

DONNY AND THE SUN KING

A Musical By Marta Jorgensen

You can't change the past,
but, you can change how you feel about it...

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DONNY AND THE SUN KING - CAST OF CHARACTERS

Principles

Francis P. King II (Frenchy King) - Flamboyant media tycoon. 50's.
Sheila Acer - Frenchy's girlfriend/newscaster/reporter. In her late 30's.
Donny O'Connelly - Clean cut, short hair, twinkle in eye. Early 30's.
Laura Fitzpatrick - Hyper and on the phone often. Early 30's.
Rhoda Haynes - A famous playwright. 50's.
Blaze Haynes - Daughter of Rhoda Haynes. 30's.
Hubert Haynes - Husband of Rhoda Haynes. 50's.
Mr. Perry - Owner of Perry's Poorhouse. He is like the King of the Underworld. Age unknown.
TrenchCoat Bob - Works for Frenchy King. He is his nephew. 40's.

Ensemble Cast Parts

Homeless Residents - ages 17-40
Lawyer - Attractive woman in a suit.
Kids - Teens
Perry's Inmates - A collection of people in Rhoda's memory.

Location - New York City

Time - Present

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

Sun King Theme
Hope and Pride
Spy's Lament
Ratings R Us
Stand Tall
Words
What's In A Word
Donny's Lament
Ball and Chain
You Did Me Wrong
Is It True/Politics
Babel
My Story

ACT TWO

My Imagination
Lower Slobovia
I Want My Life Back
Perry's Poorhouse
I Want My Life Back
Frenchy King
Show Me
Sun King Theme

ACTS AND SCENES

ACT I - 1-8
ACT II 1- 7

SETTINGS

Streets/Park Bench
Happy Endings Homeless House/ Int/Ext
King Media/ Int
Frenchy King's Bedroom/Int
Perry's Poorhouse/Int/Ext
Sheila's Bedroom/Int

ACT 1SCENE 1

AT RISE: RHODA HAYNES'S HOME OFFICE

(RHODA HAYNES, a dishevelled older Lucile Ball with red hair, throws darts at a picture of FRENCHY KING, an important looking man in a purple suit. Newspaper articles and pictures hang nearby - FAKE NEWS RAMPANT IN KING MEDIA, BLAZE HAYNES - FIRED FROM TV CONTRACT. Another headline glaring away - CONGRESSMAN HAYNES LOSES SEAT IN HOUSE DUE TO SCANDAL.)

(There are papers on the floor and a laptop computer with manual on the floor. An old typewriter sits on the desk.)

(RHODA'S husband, HUBERT HAYNES is heard off stage humming a tune as he enters with a pile of mail in his arms.)

HUBERT

Mail's here dear. Darts again, well I see your aim is getting better.

(HUBERT opens mail and sorts it into waste basket, floor and desk.)

Lawyer bill, lawyer bill, subpoena, fan mail, letter from Frenchy's attorney, oh look Good Housekeeping magazine.

RHODA

I wish I could have a martini but I don't drink. I can't make that computer thingy work.

HUBERT

Cope dear, this lawsuit with King Media will be over soon. Do what you do best. Now I'll see you in a few hours.

(HUBERT kisses her on the cheek humming the same tune as he strolls off.)

(RHODA sits at her desk with the typewriter.)

RHODA HAYNES

Well, here goes the coping.

(sings to herself in the same tune as what
Hubert hummed.)

THEY SAY HE'S THE SUN KING
THAT HE'S REALLY SOMETHIN'
HE NEVER HEARD OF THE GOLDEN RULE...
DA DA DA DA DA DA DA DA DA DA
DA DOO DOO DOODOO DA DA DA DA
A LITTLE REVENGE IS A WONDERFUL THING

(talking large)

You know I like to keep up with current events. Especially when one IS the current event. But the most fun of all, I like to bring along my nearest and dearest on these journeys. It's a kind of a road trip in the mind. So, here we go again Hubbie...

(typing)

This is the story - Title ... *Donny and the Sun King* by me, the great playwright Rhoda Haynes. Simple and to the point. So I am going to tell you the tale of Donny and the Sun King. This is the work of fiction. It's about family honor, you see. Act One...

SPOTLIGHT

(FRENCHY KING the overbearing boss hovers
over DONNY O'CONNELLY, a younger man who
cowers.)

RHODA HAYNES (CONT'D)

Once upon a time there was this nice young clean cut all American boy named Donny O'Connelly. He worked as a mail boy at the a very important media giant called King Media. The big shot, the owner of this fine establishment was none other than a big lug called, Frenchy King. Donny and Frenchy were having a fight...

DONNY

Now see here Mr. King I have worked for you for five years and this is the thanks I get. You're a crook and I had to tell the world just how unethical you were.

FRENCHY

Facebook, Twitter now I got the FCC and the NSA after me. That guy in the embassy too. You're fired. Get out before I throw you out.

DONNY

Well.... Fine... but just remember what comes around goes around. Karma. You'll see. You shouldn't go making up stuff about people.

SPOTLIGHT

(DONNY slinks off. The stage goes dark.)

DESK

(RHODA lounges at her desk. She smokes a cigarette.)

RHODA

I think this story needs a gimmick. I could always rip off something. What could that be? So what becomes of Donny... oh yes, he's out in the cold lost, lonely and looking for shelter.

(The desk and Rhoda go black.)

EXT: HAPPY ENDING HOMELESS HOUSE

(A wind blows. DONNY fights the cold and braves the wind. He spots a light and the sign that reads, HAPPY ENDINGS HOMELESS HOUSE. COME IN. The place is a rundown mess.)

DONNY

Finally. I'll just try this place.

(DONNY hurries to the front door and knocks. The door opens and the young man rushes in.)

SPOTLIGHT ON DESK

(RHODA at the desk. She's eating a sandwich.)

RHODA

(crying)

God he is in bad shape. But there has to be a silver lining.

(She nods off and the desk goes dark again.)

(A lot of time has passed at the Homeless House.)

(Suddenly flower pots and bright yard signs appear.)

(In front of the Homeless house a crowd of BYSTANDERS, REPORTERS with cameras gather.) Truck signs reading CNN, FOX, KING MEDIA.)

(KIDS and RESIDENTS crane to see what is up. Just then, the front door opens.)

(DONNY O'CONNELLY, A clean cut young man, 30's, short hair, twinkle in his eye sporting a college preppy suit hangs a large sign that says Grand Reopening of the Happy Endings Homeless Shelter as the new owner.)

(DONNY hugs his girlfriend LAURA FITZPATRICK, 30's, hyper college graduate, impatient as she grabs a quick text message. She hugs him back.)

(SHEILA ACER, 30's, a lanky blonde in a tight red dress, stands to the side with her CAMERAMAN. She fixes her hair and pulls her dress down.)

(SHEILA is wearing outlandish platform shoes. She takes the shoes off and pulls a pair of red high heels out of a bag. They are still over the top but not as high.)

SHEILA

It's good to dress for the story. You know blend in.

CAMERAMAN

(sarcasm)

Oh yeah... that really makes you look like the common man.

(Sheila gets up and drags her CAMERAMAN over to DONNY and shoves a microphone in his face.)

(LAURA turns to a BYSTANDER standing next to her.)

LAURA

Oh God, there's that disgusting Sheila Acer.

BYSTANDER #1

Yeah. Nasty Ace.

LAURA

Oh yeah... she's sure interested in Donny. Seems like a lot of media for just a homeless shelter. She must buy her clothes from hookers.

SHEILA

(really surprised to see him)

So Mr. O'Connelly, it's you. Well, I guess you went up in the world.

DONNY

What are you doing here? This is where I ended up after you and Mr. King tossed me out into the street. If it wasn't for the nice old man and Laura, I don't know what I would have done. I guess you never have been homeless.

SHEILA

(surprised by question)

Oh, sure lots of time... there was the time I got overbooked in Cancun and had to camp out at the pool. All night under the stars.

DONNY

Sounds tough.

SHEILA

I spilled coffee on my mink. She was scarred for life.

DONNY

Sorry to hear that. Minks make nice pets.

SHEILA

It was dead.

LAURA

(to herself)

Where's my pepper spray.

DONNY

Some coffee.

SHEILA

(changing subject)

You must be proud of yourself. Care to make a statement for our viewers?

SONG - "HOPE AND PRIDE"

DONNY

Well yeah. We really cleaned up the joint. It all started like this.

I WAS UNEMPLOYED,
 DOWN ON MY LUCK
 MAN IT'S A LIFE THAT
 CAN REALLY SUCK
 THE SIDEWALK WAS
 CLOSIN' IN ON ME
 I MUST CONFESS
 I WAS A MESS
 BUT THANKS TO HOPE
 AND A BAR OF GOOD SOAP
 I SMELL SWEETER
 NOT LIKE SOMEONE DIED
 THAT'S THE SMELL OF PRIDE
 HOPE AND PRIDE
 HOPE AND PRIDE
 GOTTA CLEAN SET OF CLOTHES
 AND A GIRL AT MY SIDE
 AND A SECOND CHANCE
 EVEN LEARNED TO DANCE
 NOW I'M THE NEW OWNER
 I KNOW EVERYONE...
 WE GOT HOMELESS SINGLE LADIES
 PRETTY MOMMAS WITH THEIR BABIES
 GROUCHY EMO KIDS IN PINK HAIR
 WHO SAY THEY DON'T CARE
 SOCIAL WORKERS WITH THEIR MASTERS
 KEEPING US FROM ALL DISASTERS
 DID I LEAVE SOMEONE OUT
 NOW THAT WOULDN'T BE FAIR
 HAPPY ENDINGS ARE US
 SO COME ON, TAKE A BUS!
 WE'LL BE KNOWN FAR AND WIDE
 FOR OUR MEAT LOAFS OF HOPE
 WITH A SIDE OF PRIDE
 MEAT LOAFS OF HOPE
 AND A SIDE OF PRIDE!

(MORE)

DONNY (CONT'D)

Thanks for all your support. We now have a decent place for people to live when they're down in their luck.

(The CAMERAMAN holds up a placard with the Twitter hashtag #ALL ACE.)

SHEILA

Isn't that sweet. Well you heard it here. This is Sheila Acer for King Media.

(SHEILA pushes away the camera man and walks away but then her phone rings. She answers it.)

Yes doll. Well, how about the twin deal... no, we did that last month... ah that one I didn't like it, the other one is OK, but I think we were there last year. It's getting to be lean pickings Frenchy lean... the usual suspects are scarce. I don't know where they went just scarce.

(getting aggravated)

No, I covered that, no that is over the top even for you. We need to go local. You know everyone is going local these days That's called being a locovore. I gotta go. By the way, guess who runs this new homeless house? Donny O'Connelly. The old man just up and died. The kid has been living here since we fired him. He's the new owner.

(A man named TRENCH COAT BOB brushes past her as she continues her conversation.)

Frenchy, Listen I need to discuss our tactics. I want to go local this time. Something different. I am bored with the same old same old. Gotta go.

(She hangs up the phone and summons TRENCH COAT BOB. He comes over and something gets passed between them.)

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Bob, where have you been? I am standing here waiting for you. I need a story, you need to get me one, find me a good one for the boss. We got a deadline. If Frenchy wasn't your uncle, I'd can you.

(She walks away. BOB lingers in the crowd. The crowd moves away, BOB stands alone in a shadow.)

TRENCH COAT BOB

(mocking)

If it wasn't for being Frenchy's nephew I'd can you. That woman needs a lobotomy. I get no respect. I went to college well, online. I got a degree. Well, kind of. Frenchy doesn't have a degree. Well, it was a good forgery. I made it myself. I'll show them.

