



FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

By Robert J. Wheeler, 15 Windsor Cres., London, ON N6C 1V6 Canada – Revised March 29/25

Setting – the road between Heaven and Hell. Run time – Approximately 80 minutes.

Actors – 11 M – 7 F -- 4

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Email robwheeler999@gmail.com if you would like to read the play for a possible production and I will send it to you.

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
FREDDIE	Stand-up comedian, in casual dress	40-60	Male
ARNIE	Tabloid publisher, with small pail, in blue jean jacket, garden gloves	30-60	Male
TRIXIE	Prostitute, in sexy attire with boa	20-35	Female
MARY	CEO in dark business suit, white blouse, black tie, dark rimmed glasses	30-50	Female
JERRY	A gigolo, pimp	30-40	Male
JOE	Angel (<i>soft voice</i>) in white and	30-70	Male
OSCAR	Sin processor (<i>grating voice</i>), in black	30-70	Male
GREEK CHORUS	4 Singers	Any	2M 2F

M/A/F/T/J = MARY, ARNIE, FREDDIE, TRIXIE and JERRY

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

Time: Daytime

SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

DC from SR to SL -- Mary, Freddie, Trixie, Jerry and Arnie are in a line across the stage, at least arms-length apart, facing audience, motionless, frozen in place. Each appear stunned and look in a different direction.

MARY is in a dark business suit, slacks.

FREDDIE, in worn dark sport coat, colorful stained shirt, dark pants, with half full booze bottle, lays inebriated on his chest, feet pointed DS. His face shows a week's beard, and he wears a bent out of shape hobo hat.

JERRY wears a sleazy, loud but expensive suit. He casually walks amongst the others, constantly eyes them up.

TRIXIE, cheap hooker attire, red boa, chews gum.

ARNIE wears a blue jean jacket, dark pants, solid coloured shirt, gardening gloves, holds a small pail.

DR is a "Heaven" sign with an arrow pointing SR which is covered by black cloth.

DL is a "Hell" sign with an arrow pointing SL which is covered by black cloth.

A Greek Chorus of four singers stand SR dressed like monks -- two with smiling masks and two with tragic masks. The order is first smiling, then tragic, then smiling, then tragic. As they sing, they look to the frozen actors.

During the ENTIRE PLAY, when the chorus sings the LIGHTS DIM on the actors and the actors freeze in place. A SPOTLIGHT with cloudy edges lights the chorus, then after the chorus sings, the spotlight goes out on the chorus and LIGHTS GO UP the five actors.

CHORUS Tonight five statues will animate, become Freddie, Trixie, Arnie, Mary and Jerry. They will bring forth different versions of reality, hand it to you, not willingly, but it will be done. Your idea of reality includes an open mind, or you wouldn't be here. Tonight, we assume your objective is to be entertained, however, some could be here seeking clarity. Oh dear, we noticed, there is one statue missing. It could be sitting temporarily inanimate and silent, in a theatre seat near you, or perhaps . . . it's you.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

*Four animate and look around confused.
Freddie jerks up to a knee, terrified.*

FREDDIE Don't let it get me!!

Freddie grabs onto the hem of Jerry's jacket.

(looks around terrified) You have to help me! Please!

Mary, Trixie and Arnie look around scared.

JERRY *(looks around scared)* What is it?

FREDDIE It's after me! You gotta . . .

MARY *(interrupting)* What's after you?!!!

FREDDIE It's evil, coming for me . . . all of us!

MARY Us?!!

All four hunch down look around them, are terrified.

ARNIE I don't see a threat!

MARY What is it?!

FREDDIE It's gravity!!!!

All but Jerry turn away. Jerry pulls Freddie's hands from his jacket.

JERRY You're crazy.

Freddie guzzles a swig from the bottle, looks disparagingly and confused at the others, takes another swig of booze, the collapses on the road.

I gotta stop loving you. You got me hallucinating!

Attention comes off of Freddie. The four look around confused.

TRIXIE What's happened?

Arnie looks around, disoriented.

ARNIE I was on my ladder, cleaning out my eavestrough. I'm here?

FREDDIE *(sits up, confused)* Where's here?

Mary moves to SR a little, apart from the rest, registers surprise, looks around.

MARY I remember being on the sofa in my office, having my power snooze. *(amazed by her revelation)* That's it!! This is the most realistic dream I've ever had!

Mary looks to the others.

You four aren't real. You exist in my dream, figments of my nighttime imagination.

FREDDIE *(sits up quickly)* I want what she's on!

JERRY *(to Mary)* If you've had what I offer you would need to dream.

Jerry approaches Mary, grabs his crotch.

MARY *(to Jerry)* Ouch. I need a better class of dream.

(MORE)

Mary steps back from Jerry, looks at the others and around.

Why are these depraved, vulgar characters in my fantastic dream?

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS *(from SR)* Who are these people? Samplings of semi-intelligent existences? We think you'll identify one or more. Should you not, it could be you've been living in a shadow, having a shallow life, oblivious to the temptations, the churnings of active living.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

Freddie shoots a confused look to Mary.

FREDDIE *(stands, wobbly, to Mary)* I'm nightmarin' or you're dreamin'. *(an inebriated pause)* I know. Another slug will bring everything into focus.

