to his car in David’s driveway leaving the loft with high hopes. Whatever his coworker was planning had to work. Both men didn’t want to lose their jobs and the last thing either of them needed was a notice of termination linked to their names.

The Clark mansion was full of busy women. Aurora had been trying to tell her mother about Michael’s phone call and confirmation about his appearance at the award show for the past two days. Jill’s hectic schedule as well as her daughter’s made it difficult for the two of them to speak to each another. Jill, no matter how busy she was, always made time for her only child. Sunday brunch was a very sacred institution between mother and daughter. Aurora knew discussing the event details with her mother at that time would be best for both of them. To no surprise, Jill had already received word about Michael’s appearance and wondered how her daughter got in touch with the most iconic and highly regarded music celebrity in the world on her own. It appeared she too had a few questions to ask the grey eyed intern during their brunch date.

Jill and Aurora always enjoyed having brunch on their stunning outdoor veranda. Fresh, multi-colored roses were lovingly planted by Barbara surrounding the entire decor accenting the microfiber lined chaise lounges, cloth umbrellas and rod iron picnic and patio tables. As the Upstate New York sun shined upon them, both ladies devoured a delicious assortment of foods such as omelets, croissants, biscuits and fresh fruits prepared from scratch by their kitchen staff. After a long moment of silence, Aurora began the award show discussion with her mother.

“I’m so happy you were able to have brunch with me today, mom.”  
“Of course, dear. You know I’d never skip Sunday brunch with you.”  
“Now that we have time, I wanted to talk to you about Michael’s appearance.”  
“I’m glad you brought that up. How did you manage to speak with him anyway?”

Aurora explained the entire situation to her mother and she laughed. She always knew her daughter had a gift for being pleasant and friendly but never in her wildest dreams did she think Aurora would be capable of swaying the King of Pop into doing something he once turned down.

“I must say I am impressed, my child.” Jill said as she took a few sips from her white china teacup. “Mr. Jackson is not an easy person to persuade.”  
“I’ve heard. But I must say, he is quite a charmer.”  
“He’s also MARRIED, Aurora.”  
“I know that, mom.”

Aurora sighed as she looked down at her empty porcelain plate. Her conversation with Michael from two days ago still lingered in her mind. She wondered if it was just her imagination or did he feel the same connection she did. She smiled and shook her head feeling like she was in high school again and Michael was the popular boy she had a crush on.

“I must go, dear.” Jill said as Barbara came to clear their plates and other dishes. “The board is having another meeting in a few hours and I have a few important calls to make.”  
“Have a good day, mom.” Aurora said as she hugged her mother and watched her walk through the hallway and into her study.

“Will that be all, Miss Clark?” Barbara asked the beautiful ‘Clark junior’.

“Yes, Barbara. Thank you.”

Michael sat in his private study at Neverland trying to figure out a way to fix his crumbling marriage. He loved Lisa Marie dearly but started to doubt if she still felt the same way. Michael had always admired his wife as a child when she and her father would attend his shows in Las Vegas during his reign with the Jackson 5, a group consisting of Michael and his brothers formed and managed by their father, Joseph. He couldn’t fathom how things fell apart between them and could feel his significant other slipping further and further away from him. Often times, Lisa Marie refused to be intimate with her husband and barely acknowledged his presence if he was ever in the same room as her. Michael was starting to feel like Lisa Marie’s roommate and no longer her husband. He realized he finally needed to make up his mind – either work things out with Lisa Marie or take Aurora Clark’s advice and find someone else who, according to her, would make him happy.

“Miss Clark?” Barbara said as she walked towards the brunette beauty still sitting outside on the veranda. “You have a phone call. A Mr. David Sandlin.”

Aurora thanked her employee as she took the cordless handset from her and waited until she left the floral lined patio before answering the call.

“Aurora Clark speaking.”  
“Good afternoon, Miss Clark. My name is David Sandlin. I am the MTV Program Catalogue Designer.”  
“How can I help you, Mr. Sandlin?”  
“I understand that you had a hand in confirming Mr. Jackson’s appearance at this year’s award show to present the Vanguard named in his honor to R.E.M. If you could give me about fifteen minutes of your time, I’d like to discuss an important business proposition with you.”