SONG - "SPY'S LAMENT"

TRENCH COAT BOB (CONT'D)

I'LL SHOW'EM
 I'LL SHOW'EM,
 I REALLY WILL
 I'LL SHOW'EM
 IT'S A SAD AFFAIR
 PULLING STORIES
 FROM THIN AIR
 IT'S A MOCKERY
 TO BE SPYING JUST FOR FREE
 I COULD FIND A STORY
 GET SOME FREAKING GLORY
 CUZ I CAN
 GIMME THIS
 GIMME THAT
 TELL ME THIS
 SHOW ME THAT
 I AM JUST A PLAYTHING
 TO THAT MAN
 WHAT A RAT
 MAN CHASES WOMAN
 WOMAN RUNS FROM MAN
 SUSIE ROBS THE TRUST FUND
 MOMMY'S NOT AWARE
 IT'S A LOT OF INTRIGUE
 BUT REALLY DO I CARE DO I CARE
 GIMME THIS
 GIMME THAT
 TELL ME THIS
 SHOW ME THAT
 I AM JUST A PLAYTHING
 TO THAT MAN
 WHAT A RAT
 SO I MADE MY MISTAKES
 BUT I KNOW WHAT IT TAKES
 SUPERNATURAL INSTINCTS
 FOCUS THAT'S UNREAL
 I CAN SPOT A STORY
 FROM A HUNDRED PACES

YES I CAN
 YES I CAN
 YES I CAN!

TRENCHCOAT BOB

(musing)

Now where is my GPS. What does this map say poor huz? Is that a b or is that p or d?

(The GPS beeps as BOB fumbles with a map.
 He runs off.)

LAURA

That made me ill. Come on Donny let's go inside before she comes back.

DONNY

I can't believe they came here. Couple of sleaze bags. Mr. King is not gonna like this. The Feds are still hassling him about that fake Haynes story. I had to turn him in. It was only right.

LAURA

Yeah, you were pretty brave going up against Francis King.

(The crowd breaks up. DONNY and LAURA enter the homeless shelter front door.)

(A MOVING MAN pushes a large screen TV onto the stage to one side and walks away. He checks a clip board and walks off.)

(RHODA IN SHADOW is looking at herself in a TV screen then she seems to disappear.)

(The large TV screen suddenly becomes a portal. BLAZE HAYNES, 30ish brunette well built, and HUBERT HAYNES, older, grey haired small man, crawl through the TV screen and stand up. RHODA comes out of the TV screen and stands up.)

RHODA

Oh. Hubert let me help you stand up. There you go dear. See I told you you'd make it.

BLAZE

Where are we, Mom?

HUBERT

Is this the only way we can get around? Crawling through the TV?

RHODA

You used to like TV. I think it makes a fine mode of transportation.

HUBERT

I like being on TV not in it.

BLAZE

I was on the TV once. Doesn't anybody care about that.

RHODA

Of course we care. It was a lovely show. This will be fun.

HUBERT

I could use some fun. Is this another spy thriller? Am I going to be shot again? I hate being shot at.

RHODA

You'll see.

(They dash off. The MOVING MAN comes back for the TV and pushes it away off stage.)

END OF SCENE

ACT 1SCENE 2

SETTING: KING MEDIA - High rise office

TIME: AM

(SHEILA ACER walks in with a cup of coffee. A stunning RECEPTIONIST sits at a desk typing on a computer.)

(A dominating looking figure sits in a huge chair playing with a selfie stick. The figure spins around. The very imposing FRENCHY KING is playing ANGRY BIRDS on the computer tablet. He lights up when SHEILA appears throwing down her coat. She finds a letter on the desk and reads it.)

FRENCHY

(agitated)

Hi Sheila. Well what happened? Yeah, that's another subpoena from the FBI. Damn O'Connelly. I want to wring his neck!

SHEILA

Calm down.

(She gives him a kiss. The RECEPTIONIST gets her cue to leave and shuts the door behind her. ACE sits on the desk.)

FRENCHY

Damn birds. I don't get this game. Did you talk to him did you interview him?

SHEILA

Yeah, he told us in so many words his tale of redemption. CNN was there so was that other one with that great looking guy Todd. But, I can't see why he was there. Such a waste of great ass on the screen. But I'll tell you Donny O'Connelly's girlfriend looks like a piece of work.

FRENCHY

Girlfriend? He's old enough to have a girlfriend?

SHEILA

A social worker at the home. A real do gooder and man those shoes. I'd put her on the World's Biggest Loser if there was such a thing for shoes. I gave Bob his task. He was late as usual. So... are they here yet... where's the ratings?

FRENCHY

Out treasure hunting again? I wonder what he's looking for. Here's the latest report.

SHEILA

Yeah, give it to me.

(FRENCHY stands up. Nearby is a coat rack with several jackets hanging up. He takes down a purple jacket and tries it on. Outlandish looking. He takes a selfie of himself with his selfie stick.)

FRENCHY

How do I look?

SHEILA

Like a plum with stretch marks.

FRENCHY

Great isn't it? For my next congressional hearing? But, Congressman, I didn't know the bathroom was bugged.

SHEILA

It makes you look fat. You don't look good in patterns. Don't wear that when you go before the feds. So, you were saying about the ratings? Maybe the kid's right.

FRENCHY

(horrified at the thought)

What? Now, see here, let me tell you missy.

SHEILA

OK I am listening because you are going to give pearls from your great intellect.

FRENCHY

That's right

(CONT'D)

SONG - "RATINGS R US"

FRENCHY
OH YES, WE'RE NUMBER ONE IN THE RATINGS GAME

SHEILA
NUMBER TWO

FRENCHY
OK WE'RE ALMOST AT THE TOP OF THE PACK

SHEILA
SEE THAT WASN'T HARD

FRENCHY
OUR COMPETITION IS ON THE RUN

SHEILA
YOU SCARED THEM GOOD WHAT FUN

FRENCHY
CUZ WE GOT THE GOODS THAT THEY LACK

SHEILA
THAT PURPLE COAT OFF THE RACK JACK

FRENCHY
I LOVE THIS COAT

SHEILA
SO DID KING LOOY THE FOURTEENTH'S GOAT

FRENCHY
WE GIVE THE PUBLIC WHAT THEY WANT

SHEILA
ANXIETY AND HEARTBURN

FRENCHY
AND WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR

SHEILA
I GET IT, WE ALL KNOW THAT FUNNY FEELING

FRENCHY
THAT COMES FROM BLOOD LUST

SHEILA
PARANOIA

AND FEAR MY DEAR FRENCHY

YOU ARE SO THE BOMB SHEILA

RATINGS R US RATINGS R US FRENCHY

GRAMMAR SHEILA

TELL CNN WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS FRENCHY
PHOOEY ON STANDARDS, STANDARDS AIN'T FUN

THERE'S THAT GRAMMAR AGAIN SHEILA

WHO NEEDS JOURNALISTIC INTEGRITY FRENCHY

OF SYLLABLES THERE ARE TOO MANY SHEILA

WHEN YOU CAN HAVE ALIENS, FRENCHY
TALKING DOGS AND KILLER BEES

IN ONE U TUBE VIDEO PLEASE SHEILA

YOU SEE FRENCHY

WELL I DON'T BUT CONTINUE SHEILA

I'm going to bury that kid! FRENCHY

I'm not sure I like the sound of that. SHEILA

Now Sheila. FRENCHY

What Frenchy? SHEILA

Turn about is fair play. FRENCHY

What are you trying to say? SHEILA

You know what to do. FRENCHY

Oh the hell with you. SHEILA

Sheila my dearest. FRENCHY

Don't pout, I hate it when you pout. SHEILA

You're my other half. FRENCHY

Yeah you could say we are the Jackie and Hyde of media. SHEILA

FRENCHY
IF IT'S GOOD FOR RATINGS
IT'S GOOD FOR US

FRENCHY/SHEILA
CUZ RATINGS
RATINGS R US
AHHH US
RATINGS R US

(The phone RINGS. SHEILA picks up the phone and listens attentively to TRENCH COAT BOB on the other end. FRENCHY combs his hair gazing into a pocket mirror.)

SHEILA
It's our wondering boy. Bob, did you get me a story? We need to be sure you can make it stick. Boss is out for blood. Can it be credible? And you heard it where again?

TRENCH COAT BOB
I heard it all while I was standing by the ally, walking my ah, my dog and I heard it. Money laundering, oh my, who would of thought such a nice kid. Embezzlement it just gets more interesting.

SHEILA

Sounds good. Now, don't screw up. Any ten-year old can do this.

TRENCH COAT BOB

Yes, yes, I know.

SHEILA

Thanks, we'll be in touch.

(SHEILA hangs up and FRENCHY'S ears are burning.)

FRENCHY

Well? Bury him!!!

SHEILA

Looks like we got us a story. We hope. Oh boy.

A STREET SIGN

(TRENCH COAT BOB, standing by a street sign, pulls out a map and a magazine from his huge pockets. He looks longingly at a strange map.)

TRENCH COAT BOB

Any ten year old can do this. Any ten year old can do this. The nerve of her. I am family, not her. I want to find this place. What does this say? Door house? Is that a P or a B?

(He stands in the receding light until it fades out.)

END OF SCENE

ACT 1SCENE 3

SETTING: HAPPY ENDINGS HOMELESS HOUSE

TIME: AM

(Life is stirring in the house. RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT are loitering around Donny's homeless house. A few RESIDENTS line up for breakfast.)

BLAZE

So why are we here again, Mom? Are we homeless this time? Weird plot.

HUBERT

It's a homeless shelter. They are not the P word. Don't say the P word. Poor. Not politically appropriate. Monetarily Challenged.

RHODA

What's wrong with just poor, dear. Come on blend in. Get in line.

(They get in line with the others. DONNY comforts YOUNG TOM with the help of LAURA. Laura is getting impatient.)

YOUNG TOM

I'm a loser. I'm just not lucky these days.

DONNY

Now don't say that, Tom. Things always turn out. You'll see.

SONG - "STAND TALL"

DONNY/LAURA

THEY SAY IT'S A SHAME, YEAH
 THEY SAY HOW'D YOU GET LIKE THAT
 WHAT BAD LUCK YOU HAD YEAH
 THEY SAY IT'S A SHAME, YEAH
 BUT DON'T TAKE IT TO HEART
 CAUSE YOU ARE BETTER THAN THAT
 YOU CAN STILL STAND TALL
 STAND TALL, STAND TALL
 BEFORE YOU FALL...
 YOU KNOW LIFE GETS HARD

AND THE RAINS DO COME
 THEN THE RAIN TURNS TO SNOW
 PEOPLE WILL TELL YA
 OH THEY KNOW
 HOW THEY KNOW
 AND YOU WANT TO RUN
 BUT LISTEN TO ME, SON
 IT'S NOT TOO LATE
 IT'LL ALL GET BETTER
 JUST YOU WAIT
 STAND TALL, STAND TALL
 BEFORE YOU FALL

YOUNG TOM

Mr. Donny and Miss Laura thanks for the pep talk. I don't know sometimes you just can't see good things.

DONNY

You know you have a home here.

LAURA

Yeah. And we're not going anywhere are we Donny?

DONNY

Like the Rock of Gibraltar.

YOUNG TOM

I don't know what that is but it sounds good to me.

(DONNY and LAURA give the BOY a hug.)

RHODA

That nice kid is Donny O'Connelly. That girl is Laura his babe. He owns this place.