Freddie takes a swig from his bottle.

MARY *(ignores Freddie, to the others)* My dreams help me make smart business decisions.

Trixie, aggressively chewing her gum, turns her attention to Mary, gets in Mary's face.

TRIXIE Oh yeah?!

Mary turns away from Trixie.

MARY *(disdain)* My dream's turning into a nightmare.

ARNIE *(looking around)* I can't recall anything before reaching the top of my ladder, then . . .

Arnie looks around confused.

MARY *(interrupting to Arnie)* Ladder? The corporate ladder? Is that it? I'm to climb a corporate ladder? Is there more? *(to the others)* Anyone?

ARNIE *(confused)* I don't see anyone or anything I know. I'm on a barren road with strangers.

TRIXIE Not strangers. It's a line of of of . . . potential clients?

JERRY *(to Trixie)* You can't afford me, Slut. As you can see, I'm a cut above.

Jerry grabs his crotch and struts. Trixie takes a swing at Jerry, who ducks and moves back from her.

Trixie looks to Arnie, throws her boa over his shoulders, pulls Arnie to her.

MARY It's moving from a nightmare to a dirty dream.

Arnie smiles, takes the boa off, throws it over Trixie's shoulders.

. . . or not.

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS Why are they here? To discover something? . . . themselves? . . . others? . . . Where are they going? We need answers, many answers.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

On tip toes, Arnie looks over the rest toward SR, hand above eyes.

ARNIE It's the longest line of people I've ever seen, goes on forever.

Freddie stands, staggers, hand above eyes, looks down the line toward SL.

FREDDIE A line without end in both directions is un, un, unfath . . . fath . . . om . . . ish!

Trixie dances and plays with the boa around her neck tries to make herself attractive.

JERRY *(admiring her dancing)* Looking for a freebee?

Trixie takes a swing at Jerry. Jerry moves back. Trixie glances both ways down the line.

TRIXIE Nah, I fathom it. It's a cue, the line into the next Star Wars openin'.

MARY *(new idea)* Business wars?!

ARNIE I bent sideways, reaching for the last leaf.

MARY Leaf?

ARNIE Red maple leaf in the eavestrough! I was pulling leaves into my pail.
It's the last thing I remember! The last thing!

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS Is this Mary's incredible dream . . . or something more . . . sin-is-ter?
Now that their days and nights are done, you may wonder . . . does it
matter? . . . or not? . . . ENTER an arbiter . . .

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

*JOE, wearing a long white cloak, white bowler
hat, white pants, white shirt and sandals
ENTERS from SR.*

*The five remain frozen in place. Joe walks
among the five people unseen by them, speaks
with a soft voice, looks into their eyes.*

Tonight's arbiter takes pity . . . wants to help . . . but . . .

JOE *(interrupting to the inanimate people)* Hello Sinners! You can't hear or
see me, but could sense my presence. I'm Joe, a facilitator. I take care
of matters on this end of the road to your eternity. *(alarmed)* Fear is in
the eyes. Extreme sinners! A sinful life has consequences; however, a
good life has consequences also. It's a precarious balance – goodness
versus sinfulness.

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS The arbiter throws his light here, and occasionally . . . there, but will it
help?

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

Joe motions to the covered “Heaven” sign. A TINKLING SOUND causes the cover to fall from the “Heaven” sign.

The five unfreeze, snap-look to the “Heaven” sign as Joe EXITS SR.

MARY Heaven? (*thinks*) A street sign marked Heaven?

FREDDIE Street signs don’t have arrows.

JERRY My last client called herself Heavenly Heather. Names can be deceiving.

TRIXIE It’s gotta be an ad for somethin’.

ARNIE (*new idea*) It’s pointing us to . . .

FREDDIE (*interrupting*) A bar!! An ad for a bar! Maybe a grand opening!

TRIXIE (*happily*) Music! Friendly people!!

FREDDIE A nice, happy bar. Talking makes me so, so (*tries to remember*) thirsty? I’ll buy.

ARNIE (*stands on toes, looks around*) I don’t see a bar!

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

FREDDIE (*disappointed*)_No?

ARNIE We’re all . . .

FREDDIE (*interrupting, snap sits up facing DS*) Hammered!! That’s gotta be it.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

JERRY It’s not booze or dope. It’s something else, something . . . beyond.

TRIXIE Beyond?

JERRY Yea.

TRIXIE Beyond what?

Jerry shrugs.

ARNIE I feel different, not normal.

FREDDIE An out of body experience!!!

JERRY (*nervous*) Please no, not out of body.

ARNIE Why?

JERRY I'm accustomed to mine.

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE (*interrupting*) Astral travel!

TRIXIE We're travelling?!

FREDDIE Astrally.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

TRIXIE I need to be available for Emmie.

ARNIE Emmie?

TRIXIE My daughter, Emmie! She's six years old, in school. I need to pick her up at three.

ARNIE Or . . .

TRIXIE (*interrupting*) What?

ARNIE We're dead!

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE Now, that's what I call a negative attitude.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

JERRY I can't be dead.

ARNIE Why?

JERRY I haven't lived.

TRIXIE That's crazy.

ARNIE This is the afterlife.

Freddie snaps up from his seated position.

