

The Media Lords

An Opera, of Sorts

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CHARACTERS

ARISTOCRATS

LADY DIVA (Soprano): Beloved talk show host. Her magic, her fans do whatever she tells them.

BARON ANCHOR (Baritone): Trusted newscaster. His magic, whatever he says on-air becomes real.

SIR MOGUL (Tenor): CEO of Consolidated Media Inc. His magic, money.

MAJOR BRANDS (Bass): Owns everything worth owning. His magic, raw power.

PAP, PAR & AZZI (Baritone, Tenor, Mezzo): Gossip mongers. They wear a single costume with six arms & legs, and three neck openings. Their magic, can momentarily enchant the masses.

MINIONS

FOURTH WALL (Tenor): Court Jester who can see and interact with the THEATER AUDIENCE.

DARK MINION (Alto): Performs dirty tricks and murder for hire.

MINIONS (2 - Tenor & Alto/Mezzo)): Help Mogul dress.

PRODUCER 1 (Alto): Produces *The Lady Diva Show*.

PRODUCER 2 (Tenor): Produces *Baron Anchor's Newscast*.

WAITER (Mezzo): Just guess what she does and you'll be right.

HOST (Tenor): Hosts the game show *I'd Sell My Soul For...?*

ANNOUNCER 1 (Tenor): Announcer for *The Lady Show*.

ANNOUNCER 2 (Tenor): Announcer for *Baron Anchor's Newscast*.

ANNOUNCER 3 (Bass/Baritone): Announcer for *Mediastan Tonight*.

OTHERS

MAN IN LINE (Any Male)

DIRECTOR (Spoken): Supposedly the director of *The Media Lords*, but really just another actor.

ENSABLE: Various audiences, show crews, and crowds.

PRERECORDED COMMERCIAL SINGERS:

COMMERCIAL
ANNOUNCER (Baritone/Tenor)

The Love Commercial
WOMAN (Alto/Mezzo)

The Chimera Resorts Commercial
MAN (Bass/Baritone)
WOMEM (Mezzo & Any Female)

The Solace Commercial
MAN (Any Male)
WOMAN (Any Female)

The Glammy Awards Commercial
WOMAN (Any Female)

The Proposition 56 Commercial
MAN 1 (Bass/Baritone)
WOMAN 1 (Any Female)
MAN 2 (Tenor)
WOMAN 2 (Alto/Mezzo)

The Bot Bot Commercial
WOMAN 1 (Any Female)
MAN 1 (Tenor)
WOMAN 2 (Mezzo)
MAN 2 (Any Male)

SETTING

The magical land of Mediastan. A feudal society that exists entirely within a media universe. The inhabitants of Mediastan are divided into three castes. The titled ARISTOCRATS run Mediastan, and each has a special magical power. The MINIONS work for and directly with the ARISTOCRATS. The lowest caste, the AUDIENCE, have no personal contact with the ARISTOCRATS. Mediastan is all surface, no substance - and flashy, flashy, flashy. Many video monitors are scattered throughout the set. These are used to display the various TV shows depicted and also show the action onstage from different perspectives along with providing additional visual content.

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

Due to the show within a show nature of the story, two distinct audiences exist. AUDIENCE refers to the audience that resides within Mediastan. The THEATER AUDIENCE refers to folks like us, in the real world, who are watching a show titled *The Media Lords*.

ACT I**SCENE 1**

(The broadcast set of the Lady Diva Show including the seating area for the show's AUDIENCE and DIVA's dressing room and backstage area. One of DIVA's MINIONS applies makeup to the star while other MINIONS attempt to look busy and avoid upsetting DIVA. The CREW fiddles with their equipment and chats with each other. The show's ANNOUNCER watches the AUDIENCE excitedly take their seats.)

AUDIENCE

*We are Diva devotees
We are adoring fans
She rules all celebrity
Practiced in the art of fame
We watch her every morning
Enshrined on our TV*

*Lady Diva, here with me
Diva we love you
Above all that we see
On our TV*

DIVA

*(In a rage)
Where are my fucking chocolates?
Here I stand surrounded by all of you fools and nit-wits!
(Awkward pause)
I am waiting!
I've no time for your nonsense
I've got a show to put on
Can't you hear my audience
Leave my dressing room, be gone*

*(The MINIONS leave the dressing room for the
backstage area of the show's set)*

MINIONS

*Diva's a bitch
Too stinking rich
Never delightful*

Cruel and spiteful

AUDIENCE

We are Diva disciples

MINIONS

Cross her, she goes ballistic

AUDIENCE

Her every word is gospel

MINIONS

Diva's wrath is sadistic

AUDIENCE

*At last our dreams culminate
'Cause Diva will entertain us*

MINIONS

She loves to humiliate us Minions in her domain

AUDIENCE & MINIONS

*(Together except for "love" and "hate")
Diva we love-hate you above all that we see on the TV*

ANNOUNCER 1

*We've got a few moments, before taping the show
There is something, you need to know
You see that sign, right over there
Well when it lights up, just be aware
In order to make, our show come alive
We need you to move into overdrive
Let me hear you applaud*

*(The AUDIENCE applauds ever more feverishly as
the ANNOUNCER rallies them.)*

*We need your applause
Applause, applause, applause, applause
Baron Anchor will be Diva's guest
Applause, applause...*

MINIONS

*We are the shit that Diva steps on
And then she scrapes us off her shoes
But that's the life of a minion
And all we get is one big "Fuck you!"*

(Enter FOURTH, nobody notices him. The focus shifts solely onto FOURTH as he walks to the lip of the theater stage and directly addresses the THEATER AUDIENCE. Exit ALL except FOURTH)

FOURTH

*Hello, hello, I can see you
And you can see me too
My name is Fourth Wall
Please don't mistake me for
Frivolous buffoons like them*

(ANCHOR, DIVA, MOGUL, BRANDS, and PAP, PAR & AZZI appear onstage, unmoving and lifeless mannequins of their characters. FOURTH indicates he is referring to these ARISTOCRATS.)

FOURTH

*Highfalutin royalty
Who can't tell you exist*

*Welcome to Mediastan
Our world is not like yours
Full of aristocrats
I'm merely a court jester here*

*Eavesdropping, observing
Since they don't notice me
Pays to know all I can
Keeps me safe
Treachery abounds here nowadays*

*Let me wise you up
Got the big what's what
'Bout the so called better classes*

*They're a sketchy bunch
Smiling faces with daggers in hand*

(Indicating the THEATER AUDIENCE)

Like some of you

*Unlike you, occult skills hold sway
Wielded in massive ego plays
Each one has unique capabilities
Sorcery confers special privileges*

*Because they need the aristocracy
 Propping up arrogant entitlements
 Everyone born of noble blood lines
 Possesses one pure magic enchantment*

*Using this one special power
 Grants license to the Peerage
 Yet they think after everything has been given them
 On a silver tray by a minion's hand
 After all the luck that money can buy
 Places them on high
 Still each one believes
 That they're all self made*

*Ladies and gentlemen
 I give you the rulers of Mediastan
 The champions of vested interests
 Image brokers, corrupt elites
 The Media Lords*

(ANCHOR, DIVA, MOGUL, PAP, PAR, AZZI, and BRANDS spring to life but not as their characters. Rather they are empty emotionless runway models. FOURTH conducts a fashion show of sorts.)

FOURTH

*Baron Anchor
 Wise and learned they say
 And old, very old
 Whatever he says on his daily news
 Becomes the truth
 His magic?
 Our world changes to match
 Every word Anchor speaks during his newscast*

*Lady Diva
 Kind and lovely
 Unless you work for her
 A witch to her staff
 But a saint to rapt adoring fans
 Her magic?
 The audience will do anything she tells them
 No matter what it is*

*Next, Sir Mogul
 Enfant terrible*

*The CEO of Consolidated Media
A man of wealth
His money screams
And it bribes
And it schemes
And it decides
His magic?
Big bucks
Luck it seems comes to those
Who have huge piles of cash*

*My three favorites
Pa, Par, and Azzi
They cause so much mischief
Lewd gossip mongers
Rumor floggers
Celebrity stalkers
Their magic?
Momentary enchantment
Salacious pandering forms their stock and trade*

*Now last we have Major Brands
I avoid him best I can
He controls it all
Pulling our strings
His magic?
Raw power
Sociopathically Brands directs this mess
Brands directs this mess
Brands directs this mess*

(The other ARISTOCRATS gather around BRANDS who raises his hands and as a puppeteer makes them dance until he cuts their strings and they fall to the ground.)

SCENE 2

(The set of ANCHOR's newscast. ANCHOR waits for the show to begin while a makeup MINION makes last minute adjustments to ANCHOR. Exit MINION.)