Aurora raised her brow thinking David may have made a mistake in calling her.

“You have my attention, Mr. Sandlin.”  
“As per my knowledge Miss Clark, you are currently an intern at MTV and your mother is the head committee member of the board.”  
“Yes, that is correct.”  
“Mr. Jackson’s appearance at the event will definitely be a show stopper – one that will attract many viewers from across the globe thus enhancing the overall effect of the show.”

Aurora rolled her eyes. She knew David was trying to impress her but she wasn’t the type of woman to be fazed by fancy words and mindless marketing schemes.

“Mr. Sandlin, I apologize for being forward but I do have a very busy day ahead of me. What exactly is the reason for your call today?”  
“I’d like to confirm and sign Mr. Jackson as our opening act for this year’s MTV Video Music Awards.”

“This concerns me how?”  
“You convinced him to make an appearance – something that your own mother could not do. I believe you also have it in you to convince him the open the entire event.”

Aurora smiled. Her mother always told her she, like her mother, also had the gift of persuasion within her.

“And how do you propose I do that, Mr. Sandlin?”  
“I have created an entire computerized visual presentation of my proposal. I must have Mr. Jackson’s approval within two days or else I will be terminated from this project. I have no doubt in my mind that I can sign him however after many failed attempts of trying to reach one of Mr. Jackson’s representatives, I am coming to you for assistance.”  
“Mr. Sandlin, correct me if I’m wrong but are you asking me to represent you to Mr. Jackson by putting forward your request for him to perform as the opening act at the occasion just so you can sign him and gain the credibility you are desperately looking for by possibly having your name next to one of the greatest entertainers of all time?”

David was shocked. He had no idea that Aurora could be so witty and intelligent with words. No wonder she convinced Michael to make an appearance. She was definitely her mother’s daughter.

“That is correct, Miss Clark.”

“When exactly do you expect this proposition to take place?”  
“I will email you my presentation immediately. I trust that you will be impressed upon receipt and will successfully be able to convince Mr. Jackson to become the focal point of the evening.”

“I applaud your courage to approach a woman who is just an intern to assist you, Mr. Sandlin.”

“Thank you Miss Clark. However, I don’t believe that gender has anything to do with a person’s level of learning, understanding and aptitude. You certainly are living proof of that and have done quite well for yourself.”  
“Thank you for the compliment. Please send your information to my mother’s business email address. I assume you have that seeing as how you work under her board?”  
“That is correct and yes, I do have her email address.”

“Perfect. I will be sure to view your information before the end of the day.”  
“Thank you, Miss Clark.”  
“Have a wonderful day, Mr. Sandlin.”

“Michael, I have some things to take care of.” Lisa Marie said as she came into her husband’s study noticing him going through several different piles of paperwork.

“Where are you going?” He asked as he looked up at his wife dressed like she was going to a party.

“I need to run some personal errands.”  
“Lisa, we really need to talk.” Michael said as he gestured for her to sit in the chair across from his desk.

She scoffed and rolled her eyes as she made her way towards the recliner and sat down.

“Things aren’t going so well between us.”  
“You think?”  
“I feel like we’re not a married couple anymore. We’re just two people obligated to live under the same roof.”  
“What do you want me to do about it?”

“I want you to love me again, Lisa. Love me the way that you used to.”  
“You haven’t exactly been responsive to me either, Michael. You’re always in your own world. You come and go as you please and never tell me anything. You treat me like I’m invisible.”  
“I’m sorry if I ever made you feel that way. I’m not used to having a significant other to report to all the time.”

Lisa scratched her forehead and looked away from her husband. Michael knew she was starting to tune him out.

“I also wanted to talk to you about something else.”   
“What is it now?”

“I’m presenting the Vanguard to R.E.M. at the MTV awards next week. I want you to come with me.”  
“I don’t think so, Michael.”

Michael knew his wife would respond that way. Being the persistent man he was, he refused to accept defeat. Especially from the woman he loved.