BLAZE

I don't see any fighting or begging here.

RHODA

Last year's play. *Lawless Retreat*, a social commentary play. Got panned remember?

HUBERT

We must follow the laws. It's good to follow laws. Wasn't that the theme?

BLAZE

Oh screw the laws, Pop. Laws are meant to be broken.

RHODA

Such language. Now be nice to your father. The story is about to unfold.

BLAZE

Lost my head. Mom is in charge.

RHODA

You'll see. Here they come.

(DONNY, LAURA and YOUNG TOM walk through the gathering of homeless RESIDENTS.)

BLAZE

You know he's kinda cute. Who is he?

HUBERT

She's not bad either.

BLAZE

Dad. No action here.

(TRENCH COAT BOB makes his presence felt in background and follows LAURA.)

HUBERT

Well not everything has to be guns blazing, dear Blaze.

(A LADY passes out sandwiches.)

RHODA

I guess. Anyone care for a sandwich?

BLACK OUT

END OF SCENE

ACT 1SCENE 4

SETTING: SHEILA'S BEDROOM / FRENCHY'S OFFICE

TIME: EVENING

(Back at the office, FRENCHY KING talks to SHEILA on the phone. SHEILA is at home and the stage is split.)

FRENCHY

So what's in a word? You know Ace I have used every word ever written.

SHEILA

Oh sure you have.

FRENCHY

No it's true. A word is a universe within itself.

SHEILA

You're so full of BS.

FRENCHY

Take the word EMBEZZLER. It connotes a universe of intrigue and secrets. So what's in a word?

SONG - "WORDS"

FRENCHY

A WELL CRAFTED PHRASE
IS A WONDERFUL THING
SO MULTISYLLABIC
SPECTACULAR DRAMATIC
GRAMMATICALLY PURE
JUST MAKES MY HEART SING
EMPIRES WERE BORN FROM
THE TURN OF A PHRASE
THE BIGGEST MOUTH WON
WHO COULD REALLY AMAZE
WORDS TORE THE HIGHEST
MAN DOWN
IT DIDN'T MATTER THE
TIME OR THE AGE
WORDS CAN BE PRETTY
WORDS, WORDS

WORDS CAN SOUND SHITTY
 WORDS, WORDS
 THE VOWELS AND THE VERBS
 WORDS, WORDS
 THE WORDS THAT DISTURB
 WORDS, WORDS
 EMOTIONAL BLISS
 WHEN IT'S WRITTEN JUST RIGHT
 YOU CAN LAUGH WHEN
 THEY CAN CRY
 WHEN THEY FEEL YOUR SPITE
 DAY AFTER DAY OF
 DEVELOPING WORDS
 RISING WITH SUNSHINE AND
 CHIRPING OF BIRDS...
 GEE DID I SAY THAT?

SHEILA

A WELL CRAFTED WORD CAN
 DO SO MANY THINGS
 WELL LIKE YES WELL...
 WORDS SHOULD BE PRETTY
 WORDS, WORDS
 ISN'T IT A PITY
 WORDS, WORDS
 EMOTIONAL WRECK
 WHEN YOU SAY IT JUST RIGHT
 YOU CAN SNORE ALL YOU WANT
 WHEN I CRY IN THE NIGHT
 DAY AFTER DAY
 OF FIGHTING OFF WORDS
 CAN'T FEEL THE SUNSHINE
 OR HEAR DAMNABLE BIRDS
 BUT YOU ARE THE EXPERT

FRENCHY

Thanks. Now go do that ole black magic on Twitter. Can I visit you in your office?

SHEILA

Now how much work would I get done.

FRENCHY

Well...

(FRENCHY plants his feet up on the desk.)

(SHEILA pulls out her laptop and opens it. She starts to type and keeps typing.)

SONG - "WHAT'S IN A WORD"

SHEILA

YOU'RE NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT
 YOU CAN BE A BIG LUNK
 BUT YOU'VE BEEN MY FRIEND
 ALL THE SAME
 WHEN IT COMES TO SMARTS
 NOT MUCH JUNK IN YOUR TRUNK
 BUT FRENCHY YOU STILL GOT
 TO THE TOP OF YOUR GAME
 SO WHAT'S IN A WORD WHEN
 IT COMES TO YOU?
 WHAT'S IN A WORD TO YOU
 IF THE WORD IS FRIEND OR BOSS
 IT DEPENDS
 WHEN IT COMES TO YOU
 SOMETIMES YOU ASK AN
 IMPOSSIBLE GAME
 SOMETIMES I ANSWER WITH DOUBT
 SOMETIMES THE WORLD SERVES
 US DAGGERS AND RAIN
 BUT WE ALWAYS FIGHT OUR WAY OUT
 WHAT CAN I DO
 IT I SAY TOO MUCH
 IT'S ALWAYS SHEILA
 MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS
 IF I SPOKE WHAT'S TRUE
 AND I SAID IT TO YOU
 WILL YOU TURN ME AWAY?
 WHAT CAN I DO?
 SOMETIMES I HAVEN'T A CLUE
 BUT I'LL SEE IT THROUGH
 WHEN IT COMES TO YOU...

(deep sigh)

The things I do for you...

BLACK OUTEND OF SCENE

ACT 1SCENE 5

SETTING: HAPPY ENDINGS HOMELESS HOUSE

TIME: NEXT DAY

(DONNY and LAURA do housework. A nervous female helper named HELEN comes running in with a computer tablet in her hand. She motions to LAURA.)

HELEN

Laura, you have to look at this. I found this news posting on the Internet.

LAURA

(reading)

The Happy Endings Homeless Shelter has been implicated in criminal activity in embezzlement and money laundering for a well known drug cartel. Oh, my God, who wrote this?

HELEN

You know people always do that. It's probably some kid in his bedroom playing a prank. I wouldn't pay any attention to it. Stupid hackers.

DONNY

Oh, I don't know about that.

LAURA

Come on Helen can you help me in the kitchen. I have a bad feeling...

DONNY

(visibly angry)

Hackers. No, it's that King, he's got to be up to something.

LAURA

And that Acer woman. Snake in high heels.

(HELEN and LAURA exit. RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT quietly watch from a secluded place. DONNY is left alone with his broom. He paces nervously near the TV.)

DONNY

I knew sooner or later that man would try something.

SONG - "DONNY'S LAMENT"

DONNY

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?
 WHAT PEOPLE SAY
 ONLY YESTERDAY
 ONLY YESTERDAY
 I WAS THE IT GUY
 I'M NOW OH MY
 PUNCHED IN THE EYE
 THAT AIN'T NO LIE
 IT WAS THAT KING
 AND HERE'S THE THING
 HE'S A FAT HEAD, A CREEP
 HE'S EVEN CHEAP
 COLD TO HIS CORE
 CAN I SAY MORE
 IS THERE MORE IN STORE
 THAN I CAN BARGAIN FOR
 HE CAN CALL ME A CROOK,
 EVERY NAME IN THE BOOK
 BUT I'M JUST A DUDE
 WHO WANTS TO BE GOOD
 I'M JUST A DUDE
 WHO WANTS TO BE GOOD
 IF IT'S WAR BY TWEET
 IF THAT'S HIS GAME
 I WON'T RETREAT
 I AIM TO PLAY IT
 I AIM TO SAY IT
 AND DO WHAT I SAY
 ALL THE WAY
 CUZ I'M JUST A DUDE
 WHO WANTS TO BE GOOD
 I'M JUST A DUDE
 WHO WANTS TO BE GOOD
 IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?

(DONNY rushes off.)

RHODA

(emotes)

Oh, the shame of it. We have to make things right. You know that every hero has a nemesis who bodes them harm.

HUBERT

Like in a Spanish novella or a soap opera.

BLAZE

You know I was in a soap opera until I got hit by the car.
What an unlucky break.

RHODA

Sorry about that. It was just fiction.

BLAZE

Fiction can hurt sometimes.

HUBERT

So what's your plan? I for one, want to be consulted.

RHODA

Of course dear. We need a reference. We must look to the
classics. We need to find a way to make things right.

BLAZE

Cars are classic. A good pencil skirt is a classic and so is
my nail polish.

RHODA

Well you have your perspective I guess. No, literature.

BLAZE

I read sometimes. I do have a Kindle.

HUBERT

You'll ruin your eyes.

BLAZE

She's a grown woman. I love stories about ghosts.

HUBERT

Yes I know. Now, *The Manchurian Candidate*. That's a classic.
Spies can make things right.

RHODA

Oh that spy stuff. It's not like it was all that original.
Too much gun waving.

BLAZE

I like spies. Tall, dark, tall.

HUBERT

Not when they are spying and shooting at you dear.

BLAZE

Yeah. Mom's spies are like mom's pies. Tall, but not too tall. Or was that tangy?

RHODA

Spies... testosterone ridden men... focus people. As for you Blaze, keep your pants on. The classics... bad men... justice... good versus evil. There is one story that works for our circumstances. It has a proven track record . Can anyone guess? Come close and I'll tell you.

(Huddling together in a low whispering)

BLAZE/HUBERT

Are you kidding? That's a gas. Oh, all right. The things you make me do.

BLACK OUT

END OF SCENE

ACT 1

SCENE 6

SETTING: FRENCHY KING BEDROOM

TIME: NIGHT

(FRENCHY is texting and watching TV. Suddenly, all the lights go out. Frenchy is quite alarmed. There is a large TV in the room that is on the floor. A white face appears in the screen then a white hand. Annoyed moaning is heard from TV. A ragged figure begins to shimmy out of the screen and slides to the floor. FRENCHY does not notice at first because he is yelling at his iPad screen.)

FRENCHY

Ah, dammit, I almost had ya.

(The ragged figure is handed a ball and chain by another white hand that has just shown up in the screen.)

(The ragged figure dons the ball and chain and it suddenly clanks to the carpet with a dull thud.)

(Frenchy looks up. His jaw drops he drops the iPad and rubs his eyes. He is staring at the GHOST WITH CHAINS/RHODA.)

(In the meantime two other pale figures slither from the screen. One gets helped out. One "ghost" has a great makeup job looks like a glamour ghost. The other looks like an old ghost, not a great job.)

GHOST WITH CHAINS

(New York accent)

Frenchy King, Frenchy King. Whoooo. The Council has decided to pay you a visit.

FRENCHY

I knew there was something wrong with this TV. A lot of 3-D Hi - Def baloney.

GHOST WITH CHAINS

You must be judged for crimes against society and little old ladies and nice girls and kindly gents.

FRENCHY

Where's that manual? Where did I put it?

(Frenchy rummages around in the stuff on the bed. GHOST WITH CHAINS approaches the bed, reaches out to touch FRENCHY.)

FRENCHY (CONT'D)

(shrieks)

You're real!

GHOST WITH CHAINS

We are real.. Whooo. As are your crimes Frenchy King.

(The OLD GHOST/HUBERT prods the GLAMOUR GHOST/BLAZE to the front. GHOST IN CHAINS gives the ball and chain to the GLAMOUR GHOST.)

SONG - "BALL AND CHAIN"

GLAMOUR GHOST/BLAZE

THEY SAY TIME HEALS ALL THINGS
 SO I'VE BEEN TOLD
 LIKE IN A MOVIE
 LIKE IN STORIES OF OLD
 BUT THEN YOU CAME ALONG
 AND CHANGED THE GAME

(OLD GHOST points to a picture of
 (Frenchy.)

YOU BROUGHT YOUR PART
 IT WAS THIS BALL AND CHAIN

(OLD GHOST and GHOST WITH CHAINS begin to
 pantomime the door and it being opened.)