ANNOUNCER 2

(Offstage)

*Live from the Citadel of Truth
Today's news with Baron Anchor*

ANCHOR

*Top of the news today
Plans are now complete
For next year's Golden Jubilee
Honoring the Emperor's fifty years
On the throne of Mediastan
More after these headlines*

*This just in, the courts have issued
A surprising ruling about love
Consolidated Media's
Patent has been upheld
So when you fall head over heels
Pay your royalties straight to them
The stock markets soared higher
When the ruling was announced*

*Details about the Jubilee
After this from our sponsors*

(The video monitors display a sappy commercial showing a montage of a young couple walking on a beach, falling in love and eventually getting married. A WOMAN'S voice sings on the Commercial's soundtrack.)

WOMAN

*Your life's beyond belief
Strolling along the beach
Feeling sublime
Hand in hand through time*

*You've found that special one
Joyful delirium
Cupid's arrow
Leads to your trousseau*

Love
Falling in love
Exhilaration fills your heart
Now that you're in love

(The video cuts to an image of the corporate logo for Consolidated Media as an ANNOUNCER confirms that Consolidated Media does indeed own the patent for love.)

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER

Love, brought to you by Consolidated Media

SCENE 3

(The street in front of the broadcast studio. A CROWD mills about. Enter PAP, PAR, AZZI stalking ANCHOR who is arriving for his appearance on the Lady Diva Show.)

PAP PAR AZZI

*Look out, look out
We cannot stop
Until we get the latest story out
And our money for the story
For the money
We find the dirt
A photograph or a scurrilous flirt
A small bribe, no one hurt
Was it an affair, or just a squirt?
We'll dig that dirt
Doesn't matter, dirt is dirt
But we call it cash*

Ha, ha!

*And now we're stalking Baron Anchor
'Cause there was no tawdry tale
Of wanton lust with a money trail
Or political scandal
We love those too
As long as there's a sexy twist
For our beloved prurient interests
But there's not
Not a bit of kinky shit
That is always such a hit
And so we're stuck staking out
The most boring man alive
Most boring man alive
Baron Anchor
Baron Anchor*

Boohoo, boohoo, boohoo!

SCENE 4

(The set of the Lady Diva Show. The Audience waits, chatting while DIVA engages in a heated unheard conversation with the show's perplexed PRODUCER 1. A CAMERAMAN raises his opened hand and silently counts down with his fingers to begin the segment. Starting at five, on the count of one he points to DIVA and the PRODUCER jumps out of the camera's frame. DIVA smiles into the camera.)

DIVA

*Welcome to our show today
My guest needs no introduction
Yet I will
You know I must
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha*

*He's the voice you trust
When you need all the latest news
In his time slot he's been number one
Since his show's debut*

*I know him as my best friend
I'm overjoyed to present
A unique living legend
Please welcome Baron Anchor*

(Enter ANCHOR who sits in the guest chair. The applause sign lights triggering a standing ovation from the AUDIENCE.)

DIVA

Well you've certainly got a whole lot of fans here today

ANCHOR

*No, that can't be right
Here on your turf
I believe they all worship you*

DIVA

*Such modesty
You're too kind*

ANCHOR

Just honest reporting my dearest Diva

DIVA

*Now let me see if I've got this right
Your new special is this Sunday night?*

ANCHOR

*Great, straight to business
I appreciate that
Yes Sunday night at eight, eight, eight, eight*

DIVA

And I hear the subject is special to your heart

ANCHOR

*It's a touching, feel good show
Comprehensive in its scope
All about my favorite pet
My chimpanzee Kismet*

DIVA

Sounds fascinating

ANCHOR

*Kismet eats and he drinks
At the table next to me
Kismet runs, Kismet plays
And sometimes misbehaves*

*Kismet bites, just a bit
Piss him off, Kismet spits
Kismet throws his shit at me
He'll lob some at you too*

DIVA

*Charming
How old is your chimp?*

ANCHOR

(Confused)

What chimp?

DIVA

Why your pet, Kismet

ANCHOR

Oh yes, I do have a monkey named Kismet

*How did you know of him?
Please tell me who are you?*

DIVA

I'm Diva your oldest friend

ANCHOR

*Oh yes me and Diva go way back
My best friend
Have you seen her talk show?
I've heard it's excellent*

DIVA

*(DIVA realizing something is seriously wrong with
ANCHOR looks directly into the camera, cutting
short the interview.)*

*Don't forget Anchor's show
Watch it Sunday night at eight*

DIVA

*Eight, eight, eight,
Eight, eight, eight
Sunday night at eight
Eight, eight, eight
Got something to celebrate?
Coming after this short break
We'll show you how to bake
A perfect lemon cake
Stay tuned*

ANCHOR

*Eight, eight, eight,
Eight, eight, eight

Kismet throws shit
Kismet throws shit
Shit
Kismet throws shit*

*(PRODUCER rushes to DIVA. A MINION slowly guides ANCHOR
off the set)*

PRODUCER 1

What the hell was that?

DIVA

I don't know

DIVA

*It seemed like
He wasn't even here*

ANCHOR

*Kismet throws his shit
He'll toss some at you*

(Exit ANCHOR and MINION)

DIVA

*I watched Baron Anchor
Vanish here on this stage
And in his gaze I saw
Empty eyes, empty eyes*

*Not one shred of the man
I have known all these years
He didn't recognize me
Blank sockets bereft of any essence*

*I can hardly believe
What has just been revealed
Though I witnessed his crazed
Empty eyes, empty eyes*

*Should I doubt what I've seen
In deference to our past?
Some truths we don't need to know
Can't this harsh reality stay away*

*Did I miss some sign?
That filthy chimpanzee
Became such an obsession for Anchor
Sometimes he forgets names
But everyone does that
Barely worth a second thought*

*What a horrendous day
I will never forget
Peering into those flat
Empty eyes, empty eyes*

*In our cruel universe
Fate's a slap in the face
Nothing exists save this void
Damned empty eyes, empty eyes, empty eyes*

SCENE 5

(MOGUL's bedroom. MOGUL admires himself in the mirror. Two MINIONS assist MOGUL in selecting and more often rejecting articles of clothing.)

MOGUL

*I am the very model of a modern media mogul
I'm excellent at selling people entertainment to ogle
I screw around with distribution just to create confusion
Because that's a real advantage when contemplating collusion
I'm very well acquainted with the delusions of show runners
When confronted with ratings that show falling audience numbers
Public opinion never sways positions editorial*

(MOGUL searches for both the proper rhyme and outfit.)

I so enjoy intimidating through methods sartorial

MINIONS

*He so enjoys intimidating through methods sartorial
He so enjoys intimidating through methods sartorial
He so enjoys intimidating through methods sartorial*

MOGUL

*Negotiating contracts with a slightly drunk affiliate
I imply that I've been shown some photos that could humiliate
In situations selling people entertainment to ogle
I am the very model of a modern media mogul*

MINIONS

*In situations selling people entertainment to ogle
He is the very model of a modern media mogul*

MOGUL

*I'm always in my element when holding court at the upfronts
Approving casting choices I'm immune to agents' dumb ass stunts
And for the sweeps I hustle up a package with some star attached
When my tween idol gets busted I manage that P.R. whiplash
Look at my walls and shelves, they're all lined with accolades
and awards
Society clearly needs me, so money is my just reward
When schmoozing over cocktails to make deals I am notorious
I understand the importance of always dressing for success*

MINIONS

*He understands the importance of always dressing for success
He understands the importance of always dressing for success
He understands the importance of always dressing for success*

MOGUL

*I know the bandwidth requirements of video on demand
How to avoid diluting the intrinsic value of our brand
In situations selling people entertainment to ogle
I am the very model of a modern media mogul*

MINIONS

*In situations selling people entertainment to ogle
He is the very model of a modern media mogul*

(Convinced that he is not only the most important person in Mediastan, but also the best dressed, MOGUL disdainfully dismisses his MINIONS. Exit MINIONS)

SCENE 6

(The video monitors display a commercial showing people gambling, lounging on a beach, drinking exotic cocktails, dancing at a nightclub, etc.)

MAN

When you're looking for fun times

WOMEN

Fun times, good times

MAN

Where you gonna go?

WOMEN

Go, go

MAN

We got casinos

WOMEN

Casinos

MAN

We got the beach

WOMEN

The beach, the beach

MAN

Sip a tasty cocktail

WOMEN

Bottoms up

MAN

Spin a roulette wheel

WOMEN

Hot streak, hot streak

MAN

We're here for your pleasure

WOMEN

Your pleasure

At Chimera Resorts MAN

Chimera Resorts WOMEN

For maximum gaming fun MAN & WOMEN
Bring extra cash
To make more bets

Chimera Resorts COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER
A subsidiary of Consolidated Media

SCENE 7

(BRANDS and MOGUL meeting in BRANDS' office.)