“Why not?”  
“The whole world knows we’re having problems. What is showing up at an award show together going to prove?”  
“That we still love and care for each other, Lisa Marie.”

She rolled her eyes again not wanting to discuss the matter any further. Michael leaned over and grabbed her hand placing it in his against the desk.

“I want this to work, Lisa. I don’t need the effects of my trial or our constant miscommunications getting in the way or our relationship. I really want to be with you and I hope you still feel the same way. “

Lisa moved her hand away from her husband and stood up. Thinking she was going to hug or kiss him, Michael smiled and also stood up in front of her. To his surprise, she backed away slightly and took a deep breath before looking him in his eyes. Being the intuitive person he was, Michael kept an open mind about his wife and tried his hardest to stay as optimistic as possible.

“Fine. I’ll go with you to the award show.”  
“Why does it seem like you are just doing me a favor?”  
“BECAUSE I AM.”   
“Why are you being like this with me? What did I do to deserve it?  
“SERIOUSLY, MICHAEL?”

“Yes, tell me!”

“You’ve done nothing. That’s the point.” Lisa said lowering her voice trying to stay calm. “You haven’t done a damn thing. What you DID do was trap me into your web of deceit and used me as your crutch in this bizarre fantasy land you call a life to get past your demons. Once that mission was accomplished, my job was done and so was our marriage.”

Michael couldn’t believe the words coming out of his wife’s mouth. He always loved Lisa Marie wholeheartedly and never intended on ‘trapping’ her into anything.

“I never wanted you to feel trapped. I could easily show you how much you mean to me and how badly I want to fix our relationship if you would just give me a chance.”  
“I’ve given you plenty, Michael.”  
“So have I.”  
“What is that supposed to mean?”  
“You forgot my birthday, Lisa Marie.”

Lisa gasped and covered her mouth. She felt horrible for forgetting the day her husband was born. Earlier that year in February, Michael surprised his wife on her birthday by throwing her a lavish party with several guests including her mother and some of her closest friends. He also serenaded her with her favorite songs by him and bought her several gifts, one of which included a three carat diamond ring from Cartier – her favorite diamond carrier.

“I’m sorry I forgot, Michael. I’ve been occupied with my own things. I’ll go with you to the award show to make up for it but after that…”

Michael held his breath. His curled his hands into fists and closed his eyes fearing that his wife would say the words he didn’t want to hear.

“We need to go our separate ways.”

“What the heck are you doing?” Dennis asked as he barged into David’s loft seeing him resting comfortably with his feet up on his coffee table.

“Kicking back and relaxing, D. I’m a genius you know.”

“Pfft, right. Why aren’t you working on the proposal?”

David explained his phone conversation with Aurora and emailed his presentation for the intern to review. Dennis was completely amazed. He never expected David to pull off such a risky yet brilliant plan to get Michael Jackson as the opening act. His tact was very impressive and Dennis couldn’t have been happier.

“You amaze me.” He said sitting next to the ‘genius’.

“I amaze myself, bro. Trust me. I got this.”

“You better ‘get this’ by tomorrow or else we can kiss our jobs goodbye!”  
“Relax, D. Miss hot bod is reviewing the details of my report as we speak. She’ll probably start reaching for her phone in the next few minutes and call Michael’s reps to confirm all the fine print.”  
“Michael? Michael who?”

David smacked his forehead. He completely forgot that Dennis still didn’t know who his surprise entertainer was.

“You might as well know since he’s already going to be there. I’ve been trying to sign Michael Jackson as this year’s opening act performer.”

Dennis laughed so hard he almost fell to the floor. David, feeling insulted and ridiculed, gave Dennis the evil eye saying if he didn’t stop he would throw him out of his loft.

“YOU? GETTING MICHAEL JACKSON? FOR THE OPENING ACT?” Was all Dennis could say as he continued laughing as if he were watching a stand-up comedy show. “YOU MAKE ME LAUGH!”

“What’s so funny about it?”