YOU KNOW I OPENED THE DOOR
 BECAUSE I COULD
 WELL THE WOLF AT THE DOOR
 SAYS HE'S SO MISUNDERSTOOD
 I CRIED OUT AS LOUD
 AS LOUD AS I COULD
 BUT I CRIED OUT IN VAIN
 CAUSE THE ONLY SOUND HEARD
 WAS THE CLANK OF THE CHAIN

(Over the top)

WHEN YOU GIVE UP THE GHOST
 THEY SAY YOU GIVE UP THE CHAIN
 JUST ASK THE MAN

(OLD GHOST takes keys from Frenchy's
 bathrobe pocket. The bathrobe is nearby.)

WHO KEEPS THE KEYS IN HIS HAND
 IT'S HARD TO CROSS A RIVER OF STONE
 IT'S HARD TO GET BACK
 YOU'RE GOOD NAME ONCE IT'S RIPPED TO THE BONE

(GHOST WITH CHAINS opens her shirt we see
 bones.)

GHOST WITH CHAINS

Well, well, here we are again in the presence of the great
 Mr. King. Or should we call you the Sun King?

(MORE)

GHOST WITH CHAINS (CONT'D)

Now that's a good nickname for a pompous ass as yours truly.
Do you know who I am your majesty?

(FRENCHY cowers in fear and utter shock.)

FRENCHY

What are you talking about? What man? No I don't know you!
What the hell are you? No, it must be the bad sushi. You
aren't here.

GHOST WITH CHAINS

(dramatic New York accent)

You will be visited by three casualties. They are the
CASUALTY OF THE PAST, CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT and my very
favorite CASUALTY OF THE FUTURE. So enjoy the show. It's a
reality show and you are the star.

FRENCHY

OH really, so when is that going to happen?
(thinking)
Hasn't that been done before?

GHOST WITH CHAINS

Done before, done before? Geez, a critic.

FRENCHY

Why am I talking to a damn hallucination!

GHOST WITH CHAINS

Oh contraire.

(GHOST WITH CHAINS/RHODA stalks FRENCHY
around the room scaring him.)

GHOST WITH CHAINS (CONT'D)

Anytime now !!!

(The bedroom goes away and out comes a
TINY NIGHTCLUB WITH CHAIRS AND TWO
TABLES.)

(FRENCHY still in his pajamas is pushed
into a chair by RHODA still in ghost
costume.)

(HUBERT and BLAZE enter. BLAZE in a long
red dress steps up to a mike.)

RHODA and HUBERT sit at another table
looking like ghostly, other worldly
tourists.)

SONG- "YOU DID ME WRONG"

BLAZE (CASUALTY OF THE PAST)

YA KNOW I HAD A CAREER
I WAS ON TOP BUT YOU CAME ALONG
IT ALL STOPPED
WHILE SITTING IN THE MEDI-SPA
I SPIED A MAGAZINE
ON THE COVER
SCORNED AND ALONE
MY FACE PUCKERED COFFEE STAINS
DRIPPING INNUENDO
AND THE CAPTION READ
BLAZE HAYNES
CAUGHT LIP SYNCING
WELL AFTER PARAGRAPH TWO
THE PHONE RANG
IT WAS MY AGENT
SAYING, "I QUIT"
YOU DONE ME WRONG, FRENCHY
YOU DONE ME WRONG, FRENCHY
YOU TOLD A TALE, FRENCHY
YOU TOLD A TALE, FRENCHY
IT WAS A WHALE OF A TALE
I WENT TO JAIL, FRENCHY
WELL NOT REALLY
IT JUST FELT THAT WAY
YOU KNOW ITS HARD
READING ABOUT YOURSELF
WHEN YOUR FACE, YOUR FACE
IS ALL OVER THE SHELF
O.M.G.
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH WORDS
IN THIS SONG
TO TELL HOW YOU DONE
ME WRONG
ITS HARD SO HARD
WHEN THE WORDS
ARE SO LONG
THEY WON'T FIT
IN THIS SONG
YOU DID ME WRONG!

(RHODA stands up and applauds.)

GHOST WITH CHAINS/RHODA

Wasn't she great. Give her a big hand.

(SOUNDS of CLAPPING like in a big crowd.)

FRENCHY

Why does that sound familiar? Are you done yet? I want to go back to bed.

(FRENCHY tries to stand up and leave but he seems glued to the chair by an invisible force.)

(HEADLINES begin floating in the air that say "CAR CRASH - UP NEXT".)

(The tiny nightclub changes color SIRENS SCREECHING and a CRASH sound.)

HUBERT

Oh my. I remember that. Blaze and I.

GHOST WITH CHAINS/RHODA

Yes and it was not a fun time for me either. Damn King reporters chasing you.

(The headlines change to read - CONGRESSMAN HAYNES AND LOVE CHILD, THE FAMOUS CHANTEUSE, BLAZE, ALMOST KILLED IN CAR CRASH. CHASED BY KING MEDIA REPORTER.)

FRENCHY

I DIDN'T DO IT!! IT WAS THOSE OTHER GUYS !!

(BLAZE wants to keep singing.)

BLAZE

YOU, YOU DONE ME WRONG
(big finish)

FRENCHY runs off terrified. RHODA and HUBERT clap and holler. BLAZE bows.

BLAZE (CONT'D)

What a sore sport.

GHOST WITH CHAINS/RHODA

Now Hubert. You're up next. Break a leg.

(FRENCHY runs like he is escaping. For a moment he thinks he's alone and collects his breath.)

FRENCHY

That was a dream. I was dreaming about those awful Haynes people. Why? Where am I?

(FRENCHY stands alone in the dark.)

(Suddenly the CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT is standing by a chair on a dark stage. He has a floor length gavel he holds like a flag and there is a light on him.)

(The CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT turns to FRENCHY.)

CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT

FRENCHY KING, ISN'T IT TRUE
YOU THINK THE WORLD BELONGS TO YOU?

FRENCHY

Ahhh... no?

CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT

Exhibit A. Headline - *Hubert Haynes is a crooked Congressman*. Now that wouldn't be because we tried to investigate your questionable journalistic practices, would it?

(HEADLINES appear in the air)

FRENCHY

No, I don't know how that headline got there.

(HUBERT takes a pose.)

SONG - "IS IT TRUE/POLITICS"

HUBERT

THIS INQUIRY IS CALLED TO ORDER
IS IT TRUE, FRENCHY KING
IS IT TRUE?
YOU CONFOUNDED THE PEOPLE,
DID YOU?
OUTRAGIOUS, BALONIUS

GOSH DARN FELONIOUS
 TALES OF INTRIGUE
 FOR ALL
 READERS, TWEETERS
 MEDIA BELIEVERS
 IN THE WORLD AND
 ALL PARTS UNKNOWN?
 IS IT TRUE, FRENCHY KING
 IS IT TRUE
 IS IT TRUE
 IS IT TRUE
 WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU?

FRENCHY

Is this that crazy ghost thingy. Are you going to show me the errors of my ways or what?

(Hubert raises the gavel over Frenchy's head.)

(HUBERT swats FRENCHY with the gavel.)

FRENCHY (CONT'D)

What are you doing old man? This is all very interesting but I really want to go back to bed.

(Four pink haired KIDS in matching ghost getup enter. HUBERT looks annoyed.)

CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT

I thought this was my scene.

KID #1

You are over your head gramps. We're your backup.

CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT

Do you know any soft shoe? None of that stuff you kids do on your heads.

KID #1

Hit it boys.

(Dance routine soft shoe as Hubert speaks.)

CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT

Now where was I? I would like to sing about a number of things that come to mind.

SONG - "IS IT TRUE/POLITICS"

I WAS ONCE AN UPSTANDING CONGRESSMAN
 NEVER HAD A WORRY OR A DOUBT
 EVERYBODY LOVED ME
 EVEN WHEN THEY SNUBBED ME
 I HAD A JOB THAT HAD SOME CLOUT
 WHILE SITTING IN THE MEN'S ROOM
 I READ A MAGAZINE
 AND TO MY SURPRISE
 I GAZED INTO MY EYES
 GAZING BACK AT ME
 IN LIVING COLOR WAS ME
 AND THE CAPTION READ
 HUBERT HAYNES CAUGHT RED HANDED!
 WELL AFTER PARAGRAPH THREE
 IT WAS OBVIOUS I WAS OUT OF A JOB ,
 OH GEE

(Kids keep dancing looking bored.
 Suddenly they break into a hip hop
 routine to an unseen boom box.)

KID #1

You're putting us to sleep Gramps. Let's show em how its done.

KIDS

POLITICS
 POLITICS
 ITS A GAME WHERE WE GET OUR KICKS
 ITS A KICK ITS A GAS
 BE A SNAKE IN THE GRASS
 BUY A VOTER BUY A JUDGE
 NOT A PROBLEM NOT A GRUDGE
 CAUSE YOU'RE IN POLITICS

CASUALTY OF THE PRESENT/HUBERT

Now wait a minute who's side are you on?

(The KIDS break out into a wild dance
 number dragging HUBERT and FRENCHY into
 it.)

(The mood becomes raucous and weirdly supernatural when RHODA and BLAZE enter the scene.)

(Dazed and confused finally FRENCHY breaks free and runs off.)

END OF SCENE

ACT 1

SCENE 7

SETTING: PARK BENCH

TIME: LATER ON

(RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT, looking their normal selves, are sitting on a park bench in deep discussion.)

Poor Donny.

RHODA

What a Joe.

BLAZE

HUBERT

Doesn't the Scrooge character have a change of heart? If you want the Donny boy to get justice you might need a little extra push. Anyhoo, that's my two cents.

RHODA

I think it's time he met number three. I never got any satisfaction. I want payback. I want something from him.

STREET

(There is laughing heard. 4 KIDS saunter in and gather around a lamppost. One KID lights up a cigarette. Another KID is reading something on his IPHONE.)

KID #1

Did you know the Clapper thingy and Chia Pets are really alien techno?

KID #2

Now that is buzz worthy.

KID #3

Did you read about the pizza drone that blew a guys's apartment up because he had the wrong change. That's nasty.

KID #4

Serves him right. Pizza drones. How do you suppose the King Media dudes get their information? Spies? Drone spies?

KID #1

They get it from the aliens dude. Pizza drones came from aliens.

(RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT listen in on the banter. Just then SHEILA ACER walks along the street. She sees the kids and tries to avoid them nervously.)

(The kids recognize her as she walks down a dark street at night as she is getting out of work.)

(SHEILA tries to avoid them. The KIDS circle around her kind of slow but not menacing.)

The KIDS pick up items in the street and use them as percussion instruments.)

KID #1 (CONT'D)

Well lookie here. We talk and voila she shows up. The Queen of mean and in between. Can I escort you to somewhere?

SHEILA

Now boys don't get up on my account.