FREDDIE Maybe it's the before life! People talk about the afterlife, all the time afterlife, never any mention of before life! Afterlife is boring.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

TRIXIE No!! I need to . . .

MARY *(interrupting)* Shut it! I need to analyze what my dream is telling me.

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS The veil has begun to lift . . . thunderbolt realizations hit some hard.
Others . . .

The entire chorus shrug.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

Freddie sits up.

FREDDIE Okay, so if this is Heaven, where's the bar! No bar, I'm not goin' in!!

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS We sense an extended period of adjustment will be required for one member of the group.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

MARY *(breaks away)* Dreams can be scary. I'm scared too, but it's just a dream, not real!

Mary gets "Are You Crazy" stares from Trixie, Freddie and Arnie.

ARNIE I'm real! You're real! We're all real!

FREDDIE We're all used up.

Freddie collapses with his bottle.

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS Enter the other arbiter . . . brim full of burning desire . . . enthusiasm
for his task . . . hungers for sin and sinners.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

*OSCAR ENTERS from SL dressed in a black
cape, black bowler hat, black pants, and black
shirt, carries a horn.*

*Oscar claps his hands causing the five sinners
to freeze, smiles as he walks among them.*

*Oscar waves his bowler hat toward the covered
“Hell” sign that is SL. A horn GROANS and the
Hell sign uncovers. The sinners unfreeze.*

Oscar EXITS SL.

*All but Freddie snap their attention to the
“Hell” sign with an arrow pointing SL.*

MARY
ARNIE
TRIXIE
JERRY

Ahhhhhh!

*Startled, Freddie, jumps up, doesn't see the
“Hell” sign.*

FREDDIE *(puts a thumb out)* I'm hitchin' a ride.

*Freddie sticks out his arm and thumb, moves,
hitchhiking toward SL, sees the horror on the
others' faces, then sees that they are looking at
the Hell sign, appears scared, turns and
hitchhikes toward SR and the Heaven sign.*

Freddie stops, shrug, lays down, falls asleep.

MARY Oddballs on a road . . . could mean . . . troubled waters ahead.

TRIXIE *(looks SL)* It's a long . . .

JERRY *(interrupting)* winding . . .

ARNIE *(interrupting)* . . . road . . .

TRIXIE *(interrupting)* . . . to . . .

All three look to each other horrified.

ARNIE
JERRY
TRIXIE

Hell! Ahhhhhh!

Freddie startles awake, leaves his bottle on road, jumps up swings and punches randomly, strikes out at imaginary targets, is exhausted, takes a slug of booze, collapses on the road.

Mary watches Freddie intently.

MARY *(breaks away)* I need to fight harder to beat the competition. *(to the others)* Dreams appear scary. Each of you have an important message for me!

ARNIE We're stranded on the road between Heaven and Hell.

JERRY With a dream fanatic!!

Freddie sits up.

FREDDIE *(laughs)* I'm a stand-up comedian, *(looks around)* sit-up comedian today. Here's a joke. A big joke. Not the biggest but big. *(laughs)* Now listen, this is very important. One morning, when I left my apartment on the way to my local bar, I got to my car to find my car door open. A thief had gotten into my car, left my papers scattered around and my valuables, my portable radio, CDs, GPS, umbrella, Blue Jays hat, two pair of sunglasses, all my car stuff was . . . still there! *(almost crying)* I felt violated.

They laugh.

Freddie stands, staggers, hangs on Mary for support, breaths into her face. She's repulsed, pushes Freddie away. Freddie collapses on the road.

MARY Memo to subconscious -- leave drunken comedians out of dreams.

FREDDIE I'm going to need a bigger bottle.

MARY Stuck between symbolic Heaven and Hell? A fifty-fifty year, first good then . . .

Freddie, sits up, holds up his bottle.

FREDDIE *(interrupting)* How about a drink?! Anybody need spirit help?

No takers, so Freddie takes a slug of booze, lays down.

TRIXIE It's past three. I've missed Emmie. Ahaaaaaaa!

MARY Everyone get a grip!

Freddie sits up, reaches toward Mary.

FREDDIE On her throat!

Mary moves away from Freddie, speaks to the four sinners.

MARY I would like nothing more than to wake up, and rid myself of you, but my subconscious won't let me. I hate to admit it, but I need what each of you are about to tell me.

FREDDIE Wackadoooo!

Freddie collapses with his bottle to the floor.

JERRY A major wack job.

ARNIE *(to Mary)* You're ridiculous!

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE Does anyone feel it heating up?

ARNIE *(alarmed)* It's heating . . .

Freddie collapses with his bottle to the floor.

ARNIE/
TRIXIE/
JERRY *(feeling the heat)* . . . up! Ahhhhhh!

Freddie's startled, jumps up ready to fight.

FREDDIE Ahhhhhh!

Mary breaks away from the others.

MARY Business will heat up! Growth!

ARNIE *(moves to Mary)* Business?!! Who are you?

MARY I'm Mary Simmons, Esquirette, CEO of Everything-Mart Inc. *(inc. sounds ink)* We sell everything. I'm the leader of the world's mega retailer.

FREDDIE Is esquirette a word?

TRIXIE She made it up.

MARY I said it's a word, so it's a word!!!