“You really think he’s going to do it? Dude, the guy is only making an appearance and he just dropped a new album a few months ago. There are rumors that he’s even planning a world tour. There’s no way in hell he’s going to do something like this, especially with just one week’s notice!”  
“Have you forgotten what I told Jill at the board meeting last week? The man has performed all over the world with less time to breathe let alone rehearse. What better way for us to get the recognition and hype?”  
“You told Aurora Clark this?”  
“And so much more.”

Dennis rolled his eyes and smirked thinking his coworker was completely delusional. How was he going to convince the King of Pop to do something like this in such short notice?

“Dave, you need to consider other options – FAST.”  
“Like I said, I got this.”

Jill left her mansion after brunch with her daughter to attend important business meetings. The Clark women shared their in house office since they both worked for the same company. Aurora sat in her mother’s regal office chair and powered up her desktop wanting to view the presentation emailed by David. As she logged into her mother’s business email account, she downloaded his file and carefully examined all of the details the Program Designer compiled and couldn’t help being dazzled by it. David did a remarkable job. One that definitely stood out to the future board member. Aurora replied to David’s email thanking him for his incredible work and effort and agreed to help him by taking on the task of luring the King of Pop into performing at the grand award show.

Michael fell to his knees against his office floor. His wife’s painfully aching words left him weak and emotionally disfigured. His heart began pulsating rapidly and his eyes instantly filled with tears. As they flowed steadily down his colorless cheeks resembling the waves of unsettled rivers, Lisa Marie stood before him feeling no remorse for her hurtful words. She no longer felt the need to mask her feelings and wanted to be free from the solitary confinement she felt from always being imprisoned within the gates of Neverland. She wanted a normal life. One that did not include her husband.

“I have some things I need to deal with.” Lisa said as she turned her back to Michael and headed towards the closed office door. “I’ll be late. Don’t wait up. I’ll see you again tomorrow if you’re here and you can let me know when we are leaving for New York.”

“Lisa Marie…” Michael pleaded with a frail and desperate tone of voice.

“Have a good day, Michael.”

She walked out of his study leaving behind a brokenhearted husband on his knees. As he heard her faint footsteps making their way out the main entrance door, Michael sat on the floor and let out a loud, piercing scream. He had suppressed his feelings about his estranged wife for months and could no longer keep them bottled inside of him. Frightened by the horrific screech, Sandra ran into Michael’s study and saw her boss sitting on the floor looking helpless and completely defeated.

“Are you alright Mr. Jackson?” She asked with panic dripping from her voice.

“I’m fine, Sandra. I just need to be alone.”

“But, sir—“  
“That will be all.”

Sandra nodded and reluctantly left her employer in his wrecked state. In all her years of service, she always adored her boss and his loving nature. She feared Michael’s life would change once he married the daughter of a celebrity equally as famous as him. Throughout the course of their marriage, Sandra witnessed and heard countless fighting and screaming matches between the newlyweds and knew their relationship would be doomed from the very beginning. Michael’s vulnerability at that moment made him realize that his entire life was about to change in a way he would not be able to handle. He needed to be saved. He needed to be loved. He needed a new friend.

“What are you doing, dear?” Jill asked as she entered the Clark’s home office.

“This is fantastic.” Aurora replied studying the incredible visual and written report David sent.

Jill walked towards her daughter seated in front of their business computer and kissed the top of her head. She briefly skimmed the material displayed on the screen in front of her and she too could not believe the layout of the information presented.

“Did you do this, darling?”  
“No, mom. One of your workers did.”  
“My workers? Who? Why?”  
“Have you heard of David Sandlin?”  
“Why, yes. He’s the Program Designer for the award show.”  
“This is HIS presentation.”

“How did you get it?”

Aurora told her mother about David’s phone call and wanting her help in signing the Gloved One for the opening act at the show. Jill, not impressed by David’s clever idea to con her daughter into using her resources for his own personal gain, thought it was a magnificent idea. She promised Aurora she wouldn’t utter a word to anyone about David’s plan and gave her the Pop star’s contact information. Jill knew that if anyone could convince Michael Jackson to perform, it would be none other than her charming and irresistible daughter – the extraordinary Aurora Chastity Clark.