BRANDS

*Have you seen the numbers
In this new report
The ratings suck
with profits in decline
There is only one last resort
We need the trendy next big thing*

MOGUL

*It seems they've tired of the show
About the dogs of chefs*

BRANDS

So, Fe-fe's got to go

*And that craze
For hula dancing*

MOGUL

I knew it wouldn't last

BRANDS

Don't forget the cop show where they

BRANDS & MOGUL

Never caught the perp

MOGUL

They said it would be edgy

BRANDS

It barely had a quirk

MOGUL

That dramady about the skinhead nurse

BRANDS

Enough, it pains me to remember

BRANDS & MOGUL

*We must address this disastrous report
The ratings suck*

*with profits in decline
There is only one last resort
We need the trendy next big thing*

*What about Shamba, Animal Huntress
The pitch, the pitch sounded great*

MOGUL

*Strap a camera on the damn cat's head
Then in real-time watch as she stalks her prey*

BRANDS

Instead we got graphic shots

BRANDS & MOGUL

*Of the Princess in her bed
With a hunky gardener by the name of Fred
With a hunky gardener by the name of Fred
With a hunky gardener by the name of Fred*

BRANDS

Then came the lawyers

MOGUL

One thousand it seemed

BRANDS

Those legal costs sure

MOGUL

*Hit the bottom line
Our...*

BRANDS

*Comedies ain't funny
The...*

MOGUL

*Dramas have no soul
Re-*

BRANDS

*-ality's there for free
So...*

MOGUL

The sponsors flee

BRANDS & MOGUL

*In the afternoon only Diva's show
Is raking in big cash
In the afternoon only Diva's show
Is raking in big cash
Big cash
Big cash
Big cash
Cash*

MOGUL

Then there is the news

BRANDS

*And you know that is sacred
To our way of life
Even at a net loss
It is surely worth the price*

BRANDS & MOGUL

*To keep society stable
It is crucial that we must
Maintain our vital role
As propagandists for the status quo
Status quo, quid pro quo
Status quo, quid pro quo
Quid pro quo, quid pro quo
Quid pro quo, quid pro quo
Quid pro quo, quid pro quo
Quid pro quo, quid pro quo
Quid pro quo, quid pro quo*

(Enter FOURTH, not visible to BRANDS or MOGUL)

FOURTH

(Addressing the THEATER AUDIENCE)

*Major Brands, an ambitious man
Doesn't care about you
In pursuit of profits and his
Overwhelming lust for power*

*He believes that he knows what's right
For mankind, every time
He controls what you see and hear
His intentions are self-serving*

*Major Brands, an ambitious man
 He will do anything
 In pursuit of profits and his
 Overwhelming lust for power
 In pursuit of profits and his
 Overwhelming lust for power
 Overwhelming lust for power
 For power
 For power
 Power
 Power
 Power*

(FOURTH observes and reacts to BRANDS and MOGUL)

BRANDS

*I've never underestimated
 An audience's taste
 And found my bid too low
 It's pabulum that they love
 So it's pabulum that they'll get
 On with the show*

*Welcome to my Zeitgeist
 Crass carnival of now
 Let your cranium slip
 Into the frenzy, all of this
 Then sweet subjugation*

*Pabulum, we need new pabulum
 Not just a plot twist*

MOGUL

I know that don't work

BRANDS

*We need some brand new pabulum
 Maybe something classy*

Who's mining your data?

MOGUL

(Laughing)

Sometimes it's me

BRANDS

Your thoughts for a few bits more

Tailored,

MOGUL

To your desires

BRANDS & MOGUL

*Our seductive trap is set
For your stultification*

*Pabulum, we need new pabulum
Not some cheap knock-off act*

MOGUL

That never clicks

BRANDS & MOGUL

*We need some brand new pabulum
Looking for something glitzy*

*Bow down to the money changers
In their temples rigging the markets
'Cause they rule the universe
'Cause we rule the universe
The universe, our universe*

Disguised as just a couple 'a pitchmen

MOGUL

Selling,

BRANDS & MOGUL

Selling off some souls

BRANDS

Maybe yours?

BRANDS & MOGUL

*Priced at market value
So that you can own your own*

MOGUL

And who wouldn't want that?

BRANDS & MOGUL

Then pure subordination

*Pabulum, we need new pabulum
Not a has-been's revival*

MOGUL

We fired her before

BRANDS & MOGUL

We need some brand new pabulum

BRANDS

I think it could be scary?

MOGUL

Scary's good

BRANDS & MOGUL

*Pabulum, we need new pabulum
Not last year's biggest hit
With a bit of retrofit
We need some brand new pabulum
And make it extra sexy
Make it extra sexy
Make it super sexy
Make it white hot sexy*

SCENE 8

(In the Ether, Everywhere at Once. Enter
PAP, PAR, AZZI)

PAP PAR AZZI

*Stop the presses
Whatever that means
Got a hot new story
Breathless and raw
Verify?
Who's got the time
With a scoop on the line?*

*Right now it's a rumor
But we're sure it will grow
Into something quite substantial
For everyone to know*

*Sure it might be a baseless gossip
Or perhaps some nasty slander
Juicy and vile
It all needs to play out
That can take awhile
But in the meantime
Here is what we know*

*Baron Anchor
Diva's show
Mass confusion
Unclear what was said
Segment cut short
No official comment on
What happens next?*

*Breathless and hyper
Reporter on the scene
Waiting for more information
So we will
Repeat the same
More excited this time*

*We're all very worried
About Anchor's health
But with nothing known
Guess we'll just make something up*

*Has Baron lost his mind?
Our experts seem to think so
As always stay tuned here
For all the latest updates
All the latest updates
All the latest updates
Right here*

SCENE 9

(BRANDS' office. BRANDS angrily throws a tabloid he has been reading across the room. FOURTH stands off to the side unseen by BRANDS.)

FOURTH

(To the theater audience)

*It seems some bitchy style maven said Brands
Deserves jail time for fashion malpractice*

(Indicating BRANDS)

*Any criticism Brands perceives as a sin
It will foul his mood
Brands' skin is oddly thin*

(Exit FOURTH)

BRANDS

*Clearly they don't understand that
I'm blessed with a generous heart
and feelings delicate for a man of my exalted state*

*Noblesse Oblige is what I believe
separates our ruling class from the riff-raff*

*I give so much to society
Why do they then despise the trappings of my life*

*I'm a benign oligarch
I do enough for the little people
And yes I make lots of money
yet it's less than I deserve*

*Spite and jealousy cause them not to see that
what is good for me is always best for them*

*It doesn't matter anyway
The Hoi Polloi they hold no sway
over how I spend one single day*

*The common man cannot comprehend
how the world works and who makes it run
They owe their lives to my enterprise*

Noblesse Oblige is what I believe

separates our ruling class from the riff-raff

*We make the rules and
they labor for us
It is simply common sense
the natural order
It is simply common sense
the natural order*

(Yelling to an offstage MINION)

*Call Mogul
and have him get his ass
over here A-S-A-P*

SCENE 10

(BRANDS office later that day and the set for ANCHOR's newscast. A monitor in BRANDS office shows the newscast. BRANDS and MOGUL are reviewing financial reports. ANCHOR waits for the newscast to begin.)

