



FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

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

Setting – the road between Heaven and Hell. Run time – Approximately 90 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	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

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

Time: Nighttime

From SR to SL are Mary, Freddie, Jerry, Trixie and Arnie in a line across the DC and DL stage, approx. arms-length apart facing audience, motionless, frozen in place. They appear stunned and look in different directions.

MARY is in a dark business suit, slacks, has a harsh outlook on life in general including the people around her. She is a user.

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. He is a broken man.

JERRY wears a sleazy, loud but expensive suit. He casually walks amongst the others, constantly eyes them up. Has a superior attitude but hides personal insecurity.

TRIXIE, cheap hooker attire, short skirt, red boa, chews gum. She is mouthy and doesn't care what others think.

ARNIE wears a blue jean jacket, dark pants, solid coloured shirt, gardening gloves, holds a small pail. He is eager about being an important person, full of self-importance. Think "Donald Trump" when you think Arnie.

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

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

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS GREEK CHORUS DR:

A Greek Chorus of four singers dressed like monks are in the spotlight -- two with smiling masks and two with tragic masks – two rows. Row one has the first chorus member with a smiling mask, the next with a tragic mask. Row two has a chorus member with a tragic mask and the next with a smiling mask.

CHORUS Tonight five statues will animate, become Mary, Freddie, Jerry, Trixie and Arnie. They will bring forth different versions of reality, hand it to you, not willingly, but it will be done. You've come to be entertained, which we will endeavour to achieve, but there could be more. Modern living has many competing aspects clouding awareness. Those who seek clarity could find it with us tonight. 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.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT DR OUT:

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

Four animate, 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 help me!!!

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 An evil monster is coming for me! . . . all of us!

M/A/F/T/J Us?!!

All four hunch down look around them, are terrified.

ARNIE I don't see a threat!

MARY There's nothing! You're crazy.

JERRY What's after you?!

FREDDIE Gravity!!!!

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

ARNIE You're drunk.

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

(to his bottle) I gotta stop loving you. You got me hallucinating!

Collapses entirely on the road, lays flat out. 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, but . . .?

FREDDIE *(interrupting, 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 only in my dream, figments of my vivid imagination. I'm in my dream with all of you!

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

Freddie collapses on the road.

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

Jerry approaches Mary, grabs his crotch.

MARY (to Jerry) Disgusting! I need a better class of dream.

*Freddie struggles to stand, manages it after much effort.
Mary steps back from Jerry, looks at the others and
around.*

What are these disgusting, depraved, vulgar characters doing in my dream?

There is a CHIME.

*The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward
positions.*

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

*The five Sinners animate. Freddie is wobbly, shoots a
confused look to Mary.*

FREDDIE (to Mary) Either I'm nightmarin' or you're dreamin'! (an inebriated pause) I know. I need to focus.

*Freddie takes a swig from his bottle, looks around,
collapses on the road, smiles.*

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 in a line of strangers on a barren road.

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

JERRY (*to Trixie*) You can't afford me, Slut. Anyone 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.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

The five Sinners animate. 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 SR then 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 (to Trixie, admiring her dancing) Angling 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!

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS Is this Mary's incredible dream . . . or something more . . . sin-is-ter? Now that their days and nights could be done, you may wonder . . . does it matter? . . .
ENTER an arbiter . . .

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

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 but loud voice, looks into their eyes.

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

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

JOE *(interrupting to the inanimate people)* Hello Sinners! You can't hear or see me, but you sense my presence. I'm Joe, a facilitator. Over your lives I've encouraged you to take righteous paths. I'm here on the road to eternity for the ones who've earned Heaven. *(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.

There is a CHIME.

Joe and the five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS Over time the arbiter has thrown his light here, and occasionally . . . there. If their time is done, how can he help our five sinners now? We need to know.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

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

The five Sinners animate, snap to the sign.

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

FREDDIE Street signs don’t have arrows.

JERRY Heavenly Honey was my last client. Names can be deceiving.