SONG - "BABEL"

KID #1

EACH DAY I TURN MY GOOGLE ON
BEFORE I GO TO SCHOOL
THEY SAY I NEED TO WATCH THE NEWS
DON'T WANT TO BE A FOOL

KID #2

THE LADY IN THE TIGHT DRESS,
HER HAIR IS PRETTY COOL

BUT ALL I HEAR IS
 BLAH, BLAH
 BLAH, BLAH

KID #3

THIS BLONDIE GOT A SWAGGA ON HER
 SHE'S SUCH A PRETTY PICTURE
 YOU COULD PUT A FRAME ON HER

KID #4

KINDA LIKE MY SISTER
 BUT ALL I HEAR IS
 BUY A CAR
 BE A STAR
 BUY A FROZEN DINNER
 TAKE A POLL
 ROCK N ROLL

ALL THE KIDS

I TOO CAN BE A WINNER
 BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH,
 BLAH, BLAH
 IT'S SO MUCH BABBLE
 IT'S SO MUCH BABBLE
 YOU THINK WE'RE RIFF RAFF
 YOU THINK WE'RE RABBLE
 IT'S SO MUCH NOISE
 TO ALL US BOYS
 LET'S START THE STORY OVER
 LET'S START OVER
 REWIND, REWIND, REWIND
 I THINK I NEED A ROAD MAP
 TO GET THROUGH
 ALL THIS BLEEPIN CR...P
 I GOTTA MIND, I GOTTA BRAIN
 BUT ALL THIS BABBLE HAS MADE
 US ALL INSANE
 REWIND, REWIND
 CHANGE THE CHANNEL

SHEILA

You are just a bunch of hoodlums. Leave me alone.

KID #1

She called us hoodlums. That hurts my feelings. You can dish it out but you can't take it. Better run sister. So where were we?

(SHEILA runs away. The KIDS run off.)

(BLAZE, HUBERT and RHODA are left alone
sitting on the park bench.)

BLAZE

My, they really don't like her. I sure don't like her.

HUBERT

I should say not.

RHODA

It's because she runs with King. I have a plan for King. Put
him away, where he can't meddle in people's lives anymore.

HUBERT

Revenge.

RHODA

Family honor. Oh Hubert... Let me explain.

(RHODA stands up and begins to pace. She
is lit by one light.)

SONG - "MY STORY"

RHODA

YOU SEE IN MY LIFE A LITTLE RAIN
WAS BOUND TO WASH AWAY THE
SANITY I HAD
THAT MADE ME MAD
COULD NOT CONTROL THE THINGS
PEOPLE DID OR SAID
WHAT PEOPLE WROTE OR READ
ABOUT ME
AND MY FAMILY YOU SEE
MY STORY IS MY STORY
I WANNA TELL IT AND GET IT
OFF MY CHEST
IT'S A KNIFE FIGHT FOR EVERY WORD
IT'S A BATTLE TO BE HEARD
AND EVEN THOUGH I VENTURE OUT
INTO THE REALM OF THE ABSURD
IT'S STILL MY STORY ALL THE SAME
NO ONE TO BLAME
MY STORY IS MY STORY
I NEED TO TELL IT AND GET IT
OFF MY CHEST
WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN,
LIKE SO MANY THINGS

IMAGINATION, CAN GIVE
 MY HEART WINGS
 SO PLEASE BE FAIR
 DON'T BLAME ME IF I DARE
 CAUSE...
 MY STORY, NOT WEIRD OR GORY
 THERE IS A REASON AND A RHYME
 I JUST WANNA WRITE AN ENDING
 I CAN LIVE WITH THIS TIME...

HUBERT

As much as I hate to say this, why don't you give him a chance. I know... twenty-four hours. That always sounds sportsmanlike.

RHODA

Oh... OK but that's all.

BLAZE

I'd just hire a hit man.

HUBERT

Oh my... Now don't give your mother any ideas.

END OF SCENE

ACT 1

SCENE 8

SETTING: FRENCHY KING'S BEDROOM

TIME: NIGHT

FRENCHY

Well there was only one ghost. That story had three.

(ON FRENCHY'S TV SCREEN. We see GHOST #3
 GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA doing a commercial
 called Perry's Poorhouse.)

GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA

WELCOME TO PERRY'S POORHOUSE
 WHERE THE RICH GO TO LIVE
 WHEN THEIR POCKETS GET THIN

IT'S NOT A HOTEL
 CAUSE YOU NEVER CHECK OUT
 IT'S MORE LIKE A DREAM
 FROM WHICH ONE NEVER AWAKES
 SO TURN IN THEM GUCCIS
 AND ALL THEM NICE TOYS
 GET IN THE LINE WITH THEM OTHER POOR BOYS,
 MR. KING.

(FRENCHY KING jumps out of bed in a panic. Checks his iPhone all his gadgets and stuff to see it's all there. He sloths it off as another stupid dumb dream. Just then the TV comes to life. The third GHOST is in the screen.)

GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA (CONT'D)

I am the Ghost of the Future."Imagine that poor defenseless boy Donny crying in his beer because of YOU! I won't let you do to him what you did to me, what you did to Blaze and to Hubert Haynes. You need to stop this now!"

FRENCHY

Oh not again. What the hell are you talking about?

GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA

Oh yes. You got a little backstory. You wrote vicious stories and ruined many lives including mine and thine and you don't care.

FRENCHY

How do you know I don't care?

GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA

Times a wastin'. You have five hours I mean twenty-three, I mean twenty-four, oh hell to get things right with Donny O'Connelly and his nice girl the lovely Laura.

FRENCHY

If I don't want to or can't or get busy and forget to.

GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA

Mr. Perry's waiting... his blood thirsty wolves are waiting to greet you in a bleak really smelly place no man has ever returned from.

(SOUND of howling wolves. FRENCHY jumps.)

Aahhhh!!

FRENCHY

Twenty-four hours.

GHOST OF FUTURE/RHODA

BLACK OUT

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SCENE 1

SETTING: STREET

TIME: NEXT DAY

(DONNY is being chased by news people.
The MAYOR is there and he is
orchestrating the chase.)

NEWS PEOPLE

Is it true you did these things?

DONNY

No!! There is no embezzler. It never happened! Why can't you leave us alone?

MAYOR

I am here to take back the award you crook.

DONNY

Why? You can't do that. It's all lies. I don't know about any embezzler.

(HELEN and YOUNG TOM are moving out with
their shopping bags.)

DONNY (CONT'D)

Where are you all going ? Come back. I am innocent!

HELEN

We can't afford the bad publicity.

YOUNG TOM
I believe in you Donny and Ms. Laura too.

HELEN
(embarrassed)
Come on Tom.

YOUNG TOM
We are going down the street to the K-Mart parking lot.

(The 4 KIDS walk on stage with picket signs and then exit.)

(RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT are watching from a hidden place on the sidelines.)

(DONNY and LAURA are left alone on the street.)

(Donny has the empty case that the award came in. LAURA wrings her hair.)

LAURA
It could be worse.

DONNY
What's worse than this?

LAURA
I don't know... ahh.. Damn it Donny we can't just take this lying down. We have to fight back. This is our whole lives and...
(crying)

DONNY
There, there, we'll be fine you'll see.

(DONNY and LAURA walk off holding each other close.)

(FRENCHY KING and SHEILA ACER are both on their phones at opposite ends talking to each other.)

FRENCHY
Change in plans. Find out something good about that O'Connelly kid. Got that?

What... are you kidding?
 SHEILA

It's life and death doll.
 FRENCHY

What has come over you?
 SHEILA

Think good thoughts, happy thoughts. Reverse psychology.
 Didn't you learn that in school?
 FRENCHY

Did you forget to take your medication again?
 SHEILA

Smart ass.
 FRENCHY

First you want to bury him, now no. Yes, I'm worried.
 SHEILA

I'm the boss. Do as I ask please. It's my decision.
 FRENCHY

OK, OK ... I'll try...
 SHEILA

I gave up snacks, I'll stop watching TV. Ohh that's a tough one.
 FRENCHY

(They both hang up together. FRENCHY and SHEILA slink off in opposite directions.)

DARK PATH

TRENCH COAT BOB is singing and feeling carefree as he walks along down a dark path.

TRENCH COAT BOB

MAN CHASES WOMAN
 WOMAN RUNS FROM MAN
 SUSIE ROBS THE TRUST FUND
 MOMMY'S NOT AWARE
 IT'S A LOT OF INTRIGUE
 BUT REALLY DO I CARE

(GPS tracker begins to CHIRP)

TRENCH COAT BOB (CONT'D)

It must be here! But what's here?

(BOB comes to a place of dense bushes and vines.)

(He stands looking at the map, his back to the bushes.)

Nothing here.

(Silently the bushes give way, a door opens, an arm comes out grabs TRENCH COAT BOB and yanks him in. The door shuts. The bushes go back to where they were.)

(The bush fades into the darkness.)

NIGHT - HOMELESS HOUSE

(DONNY and LAURA huddles on the front steps of the Homeless House.)

DONNY

So I wonder when the Feds will show up to haul us away.

LAURA

We haven't been alone like this in a long time, Donny. You know it's kind of nice.

DONNY

Yeah. So what do we sell off first? Your clunker or mine? Gee my school loans are due. So if we plead guilty will they be easier? Never been to jail.

LAURA

No. Stop this. Get up Donny grow some hair.

DONNY

I don't think that's the precise term. Will it be painful?

LAURA

Painful? What ever. Get up. Stand tall...

DONNY

Before I fall. Right.

LAURA

Right - you got it.

(Clock SOUND counting the hours.)

DONNY

Did you hear that clock chime? Where did that come from? We don't have a clock.

LAURA

We must be hallucinating. Say remember the time when we were thinking about the future you know?

DONNY

Hey yeah... well if our future is a jail cell can't think of any one I'd rather share it with than you, Laura.

SAME TIME - PARK BENCH

(RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT bide their time on the park bench with the moonlight overhead. There are SOUNDS OF HOOT OWLS somewhere.)

RHODA

Ever read the stories about the Greeks?

HUBERT

Of course.. So did this ghost thing work is he going to change his ways?

BLAZE

I like Greek cheese.

RHODA

Dear. You consider that salty paste cheese? We'll see. He looked pretty shook up.

HUBERT

Is this another let's consult the classics moment again?

RHODA

Do I detect a bit of sarcasm?

HUBERT

Just asking. It never hurts to ask. I never assume to know what is going on in that head of yours.

Oh I don't know I think you do. RHODA

SONG - MY IMAGINATION

RHODA
 IN MY IMAGINATION
 THINGS ARE THE WAY THEY COULD BE
 THE WAY THEY SHOULD BE

HUBERT
 IT'S NICE TO BE IN YOUR IMAGINATION
 WE HAVE ADVENTURES THAT'S NO LIE
 WE SPEND FAMILY TIME
 WE GO PLACES WE NEVER GO FOR REAL

RHODA
 THAT'S TRUE

HUBERT
 WE HAVE A CRAZY TIME
 WE CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER

BLAZE
 BETTER THAN FAMILY THERAPY
 I LOVE A GOOD CONFLICT

HUBERT
 I CAN ATTEST TO THAT
 CAUSE YOU GET IT FROM YOUR MOTHER

RHODA
 OH HUBERT

RHODA/HUBERT/BLAZE
 AS LONG IT'S WITH YOU AND ME
 AND ME IN THIS IMAGINATION
 WE'LL GET ALONG JUST FINE

RHODA
 Remember the one about the horse. You know da, da, da bearing
 gifts.

BLAZE
 I love horses. What dadada?

RHODA

You never got a horse. Hard to get a horse in a taxi. Up an elevator. Into a penthouse.

BLAZE

But I'd like one. Dad always promised me one.

HUBERT

I did? You are too old for ponies. My women are spoiled. Get to the point, Rhoda.

RHODA

I always get to the point even when it's miles away, like now, you'll see.

(They huddle in discussion.)

BLAZE, HUBERT

You want to do what? Not again.

BLACK OUT

END OF SCENE

ACT II

SCENE 2

SETTING: KING MEDIA OFFICE

TIME: NEXT DAY

(FRENCHY KING paces nervously in his office, biting his nails. SHEILA enters. There is a news broadcast being held in another part of the floor that goes on that is clearly seen through a glass pane.)