ANNOUNCER 2

(Offstage)

*Live from the Citadel of Truth
The day's news with Baron Anchor*

ANCHOR

*Today we begin with a story of grave importance
In a spectacular display, the southern village of Kali
Spontaneously burst into flames
Amazingly no reported injuries
The homeless villagers were relocated
To the Big Bite Cafeteria
Where they rest in surprisingly clean
Booths and banquettes
Kali is the fifth self-igniting village
Since the Great Heat Wave began...*

MOGUL

(Showing BRANDS a section of a report)

*These are numbers and
This is what they can do for you
Concealing details
Of profit and gain*

BRANDS

*Hiding my secrets
Again and again and again and again
I make those numbers work for me
Obscuring the big hush-hush*

BRANDS & MOGUL

*Business is sometimes a gamble
But who needs the risk when we can fix the odds
Banking all the bounty that we
Skim from the top because we rigged this game*

*We loot your numbers
Cross referenced in our database
There is nothing we don't know*

*About what you buy, how much you pay
Who you ring up when you talk on the phone
What you love and you hate*

*We've got your number, got you pegged
Where you went Monday night
No secrets no confidential
Dates with that sleaze-ball who met you online
Take a number stand in our line
We'll let you pretend your thoughts are your own*

ANCHOR

...In the latest financial news

(BRANDS and MOGUL snap around to watch the newscast)

*Anonymous sources confirm that
Consolidated Media
Will announce a massive decline
In revenues from ad sales
Expected to fall sixty percent
Their financial report
Will be released next Friday*

BRANDS

Holy shit what was that

MOGUL

Holy crap this is bad

BRANDS & MOGUL

*What Anchor says, always becomes true
What Anchor says becomes true, what can we do?*

*He's getting dodgy in the head
Who can tell what he'll say next*

*His mental state has been going downhill
For several months
'Bout time that he retires*

BRANDS

Anchor's stubborn, he'll never leave

MOGUL

Appeal to greed, offer a bribe

BRANDS & MOGUL

*Call it a token of appreciation
Which we can only grant upon termination*

MOGUL

*Major, I will see to this
Anchor will say bye-bye*

SCENE 11

(The set of the Mediastan Tonight show. PAP, PAR, & AZZI wait for the show to begin)

ANNOUNCER 3

(Offstage)

*When you have to know
The what's what
And the who's who
There's only one source you need
Mediastan Tonight
Mediastan Tonight*

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*Excitement and scandal
Behind the scenes
Reports about a big story
That's breaking huge today*

*Teen heartthrob
And film star Tab Lloyd
Is splitting up with
Long time girlfriend
And fashion whore
Dame Hot Babe*

*Details sketchy
Off the record, sounds real saucy
Babe's rehearsing for her concert tour
No comment*

*Coming up
Backstage at
McLuhan, The Musical*

(The video monitors display a commercial. It begins with a black & white montage of people looking sad, lost and distracted)

MAN

*Melancholia, no one seeks it out
Don't let sullen thoughts keep you down
There is a better way*

(The images in the commercial montage gradually shift into color as the expressions of the people shown transform from negative to positive)

MAN

*Feeling anxious or just OK?
When good isn't enough for you
Take one tiny magenta pill
To rejuvenate your mood*

MAN & WOMAN

*Solace perks life up
Makes each day a joy
Ask your doctor if Solace is right for you*

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER

*ChemLife
A subsidiary of Consolidated Media*

SCENE 12

(ANCHOR's dressing room. ANCHOR is opening the door to let MOGUL enter)

ANCHOR

*Oh my, I did not expect
The big boss
Here at my door
Come in, come in, come in*

MOGUL

*I don't mean to interrupt
Is this a bad time?*

ANCHOR

*Oh no
Please, come in sit down*

(Aside)

*It's best to humor these plutocrats
Fragile egos in bespoke suits*

(To MOGUL)

*Would you care for a bit of wine?
I always have a glass before my show
I believe it helps lubricate my tongue
If not, it surely soothes my soul*

MOGUL

Yes, I'd love a taste

(ANCHOR pours two glasses of wine and hands one to MOGUL who never drinks any of it)

MOGUL

(Aside)

*The wine's calming glow
May soften him up
To accept my scheme*

ANCHOR

*What brings such a high,
High and noble lord
Here to visit this humble newsman?*

MOGUL

*You mean our most trusted star
A true national treasure*

ANCHOR

(Aside)

What is this scoundrel up to today?

MOGUL

*I don't quit recall
When did your show start?*

ANCHOR

Forty-seven years, the end of next month

MOGUL

*I can't imagine how fatiguing
A grind like that must be*

ANCHOR

*Oh no, no, no, no
My show gives me energy*

MOGUL

*Oh, by the way there's something
Which I almost forgot
It seems that H.R. during an audit
Found they could enhance your benefit plan*

ANCHOR

(Aside)

I smell subterfuge

MOGUL

(Hands ANCHOR a folder)

Your pension's increased four-hundred percent

ANCHOR

(Examining the papers)

Yes this looks a huge sum

(Aside)

What does Mogul want?

(To MOGUL)

*You're really too generous
What strings are attached?*

MOGUL

*Just a way to demonstrate
Our high regard for you*

ANCHOR

(Aside)

Yeah, sure

MOGUL

*There's one small constraint
This bonus only applies
If you retire within one week*

*We need a loss to offset some gains
We incurred shifting funds offshore
To a tax haven
So the accountants dictate this sudden timing*

ANCHOR

(Aside)

*I do not trust him one bit
That pompous lying piece of shit
His rancid ethics will not corrupt me*

(To MOGUL)

*I see that you want me gone
So take your bribes and move along
This is my show and I cannot be bought*

SCENE 13

(MOGUL's office. MOGUL rises from his desk as DIVA enters. MOGUL and DIVA greet each other with cheek air-kisses)

MOGUL

*Hello my dear
More beautiful every time we meet*

DIVA

*Why aren't you sweet
(Aside)
Buttering me up already*

MOGUL

Let me get straight to my point

DIVA

Of course, of course

MOGUL

*I'm very worried about Baron Anchor
I know you've seen the signs
His mental capacities
Wander increasingly*

DIVA

Yes that happened on my show

DIVA & ANCHOR

I know, I know

DIVA

*When we finally got backstage
So much worse*

MOGUL

And the world must never know about it

DIVA

My lips are sealed

MOGUL

Still, I need your help

DIVA

How is that?

MOGUL

*As Anchor's friend
Help me convince Anchor to retire*

DIVA

He won't care for that one bit

MOGUL

So I've learned

(MOGUL shows DIVA the contents of the folder he'd
previously shown ANCHOR)

MOGUL

He rejected this very generous severance offer

DIVA

*Generous indeed!
He's a stubborn man when his mind is made up*

MOGUL

You can sway him with your charm and friendship

DIVA

I'm not sure of that

MOGUL

*Don't be so modest
You can persuade him*

DIVA

(Aside)
*More important
What's in it for me?*

MOGUL

*Confide in him
How much you'd love to retire
To escape the rat race
(Aside)
And now the bait*

MOGUL

*Then of course
His show will need*

A brand new host

DIVA

(Aside)

A worthy bribe

DIVA

*But I have my own talk show
I couldn't leave it behind*

MOGUL

*No need to
Keep them both
Give your fans a double dose*

DIVA

Yes my fans would eat that up

MOGUL

(Aside)

Damn I'm good at this

DIVA & MOGUL

*We only want what's best for Anchor
We only want what's best for him
We only want what's best for Anchor*

(Aside)

I only care what's best for me

DIVA

*We only want what's best
We only want what's best
We only want
We only want
What matters is
What's best for me*

MOGUL

*We only want what's best for Anchor
What is best for him
Best for Anchor
Best for Anchor
What matters is
What's best for me*

*I've one simple rule
That guides me through life
Always look out
For number one
And take what's best for me*

*I believe there is a force
Which guides decisions that I make
Because somehow
Things all work out
Just right for me*

*I deserve my due
Justly entitled
To reap the fruits
Of my high rank*

*I make my own fate
I robustly take anything I need
'Cause I deserve
The finest things*

*I only care what's
Best for me
I only care what's
Best for me
I only care what's
Best for me*

*I only care what's
Best for me
I only care what's
Best for me
I only care what's
Best for me*

SCENE 14

(An expensive restaurant. ANCHOR is sitting at a table. Enter DIVA. They cheek air-kiss and sit for lunch)

ANCHOR

*What a delightful surprise
Your luncheon invitation*

DIVA

*We so seldom see each other
'Bout time we get caught up*

DIVA & ANCHOR

*'Bout time that we got caught up
Got caught up
Got caught up
Caught up*

(Enter WAITER who presents menus to DIVA and ANCHOR)

WAITER

*Our soup today, a special Cream of Truffle
Infused with chef's secret ingredients which form a bubble
And when that bubble bursts it releases the scent of
Springtime, roses and a hint of that new car smell*

*The catch de jour an Emperor Cod grilled to perfection
Served in a butter sauce*

(Aside)

Flavored with spit and rancor

DIVA

*The fish sounds delicious
But we need...
Yes a few more minutes to
Decide
Meanwhile shall we order

A bottle of wine
I'll defer to Anchor's palate
Yes fetch the best Pinot
In your cellar for us
This meal's on me
Please charge my account*

ANCHOR

*A few minutes
To decide,
Decide
We need some wine
We must have wine
A bottle of wine
Zin? No I think Pinot Noir
The Pinot and
Luncheon tab
Billed to my
Account*

(Exit WAITER)

ANCHOR

*I really enjoyed my interview on your show
But oddly I can't recall how it ended*

DIVA

(Aside)

That's something I can use to advantage and exploit

(Enter WAITER with a bottle of wine which ANCHOR approves.
The WAITER pours two glasses. While pouring DIVA
surreptitiously prompts the WAITER to fill ANCHOR's to the
rim while indicating only a small pour for herself)

DIVA

*More is always best
At least that's how
I was raised*

DIVA & ANCHOR

*Fill both glasses up
The better for a toast
To friendship
Lifelong friends
You and I*

(Exit WAITER)

DIVA

*Drink up
This is quaffing wine*

(BARON gulps more than half his remaining wine. DIVA
refills his glass)

DIVA

(Aside)

I need his defenses lowered

ANCHOR

*Strange, I don't remember
Leaving your set*

DIVA

Well you were fabulous

ANCHOR

*We were chatting about my special
Next thing I woke up
Sprawled across a couch*

DIVA

*You told that story about how we met
Everyone loved your banter, so witty*

ANCHOR

But...