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS To know all, one needs to pay attention. We will listen to a few of the challenges ahead, and marvel or shudder at the results. Choices will be made and results lived with. In time, our sinners will shape their reality, brightening or tarnishing time spent.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE ONE

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

Time: Night

Place: Board Room

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE SCENE:

Mary stands at the US end of a long board table that faces DS. Six dummies or silent people, male and female, dressed in casual attire sit around the table facing her (three will be people, could be crew).

There are sounds of discord among men and women.

MARY Order!! I need order!!! The emergency board meeting of Everything-Mart Inc. will commence!

The discordant sounds dimmish, but do not subside.

As chief executive officer of Everything-Mart Inc., I suggest you listen carefully. Without order there can be no meeting! Without a meeting there will be a different board!!!!

Silence prevails.

I know some of you are opposed to my proposal, that is fine, however, if we as a company, want to succeed, push forward in retail, we need to move with the times. You're aware Giant Elephant and Welcome Mart have merged. Competing with them individually we dominate but with the merger they'll cut overhead, so we'll be struggling. We are playing catchup here! We need to fight for our place in the market!

There are some discordant sounds, but they subside.

Companies that don't expand, die! It's a fact of business. Expansion requires capital, capital we don't currently have, so, as you've already heard, we need to acquire it from other sources, one being the employees' pension fund. The alternative, which a minority favour, is issuing further shares or share splitting. Both would diminish dividends, which could scare the market, which, in turn, could initiate a frenzied price drop, making expansion out of the question. An

outlandish ill-informed proposal has been presented to me. It would solve the funding problem but would see a reduction in income to all officers of the company which obviously includes all of you. Sixty percent less! How does that sound?!

There are some discordant sounds.

SILENCE!!!

Discordant sounds abate.

I understand your pension concerns, but in business, it is either sink or swim, and I'm not sinking. Is the income reduction proposal for officers of the company what you want? (*silent pause*) I think not! Is anyone not in favour of voting on the proposal that would enable the company to use pension fund assets to enable the European expansion?

One hand is raised. Mary moves to the board member who raised their hand, takes the chair he/she is sitting on and moves it off stage SR, then returns to the table.

VOICE (O.S.) I wanted to use the bathroom.

Mary looks frustrated towards O.S., then to the board members.

MARY (to the board) Vote!

Four board members start to raise their hands.

It's unani . . .

MEMBER ONE No!!

MARY Bathroom?

MEMBER ONE No.

MARY Dissent?

MEMBER ONE Yes.

MARY What is your alternate expansion fund proposal?

MEMBER ONE I surveyed our employees. Eighty-five percent are in favour of purchasing preferred shares if we were to offer it to them.

MARY Have workers run the company?!

MEMBER ONE That is an over-reaction. Giving employees a stake in the company gives them a reason to be loyal. Employees having shares in the company allows them to feel valued. They will be working for themselves. Employees wouldn't mind putting off other purchases – new cars, furniture, swimming pool, etc. -- to secure shares in the company they work for. They will become our best customers.

MARY Does anyone have other thoughts?

MEMBER TWO Offering shares to employees will dilute the value of the shares presently held, weakening our position. It would initiate the end of business as we've come to know it. Besides, the amount we pay employees needs to be reduced. At present employees' expense is not proportionate to our returns. Severing employees and reducing wages is a must if this company is going to survive let alone expand. Expansion can be accomplished, but sacrifices must be made! Expansion can work with less employees. After the thinning, employees remaining will work smarter, harder, more shifts to keep their jobs.

MARY I agree. I put the original proposal forward. Anyone opposed to it raise a hand.

Member One raises a hand.

The motion is carried by a majority vote. Employee pensions will fund the expansion. Also employee numbers and wages will be re-assessed – both of which I expect will result in a boon to our European expansion plans.

*Member One and Member Two turn, face DS.
Member One is Joe and Member Two is Oscar.*

SPOTLIGHT OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS The die has been cast. A memory rekindled. A pleasant memory for some, unpleasant for others. Now back to our travellers.

END OF ACT ONE SCENE TWO

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

Time: Night

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

LIGHTS UP:

DC from SR to SL -- Mary, Trixie, Arnie and Jerry are frozen still in a line across the stage, arms-length apart, facing audience. Freddie sits frozen on the road with his bottle. Freddie thaws, stands, approaches Mary.

FREDDIE *(toward Mary's ear)* Hello Mary's Wacko Weird Subconscious, you in there?!!

All unfreeze. Mary pushes Freddie away. Freddie staggers back, shadow boxes in front of Mary.

Come out and fight.

MARY *(pulls away from Freddie)* How dare you! I'm the most powerful woman in the world! Everything-Mart Inc., the company I founded, has become the ultra retail outlet, the largest retailer on the planet. Online it's www.everythingmartinc.com.

TRIXIE Not every *(pause)* thing. My customers get the ultra-important, ultra-worthwhile, ultra-physical experience. Something you know nothing about.

FREDDIE *(staggers, sickly)* One more ultra and I'll heave.

MARY *(up close with Freddie)* Says the extremely pissed drunk! *(pause)* Ultra!

Freddie staggers, collapses US. There are sounds like Freddie's heaving. Trixie gets up close with Mary.