“Mr. Jackson?” Sandra said as she approached her employer standing on his patio staring at the view of the exquisite playground adjacent to his home. “You have a phone call.”

“Not now, Sandra.” Michael replied with his back towards her.

“Sir, she is requesting that you—“  
“I don’t want to talk to anyone at this time.”

“Very well, sir.”

Michael heard his maid’s conversation as she ended the call and made her way back into the house.

“I’m sorry, Miss Clark. Mr. Jackson is not available at this time.”

Michael’s eyes widened. His new friend was on the phone!

“WAIT!” Michael yelled running towards Sandra as she hung up. “Who was it?”  
“She said her name was Miss Clark, sir.”

Michael smiled brightly from ear to ear. He knew Aurora would be the perfect person to make him feel better. Sandra quickly grabbed a pen and a piece of paper from a nearby desk and wrote down the contact information she was given during the call so she wouldn’t forget it. She then handed the message to her boss and giggled as she watched him dance around in circles several times before snatching the paper happily from her hands. Michael thanked her and quickly made his way towards his office informing Sandra he did not wish to be disturbed for any reason whatsoever.

“Clark residence.”  
“Is Miss Clark available?”  
“I believe she is in her office. May I ask who is calling?”

Michael giggled cutely. He wanted to play a joke on his new friend hoping it would make her smile and laugh.

“Mr. Concur.”

Barbara was confused. What the heck kind of name was that?

“I bet your pardon, sir?”  
“She’ll know who I am.”

Barbara, thinking the call was for Jill, paged her in her study.

“Yes, Barbara?”  
“You have a call from a Mr. Concur.”  
“Excuse me?” Jill asked with a puzzled tone in her voice. “I don’t know anyone by that name. Are you sure they are asking for me? Perhaps they wish to speak to Aurora?”

Realizing she made the same mistake twice, Barbara apologized to her employer and asked ‘Mr. Concur’ for more clarification about which Clark he was calling to speak to.

“Mr. Concur?”

Michael snorted loudly at the thought of how ridiculous that name sounded.

“Yes?”

“Ms. Clark has said she does not know anyone by that name. Who exactly are you requesting to speak to?”

Michael was the confused one now. He didn’t know Aurora’s first name and clearly Jill wasn’t the one he intended to speak to. How on earth was he going to ask for someone whose name he didn’t know?

“I’d like to speak to the daughter of the house please.”

Barbara smiled and rolled her eyes.

“My apologies, sir. I should have asked you in the beginning. I will page her immediately for you.”

“Can you please tell me her first name?”  
“Aurora, sir.”

**A beautiful name for a beautiful girl**. Michael thought as he blushed and looked down at his free hand on his desk. Barbara paged the young Clark and told her ‘Mr. Concur’ was on the phone wanting to speak with her. After laughing for a good 30 seconds, Aurora excitedly answered his call seated at a large desk in her mother’s home library filled with all sorts of books including Michael’s own biography as well as his CD’s including his newest, HIStory.

“Hello Mr. Concur. How lovely to hear from you.”

Michael giggled when hearing Aurora address him so formally. His pain immediately subsided at the sound of her positively cheerful voice and he no longer felt any type of sorrow. He owed it all to his new friend.

“Good afternoon, Aurora.”  
“Oh my. How did you know my name?”  
“You dare to question the infamous Mr. Concur?”

Aurora laughed making Michael’s heart skip a beat. He was falling for her and loved every second of his new found feelings.

“How are you, Mr. Jackson.”  
“Much better now. Yourself?”  
“I must say I’m a little disappointed.”

“May I ask why?”

“You refused to take my call today Mr. Concur.”  
“I’m sorry. I was having a bad day and didn’t realize it was you.”

“The honorable Mr. Jackson is having a bad day? What happened? Did you misplace your fedora?”  
“Are you mocking me, Miss Clark?”  
“I would never do any such thing. You are much too sensational to ever be made fun of.”  
“I concur.”  
“Judging from your name, I knew you would.”

Michael laughed. Aurora was such a delight. She was special to him and he wanted to make sure she knew it.