SHEILA

What is wrong with you? We are all looking to find good things on Donny but he has stayed out of the public eye. When did you get a conscience? By the way, where is that no good nephew of yours. He is not anywhere to be found.

FRENCHY

What? You would not understand.

SHEILA

Naa... that would never happen.

(RHODA in disguise as a bag lady named HOMELESS MADGE, enters the reception area of the office. She has a bag with her. She approaches the RECEPTIONIST.)

HOMELESS MADGE

Oh hello. I am here to see Mr. King.

RECEPTIONIST

Ahhh. How did you get in here.

HOMELESS MADGE

Door. How did you get in here?

RECEPTIONIST

I work here. I am calling the guards.

HOMELESS MADGE

You looking for a story, I have one. That Donny person.

(The RECEPTIONIST enters FRENCHY'S office.)

RECEPTIONIST

Sorry to bother you but someone out here wants to talk to you about that O'Connelly situation.

FRENCHY

Oh? OK.

(HOMELESS MADGE enters. She stares at Frenchy she wants to strangle him but stays in character.)

FRENCHY (CONT'D)

What do you want? I gave last year. Come back next year.

HOMELESS MADGE

Mr. King, I know about you. I have read your various literary contributions to society.

FRENCHY

Oh really.

HOMELESS MADGE

I like the pictures. Say who is that nice looking family you got hanging on your wall there?

FRENCHY

Those are the Haynes nut cases. A bad writer, a stuck up singer and an old politician. Great family.

HOMELESS MADGE

Must be special to have such a place on your wall.

FRENCHY

We're in litigation. I keep their picture there so I can be reminded. But, go on, why are you here again?

HOMELESS MADGE

I live at the Happy Endings Homeless House. I know what goes on there. I know the real embezzler. Not Donny. He's a peach and would not hurt a fly.

FRENCHY

Oh, is that so. Got some evidence.

HOMELESS MADGE

Yes the culprit took a selfie.

(TV screen in office flashes a picture of
a GUY IN A CABLE MAN UNIFORM mugging.)

FRENCHY

Selfie? How'd you do that... in my office? Get the tech guy up here and fix this screen.

HOMELESS MADGE

This is your embezzler. Not Donny.

SHEILA

Why's he wearing a cable guy uniform?

HOMELESS MADGE

A clever disguise. Who would suspect the cable man of stealing money from a homeless shelter.

FRENCHY

Sheila get our guest a glass of milk. And some cologne.

SHEILA
We have girls for that.

FRENCHY
Go.

(SHEILA exits.)

FRENCHY (CONT'D)
Tell me more.

HOMELESS MADGE
WELL IT ALL STARTED.....

FRENCHY
Yes.

HOMELESS MADGE
Just a minute...

(MADGE pulls food out of her bag and starts eating.)

FRENCHY
Go right ahead. Not on the desk!

HOMELESS MADGE
I brought you a present because you are such a nice man. It's cake. Come on, I know you want it.

(SHEILA enters with the milk.)

SHEILA
Here's the milk. I'll go.

FRENCHY
(longing)
Stay. Cake?

HOMELESS MADGE
I made this myself. By the way nice shoes, Babs.

(MADGE scratches herself and fiddles with bag. Picks up things on FRENCHY'S desk and studies them, in the broadcast area something has happened to cause a ruckus.)

FRENCHY

Go see what's going on out there.

(SHEILA exits.)

SONG - LOWER SLOBOVIA

HOMELESS MADGE/FRENCHY

HOMELESS MADGE

WHERE WERE WE? OH YES
WELL IT ALL STARTS WHEN I FIRST MOVED IN
LOST MY JOB CAUSE MY GOUT KICKIN' UP
THE CABLE GUY CAME TO FIX THE TV ON THE FRITZ
I MISSED THE DANCIN' WITH THE STARS

FRENCHY

OH?

HOMELESS MADGE

YEAH. WE WAS LIKE BABES
NOBODY EVER REALLY KNEW
WHAT HE WAS REALLY DOING
IN THE OFFICE
HE WAS PLAYIN' WITH PHONES
TAPPING AND PUTTING BUGS
UNDER THE RUG

FRENCHY

YOU KNOW THIS HOW

HOMELESS MADGE

I KNOW THINGS. SEE THINGS
DONNY NEVER DID ANYTHING

FRENCHY

SO WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

HOMELESS MADGE

TRODGE. TRODGE N. HASS
SLAVIC FROM THOSE GLOOMY PLACES
YOU READ ABOUT IN NAT GEO
HE'S FROM LOWER SLABOVIA
LOWER SLABOVIA

LOWER SLABOVIA
 LAND OF STARVING SNOW BOUND SMUCKS
 HE WAS A SPY FOR SLOBOVIA
 SO WHAT'S IT TO YA WHEN THE
 PEASANTS IN SLOBOVIA WANNA MAKE A BUCK?
 WHAT'S A LITTLE LARCENY
 WHEN YOU ARE SINKING DOWN INTO THE MUCK?
 OH, THE PETTIEST HUMILIATION,
 SO POOR TRODGE
 WAS SENT TO SAVE HIS NATION!
 THAT HOLE IN THE WALL, THEY CALL
 SLOBOVIA

FRENCHY
 Terrible place. Well did he save his nation?

SHEILA
 Everything is under control. What did I miss.

FRENCHY
 Madge here gave me his name. Trodge N. Hass.

SHEILA
 What kind of name is that?

FRENCHY
 Lower Slabovian.

SHEILA
 You buy this? But, but it's my story. Bob's story remember?
 The phone call? Find dirt etc, etc.

FRENCHY
 Yes. Post the selfie with a headline. Finally I get a break.

SHEILA
 Oh God, what are we coming to?

(SHEILA exits exasperated.)

RHODA
 I HOPE THEY CATCH THIS CROOK
 FOR SAKE OF THE WOMEN AND GIRLS

FRENCHY
 You poor things.

RHODA
WE'LL SEND HIM BACK TO SLOBOVIA
YOU AND ME

FRENCHY
YES!

FADE OUT
END OF SCENE

ACT II

SCENE 3

TIME: THE NEXT DAY

(Big splashy front page of cable man's selfie and a headline on a TV screen - CROOKED CABLE MAN EXPOSED.)

(FRENCHY strolls in with SHEILA and past the RECEPTIONIST at the desk.)

(FRENCHY looks up at the screen.)

FRENCHY
There it is, my salvation from the poorhouse. Damn ghost anyway, what does it know about the world? What does it know about the future?

SHEILA
What are you mumbling?

FRENCHY
I love the smell of a trending headline.

SHEILA
I think they just burned the cinnamon rolls again.

FRENCHY
No, this is news being made and innocent victims being exonerated. Journalism.

SHEILA
Well it helped the ratings and you're a hero to the homeless shelter.

(FRENCHY sits down at his desk and props up his feet.)

(Just then an older man named JOHN storms into the reception area.)

JOHN

Do you know who I am?

RECEPTIONIST

Ah No. How did you get in here?

JOHN

The doorman let me in. I need to see your boss... now!

RECEPTIONIST

OK.

(The RECEPTIONIST rushes FRENCHY'S office.)

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

There's man here to see you and he looks mad.

SHEILA

Send him in.

(JOHN barges in and hovers over the desk.)

FRENCHY

Well John... so nice to see you. Been a long time.

JOHN

How dare you. You accuse my son of stealing money from a homeless shelter. That's low even for you. You are the master of excessive hyperbole.

FRENCHY

Your son?

JOHN

That boy in your headline is my son Jimmy. That picture is him at a frat house Halloween party. It's all over the place!

FRENCHY

Sheila!

SHEILA

You got it from that woman I told you. You have been punked!

JOHN

I'm suing you and your rags. Francis, you're some friend.

FRENCHY

John...Wait!

(JOHN storms out and leaves in a hurricane of confusion.)

SHEILA

See you never listen to me. Now we're screwed.

(SHEILA leaves crying.)

STREET

(RHODA, BLAZE and HUBERT are looking at the headlines, FRENCHY KING PULLS FAST ONE. CABLE GUY GATE on TV screen in a window.)

(Hubert gazes at it confused)

HUBERT

What's this? Did you do this? Is this the new twist?

BLAZE

Wow, way to go!

HUBERT

Your mother can't help herself. She wants revenge.

RHODA

Well.

HUBERT

And.

RHODA

Well Hubert, I tried to give him twenty-four hours but you know how it is. He was not up for the task. Things got in his way.

HUBERT

Oh, so you threw a monkey wrench so he could not succeed. All right, do what you must.

(MORE)

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Cart him off to some dark dank poorhouse with no hope just to make yourself feel better. Yes, it is after all your story. I don't approve.

RHODA

Family honor, Hubert. Family honor.

BLACK OUT

END OF SCENE

ACT 1I

SCENE 4

SETTING - FRENCHY KING'S BEDROOM

TIME: NIGHT

(FRENCHY is in bed trying to sleep.)

(Suddenly a big billboard reading DONNY IS A NICE GUY - ACQUITTED - NEWS AT 11. Over that is another sign that reads NEVER MIND. It rolls into the bedroom area. Frenchy looks at the billboard.)

FRENCHY

What the hey!!

(The GHOST OF FUTURE (RHODA), appears holding a sand timer. The sand runs down in the sand timer. She points to it.)

GHOST OF FUTURE (RHODA)

Times up. Though the billboard was a nice touch and news at 11 was nice but he is not cleared and they are still hounding him.

FRENCHY

Hey! I did my best. It's Madge's fault.

GHOST OF FUTURE (RHODA)

Why is it the lady always gets blamed. Let's go. We are going on a field trip.

(RHODA drags FRENCHY into darkness. Suddenly, face the wall of bushes. Silently, the bushes give way, a door opens, an arm comes out grabs FRENCHY and yanks him in. The door shuts. The bushes recede into darkness to forboding music of STURM UND DRANG.)

GHOST OF FUTURE (RHODA) (CONT'D)

Goodbye Mr. King.

FRENCHY

(muffled off stage)

Aehh what is that smell?

DARK STREET

(SHEILA walks nervously. Behind her LAURA walks.)

LAURA

You and that blood sucking boss of yours ruined me.

(SHEILA turns around.)

SHEILA

What do you want? Don't hurt me. He's not that bad.

LAURA

What are you two an item? Gag me... puke. Don't you have any respect for yourself? And why? Why us? Why not some rich guy or a rap singer. We're nobodies.

SHEILA

Mr. King has vanished. He called me and told me to find something good on your boyfriend that his life depended on it. Then he just disappeared. Do you know anything about this?

LAURA

Donny, I can't find him either. You know I can't even face my friends or go outta the house without some creepy news guy chasing me because of you.

SHEILA

Could Donny be, you know dangerous? I have to find him. Frenchy and I went too far this time.

(LAURA faces SHEILA)

SONG - "I WANT MY LIFE BACK"

LAURA

I WISH BUT NO. YOU KNOW I HATE YOU

SHEILA

AND I DON'T BLAME YOU TOO

LAURA

WHEN DOES THIS WAR BETWEEN US EVER END

SHEILA

I DIDN'T PICK YOU - YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE GRUDGES

LAURA

I WANT MY LIFE BACK

SHEILA

I WANT WHAT YOU HAVE

LAURA

What's that? A conscience?

I WANT MY LIFE BACK AND DONNY IS MY LIFE

SHEILA

I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S AT

LAURA

I WANT MY LIFE BACK

SHEILA

I WANT WHAT YOU HAVE
SOMEONE WHO'D LOVE ME
I'D GIVE ANYTHING FOR THAT
WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WAS SO NAIVE
FRENCHY CAME ALONG AND
HE MADE ME BELIEVE IN SOMETHING

LAURA

BUT WHY?