TRIXIE People from all walks of life want my company, Trixie Inc. *(sounds like "ink")*

JERRY Trixie Inc. bargain -- buy your first experience, get the second half off?

Trixie takes a swing at Jerry who ducks back.

MARY My subconscious has dug deep and dark tonight. Trixie is a suggestive name. Trixie the trick turner? That could mean a hostile takeover is threatening!

Trixie moves threatening toward Mary. Freddie joins the group.

TRIXIE Trixie is short for Beatrice. It's Trixie Inc. Got it?! Come up and see me sometime (*raises a fist*) I'll serve you my special of the day -- a knuckle sandwich!

Mary pushes Trixie away.

MARY (*to all*) Subconsciously I need all of you. Consciously I'm staying indifferent.

ARNIE Bull!

Arnie moves between Freddie and Trixie.

(to Freddie) You are?

FREDDIE Freddie Friendly. Stand-up comic. (*staggers*) Let's see. Oh, yeah. Here's one.

Freddie stumbles to DC.

It's nice to see a young couple get together and fall in love. The stages of love. The first stage is physical attraction, then mental attraction, next comes infatuation, next they enjoy true love, then, there's . . . you've guessed it . . . straight to the last step . . . alimony payments.

All laugh.

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

(MORE)

CHORUS There have been considerable challenges for Freddie. Today we look at the entire being, not to just know his present truth, but feel it. It's raw, but it is what it is. You might wish to look away, however, to do so would be unwise, as it could impede growth.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE THREE

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

Time: Night

Place: Freddie's Room

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE SCENE:

There is a sofa and a table with an open letter and a bottle of rum on the table. There is a blanket at the end of the sofa.

CONSTANCE, Freddie's wife, wears a sad robe, lays on the sofa with face buried in it's back and WAILS. Loud sobs, and screeches. (Could be the character playing Trixie in wig, robe.)

Freddie, in clean, casual clothes, with hair slicked back, ENTERS with his lunch pail, moves to a table that has an open letter, silently he reads the letter and addresses Constance.

FREDDIE You read the letter?

Her sobs are louder to indicate she has read the letter.

I tried to be home before . . .

Beaten, Freddie shrugs as he drops the letter on table.

I begged them to keep me, but they said they had no alternative, had to cut jobs to cut expenses, so, after twenty-five years, I am suddenly expendable. I told them our medical plan covered your drugs and treatments and without the treatments you'd be lost. They said they had no other choice. Truth is, they could have helped but chose not to.

Louder sobs turn into painful shrieks. Freddie paces.

(MORE)

*One last shriek and Constance dies, arm falls
limp to the side of the sofa.*

*Freddie takes Constance's arm, moves it along
side her body, takes the blanket and covers her
up entirely.*

Freddie takes the bottle, opens it.

Constance is dead. Gone from me. I'm alone, completely alone. I'm a
vacuum.

*Freddie sits at the table, tears up the letter,
hangs his head.*

Life's a joke, a long, oh so long . . . bad joke!

Freddie takes a large swig from the bottle.

SPOTLIGHT OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS One's circumstances can be dire, difficult to absorb. Some choose to
dull pain through time-worn habits, use whatever works. Too bad.

END OF ACT ONE SCENE FOUR

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

Time: Night

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS We're back again, with our faces of life. We return you to the five sinners on their path to their personal eternity. We wonder if anyone wonders about where they belong in the hereafter, where they will find themselves. We four are assured of a life there because we sing what is unsaid. Thank you for listening.

SPOTLIGHT OUT, LIGHTS UP:

DC from SR to SL -- Mary, Trixie, Arnie and Jerry are frozen still in a line across the stage, arms-length apart, facing audience. Freddie, as he was in the first scene, lays on the road with his bottle. They unfreeze.

ARNIE *(to Trixie)* What's your full name?

TRIXIE *(playful)* Beatrice Trixie Tina. I'm in . . . public relations . . . highly personal . . . physical . . . relations. You could say my public love me.

JERRY *(condescending)* I'm in the same racket, just a cut above.

MARY *(to Trixie and Jerry)* I'm disgusted with both of you.

TRIXIE I don't need dreams to tell me what to do! After Emmie's dad got shot, I had to survive, so I learned to take care of myself and Emmie.

JERRY I'm here for either of you.

Jerry holds out a business card to the two women.

MARY *(to Jerry)* You nauseate me!

(turns away) I can't look at either of you.

Jerry pockets the business card.

Trixie takes her boa and puts it around Mary's neck, pulls Mary to her.

TRIXIE Another word about me and you'll be picking your teeth off the road.

Mary throws the boa off, steps away from Trixie.

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS We're back again, with our faces of life.

The two chorus members with smiling faces step forward.

Fun!

The two chorus members with smiling faces step back and the two with tragic faces step forward.

Tragedy!

The two chorus members with tragic faces step back.

The two faces of life. If you haven't worn those faces you haven't lived. We can laugh or cry with our subjects. To do what we need to do to know everything. Though life can be difficult, it is good to be informed regarding challenges that arise. Next, one other will shed light in our direction. We eavesdrop on Trixie Tina's past.