“You’re a wonderful young lady.”  
“Full of compliments today are we?”  
“Only for you.”  
“Thank you, Mr. Jackson. I must say I’m the one who’s flattered now.”

“As you should be. How is your mom?”  
“Very well. Busy with her assignments for the upcoming event which is the reason for my call. I was approached with a business proposition earlier today and wanted to discuss its details with you.”  
“About the Vanguard award?”  
“No, something else.”  
“You have my full attention, Miss Clark.”  
“Wonderful. Shall I begin?”  
“Please do.”

The MTV intern and King of Pop spoke informatively discussing all but one major aspect of David’s plan for the annual event. Lighting, wardrobe, audio and stage layouts were just a few of the subjects Michael and his new friend talked about. He even gave Aurora essential and very helpful tips on how to create the perfect setting for an opening act. Unbeknown to Michael, she was also trying to gain his trust hoping he would agree to be the performing act he was coaching her about. Aurora knew Michael would be the perfect artist for the event. An artist she loved and admired her entire life. An artist she had been dreaming about for years to see perform on stage. An artist she felt would not let her down for any reason.

“Thank you for the information, Mr. Jackson. You truly are a genius.”

“I wouldn’t say that.”  
“Modesty has always been one of your many strong points.”  
“Are you always so shrewd?”  
“Only with you.”

Michael giggled as his cheeks turned red.

“I apologize for taking up so much of your time.”  
“It’s no problem. I’m glad I could help you.”  
“There is one detail I haven’t mentioned.”

“What might that be Miss Clark?”

“AURORA!” Jill yelled from the bottom of their grand staircase in their eight bedroom mansion. “I NEED YOUR HELP WITH SOMETHING!”

Aurora quickly placed her call on hold and opened the library door saying she would tend to her mother once she finished her ‘business call’.

“I’m sorry for putting you on hold.”  
“Don’t apologize. It’s alright.”  
“It’s been a real pleasure. I still can’t believe it’s really you.”  
“I get that a lot.”  
“I hope I don’t sound like a typical, obsessed fan.”  
“Believe me you don’t. A typical fan would be someone who would scream then faint.”  
“Well, there’s no guarantee that won’t happen in New York, Mr. Jackson.”

**If it does, I’ll be sure to catch you**. Michael thought smiling to himself.

“As I said before, there is one major point regarding this event I have not informed you about.”

“Which is?”  
  
“AURORA!”

Ignoring her mother’s plea, she continued her conversation with Michael knowing she was pressed for time.

“Mr. Sandlin came to me with this project simply because he knew if anyone could bring this proposal to you, it would be me given the fact that it was I who talked you into making an appearance since you had previously declined to attend at my mother’s request.”  
What exactly are you trying to say, Miss Clark?” Michael asked with a taste of uncertainty in his words.

“Mr. Jackson…”

Silence filled Aurora’s mouth. She suddenly became lost for words. Thoughts of Michael rejecting her request swam through her mind making Aurora feel incredibly flustered. She had no idea why she felt that way but also knew she couldn’t get around the fact that Michael had to know. She had never seen the legendary entertainer perform before and wished for nothing but to see him grace the stage with his electrifying presence.

“Are you still there, Miss Clark?”  
“Yes, I’m sorry.”  
“What were you saying?”  
“Mr. Jackson...”

Michael waited patiently for Aurora to speak. He didn’t know what to think of her silence but also didn’t want to push her into saying something she wasn’t comfortable with.

“It’s ok.” He whispered trying to put her mind at ease. “You won’t offend me in any way.”  
“It’s not that, Mr. Jackson. To be honest I’m quite nervous about bringing this to your attention now.”

“Please don’t be. I’d love to know what it is.”

Aurora took a deep breath. She knew it was now or never.

“David Sandlin has requested YOU be the opening act at this year’s MTV Video Music Awards, Mr. Jackson.”

Dennis Miller was a man with big dreams. As the host of the award show, he knew this would be the big break he was waiting for. As a child, Dennis wished to have a career in music production. After many years of hard work and dedication, he graduated from NYU with an honors degree in fine arts and animation. After being selected from a pool of 25 different candidates, Dennis Miller was definitely not comfortable with his lifelong dream being held in someone else’s hands. Especially someone he’d never worked with before.