SHEILA

THE DOUGH WAS GOOD
WE GOT STUCK TO EACH OTHER
LIKE SMOKE AND FIRE

LAURA

BUT HE SUCKED YOU INTO A GUTTER
BUILT WITH WORDS AND MISLEADING YOU

(Sheila sits on a park bench in her suit
and high heels.)

SHEILA

Yes... that's true.

WE MET AT THE BILTMORE IN 1995
HE WAS A PICTURE, SHORT BUT NOT TOO SHORT
HE WAS EDITOR AND I WAS AN INTERN
AT THE DAILY NEWS IN NEW YORK

(Laura slowly comes over and sits next to
Sheila on the bench in her plain clothes
and loafers.)

LAURA

WE MET AT COLLEGE IN 2005
HE WAS A PICTURE TALL BUT NOT TOO TALL
HE WAS A STUDENT AND I WAS ONE TOO
AT AN IVY LEAGUE IN NEW YORK

SHEILA/LAURA

LIFE IS A PUZZLE THAT I CAN'T COMPLETE
IT WAS SWEET
NOW LOOKING BACK THERE WAS ALWAYS
SOMETHING MISSING
I REALLY LOVE THE ONE I'M MISSING
BUT IT ALL WENT WRONG
WITH HIM I BELONG
ALL BECAUSE
OF THE DAILY NEWS
OF THE DAILY NEWS
IN NEW YORK

LAURA

You're still wearing those damn shoes.

SHEILA

You're still wearing those boring loafers.

(Laura takes off her shoes.)

LAURA

Now, your turn.

(Sheila takes off her shoes.)

SHEILA

Try em.

(Laura slips on the shoes. They fit.
Sheila tries on the loafers.)

LAURA

Well maybe it's not too late. Like Donny always says about standing tall. Try it on your own. Be a good woman and maybe you will find the good man in him.

(Laura and Sheila take off the shoes and stand up. Barefoot they are the same height. They walk off in opposite directions.)

SPOTLIGHT ON DONNY

(DONNY stands alone)

DONNY

I can't stand to see Laura so glum, the way she looks at me. I can't be a victim I've got to stand tall before I fall. Mr. King has disappeared. I feel bad. I can't help but wonder why and what made this guy so mean and deceitful.

SPOTLIGHT ON RHODA

(RHODA enters)

DONNY (CONT'D)

Who are you?

RHODA

Your muse and guardian angel.

DONNY

Am I dreaming?

RHODA

No you are awake. I fixed your problem and now you want to worry about him?

DONNY

Mr. King?

I fixed him good.

RHODA

Is he dead?

DONNY

Oh heavens no! He went through the door.

RHODA

Door? Wow, that's weird. Twilight Zone. But I need to talk to him.

DONNY

(RHODA throws her hands up in the air.)

RHODA

I am at a loss. He fires you, slanders you and you want to do what?

DONNY

You need to take me there NOW!

RHODA

NO!

DONNY

Why not?

RHODA

There's no drama in that.

DONNY

Fine, I will find this door myself.

RHODA

Good luck with that. It's my plot device.

DONNY

I want to find Frenchy King, look into that bastard's face. He needs to apologize for destroying my life.

RHODA

Look kid you can't go there. When you go there that's it.

DONNY

How bad can a door be?

RHODA

Who's writing this story anyway?

I write my own stories.

DONNY

Give an inch, they take a mile.

RHODA

ACT II

SCENE 5

SETTING: INSIDE OF PERRY'S POORHOUSE

TIME: SAME TIME

(FRENCHY stands in the living room of PERRY'S POORHOUSE, a mishmash of bad interior decorating. "Don Giovanni" meets "Married with Children".)

What the hell is this? Ohhhh, who died?

FRENCHY

(Two ragtag INMATES in striped jumpsuits are trying to put out a fire at a kitchen stove.)

(Other INMATES are arguing and fighting over things. A TV is on.)

You burned our dinner again. Perry!!!

INMATE #1

Who the hell are you people? What is this?

FRENCHY

(A dashing silver haired man named MR. PERRY in sport coat enters and walks up to FRENCHY.)

Well... this is the poorhouse.

MR. PERRY

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

SONG - "PERRY'S POORHOUSE

MR. PERRY

WELCOME TO PERRY'S POORHOUSE
 I'M MR. PERRY AND THIS IS MY INN
 WHERE THE RICH GO TO LIVE
 WHEN THEIR POCKETS GET THIN
 IT'S NOT A HOTEL CAUSE
 YOU NEVER CHECK OUT
 IT'S MORE LIKE A DREAM
 FROM WHICH ONE NEVER WAKES
 SO TURN IN THEM GUCCIS
 AND ALL THEM NICE TOYS
 GET IN THE LINE
 WITH THEM OTHER POOR BOYS,

BACK UP SINGERS

WELCOME TO PERRY'S POORHOUSE
 HE'S MR. PERRY AND THIS IS HIS INN
 IT'S NOT A HOTEL CUZ
 YOU NEVER CHECK OUT
 LIKE A REALLY BAD DREAM
 YOU CAN NEVER AWAKE
 AND FOR HADES SAKE
 WE HOPE YOU CAN BAKE!

MR. PERRY/BACK UP SINGERS

SO ENTER IN
 SO ENTER IN
 ENTER IN
 ENTER IN...

MR. PERRY

Welcome to Perry's Poorhouse. I own this joint. Maybe you did something? Well we are very happy to have you. Babs, we gotta another one.

(BABS comes over in her striped jumper.
 Tall blond in boots.)

FRENCHY

Wow. You some kind of guard? Are you going to interrogate me?

BABS

Maybe, I'm the Social Worker. Frances P. King II? That is your name? You also go by Frenchy King or the Sun King. So do you have any skills? You could be here a long time and everyone has to work to keep up this fine establishment.

FRENCHY

What do you mean do I have any skills? That's a ridiculous question.. This is a bad dream.

BABS

Wanna touch me and find out?

MR. PERRY

No chance.

BABS

He's going to be difficult.

MR. PERRY

You are so impressed with yourself. All these folks here are here because of you. Victims of character assassinations, scandals or other nefarious activities. They lost their shirts, their reputations. Might be a few literary critics here too.

FRENCHY

What?

MR. PERRY

It's your punishment to live here with them for all time, ha ha, ha.

FRENCHY

Sheila... help me.

(Just then TRENCH COAT BOB appears.)

FRENCHY (CONT'D)

(dumbfounded)

What are you doing here?

TRENCH COAT BOB

I found it... I found Hell or something like that. It's not so bad. You wrote about it in the last issue, Uncle Frenchy.

FRENCHY

I made that up. What idiot would go looking for Hell and find it? You, of course. You're fired!

TRENCH COAT BOB

Fine. Anyway I have a new boss. Him.

FRENCHY

Sheila help!

BLACK OUT

STREET

(A streetlight flickers on. DONNY walking with RHODA one way and LAURA and SHEILA walking the opposite way.)

SONG - I WANT MY LIFE BACK

DONNY

I WANT MY LIFE BACK.
GOTTA STAND UP TO THE BULLY
WHAT'S WITH RHODA?
THE OLD LADY IS SO KIND TO ME

RHODA

I WANT WHAT I HAD
THE KID IS A GOOD PERSON
HE WANTS WHAT HE HAD

DONNY

SHE KNOWS ME SO WELL
HOW CAN THAT BE

(RHODA breaks fourth wall and faces out.)

RHODA

IT'S EASY TO SEE
WHEN DONNY IS ME

ACT 1ISCENE 6

SETTING: PERRY'S POORHOUSE

(DONNY and RHODA enter. FRENCHY is sweeping as MR. PERRY supervises. TRENCH COAT BOB hangs out with the other INMATES.)

(FRENCHY stops when he sees DONNY. He does not at first realize who RHODA is.)

DONNY

Wow what is that smell? This is not what I expected.

FRENCHY

(growling)

You?!!

DONNY

Broom looks good on you. You lying coward.

FRENCHY

I'll kill you!!

DONNY

Oh yeah, what with that broom? So, this is the Poorhouse, always imagined it like in the stories, real dirty, creepy and people fighting over oatmeal.

MR. PERRY

Oatmeal is too good for these bastards. They only get it at Christmas, which we don't celebrate if you get my drift.

FRENCHY

That's fine with me. I hate the stuff. Do I know you? Oh no, not you that Haynes woman.

(stares at RHODA)

RHODA

No kidding sport. Rhoda Haynes, New York playwright caught in career killing scandal. News at Eleven. You ruined me with your phony stories. There's not enough darts in the world for you, King. I hope you ring up a lawyer bill to stretch to the moon and back.

FRENCHY

Darts? I never liked your plays. I did not ruin you, your bad writing did that.

RHODA

I never liked your plays. Geez everyone's a critic. It was a bore, a real snooze, highbrow without the eyebrows. Bloodless dribble, and on and on.

(RHODA points to an OLD MAN.)

RHODA (CONT'D)

His words. He was a critic. So I put him here. In my story. So how do you like my story so far?

(she points to TRENCH COAT BOB)
Another critic. He was always looking for trouble so I made him into a spy. The part suits you. Lucky.

TRENCH COAT BOB
(impressed with himself)
Now wait a minute.

DONNY
(to Mr. Perry)
You know we have something in common.

MR. PERRY
Oh, what's that?

DONNY
We both run a home for the economically disadvantaged. I could give you some pointers.

MR. PERRY
(annoyed by the comment)
Oh, you could, could you? Go to Hell. Sorry... you're already here.

DONNY
Ahh, yeah. I guess... but that doesn't mean it can't be the best version of Hell, or something like that.

MR. PERRY
How?

DONNY
You have to give people hope. Something to look forward to? Better living conditions, activities, trips, free speech.

INMATE #1
Yeah. I vote we keep Donny as our cook and butler.

MR. PERRY
Shut up.

DONNY
I think people should know you exist. Come out of the shadows.

FRENCHY
Well, I could run a story.

TRENCH COAT BOB

You already did.

FRENCHY

Oh, yeah.

INMATES

Don't forget us.

SONG - "FRENCHY KING"

INMATES

DOWN IN THIS HOLE WE TRY
 NOT TO THINK ABOUT YOU
 NOT TO THINK ABOUT YOU
 AND THE THINGS THAT YOU DO
 WE WERE HAPPY WITH OUR TV
 FINDING STUFF IN POKEMON GAMES
 WE AIN'T TELLING TALES BELIEVE ME
 COME TOMORROW, THEY'LL
 BE MORE OF THE SAME!
 SO FRENCHY KING HAS
 ANOTHER THING COMING
 FRENCHY KING GET IN LINE
 WITH THE REST
 FRENCHY KING
 WE GOT NEWS FOR YOU
 SO PAY YOUR DUES
 AND DON'T BE A PEST
 YOU AIN'T THE BEST
 IT'S NO SECRET EVERYONE HATES YOU
 WELL OK INTENSELY DISLIKES
 BEING PART OF YOUR CREATIONS
 FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FAME, OH BOY!
 SO MUCH FUN TRYING TO FIGHT YOU
 AS YOU KNOW LAWYERS ARE FREE
 WE WON'T GET NO VACATIONS
 THAT'S THE WAY IT'LL HAVE TO BE!
 SO FRENCHY KING HAS
 ANOTHER THING COMING
 FRENCHY KING
 GET IN LINE
 WITH THE REST
 FRENCHY KING
 WE GOT NEWS FOR YOU
 SO PAY YOUR DUES
 WE GOT NEWS ITS NICE
 WITHOUT YOU

INMATE #1

Yeah, how did he get here?