DIVA

I think your problem is stress

ANCHOR

...Stress?

DIVA

Yes, I've had this very same problem myself

ANCHOR

Not remembering things?

DIVA

*Indeed I did
So now I know the cure*

ANCHOR

What is it please

DIVA

It's simple

ANCHOR

Tell me

DIVA

*You need rest, rest, rest
Then more rest*

ANCHOR

That's it, just some rest?

DIVA & ANCHOR

*Rest, rest, then more rest
Healthy refreshing rest*

DIVA

*I took two months off
Under my doctor's direction to rest
(Aside)
No need to share he's a plastic surgeon*

ANCHOR

I suppose I could use a vacation

DIVA

*My case was mild
Yours seems more severe
Let me examine your eyes*

(DIVA lunges onto BARON, pulling one of his eyes open to peer into it)

ANCHOR

You can tell from this?

DIVA

*If you know how to look
It's worse than I feared
Better take action fast*

ANCHOR

Dear me what should I do?

DIVA

You must drastically simplify your life

ANCHOR

Easier said than done

DIVA

*Retire and live a lazy life
I'd do it myself if I could*

ANCHOR

*But you're as old as me
And surely worth more than I*

DIVA

*Yet you invested wisely
While I have a taste for roulette
So retirement is just a dream*

ANCHOR

(Finally realizing that DIVA is playing him.
Aside)

*That can't be true
She owns at least seven houses
A new book every other year
Her makeup line
Plus all those speaking fees
I've never seen her gamble
Not even in an office pool*

*She must be in cahoots
With that dog Sir Mogul*

(ANCHOR rises to accuse DIVA of betrayal)

ANCHOR

*Et tu, Diva?
Such a cruel betrayal
And you, Diva
I believed were bound by some loyalty
Diva be gone, leave my sight
I spit upon your memory*

(ANCHOR drains his wineglass and throws it at DIVA. Then ANCHOR swigs directly from the wine bottle and spits it on DIVA. Exit DIVA. ANCHOR continues to sloppily drink and spill from the bottle through the remainder of the scene)

*Farwell my traitorous friend, enemies now
Such a woman who could kiss me on the cheek
While slipping a stiletto in my spine
Chain me to a rock for all of eternity
As her eagle pecks my liver out
Dunk my head into a bucket of turpentine
And then hurl a lit match at my face
Lean me out a window so I can see the view
Oops, then it's defenestration time
Build a bed out of a hundred dead porcupines
Make me sleep with needles piercing my flesh
Wrench my jaw and force a funnel down my throat
For a tasty pint of pure strychnine*

SCENE 15

(In the Ether, Everywhere at Once. Enter
PAP, PAR, AZZI)

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*Something's up
Don't know much
Don't know what
Don't really know anything*

*Big shakeup
Somewhere, not sure,
But somewhere
So we've been told*

*Huge story
According to our source
Who is not authorized to speak
About this situation*

*Remember where you heard it
We got the scoop
We're number one
For gossip and innuendo*

*Something's up
Don't know much
Don't know what
Don't really know anything
Don't really know anything
Anything, anything, anything*

SCENE 16

(ANCHOR on the set of his show, mid-newscast. DIVA at home is watching on a large video display)

ANCHOR

*And in this week's Science Corner
New research confirms that humans and dinosaurs
Did indeed co-exist many years ago
Apparently they kept us as pets.*

*On the entertainment front
Afternoon talk phenom, Lady Diva
Has announced plans to retire from the spotlight
And end her highly regarded show
Effective immediately
We wish our dear friend Diva
All the best*

(Aside)

Take that you traitorous cow...

DIVA

*This cruel reward, foul banishment
Anchor's decree casts me aside*

(Indicating Anchor)

*His motives grate unjustified
My heart he sliced through betrayal*

*I don't deserve this fate, my world now torn amiss
Who's he to designate what I must endure
I will not surrender to my new nemesis
The Baron shall incur my fury*

*Righteously indignant about this incident
That evil man's offense I'll firmly assuage
Through rude chastisement of ludicrous punishment
True satisfaction demands irate outrage*

*I am a Lady of our noble Royal Court
The aristocracy, people of my class
Based on our pedigree we rule by just accord
The proper role for our elite caste*

*It is my duty and right to reclaim my dignity
Raise a defense to regain eminence*

From this predicament I will extract revenge

*I cannot forget this, I will not forgive
Nothing is permanent, for now I will retrench
Then I will strike back quite punitively*

*This holy vendetta
Demands that my honor
And justice must prevail
Because I swear I shall return*

ACT II**SCENE 1**

(Underture. Mash-up any bits from ACT I, but not ACT II. Use these to summarize events up to this point, like a recap on a TV series. Be clever, have fun and get creative.)

ANNOUNCER

(Offstage and spoken)

Previously, on The Media Lords.

(Let the recap begin)

SCENE 2

(The street in front of the broadcast studio. A CROWD mills about. DIVA wanders dazed among them, unnoticed among her previous fans.)

CROWD

*We are the prime demographic
We are consumers who buy
The hottest products, priced just right
Hardly even pondering why*

*We are aggregated
Analyzed so trends can be found
Regarding fashion and taste
Free will does not exist*

*Sell me more stuff
Never enough
To fill the needs
Of my shopping dreams*

*We are the engine of commerce
Set loose to spend and spend more
Craving the gadgets and baubles
Tickling our reptile brains*

*If you don't have the latest
Who are you really then?
Just some deprived schmuck
Obviously down on your luck*

(Enter FOURTH)

*Sell me more stuff
Never enough
To fill the needs
Of this shopping dream*

FOURTH

*Where are Diva's devotees?
Gone now it would appear
Her fame fleeting and fragile
Felled by ego and greed*

Diva is lost

*Here on the streets
A face in the crowd
How will she ever survive?*

(Enter PAP, PAR, & AZZI)

PAP, PAR, & AZZI

*Fashion and scandal
Nude photos were found
Messy divorces
We savor details*

*Mediastan Tonight
Exciting coverage
You won't want to miss
Make sure to tune in
Mediastan Tonight tonight*

(Exit PAP, PAR, & AZZI)

DIVA

*Here I wander desolated
All my joy now turned to pain
I gave my heart to my fans
Fickle creatures who cannot recall my name*

*They loved me more than the rest
But that was in another lifetime
Once I strode above the stars
Now I'm an empty shattered soul
They loved me more than the rest
But that was then
I miss my life*

SCENE 3

(The video monitors display a commercial showing a montage of beautiful people in a variety of situations including entering the Grammy Awards on the red carpet.)

WOMAN

*Slinking down our red carpet
All must see VIPs
Mark the night
Stars come out
On the Grammy Awards*

*Honoring people who are much more
Glamorous than you
Saturday at nine*

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER

*The Grammy Awards
Brought to you by Consolidated Media*

SCENE 4

(MOGUL'S office. BRANDS and MOGUL are meeting to determine how to manage the changing situation.)

BRANDS

Have you got it?

MOGUL

(Waving a thick binder)

Yeah, it's right here

BRANDS

A complete accounting?

MOGUL

Yes of course

Every one of Anchor's gaffes

Catalogued in my report

BRANDS

Read it to me

MOGUL

It's rather lengthy

BRANDS

Well then just the craziest stories

He caused to spring like Athena

BRANDS & MOGUL

Into life from his head

MOGUL

First we had that week the sun never set

BRANDS

Such a long tiring day

BRANDS & MOGUL

Then the heat wave soaked us all in sweat

MOGUL

Who could forget that gang of wild goats

That robbed several banks

BRANDS

*I never really understood
How they shot those guns with hooves*

BRANDS & MOGUL

Who knows, who knows

MOGUL

*Then there was that economic crash
When cotton candy got used as cash*

BRANDS

That sugar standard almost cost me my ass

BRANDS & MOGUL

Alas, alas

*His crazy talk
Has got to stop
It's just too dangerous*

*This crazy talk
We've heard enough
The Baron is extraneous*

MOGUL

*He nearly wrecked the fashion world
Bringing bell bottoms back in style*

*What about the night the beer bottles grew legs
And danced on the tavern bars*

BRANDS

I rather liked that one

MOGUL

But it ended badly when the tango began

BRANDS

All foam and broken glass

MOGUL

And now our current crisis

BRANDS & MOGUL

The pending drop in our stock price

BRANDS & MOGUL

*His crazy talk
Has got to stop
It's just too dangerous*

*This crazy talk
We've had enough
The Baron is extraneous
Anchor is extraneous
The Baron is extraneous*

MOGUL

*So then what should we do?
We can't just kill him*

BRANDS

*Sure we can
If we want*

MOGUL

*But appearances must be kept
No indication we are involved*

BRANDS

*Perhaps a poison
Something subtle*

MOGUL

I have an idea

(MOGUL removes a thick old book from a shelf and searches through the pages.)