“What the heck is taking her so long?” Dennis asked as he paced around David’s living room.

“Calm down.” David said watching the news coverage of Michael’s confirmed appearance on TV. “She’ll get him.”

“How can you be so sure?”  
“She got him to show up, didn’t she?”

“I don’t know about this, D. If he says no we’re both screwed.”  
“One thing I heard about Jill Clark is she never takes no for an answer. I’ll bet you anything Aurora Clark inherited that same trait. And let’s not forget it Jill Clark was the person behind the brilliant idea of having Michael and Lisa Marie stage their kiss at last year’s show.”

Dennis shook his head and continued pacing. Waiting for Aurora Clark to call or email David with Michael’s confirmation was driving him insane. He prayed constantly that everything would go according to plan and Michael would not refuse do open the event. Everything was hanging in the balance for Dennis and David. All they could do at that moment was wait. Wait for a miracle or wait to be rejected.

“Mr. Jackson? Are you there?”

Michael was beyond words. He didn’t know how to respond to Aurora’s surprising request. Him? The opening act at the MTV awards? In such short notice?

“Yes, I am.”  
“I apologize for startling you. I certainly didn’t intend on doing so.”  
“Miss Clark, I’m overwhelmed and extremely lauded that you would ask me to take part in something so prestigious.”

Aurora smiled brightly. She thought her plan had worked perfectly.

“Who better than the Gloved One, Mr. Jackson?”

Michael laughed and blushed again.

“Given the fact that the event is just one week away--”  
“Mr. Jackson-” Aurora interrupted. “I’ve seen how magnificently well you perform in the busiest of venues and given shorter notice than this. I’m also fully aware of the fact that rehearsal is not something you are fond of and have performed across the globe leaving every single person in every single audience breathless in a matter of seconds. That being said, I do not wish to force your decision. I do however have complete and absolute faith that you are, undoubtedly, the best choice for this year’s opening performance and could accomplish your performance successfully without the slightest bit of strain.”

Michael was speechless again. Aurora Clark certainly had a way with words.

“I must admit you have swept me off my feet Miss Clark. Thank you for keeping me in such high regards.”  
“It’s my pleasure, sir. Now, do I have your approval?”

“Miss Clark, I—“  
“Mr. Jackson , all business talk aside, I know it is very short notice and I understand if you require more time—“  
“Miss Clark—“

“Mr. Sandlin just came to me earlier today with his presentation and after careful consideration I realized he was right. You WOULD be the best entertainer to kick off this year’s event.”

“Miss Clark—“  
“In my opinion as well as many others, there simply is NO other artist who could light up Radio City Music Hall better than you and it would be absolutely wonderful to see you—“  
“AURORA!”

The young woman gasped and was completely taken aback. She hadn’t realized she was babbling mindlessly not allowing the highly praised Pop star to speak his own mind on the subject matter.

“I apologize for rambling, Mr. Jackson. What were you saying?”  
“Would YOU like to see me perform?”

Aurora smiled childishly. Why would he ask her that?

“Mr. Jackson I do believe you are asking me a personal question.”  
“There were no set rules prior to this conversation indicating I was not allowed, Miss Clark.”  
“Point well taken. I would love the opportunity to see you perform.”

“In that case…I’d love to do it.”

“Mr. Jackson, you are agreeing to perform live in front of thousands of people and possibly millions worldwide simply based on the fact that I would love to see you grace the Radio City Music Hall stage?”  
“Exactly. Now, if you don’t mind Miss Clark, I have a very important task I must extensively prepare for.”

Aurora smirked at her friend’s wit. She was intrigued and definitely couldn’t wait to meet the icon in person.

“I will see to it that all necessary arrangements are made to have the paperwork and legal documents sent to your attorney for review and approval directly from the MTV board members.”

“Very good, Miss Clark. Until we meet in New York.”

“I’m counting the days, Mr. Concur. I wish you luck in your rehearsals.”