(RHODA looking nonchalant)

(The INMATES stare longingly at a candy bar DONNY is holding.)

INMATES

OOOHHH...

(Donny breaks off a piece and gives it to a young INMATE GIRL in a junior striped jumpsuit.)

(She eats it fast and then she holds her hands out please sir can I have some more?)

DONNY

You're pretty young. Why are you here?

INMATE GIRL

He said I cheated on a spelling bee.

(The song comes to an abrupt halt. Everyone glares at FRENCHY.)

(DONNY glares at FRENCHY.)

(The song starts up again.)

WE GOT NEWS, ITS NICE WITHOUT YOU!

(DONNY turns to OLD MAN INMATE.)

DONNY

So what's your story?

OLD MAN INMATE

I lost at poker to Teddy Roosevelt.

DONNY

Wow, you are old. That's some pretty old tabloid.

OLD MAN INMATE

And how about you young whippersnapper?

DONNY

Oh, I'm just visiting.

OLD MAN INMATE

(weak laugh)

You can have my bunk.

FEMALE INMATE #1

Hey, I'm just visiting too.

MR. PERRY

Rhoda, why did you bring him here?

RHODA

Donny? You know sometimes the plot just has a way of getting away.

ALL INMATES

We're all visiting!

MR. PERRY

Cut it out!

FRENCHY

(nauseous)

Hey, this isn't right. I am a character in a Rhoda Haynes play.

DONNY

I just want to know how you got my personal stuff. Why me?

FRENCHY

From Sheila and that knucklehead nephew in the ugly coat. You ruined me with your goody, goody whistle-blower bit. Stories, it's all about stories.

DONNY

I want King Media to stop doing bad things to people. My stories were true, that's the rub.

FRENCHY

I don't do bad things. It's business. You know business.

DONNY

Is too.

FRENCHY

Is not.

DONNY

Well I am sure you'll be very happy here... wherever this is.

(DONNY starts to walk away)

FRENCHY

No wait!

(FRENCHY looks around. MR. PERRY is motioning no, don't go. The INMATES are motioning yes, go.)

(DONNY walks away)

DONNY

Well I am sure you'll be very happy here.

INMATES

No!

(There's a melee and the INMATES go after FRENCHY. A riot ensues.)

(RHODA is alarmed she has lost control of the story.)

RHODA

Stop! He has to stay in the poorhouse. It's MY story!!

INMATES

Your what?

RHODA

That's right my story and you are all characters in my story.

THE FRONT DOOR

(Front door swings open. HUBERT and BLAZE stumble in. MR. PERRY gets annoyed.)

MR. PERRY

It's like a train station here. Now, who are YOU people?

HUBERT

Pardon us, we're with her. Now, Rhoda dear. Sometimes you have to let others make a decision.

RHODA

Oh Hubert.

HUBERT

Yes I am always in your stories and that's fine, but I never get a say. Just like when it was Hubert, I have an interview, Hubert, I have to see my agent. Hubert, I have to go to the Tony awards. You know I was just an elected official no big deal. But you were always the... the star.

(Everyone in the poorhouse is listening intently. FRENCHY takes notes on a napkin. MR. PERRY glares at him.)

RHODA

Well...

BLAZE

Mom... listen to him. Look I am sorry, I don't know it's kind of fun being a character. But listen to dad.

(RHODA pauses and reflects.)

HUBERT

Now see here, Rhoda I'm going to put in my two cents and you can't stop me!

(HUBERT squints up his forehead real hard and concentrates.)

(Suddenly there's a knock at the door. The door opens and in walks a LAWYER, well-dressed woman in a suit and carrying a briefcase.)

LAWYER

Did someone call for help to mediate an issue?

RHODA/FRENCHY

Lawyers? We hate lawyers!!

INMATES

Who's that?

HUBERT

Deux ex machina. Yes I did.

INMATES

Do what?

LAWYER

OK then let's review the pros and cons of the scene. You big mouth and you gentle lady. So have your day and let's play find the ending.

(The LAWYER takes FRENCHY and RHODA and separates them so they face each other. HUBERT stands with FRENCHY and BLAZE stands with RHODA. DONNY watches with the INMATES and MR. PERRY.)

SONG - SHOW ME

FRENCHY

SHOW ME SOME MERCY, RHODA

RHODA

MERCY, SHMERCY,

FRENCHY

I'LL GET A REAL JOB, OH I'M SO AFRAID

RHODA

YEAH HELL'S KITCHEN MAID

FRENCHY

CAN I MAKE A DEAL?

RHODA

ARE YOU FOR REAL?

FRENCHY

SECOND CHANCES, OH,
RHODA REALLY, SECOND CHANCES

RHODA

OH RHODA, OH RHODA... REALLY
IT'S A MATTER OF HONOR, FRANCIS

DONNY

CAN I SAY A WORD?

FRENCHY/RHODA

NO!

LAWYER
OK, OK, I've heard enough.

HUBERT
So what do you conclude?

LAWYER
Mr. King must pay for his misdeeds.

(The LAWYER pulls out a roll of paper and unrolls it and places it in front of FRENCHY as he sits at the dining table.)

LAWYER (CONT'D)
Sign here. The contract and bill of sale for one King Media. There must be a monetary exchange. Donny must buy the goods so as to avoid the gift tax.

FRENCHY
What the hell now wait just one minute!! God I hate lawyers.

DONNY
Does anybody have some money I can borrow?

INMATES
(together)
Hell no, it's a poorhouse!

MR. PERRY
We'll look.

(Everyone starts digging in the furniture and corners and the floor.)

MR. PERRY (CONT'D)
I found a quarter.

(At the end they pool it together.)

MR. PERRY (CONT'D)
We found ninety-nine cents and this bag of marbles.

LAWYER
Excellent. Donny make your ninety-nine cent offer to Mr. King, Mr. King you accept the offer and we'll seal the deal.

(FRENCHY looks pale but everyone around him is ready to kill him with a look. He signs the paper.)

FRENCHY

I accept. Ninety-nine cents is a fair price for a one hundred and seventy-five million dollar company.

DONNY

One hundred and seventy-five million?

FRENCHY

That's right. You can't count it on your fingers. But if it gets me out of this place, I will take your offer of ninety-nine cents and bag of marbles.

(FRENCHY gives the contract to the
LAWYER. He's in a cold sweat.)

LAWYER

Well that's wraps it up for me.

MR. PERRY

Say, do you ever make personal appointments? I could use a little counselling.

LAWYER

(flirting)

It's only Hell anyway.

MR. PERRY

Everybody scram.

(There is a rush to the door. The INMATES flop down on the couch and watch "Married with Children" and PERRY and LAWYER proceed to a back room.)

OTHER SIDE OF DOOR

The bush and vine covered door CREAKS open. DONNY, FRENCHY, HUBERT, RHODA AND BLAZE fall over each other to get out.)

HUBERT

That was an ordeal.

BLAZE

Some weird mind thought up that place. Sorry Mom.

HUBERT

Your mother. What can I say.

FRENCHY
I think I'm going to be sick.
(looking green)

RHODA
Not even big guy. Say it.

FRENCHY
Say what.

RHODA puts her face in FRENCHY'S face.
The others stand aside.)

RHODA
Got anything to say?

FRENCHY
Like what?

RHODA
Do you have anything to say to ME? To us? Now that I have you
here, after all you did to my family.

DONNY
Come on...

FRENCHY
Say what?

RHODA
You are dense.

FRENCHY
No, give me a hint.

DONNY
Sounds like... starts with an s ... rhymes with safari.

FRENCHY
That's too hard give me another clue.

DONNY/RHODA
Say, you're sorry, OK?

FRENCHY
Ahhhh, sssssssss, now can I buy me company back?

DONNY/RHODA
No!

FRENCHY

Please, please I have money and these marbles.

(Suddenly, SHEILA, LAURA and two KING
MEDIA REPORTERS rush at them.)

SHEILA

Frenchy!

LAURA

Donny!

REPORTERS

Mr. King, Mr. O'Connelly, did he kidnap you? Were you in any
danger?

FRENCHY

No and no. Unless you consider a hot blonde in boots
dangerous.

REPORTERS

So what happened?

(Everyone gets closer.)

FRENCHY

Well, if you wanna know the truth.. Well, it all started with
the visit from the three ghosts... you know the past, present
and future.

SHEILA

Come on Frenchy can't you for once play straight?

REPORTERS

Hasn't that been done before? I'm going for the alien angle.

FRENCHY

Shut up! It was that ghost... that weird ghost with the New
York accent and crazy hair showed me what would happen if I
didn't rescind my story on him. And then there was that Madge
person. Well I couldn't undo the Donny story.

(Points to DONNY)

Well I couldn't, so she dragged me to the Poorhouse.

LAURA

The Poorhouse? Now I heard it all.

REPORTERS

Where? We need an address.

FRENCHY

It was awful. It always smelled like burnt spam. They made me sweep the floor!

REPORTERS

Oh come on... you, Ha ah.

FRENCHY

No it's true. Donny came along and he was with the same ghost and some old man and a redhead. They tortured me. Made me sell the company to him for my freedom.

REPORTERS

You did what?

RHODA

I did that and if only in my imagination I got one up on Frenchy King. I did it for the family honor. Still, no remorse, no apology.

(Hubert and Blaze hug Rhoda.)

FRENCHY

If I had to apologize for everything I ever wrote about, every last person.

RHODA

Now that would be hell. So, I guess, this is the end.

(DONNY reunites with LAURA, FRENCHY gets hugged by SHEILA and the REPORTERS write.)

(HUBERT, BLAZE and RHODA take one last look around.)

(The CAST stands frozen in time as the lights fade out.)

SPOTLIGHT ON DESK

(RHODA pulls the last page out and walks to the wall of articles and pulls out a dart from FRENCHY KING'S face.)

RHODA (CONT'D)

The end.

(She sings to herself in the tune from the beginning.)

THEY SAY HE'S THE SUN KING
HE'S REALLY SOMETHING
HE NEVER HEARD OF THE GOLDEN RULE
THE MAN'S STILL A SINNER
SO I'LL BE A WINNER...
AND THAT CANNOT BE DENIED

(RHODA arranges her pages in a neat pile. Puts on her hat and walks away towards a coat rack.)

(Hubert enters in a suit and strolls over to her by the coat rack. He takes down a coat and helps her into it. He takes her arm and they walk off.)

HUBERT

Did you write something? Did you get it off your chest and am I dead again?

RHODA

Yes and no. I feel like I just spit up a hair ball. But I like the ending. Except for one thing.

HUBERT

Like I always say, a good ending is advantageous to all parties involved.

RHODA

Oh of course dear. You know, I always thought, if I just beat up the guy, I'd feel better. But I don't. So life goes on and hope must spring eternal. You can't change the past so I guess you have to change how you feel about it.

HUBERT

(beaming with joy)

Well said dear. Come on, Blaze is expecting us. Just think we're grandparents. Our Blaze is a mother. Now that is something good. We can put Mr. King behind us.

(HUBERT and RHODA embrace.)

RHODA

Grandchild. Say, just think of the bedtimes stories. If it's a boy I want to write him a really scary story with ...

HUBERT

Hmmm.... about that.

RHODA

You know you are a pretty good dancer.

HUBERT (CONT'D)

Did I dance? We have a long drive, you can tell me the whole story.

(Walking away HUMMING the same tune.)

THE END