Let me check

Yes, yes right here

(Reading from the text.)

"Scandalium, effects only the most famous of personalities"

BRANDS

Sounds promising

MOGUL

*"In significant quantities
Causes paralysis and loss of face
Death is nearly instantaneous"*

*"Undetectable at lower dosages
Which weakens the heart
Any shock or surprise*

*Will induce a fatal attack
See appendix B
Dosage table three"*

(MOGUL and BRANDS examine the book together.)

MOGUL	BRANDS
<i>Appendix B</i>	<i>Dosage table three</i>
<i>Appendix B</i>	<i>Table three</i>
<i>Looks like all we need</i>	<i>Table three</i>

BRANDS & MOGUL

Is just seven drops

*Just seven drops
And one big shock
Should do the deed
Just seven drops*

*What can trigger his heart attack?
Maybe Diva has a comeback*

*The Baron's heart could not withstand
Diva's return to fame
Just seven drops to guarantee
Anchor becomes history*

*His crazy talk
Has got to stop
It's just too dangerous*

*This crazy talk
We've heard enough
The Baron is extraneous
Anchor is extraneous
The Baron is extraneous*

MOGUL

*I'll have my Dark Minion handle this task
She is exceedingly discreet*

SCENE 5

(In the Ether, Everywhere at Once. PAP, PAR, & AZZI and FOURTH muse about the nature of fame. FOURTH is not visible to the others.)

PAP, PAR & AZZI	FOURTH
<i>Promote</i>	<i>some kid who sorta sings</i>
<i>Proclaim</i>	<i>them as the hottest rage</i>
<i>Build their</i>	<i>fan base to mammoth size</i>
<i>Stardom</i>	<i>naturally realized</i>
<i>Parties</i>	<i>only the most elite</i>
<i>Free gifts</i>	<i>which are never needed</i>
<i>Cameras</i>	<i>flash at the glamorous</i>
<i>No lines</i>	<i>trying their patience</i>
<i>Exposed</i>	<i>caught in a cheap affair</i>
<i>Scandal</i>	<i>hyped in our media</i>
<i>Drop off</i>	<i>there goes the audience</i>
<i>Has been</i>	<i>gone and forgotten</i>
<i>Comeback</i>	<i>time for a revival</i>
<i>Root for</i>	<i>cheering an underdog</i>
<i>Acclaim</i>	<i>such depth in this new work</i>
<i>Renowned</i>	<i>as a great artist</i>
<i>We fawn</i>	<i>excitedly</i>
<i>over</i>	<i>celebrating</i>
<i>heroes</i>	<i>phony</i>
<i>designed</i>	<i>achievements</i>
<i>to vouch</i>	<i>This make believe</i>
<i>for our</i>	<i>reality</i>
<i>great taste</i>	<i>true or not</i>
<i>Because</i>	<i>gushingly</i>
<i>we are drawn</i>	<i>we are drawn</i>
<i>to fame</i>	<i>Drawn into the fame</i>
<i>to fame</i>	<i>Drawn by that fame</i>

SCENE 6

(A seedy dive in a bad part of town where eyes don't see and ears don't hear - a place for secret deals where no one knows your name. MOGUL sits at the bar while the BARTENDER pours a tumbler of whisky from a bottle. Enter DARK, who sits on the stool next to MOGUL. The BARTENDER starts to move to the other end of the bar taking the bottle. DARK grabs the bottle and takes a long drink from it. The BARTENDER retreats without the bottle.)

DARK

*What brings you to my side of town?
To risk the muggers knife
And lurk in shadows so dark and far
From your privileged life*

MOGUL

*I've a task that requires more
Than your usual discretion
A delicate piece of dirty work
For the second oldest profession*

DARK

*Oh, it's murder which you seek
I've much steeper fees for blood*

(Using a tube of lipstick DARK writes a number on the bar counter.)

MOGUL

(MOGUL lowers a bulging satchel onto the bar.)
*Let's triple that in diamonds and gold
Since we never had this chat*

*Here's one quarter now,
The balance when you've finished
But if you fail in form or deed
Your future will just vanish*

DARK

*An enticing offer
I accept your contract*

MOGUL

Your target's Baron Anchor

(MOGUL hands DARK a vial of scandalium.)

Slip this in the glass of wine

He drinks before each show

It will weaken his heart

Any shock will then bring death

Which you'll provide the next day

(MOGUL hands DARK a pair of tickets and a piece
of paper with further instructions.)

Find Lady Diva in the crowd

And take her to this show

A trusted colleague will greet you there

Just follow these instructions

You'll be guided to a specific seat

This will seal Anchor's fate

When Diva's fame is revived

Anchor will meet his demise

Anchor will meet his demise

Anchor will meet his demise

SCENE 7

(Nowhere. Enter FOURTH who addresses the
THEATER AUDIENCE.)

FOURTH

*Our trusted Baron's fate seems set
On its woeful course now
A crafty minion on the hunt
Employing deadly force*

*Her sinister master will not abide any
Deviation from his plan
A man of money he just hires
A first class assassin*

*There is a lesson to be learned
In poor Anchor's plight
Don't ignore the hand that feeds
Or they'll slice you from primetime*

*With your final demise
Surprise demise surprise
Demise demise*

SCENE 8

(DARK's bedroom. DARK is waking up and happily greeting her new day of skull-duggery as she prepares for work.)

DARK

*This gorgeous sun greeting me it
Portends great success today
The tools of my trade, cloak and blade
Will find work straightaway*

*My patron I'll gratify
With my surreptitious arts
I can't contain the joy I'll feel
When my labor starts*

*The beauty of shrieks of terror
The splendor of severed limbs
The scent of fear tantalizes my nose
Oozing off quaking victims
Their panic satisfies
Groveling, begging mercy
This is my true delight
My delight
My delight*

*A marvelous day waits for me
Mayhem's my dearest friend
Those who have never tasted blood
Cannot hope to comprehend*

*Be it theft, kidnapping or death
It matters not one bit to me
This work always lifts up my heart
When the wretches submit
When the wretches submit
And they always do submit*

SCENE 9

(ANCHOR's vacant dressing room. Enter DARK who stealthily searches for the decanter of wine to poison. When found it contains more than a single glass of wine. DARK guzzles enough of the wine to leave only one glass. DARK opens the vile of poison and removes the cap which has a dropper attached.)

DARK

(DARK slowly placing seven drops of poison into the decanter.)

One

Two

Three

Four

Five

Six

Seven

(A bit tipsy DARK starts to leave but hides when she realizes ANCHOR is returning. Enter ANCHOR and his PRODUCER 2. While ANCHOR prepares for his newscast DARK makes several unsuccessful attempts to sneak out, each time almost getting caught.)

ANCHOR

(ANCHOR patters about - dabbing at his makeup, comparing ties, shirts, and jackets etc.)

What's the story for the lead?

PRODUCER 2

How about the scheming bankers?

ANCHOR

Not the triple homicide?

PRODUCER 2

I think banks are more important

ANCHOR

*But grizzly gets more eyeballs
And accounting's a real bore
Don't forget about my ratings
Give the audience their gore*

PRODUCER 2

*Your name's on the show of course
Ultimately it's your choice
But don't forget professionally
Our duty to the public*

ANCHOR

*Spare me the journalistic lecture
There's one thing I know for sure
Nothing quite sells like strife*

*Which tie with this shirt
blue or grey?*

PRODUCER 2

*This, no that...
Hell, they both look OK
Have you considered red
It will pick up the undertones
When you speak of death*

(Finally DARK sneaks through the door and exits.)

ANCHOR

*Oh cut the crap
You act like this is some higher calling
But we both know the truth*

ANCHOR & PRODUCER 2

*It's another dirty racket
Just another dirty racket
Such a dirty dirty filthy
Dirty dirty little racket*

PRODUCER 2

(Passive-aggressive)

Whatever...