LIGHTS OUT"

END OF ACT ONE SCENE FIVE

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX

Time: Night

Place: Trixie's room

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE SCENE:

Trixie, not made up, dressed in worn clothes, talks on a phone while sitting on a bed. There is the muted sound of a BABY CRYING in another room.

TRIXIE *(stressed)* Jill, I don't know what to do! The kid won't stop crying, and I'm out of money. *(pause)* You know my mom is dying in hospital and my dad's funeral took care of what we had saved, so can you lend me a few dollars to get me by? *(a long pause)* Emmie father? He got shot in a drug deal. Good thing too. He wouldn't want to see this. *(a long pause)* Okay, I understand. *(pause)* No, my dad's pension dried up six months ago. Something about the company making a bad investment and Dad's pension fund took the hit. *(pause)* It was the stress that killed him. *(pause)* I want to take a bullet to the heart instead of having to deal with ongoing poverty, mom dying, debt, hearing my kid crying, but I don't have a gun. *(pause)* Okay. Thanks, I'll come right over with Emmie. *(pause)* No, she won't cry, promise. I'll give her the last of our food before leaving. Thanks. *(pause)* You think I could work the street? I'll do anything. Emmie deserves a future.

SPOTLIGHT OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS A difficult choice, but a necessary one, all as the result of a business decision. Dominos fall on and on. The five are waiting for you to see them, still on the road moving toward their personal destiny, each secretly harboring a slim but nearly impossible hope of . . . redemption.

END OF ACT ONE SCENE SIX

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN

Time: Night

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

LIGHTS UP:

DC from SR to SL -- Mary, Trixie, Arnie and Jerry are frozen still in a line across the stage, arms-length apart, facing audience. Freddie is laying on the road.

They unfreeze.

Arnie faces Jerry.

ARNIE What's your take?

JERRY Me? I'm waiting.

TRIXIE Waiting?

JERRY For something to happen.

ARNIE Something to happen?

JERRY Time and people are continually moving ahead.

MARY *(to Jerry)* What are you saying? Expansion? Recession? Depression? Please not a depression. Who or what are you?

JERRY I'm more of a what than who. I'm a professional liver. I handle challenging social events.

ARNIE We're saved! We have a professional amongst us, ready to handle our distressing communal social event.

JERRY Ha, ha. Funny. I'm a professional at living, not dying. I'm in it for profit.

TRIXIE That's you?

JERRY It's enough.

ARNIE Care to explain?

JERRY I'm a professional lover, professional gambler and professional liar, all of which makes me a professional liver.

MARY That's it?

JERRY Not quite.

MARY What else?

JERRY My last profession isn't something I share with just anyone butt it's the one I cherish most.

MARY It's in his pants.

JERRY That's crude, Mary. You're moving to my level.

ARNIE So, what is it?

JERRY I'm a professional listener.

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE He's hardly said boo, so . . .

Freddie slumps to the floor.

TRIXIE *(interrupting)* He's conning us. He's a con artist, a grifter.

JERRY I am that, but more – I'm multi-grifted.

ARNIE What have you learned listening to us? Anything?

JERRY Some.

MARY What about me? I'm the one that needs a message. Why you exist!

JERRY You don't want to know what I've observed.

MARY I've been asking to hear from you, any of you. Are you saying you've got something for me, but don't want to hurt my feelings? Say it!

JERRY You're not ready.

MARY Bull sh . . .!

JERRY *(interrupting)* You are the most insecure person here. You shout about us being in your dream, but truthfully, you're scared . . . to death, the same as the rest of us.

Freddie snap sits up, looks to Mary.

FREDDIE Got ya! Nailed her good!

Freddie slumps to the floor.

All but Mary know he is correct, their body language shows it.

MARY Hu! That's crazy! I can buy and sell all of you!

ARNIE Listening doesn't provide a living. What's your game?

JERRY I ingratiate myself to lonesome, rich women, satisfy them, then, in turn, they satisfy me. I take their satisfaction to the track or poker table and either win or lose. It's a give-and-take living. My life is full of back and forth. One exciting experience to the next.

ARNIE That's all?

JERRY It's worth it. I don't need a family life. Being stuck with a wife and kids, and the expenses incurred by having them, isn't for me.

FREDDIE You're a hollow man.

JERRY I'm not living out of a bottle.

Freddie jumps up, takes a wipe at Jerry who ducks and moves back. Freddie's swing takes him to the floor.

JERRY I am in constant wonder about life and people in it.

ARNIE How so?

JERRY Why do men who attract vast amounts of money, require attractive women who don't want them, just their money? It seems to me men can't have it both ways. Can't have riches and women who want them. Their women want what I have to offer, so I offer it. You, in your morality, might call me evil.

Jerry grabs his crotch.

MARY That's crude.

JERRY If I'm evil, then I'm a necessary evil.

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE What have you heard about me?

JERRY You're more complicated.

FREDDIE You been listening to Mary, but not to me? You're a selective listener.

JERRY I hear it all. Okay, you might not be ready for this, but . . .

FREDDIE *(takes a guzzle from the bottle)* Go ahead, I could use a laugh.

JERRY You've endured substantial physical, mental and spiritual anguish, that has stripped you to the core of your being. Nothing left. You want to disappear, have made yourself inconsequential to yourself, to anyone.