“I don’t depend on luck, Miss Clark. I was a veteran in this business before my 18th birthday. I look forward to performing in New York provided you will be in attendance. ”  
“There’s nowhere else I’d rather be.”

“Miss Clark?”

“Yes?”  
“Since you claim to be my fan, which song is your favorite?”

Aurora laughed beautifully making Michael’s heart race for miles. Her delicate voice was one thing but her laughter was certainly another.

“It is extremely difficult to pick just one Mr. Concur. I adore several of your songs.”  
“Name them.”  
“ALL OF THEM?”  
“Yes. Please tell me. What are your favorite songs?”

After putting a serious amount of thought into Michael’s unexpected question and narrowing down her choices to a reasonable amount, Aurora cheerfully wrote the names of her most favorite songs by the King of Pop completely oblivious to what he was about to ask her next.

“I’ve made a list of them.”  
“Perfect. I’m ready.”  
“You’re writing them down?”  
“Is that a problem Miss Clark?”  
“Not at all. But may I ask what this is for?”  
“You’ll find out. Now, which ones did you choose?”

Aurora read her list to Michael with flushed cheeks feeling incredibly shy. He giggled cutely to himself as she read the names of the songs he knew she would choose. To his surprise, some of her choices were also a few of his own favorites. He shook his head smiling and bit his bottom lip gently thinking his new found friend could very well be his match in more than just intelligence. She was charming, polite, funny and very easy to talk to. Once Aurora read her last chosen favorite, Michael thanked her and both parties courteously ended the call. Aurora emailed David informing him that she needed to follow up with her mother and the other board members before telling him Michael’s decision. Since the young intern was not the one in charge of any major decisions, she did not want to run the risk of giving David any information that she potentially was not allowed to release. In her eyes, she was simply helping another employee in need. A well-executed plan that worked successfully in her favor. Aurora had never been more proud of herself than she was at that moment. As a career woman, she felt accomplished. As a fan, she felt excitement and love. The greatest entertainer of all time was scheduled to light up the city of New York – and she was partially responsible.

After speaking to his new found friend, Michael immediately contacted his long time attorney and friend, John Branca and informed him of his most recent business decision. Mr. Branca welcomed the idea and said he was looking forward to receiving the paperwork outlining the rules, regulations, expenses, fees and payment to the Pop star himself. Michael did not wish to become rich by performing for MTV. His decision was solely based on an act of kindness towards Aurora Clark. He also had no intention of looking for personal gain or media attention. He simply wanted to make his new MTV intern friend happy. With just one week’s time and a specific list of songs, Michael knew he had to work extra hard to impress his friend and he knew just the place to start – at his very own Neverland dance studio.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1995

After receiving and reviewing the contracts for the highly anticipated event, The MTV Awards committee was informed via John Branca’s office that his client happily agreed to perform as the opening act at their show. Thrilled, the entire committee invited John and his family to be their personal VIP guests at the event. Humbled by their generous request. Mr. Branca decided to take them up on their gracious offer and also mentioned that he and his client would be flying to New York that same day for a formal meet and greet and to sign all of the applicable paperwork.

Jill Clark would also be attending the meeting and proudly informed David and Dennis of the King of Pop’s decision. Although not impressed with David’s clever plan to use her daughter as a stepping stone to make his job easier, Jill warned David by saying he would have to rely on him own sources in the future and not depend on other people to get what he wanted. Both men were also expected to attend the formal signing as they too had several confidentiality agreements that required signatures.

With only five days left, everyone was starting to feel the burn of meeting tight deadlines. Michael’s routine was coming along beautifully and Aurora was literally counting the minutes until she could meet her new friend. As an intern, she too was obligated to sign agreements regarding Michael’s surprise opening act and was fully aware she had to maintain complete composure while being in his presence. As professional as she sounded on the phone, Aurora Clark always had and maintained the heart of a little girl. She adored Michael since birth and could not help but feel butterflies knowing she was just hours away from seeing him in person. The beautiful Clark junior was very direct and poised on the outside but jumping for joy on the inside. She prayed for things to go smoothly and kept an open mind about their first meeting. Sparks were definitely in the air – sparks of friendship, trust, loyalty and also…love.