ANCHOR

*I could have your job
Don't forget who's boss*

PRODUCER 2

*Take it then
At least I'd have a life*

ANCHOR

*Nah, too much work
To train another fool
In what you do*

(ANCHOR pours a glass of wine, takes a sip and
spits it out.)

*Damn this wine's gone bad
Have another bottle brought to the set
I'll take my libations there*

(Exit ANCHOR and PRODUCER)

SCENE 10

(Nowhere. FOURTH addresses the THEATER AUDIENCE)

FOURTH

*It seems Baron has
Received fate's reprieve
But now Major Brands
Needs someone he can blame
Mogul will take that fall
I'd stay away from him*

*Best take care
Don't get close
To the danger
Don't risk your life*

*Collateral damage
Can screw up a day
Fanatical duress
Run amuck foul play
Combatable carnage
Imposed injury
Unnatural excess
Death row jeopardy*

*Poison slipped into your drink
Someone stabs you in the back
Or quiet in your own bed
We all die someday*

*Inscrutable privilege
Waiting in suspense
Dogmatical insistence
Ugly circumstances
Dramatical accident
Underling betrayed
Collateral damage
Will ruin your day*

*Poison slipped into your drink
Someone stabs you in the back
Or quiet in your own bed
We all die someday*

Poison slipped into your drink

*Someone stabs you in the back
Or quiet in your own bed
We all die someday*

*Collateral damage will
Eventually stalk and kill
Even the most cunning prey
We all die someday
We all die someday
We all die someday*

(The video monitors display a content free commercial against an electoral proposition. Stark frightening melodramatic imagery is used.)

MAN 1

Proposition fifty-six is not what it seems

WOMAN 1 & WOMAN 2

Vote no

MAN 2

A slippery slope

WOMAN 1 & WOMAN 2

Vote no

MAN 1 & MAN 2

A dangerous power grab

WOMAN 1

No oversight

MAN 2

Uncontrolled spending

WOMAN 1 & WOMAN 2

Save our children

Save the children

The children, the children

MAN 1

Vote no

WOMAN 1 & WOMAN 2

Children, children

MAN 1 & MAN 2

Vote no

MAN 2

Prop fifty-six

WOMAN 2

A bad idea

WOMAN 2 & MAN 1

A bad law

WOMAN 1 & MAN 2

Bad for Mediastan

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER

Citizens Solidified

*A political committee of
Consolidated Media*

SCENE 11

(The next day, the street outside the studio. DIVA stumbles aimlessly as a line of AUDIENCE members forms to see the game show "I'd Sell My Soul For...?" The set and audience seating for the show is also visible, where CAMERAMEN, USHERS, etc. prepare for the show.)

AUDIENCE

*Maybe, maybe they will pick me out
 Maybe, maybe I'll get on the show
 Maybe, maybe I'll win really big
 Maybe, maybe this will change my life*

*Someday, somehow something will save me
 Someday, somehow fate must set me free
 Someday, somehow I will rise to the
 Someday, somehow aristocracy*

*I know destiny's my new friend
 I know I am the special one
 I know I'm past due to ascend
 I know my new life has begun*

(Enter DARK)

*Surely, surely they will pick me out
 Surely, surely I'll be on the show
 Surely, surely I'll score huge today
 Surely, surely this will change my life
 Surely, surely this will change my life
 Surely, surely this will change my life*

DARK

(Approaching DIVA)

*Please excuse me
 I don't intend
 To intrude on you
 I'm your biggest fan*

DIVA

(Initially surprised at being recognized and then flattered, DIVA quickly assumes her aristocratic demeanor)

*Great to meet you
You've seen through my disguise
I love my fans
What is your name?*

DARK

(Scrambling to make up an alais)

*My name is, ahh...
Blade*

(Aside)

I'm a real danger with a knife

DIVA

*How intriguing
Such an unusual name*

DARK

*My father was a cutler
It's such an honor meeting you*

*(The AUDIENCE begins filing into the studio and taking
their seats.)*

*I have an extra ticket
That you can use
As my guest if you like*

DIVA

*You are too kind
And I do enjoy
Time with my fans
(Aside)
Especially with only one*

DIVA

*At last
Someone remembers my name
Now my heart
Is pounding with joy*

DARK

*My trap is set and
She takes the bait
With this success
My heart is pounding with joy*

(DARK guides DIVA to the front of the line.)

MAN

(In the line, taking exception)

*Hey you two
No cuts in line
It's not fair*

So wait your turn

(DARK menacingly glares at the MAN who meekly backs down.
An USHER takes DARK's tickets and escorts them to their
seats indicating a specific pre-arranged seat for DIVA)

AUDIENCE

*Maybe, maybe they will pick me out
Maybe, maybe I'll be on this show
Maybe, maybe I'll win super big
Maybe, maybe I'll get a new life*

(The remaining AUDIENCE takes their seats. Enter the HOST
of the show.)

HOST

*Such a glorious day
Are you ready to play*

HOST & AUDIENCE

I'd sell my soul for...?

HOST

(Sarcastically)

And I am sure you would

Our first contestant is

(HOST spins two giant wheels. One with row
letters and the other with seat numbers on it.)

Sitting in row E, seat eight

Come on down

Come on down to our stage

It's your turn to play

The game we call

HOST & AUDIENCE

I'd sell my soul for...?

HOST

Come on down

Down to our stage

It's your turn to play

It's your lucky day

(It takes a few moments for DIVA to realize she is sitting
in seat E8. An USHER escorts her to the stage. On the way,

no one, including the HOST & USHER recognizes her. But once DIVA is on camera, everyone recognizes her.)

HOST

(Rattled by the unexpected appearance of a superstar on his show.)

*Oh my
What a treat
Lady Diva on our show
Ladies and gentlemen
Please welcome the incomparable
Lady Diva to this stage*

DIVA

(Aside, realizing that ANCHOR's spell has vanished)

Seems like Anchor's spell's been broken

DIVA

(Seizing the moment)

*I have always loved watching
I'd sell my soul for...?
So I thought
What better place
To announce my comeback plans
I've returned to my loyal fans
For the sake of you who love me so*

DIVA

*I am back
Back here for you
Back here for you
For all of the fans*

AUDIENCE

*Diva's returned
For all of us fans
Diva's returned
For all of the fans
Diva's returned
For all of the fans
Diva's returned
For all of the fans*

DIVA

(Directly addressing the television cameras.)

*I'm looking into an eye
That's staring back at me
Metal roots into the sky
Connecting you and I, eye to eye*

*Now I am whole again
Liberated by this camera*

*From exile inflicted by
Baron Anchor's coup d'état*

*I'm back on TV
Where I belong
Right here on TV
For all my dear adoring fans*

*I cannot deny you
This passion you desire
That special pleasure
My little show inspires*

*By popular demand
My comeback will be gigantic
You deserve your Diva
Basking in your love*

*I'm back on TV
Where I belong
Right here on TV
You shall not be denied again*

*I won't retreat
No matter what risks I face
I won't forsake your embrace
It's destiny
Destiny
Our destiny
Which sets us free
Free to relish me
On the TV*

*Now we can all rejoice
The world has been restored
Time for you to enjoy
The Lady Diva Show*

*(The set for the show I'd Sell My Soul For... transforms into
the set of The Lady Diva Show.)*

DIVA

(To DIVA's newly reconstituted AUDIENCE)

*Such a joy to have you here
For the re-launch of my career
We have some very special
Surprises for you*

*Right here on TV
Where I belong
I'm back on TV
With you my dear adoring fans*

*Right here on TV
Where I belong
I'm back on TV
With you my dear adoring fans*

SCENE 12

(On the set of Mediastan Tonight. PAP, PAR & AZZI wait for the show to begin. ANCHOR's dressing room is also visible. ANCHOR is sitting making notes before his show.)

ANNOUNCER 3

(Offstage)

*When you have to know
The what's what
And the who's who
There's only one source you need*

(Enter PRODUCER into ANCHOR's dressing room. PRODUCER flicks on the TV so ANCHOR can watch Mediastan Tonight.)

*Mediastan Tonight
Mediastan Tonight*

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*Breaking news, huge story
You heard it first right here*

*Lady Diva is returning
To show business*

(Enter FOURTH who addresses the THEATER AUDIENCE)

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*She announced it on stage
At "I'd sell my soul for..."*

*Of course her fans are thrilled
They so adore Diva*

*Experts expect she will
Reach the apex of fame*

*Her new show's based on
An exciting fresh concept*

*You heard it first
Here on Mediastan Tonight*

FOURTH

They build them up

To tear them down

Just to build them

Back up again

Back up again

(ANCHOR in a rage flicks off the TV and throws the remote control at his PRODUCER. The lights fade on FOURTH and PAP, PAR & AZZI, leaving only the dressing room. ANCHOR continues throwing items at PRODUCER who ducks and hides to avoid being hit.)