TRIXIE It’s gotta be a promo, an ad for somethin’.

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

FREDDIE *(interrupting)* A bar!! An ad for a bar called Heaven! 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! Three sheets to the wind hammered!! That’s gotta be it.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

JERRY It’s something unordinary, something . . . beyond.

TRIXIE Beyond?

JERRY Yeah.

TRIXIE Beyond what?

Jerry shrugs.

ARNIE I feel different, not normal.

FREDDIE *(snap sits up)* An out of body experience!!!

Freddie collapses flat out.

JERRY *(nervous)* Please no, don't let it be out of body.

ARNIE Why not?

JERRY I've grown fond of this one.

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE *(interrupting)* Astral travel!

TRIXIE We're travelling?!

FREDDIE Astrally. I get around a lot that way.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

TRIXIE I need to be back in time 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 could be dead!

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE That's what I call a negative thinking.

Freddie collapses, lays flat out feet pointed DC.

JERRY It can't be. I haven't lived enough.

Arnie gives Jerry a questioning look. Jerry grabs his crotch.

So many women, too little time.

TRIXIE *(sarcastic)* Says the big shot macho man.

ARNIE This could be . . .

All but Freddie look at Arnie expectantly.

. . . the afterlife.

Freddie snap sits up from his laying position.

FREDDIE It's the before life! People talk about the afterlife, all the time afterlife this, afterlife that, 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.

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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

The entire chorus shrug.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

The five Sinners animate.

Freddie sits up.

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

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS We sense an extended period of adjustment will be required for one member of the group. Two if you count the dreamer. Here we four are, singing our hearts out on overtime. Rats.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

The five Sinners animate.

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 collapses with his bottle.

FREDDIE We're all used up.

Freddie sits up.

(laughs) I'm a stand-up comedian, *(looks around)* sit-up comedian tonight. 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.

Arnie faces Jerry.

ARNIE What's do you think is happening?

JERRY Me? Don't know. I'm waiting.

TRIXIE Waiting?

JERRY For something to happen.

ARNIE Something has happened! Tell us what it is!

JERRY Time and people are continually moving ahead.

MARY *(to Jerry)* What are you saying? Moving into what? 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 all?

JERRY It's enough.

ARNIE Care to explain?

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

MARY You're not a business professional! No quality there.

JERRY You'd be surprised.

MARY Anything else?

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

Jerry hesitates.

MARY It's in his pants.

JERRY That's crude, Mary. You've descended to my level.

ARNIE So, what is it?

JERRY *(hesitates)* 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, and more . . . I'm multi-grifted.

MARY We all know where your gift is.

ARNIE What have you learned listening to us? Anything?

JERRY Some.

MARY What about me? I'm the one that needs a message. I'm 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 yu! Nailed her good!

TRIXIE Yeah!

Freddie slumps to the floor.

All but Mary know Jerry's assessment is correct, their body language shows it.

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

ARNIE (to Jerry) Listening doesn't provide a living. What's your game?

JERRY I make myself available 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. Mine's a give-and-take living, full of back and forth. One exciting experience to the next.

ARNIE That's all?

JERRY It's worth it. I don't want or need a family life. Being stuck with a wife and kids, and the expenses incurred 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.

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS Freddie represents those who are sensitive to the cruelty life has to offer. Our hearts go out to him and all who suffer wherever they are. However, it is his or their decision to overcome or not, to change or not change. Crash and burn or not. We mean burn literally!

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

The five Sinners animate.

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 provide it. You, in your morality, might call me evil.

Jerry grabs his crotch.

MARY That's crude.

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

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE What have you heard about me?

JERRY You're more complicated.

FREDDIE You've 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 everyone.

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.

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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

There is a GROAN.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

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

*Oscar looks in the eyes of the five and 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.*

Oscar EXITS SL.

The Sinners animate.

*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.

Freddie stops, shrugs, lays down, falls asleep.

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

ARNIE This isn't the road to Heaven, it's . . .

TRIXIE *(interrupting)* . . . 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 stands, staggers, hangs on to 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 a spirit top up?