Freddie slumps to the floor. Silence from the others signifies truth has arrived.

TRIXIE *(to Freddie's defence)* He's our comedian. Keeps us laughing. How can you . . .

JERRY *(interrupting to Freddie)* Being drunk is your temporary survival mechanism.

Trixie puts an arm around Freddie.

TRIXIE I know what it's like to need a drink. Freddie's okay. He's just taking a break from everything.

FREDDIE Temporary.

Freddie takes a drink from his bottle.

ARNIE *(to Jerry)* You don't contribute to a better world. You're . . .

JERRY *(interrupting)* I contribute! I provide a necessary function. I make myself available to the affluent fairer sex. I'm needed, even if it's for an hour or two.

Freddie stands, approaches Mary, is about to say something to Mary. His booze breath causes her push Freddie away and turn to Arnie.

MARY (to Arnie) What about you?

ARNIE (superior) Arnie McMaster, publisher of a prominent newspaper.

Mary moves between Arnie and Freddie.

MARY (condemning) The McMaster who publishes that trash tabloid?

ARNIE (defensive) Tabloid news is the future of news. My publication, Dirty Secrets, has the highest circulation of all the tabloids. Both hard news and electronic, we got you covered.

MARY You and your Dirty Secrets mock real news!

LIGHTS OUT:

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS We have the scoop on Arnie, the intrepid purveyor of common literature – newspaper, also known as a minor player in multi-media! It's multi because one media impacts others and so on. For many, the ones who cherish truth, this is our most discouraging visit. It will be the difficult to endure. Try not to look away with mind or body, as for some, it will be challenging, but all need to stay focused.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE SEVEN

ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT

Time: Night

Place: Board Room

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE SCENE:

Arnie stands at the head of a board meeting table facing DS – six dummies or people, male and female face Arnie, similar to the meeting of Mary’s board.

Arnie’s hat and gloves are gone, and his blue jean jacket is replaced by a business suit jacket with possible tie.

ARNIE Yes, I understand there are some in the media who would rather we play by the rules of yesterday. “Dirty Secrets” doesn’t live by those rules. We change with the times. Rules change. We change with them.

There are sounds of discord among men and women.

You need to hear this!

The sounds of discord among men and women lessens then goes silent.

Among us are dyed-in-the-wool newspaper people, people who have spent their lives rooting out truth and seeing it displayed in print felt they have accomplished something of value. That was the truth of yesterday. Today we live in a world where one universal truth does not exist.

There are sounds of discord among men and women.

My words have hit pay dirt. Dissent! Bare with me.

The sounds of discord among men and women lessens then goes silent.

Truth for one nation is not truth for another. Truth for Christians isn’t the truth Muslims adhere to. Truth is not universal. There is a polarization of truth. Multi-media informs readers or viewers what we

believe truth to be. We interpret truth for them and label it news!!! We give the readers what they want to believe!! Multiple truths. We give pleasure and in return we pay our bills and reap a substantial profit. Brilliant!

SPOTLIGHT OUT

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS:

CHORUS The power to turn truth into falsehoods and falsehoods into truth. Oh, that is a choice made by members of low nature. Something must be done. We will see the scope of everything when we return to our soon to be sad sinners.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE EIGHT

ACT ONE, SCENE NINE

Time: Night

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

LIGHTS UP:

DC from SR to SL -- Mary, Trixie, Arnie and Jerry are frozen still in a line across the stage, arms-length apart, facing audience. Freddie lays on the road with his bottle.

They unfreeze.

ARNIE My Dirty Secrets newspaper is a brilliant publication!

Freddie stands, approaches Mary with amorous intentions. She pushes him away. Freddie turns to Arnie.

FREDDIE “Dirty Secrets” is where I read aliens control what the President says. Is that true?

ARNIE If you think it is, then it is.

Freddie collapses on the floor after taking a swig from his booze bottle, bounces up.

FREDDIE I know all about aliens.

The three look to Freddie.

They’re in my bottle. I let them affect me too often.

Freddie collapses on the floor.

MARY Aliens control the President? *(a maybe shrug)* Not real presidents.

ARNIE Real presidents?

MARY Presidents of corporations, real world leaders! Without CEOs and authentic business presidents, average citizens would be grovelling in filth.

Freddie struggles, trying to sit up.

MARY *(motions to Freddie)* Behold, the sub average citizen.

Freddie struggles up, stands shaking, takes a swig of booze from his bottle, wipes his mouth and nose with his sleeve, collapses on the floor.

TRIXIE I read the story in “Dirty Secrets” about the movie star, don’t remember her name, but she went camping and came across *(bug-eyed emphasis)* Big Foot!

MARY Which is a complete fabrication.

Disheartened, Arnie waves Mary away wanders toward SR.

TRIXIE She spent the night with Big Foot in his cave.

FREDDIE *(struggles to sit up)* Did you get Big Foot jokes from him? I need more material.

MARY *(to Trixie)* You believe a woman slept with Bigfoot?! Ridiculous!

FREDDIE No-one ever mentions his sock. Always his foot, but never his sock. How come? It could be the size of my shirt.

Freddie waves his shirt tail around.

TRIXIE *(to Mary)* There’s proof.

MARY It’s a Photoshopped image! It’s an image, not a being!! It’s all hype, fake! Fake! Fake! So fake!