ANCHOR

*How is this happening
I don't comprehend this rebirth
That bitch deserved her banishment, cruel yet so fair
Diva will rue this day, I'm sure*

(Exit PRODUCER as ANCHOR sinks into a crazed insanity.)

*I'll prevail in this fight, I swear
Her legacy shall not survive
No one will know her name when I am done
I'll prevail in this fight, I'm sure*

*I am the greatest newsman of all time
No one is trusted more than I
I'll seal my fate on one final show
The biggest news story on billions of screens
I will broadcast our very own demise*

(ANCHOR maniacally laughs)

*I'll scorch this world to reach my goal
All eyes will turn to me, to see
Our apocalypse I will televise
Guiding my viewers to their end*

SCENE 13

(Nowhere. FOURTH addresses the THEATER AUDIENCE.)

FOURTH

*Baron's broken
But it's not his heart
It's his head*

*When our most trusted icon goes insane
Then it's a shame, a really fucking shame
And if they cause the world to run amuck
That's just our luck
The scuttlebutt says never trust that lousy luck*

*When we put too much faith in a mirage
They will invent some cause for our applause
And hope we never notice that the facts
Are rarely backed-up
Or exactly what they say to all us saps*

*Anchor's unmoored
Lost to his rage
We must endure
Reckless rampage*

*Now Baron's gone quite dodgy in the head
You may regret that you were so misled
It's much too late to pull back horror struck
That's just our luck
The scuttlebutt says never trust that wretched luck*

(The video monitors display a commercial for the Bot Bot robot. A montage of regular people happily interacting with their Bot Bot is shown while consumers describe how pleased they are with their robot.)

WOMAN 1

*When you run out of time
And need someone to help you out
Bot Bot is your robot servant*

MAN 1

*I love Bot Bot
Cleans my clothes, scrubs the dishes
Bot Bot even does taxes*

At night it walks my dog

WOMAN 2 & MAN 2

Need a therapist?

Try Bot Bot

Its insight helped clear the air

Bot Bot saved our marriage

WOMAN 1

Bot Bot, your personal robotic assistant

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER

Acme Robots

A subsidiary of Consolidated Media

SCENE 14

(The set of ANCHOR's newscast and also In the Either Everywhere at Once. ANCHOR begins his newscast while the ENTIRE CAST watches, transfixed, on a variety of monitors and other devices.)

ANCHOR

*This just in, a hostile attack
Against our homeland Mediastan
Has commenced in the last hour
And put at risk our way of life
We must rally to protect our nation
From the wrath of evil incarnate*

(The newscast set begins to disintegrate. ANCHOR abandons his set, stalking the stage as CAMERAMEN follow him.)

*The high command summons all patriots
This incursion must be halted
Heed this grave warning
And thwart these hordes*

*The time has come
It's us or them
The time has come
It's us or them*

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*Grab a gun
Prepare to strike
We'll rise up
For our way of life*

*Load your arms with due haste
Join up now and fight
Safeguard our land
From those God has damned*

AUDIENCE

*We need a champion
Someone who'll secure
All that we hold dear*

*We need our Diva to lead us
Diva you're our Joan of Arc*

DIVA
*I most humbly
 Accept this honor*

AUDIENCE
*Diva
 Diva*

(The AUDIENCE rallies around DIVA and dresses her in armor.)

DIVA
*Duty calls us all
 To survive
 We must defend
 Mediastan from them*

AUDIENCE
*Diva
 We must defend
 Mediastan from them*

ANCHOR
Apocalyptic times are upon us

ENTIRE CAST
*We gotta arm, arm and get 'em
 We gotta arm, arm and get 'em*

*While we'd prefer peace
 Here comes war
 We all know the score
 They started this
 So we'll have to end it*

*We gotta arm, arm and get 'em
 We gotta arm, arm and get 'em*

*Since it's us or them
 Let's enjoy
 The glories of war
 We'll beat the crap
 Out of them before supper*

*We're gonna arm, arm and get 'em
 We're gonna arm, arm and get 'em*

(Enter DIRECTOR, clapping his hands to interrupt the song)

DIRECTOR
 (Spoken)
 Stop, stop stop!

CAST
We're gonna arm...

DIRECTOR

People, people, people, stop! I've got some changes.

(The ENTIRE CAST, except for BRANDS, drops their roles and become actors in the show The Media Lords. BRANDS remains in character and watches from the side of the stage. The DIRECTOR passes out script revisions to the CAST who begin nervously reading them.)

DARK

What's this? We're in the middle of a performance.

BRANDS

Just shut up and do what he tells you.

DARK

Who made you the boss?

BRANDS

You stupid tool. Don't you know, I own this show too. I run everything. Eve-ry-thing!

(To the DIRECTOR)

Go on.

DIRECTOR

Ok, ok, ok. So we done some audience testing, and it seems most people find this ending... A bit ah, dark. Maybe more than a bit. They seem to, ah... Want something, yeah you know, something... Err, up? Beat? Upbeat! Yeah. A happy, you know kinda ending.

CAST MEMBER

Ya mean pabulum.

DIRECTOR

Do you want to be a chorus boy the rest of your fucking pointless life? I can make that happen.

DIVA

(Raising her hand.)

I don't understand my motivation here. Why would I, well...

DIRECTOR

Honey, honey, honey. You don't need that shit. You're an actor. Just act it. Ok? Act it!

(Shaking his head)

Motivation?

ANCHOR

I'm concerned about the continuity. How do we go from my character going insane to this?

DIRECTOR

What the hell?

ANCHOR

Won't this, ah, I mean, confuse the audience?

DIRECTOR

(Flummoxed and then pissed-off)

Confuse the audience? I, I, I...?

(Pointing at the THEATER AUDIENCE)

You mean them? Give me a fucking break! An audience? How smart do ya think they are? That doofus there, that guy, yeah. If he had a clue, and he don't, he'd think this is part of the fucking show right now. Ya see, he does! If we flew in a giant penis from the wings, with sparklers attached and used it as a piñata. You think that'd bother them? Huh? No, of course not!

FOURTH

He's got a point.

DIRECTOR

Ok, ok, ok, whatever. Just do your best people. All I ask. Stop wasting my time. I got a hot date tonight. Capiche? Ok, one, two, one, two, three, four.

(The spoken section of our show ends and the singing resumes. BRANDS remains at the side of the stage observing. The rest of the scene is sung directly at the THEATER AUDIENCE.)

FORTH

(Indicating the Director)

*He says you need a happy ending
So we will serve you one*

DARK

*Not some lame old swan song
Teaching life lessons*

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*Our denouement
Snarky wiseass fun*

DIVA

*If Armageddon is too extreme a thought
We can protect you*

PAP, PAR & AZZI

*Guard you from such unpleasantness
Here you can feel safe and sound*

AUDIENCE

*We won't bring you down
Or ask you to think
All is calm before
Our fairytale draws to a close
Happily ever after*

*We're gonna give you a happy ending
Hope you enjoy your happy ending*

(Enter two GOONS. BRANDS indicates the CAST MEMBER who gave the DIRECTOR grief. The GOONS start pushing around the CAST MEMBER eventually brutally pummeling them.)

AUDIENCE

*Don't get scared
Instead ignore that small voice in your head
Because you'll get your damned happy ending*

*Abandon your heightened expectations
Of some great truth in our happy ending*

*If you know what is best for you
You won't take no risks
You're wise to respect this happy ending*

*Now it would be a shame
If anything happened*

(The GOONS drag the resisting CAST MEMBER offstage to something undoubtedly very unpleasant. Exit GOONS and CAST MEMBER.)

ANCHOR & MOGUL

Just sayin'

AUDIENCE

To you on your way home

Like a fatal accident

AUDIENCE

*You'll be seduced by
Our happy ending
Unless you've seen through
Our scam's intention
Notice the sleight of hand
That marks this subterfuge
To suck you into
Our happy ending*

*Just when you thought
You had a happy ending
It turns into
Crass manipulation
Because those tears and laughs
Result from cheap stagecraft
Creating a mirage happy ending*

*Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha
Happy ending*

*Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha
Happy ending*

DIVA

*Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha
Now we offer you
A happy ending*

ANCHOR & MOGUL

That's at least our hope

*To distract you
From the real world*

ANCHOR, MOGUL,

DARK & WAITER

Tricks and deception

*Form our stock and trade
On this stage*

*So here is your happy ending
It's the best
That we can do
To amuse you*

*Our ad hoc happy ending
Will have to be enough for you
To make it through our show*

*So adieu
We bid you
A happy ending*