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

TRIXIE It has to be past three. I've missed Emmie. Ahaaaaaaaaa!

MARY Everyone get a grip!

Freddie struggles up, reaches toward Mary.

FREDDIE On her throat!

Mary pushes Freddie away, moves away from him.

MARY *(to the four sinners)* I would like nothing more than to wake up, and rid myself of you all, 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 snap sits up.

FREDDIE Wackadooooo!

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 *(interrupting, 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, Everything-Mart Inc.

FREDDIE Is esquirette a word?

TRIXIE She made it up.

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

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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, but what about now?

ALL LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE ONE

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

FLASHBACK

YELLOWISH SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS DC AND DL:

Time: Night

Place: Board Room

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).

MARY The emergency board meeting of Everything-Mart Inc. will commence. 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're playing catchup here! As you know companies that don't expand die! Expansion requires capital, capital we don't have, so we need to acquire it from other sources, one being the employees' pension fund.

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 anyone not in favour of voting on the proposal that would enable the company to use pension fund assets to enable 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 head of the table.

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

Mary looks frustrated towards SR., then to the board members.

MARY (to the board) Vote!

Four board members start to raise their hands.

It's unani . . .

Member One puts up his hand.

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 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, 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. The amount we pay employees needs to be reduced. Employees' expense is not proportionate to returns. Severing employees and reducing wages is a must if this company is going to survive. Expansion can be accomplished, but sacrifices must be made! After the thinning, employees remaining will work smarter, harder, more shifts to keep their jobs.

MARY I agree. I put the proposal to access pension funds to enable expansion 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 expansion plans.

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

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL OUT

END OF FLASHBACK

There is a CHIME.

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS

One past has arrived for our pleasure or discomfort. A memory renewed. A pleasant memory for some, unpleasant for others. Either way, it's something worth pondering. Now back to our travellers.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE TWO

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

Time: Later.

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

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

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

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, is the ultra retail outlet, the largest retailer on the planet.

TRIXIE Not every *(pause)* thing. My customers get the ultra-important, the ultra-worthwhile, the 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 whore and 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. promo -- 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 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. There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS There have been considerable challenges for Freddie. We are to 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

FLASHBACK

YELLOWISH SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS DC AND DL:

Time: Later.

Place: Freddie's Room

There is a sofa and a table with chair. 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, nods 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, cut expenses to keep the company from going bankrupt, so, after twenty-five years, I've become 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 choice. Truth is, they could have helped but chose not to.

Louder sobs turn into painful shrieks. Freddie paces.

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

(MORE)

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

Freddie sits on the chair, takes the bottle, opens it.

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

Freddie tears the letter up, hangs his head.

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

Freddie takes a large swig from the bottle.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL OUT

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS One's circumstances can be dire, difficult to absorb. Some choose to dull pain through time-worn habits, use whatever works. An unfortunate choice as he is out of time, no time to reassess and choose better. Oh, well, people thank they have forever to change but . . . *(the chorus shrugs)*

LIGHTS OUT

END OF FLASHBACK

END OF ACT ONE SCENE FOUR

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

There is a CHIME.

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS We're back again, with our faces of life, to the five sinners on their path to personal eternity. Does anyone wonder where our sinners belong in the hereafter? Where will they find themselves? Any bets? We wouldn't bet on Freddie since it's obvious he's wasted his time. Many questions will be answered tonight. We four sing the unsaid. Thank you for listening.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT SR OUT

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

Mary, Trixie, Arnie, Freddie and Jerry are in a line across the DC and DL stage, about an arms-length apart, facing audience. Freddie, as he was in the first scene, lays on the road with his bottle.

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

TRIXIE *(playful)* Beatrice Trixie Scott. Actually, it's just Trix, you know Beatrice. I made it Trixie. Works better for me as I'm in sensitive personal public relations. 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 died in a car accident, I had to survive on my own, so I learned to take care of myself and Emmie.

JERRY I'm here for either of you.