TRIXIE *(putting Mary down)* You’re wrong, all wrong!

Mary gives Trixie a look of disgust.

(superior tone) The story says proof will arrive in nine months.

Arnie returns to the group with a big smile.

Jerry lets out with a loud, wicked laugh, all look at him strangely.

MARY *(deflated disgust to Arnie)* So your gullible public will endure your rag every month for nine months interested in updates and the arrival of a Little Foot.

ARNIE Brilliant!

MARY Pathetic. A Little Foot? It's absurd! Your "Dirty Secrets" will give it three heads and a tale.

ARNIE Terrific! I want to recruit you to write for us? Your imagination intrigues me.

MARY Ahaaaa!

Mary takes a swing at Arnie, he ducks, she misses.

ARNIE People need relief from the tortures of your materialistic reality! Subscribing to my "Dirty Secrets" is better than taking drugs for relief.

MARY Your idea of a "newspaper" is a joke!

FREDDIE Let me write that down.

Freddie struggles to get a pad and pen from a pocket, gets them out, ready to write.

What was the joke?

The four look at Freddie like he's lost his mind. Freddie pockets the pad and pen and collapses with his bottle.

ARNIE *(to Mary)* If we exist in your dream, then you have a need for me and my "Dirty Secrets". Mary, listen, me and my "Dirty Secrets" are here for you. Go ahead, tell "Dirty Secrets" your horrible, filthy . . . dirty secret. You like the ladies more than the gents?

MARY I'll sue you for slander! Libel!

ARNIE Bull!! *(desperate to Freddie, Jerry and Tina)* It might help for us to think back to our last action before waking here. I told you about cleaning out my eavestrough. Freddie, what's your last recollection?

FREDDIE I was doing my stand-up routine at the Fun Shack in Fort Worth, Texas, then blank, nothing. Passed out? I donno.

ARNIE *(to Trixie)* What's the last thing you remember?

TRIXIE Me? *(pause, recollecting)* I'd gotten to my no parking sign. It's mine, you know, my place on the strip. I was solicitin', flexin' my stuff on it, like a pole dancer, to scare up some business. This blue Ford came roarin' by, slammed on the brakes, threw it into reverse, and backed smack into my no parking sign. What's it mean?

ARNIE I'd like to think we are Heaven bound, but we could be going in the other direction . . . straight to Hell.

TRIXIE *(not hearing Arnie)* I'm thinkin' that over-sexed, bad driver, backed into my no parking sign, and it killed me while I was flexin'. The sign might have brained me.

MARY That's impossible.

TRIXIE Why?

MARY You were born brain dead.

TRIXIE Ahaaaaaaa!

*Trixie moves strikes at Mary but Mary ducks,
then Arnie stops Trixie from pursuing Mary.*

ARNIE That red maple leaf caused me to fall and die, then the wack from the no parking sign hit Trixie, sent us both here.

JERRY I've had my last sexual encounter. Heavenly Heather was what did it? She got me here? I died doing it?!

FREDDIE *(alarmed)* I know why I didn't finish my set! Because, because . . . *(stressed)* of my no-strings-attached, one-night stand groupie.

TRIXIE So?

FREDDIE The morning before my gig she told her boyfriend she was over him and that she loved me. Then she told me he's a gun lover with an impulsive nature and would be in the audience! Can you imagine?! I started drinking, was stuttering, couldn't remember half my stuff wondering if it would be my last show. Why can't hot women think of consequences? Is it that looks and brains aren't compatible? *(checks his body)* Any holes?!

TRIXIE *(steps away from Freddie)* Ouch!

Trixie turns to Mary.

What about Miss Mary Two Consciousnesses?

MARY *(irritated)* If I wake up now, you'll all disappear – be gone!

TRIXIE *(to Mary)* Do you sleep with a husband, boyfriend . . . girlfriend?

MARY I don't sleep with . . . others. I'm a dedicated, career-oriented, business individual.

TRIXIE Terrific sex clears the mental cobwebs.

JERRY Hear, hear!

MARY I like my cobwebs! I own my cobwebs! Not like you sex obsessed weirdos! Oh, this is my worst nightmare. Why can't I wake up?! Ahhhhhhhhh!

ARNIE I'm on my way to Hell and I'm liking it. Us being here, this, our joint situation, would make a terrific story for "Dirty Secrets".

Freddie staggers, about to fall, regains balance.

FREDDIE *(laughs, staggers)* Isn't the road moving? *(laughs)* Or I'm hallucinating, which is . . .

TRIXIE *(interrupting, alarmed)* The road is moving!

FREDDIE *(dismayed)* Really?!

All steady themselves.

MARY Moving road means . . .!!

All five simultaneously fall toward SR, struggle to stand, regain balance, but do.

ARNIE We're being pulled into Hell!

FREDDIE Halleluia! Where's the bar?

The five run on the spot facing SR.

The “Hell” sign slides toward them and stops beside the five and the “Heaven” sign moves off stage SR.

Freddie’s exhausted, collapses.

OSCAR *(O.S. booming voice)* Welcome to Club Hell! *(a maniacal laugh)*

M/A/F/T/J Ahhhhhh!

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE – END OF SAMPLE