Jerry holds out a business cards 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.

There is a CHIME.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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

The two chorus members with smiling faces step forward.

Fun!

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

Tragedy!

The two choir members with tragic faces step back.

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

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE FIVE

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX

FLASHBACK

YELLOWISH SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES DC AND DL:

Time: Night

Place: Trixie's room

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's dad died in a car accident. Danny 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'd rather take a bullet to the heart instead of having to deal with ongoing poverty, mom dying, bills coming in, but there's Emmie to care for. *(pause)* Don't worry, 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.

END OF FLASHBACK

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL OUT

There is a CHIME. Trixie freezes.

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE SCENE SIX

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

Time: Night

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

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

They unfreeze.

Freddie stands with difficulty, 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 the trash tabloid? Dirty Something?

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

MARY You and your Dirty Secrets mock real news!

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. Okay, you could be right about that . . . but the garbage you print is sickening.

ARNIE If our readers think a statement or fact could be true, then it is.

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

FREDDIE I know about aliens.

The three look to Freddie.

I drink them in too, too . . . way too often.

Freddie collapses on the floor.

MARY So, your paper reports aliens control the President?

Arnie shrugs.

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, living in his own filth.

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 a 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? I need more material.

MARY *(to Trixie)* A woman slept with Bigfoot?! Ridiculous!

Freddie snap sits up.

FREDDIE No-one mentions his sock. Always his foot, but never his sock. How come?

Freddie collapses on the road.

TRIXIE *(to Mary)* There's proof. I saw his picture.

MARY It was a Photoshopped image! You saw an image, not a picture of 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 Size matters!!

Jerry lets out with a loud, wicked laugh. The others jump back.

MARY *(disgust to Arnie)* So your gullible public will endure your rag every month for nine months absorbed in updates on the arrival of an imagined Little Foot.

ARNIE Brilliant!

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

ARNIE Terrific!? Your imagination is incredible. I want to recruit you as a writer.

MARY Ahaaaa!

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

ARNIE People need relief from the materialistic disparities you create! Reading "Dirty Secrets" better than drinking or 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!

There is a CHIME.

The five Sinners freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL DIMS

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

CHORUS We have the scoop on Arnie, the corrupt purveyor of common literature, the 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 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

FLASHBACK

YELLOWISH SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS DC AND DL ON:

Time: Night

Place: Board Room

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 casual business attire.

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. When the rules change, we change with them.

There are sounds of discord among men and women.

(loud) You need to hear this! *(normal voice)* Among us are dyed-in-the-wool newspaper people who have spent their lives rooting out truth and seeing it displayed in print and felt they had accomplished something of value. That was the truth of yesterday. Today we live in a world where one universal truth does not exist.

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. Today there is polarization of truth. The purpose of multi-media is to inform readers or viewers what we believe truth to be. We interpret truth for our customers and label it news!!! We give the readers and viewers what they want to believe!! We give pleasure. In return we pay our bills and reap a substantial profit. Brilliant!

There is a CHIME.

Anie and the board freeze, are motionless in awkward positions.

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL OUT

A SPOTLIGHT WITH CLOUD-LIKE EDGES LIGHTS THE CHORUS DR:

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 begin to see the scope of everything when we return to our sad sinners.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF FLASHBACK

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE EIGHT

ACT ONE, SCENE NINE

SPOTLIGHT DC AND DL UP ON:

Time: Night

Place: Road between Heaven and Hell

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

They unfreeze.

ARNIE None of us know anything for sure. 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. That's all I can remember. What's it mean?

ARNIE I wish we're Heaven bound, but it's possible we'll 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 killed Trixie, sent us both here.

JERRY My last sexual encounter with Heavenly Honey gave me a heart attack. I must have died doing it. Probably heart attack.

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 leader.

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?! Ahhhhhhhhhh!

ARNIE Us being here, this, our joint situation, would make a terrific story for "Dirty Secrets". I see it now "On The Road To Eternity".

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.

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.

All are exhausted, collapse on the road.

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