**DEAD GUY OPRY**

**Words and Music by Ty Hager\***

\*excerpt from “The Nascar Song” by Hager/Steve Goodie; “The Pecker Bob” by Hager/Stan Phelps

NOTE TO READER: When WILLARD/JARED appears above dialogue, it means Jared has also appeared. He’ll be mostly unseen on these occasions, but will be, of course, singing. This is specified in some cases, not so much so in others. Just wanted to avoid confusion.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

JARED WHALEY - The murdered country singer. In his forties, long-haired, scruffy.

ANGEL WHALEY - The wife/widow/defendant. Young and beautiful.

WILLARD BLEVINS – He’s the poor, overweight, 12-year-old redneck kid channeling the Dead Guy.

MACK BLEVINS – Willard’s Pa. Good ol’ Redneck - loves NASCAR and beer, a little freaked out by his boy. 30’s-40s.

ELENORE BLEVINS – Willard’s Ma. 30's, meek, subservient.

HARVEY BOYD – He’s the small-town radio newsman Dead Jared lures into getting the word out. Late 20's-30’s.

MARSHALL LAUGHLIN – Angel's high-dollar Nashville defense lawyer. Kinda Fred Thompson-ish. Mid-late 50’s.

HAYWOOD BRICE - The Prosecutor. Quiet and mousy, mid-late 40’s.

JUDGE WAY – No-nonsense and fiery, in her 40's-50’s.

AMANDA - The Other Woman. 20's-30's.

CHAD – Jared’s lead guitar player, 40’s, married to Amanda.

DAN - Jared's bass player, 40’s.

MULTIPLE ONLOOKERS, BYSTANDERS, JURY MEMBERS, ETC.

**OVERTURE**

**ACT I**

**Scene 1**

LIGHTS UP on JARED – he’s a grizzled, graying hippy-type dude, dressed in a white suit and black dress shoes, sitting on a stage bare except for a chair, a small table with a laptop, and a guitar on a stand. He’s typing..

 JARED

 Some folks believe that when you die, you go to Heaven

 Some folks think it’s better up there

 Some folks’ll say that when you’re dead, you’re dead and

 There’s just no gettin’ past the fact you ain’t goin’ nowhere

 I don’t believe no belief beats another

 I don’t think thinkin’ ‘bout it’s gonna pay

 I had my life, and if I had my ‘druthers

 There’d be something more than nothing on its way

 ‘Cause nothin’ makes a really long day…

He rises, straps on the guitar and starts playing. TYPING sfx continues then fades.

 JARED (cont)

 Well I don’t care ‘bout nothin’ minus nothin’

 And the old Grim Reaper’s quite the special friend

The GRIM REAPER slowly walks, head bowed, across REAR STAGE, stops, stands quietly.

 JARED (cont)

 And if I may be bold, if the story be told

 I just don’t wanna know how the story ends

 Charlie Brown’s gonna kick the football

 Broken hearts are maybe gonna mend

 But deep down in your soul, where the light ain’t gonna go

 You don’t really wanna know how the story ends

 Don’t really wanna know how the story ends

 It’s gonna end

The Grim Reaper raises its head. We see that it’s a young woman. This is ANGEL, whom we’ll meet properly later. She crosses to STAGE RIGHT, as OTHER CAST MEMBERS enter.

 JARED and CAST

 Well we kinda got the Cliff notes, but without the when or how

 We kinda try to redefine just what the law will allow

 We kinda got a show to do, before we take a bow

 The curtain’s gonna drop but it ain’t droppin’ now

 JARED

 I don’t really wanna know how the story ends

He takes off the guitar, puts it back on the stand. As the rest of the cast slowly make their way to exit, Jared steps in front of WILLARD, the boy.

 You don’t really wanna know how the story ends.

Willard looks puzzled, then continues with the others, singing. Jared sits and continues typing.

 JARED and CAST

 We just don’t wanna know how the story ends

 We don’t wanna know how the story ends

 Let’s just pretend…

TYPING rises and reaches a crescendo with MUSIC, then both fade.

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 2**

TYPING fades as MUSIC rises.

LIGHTS UP on a living room, a recliner in front of a large-screen TV, a sofa beside the recliner, a coffee table strewn with magazines and an ashtray at the far end of the sofa, where sits ELENORE, knitting and smoking.

MACK enters, holding beer.

 MACK

 I like NASCAR

 (pops top)

 And beer

 The only exercise I get is gettin’ it from here…

 (crosses to sofa, limping)

 To here.

 (plops down on sofa)

 I like NASCAR

 (picks up remote)

 Those guys are great

 (turns up volume, sound of racing)

 Go straight take a left take a left go straight

 Take a left take a left go straight

Go straight take a left take a left go straight

 Take a left take a left go straight

Sound of racing fades.

 ELENORE

 I like knitting, it helps relax my mind

 I ain’t kidding

 Sometimes it’s the only peace I find

 Just a needle and some thread

 And cigarettes and magazines

 And I’ll be the happiest country girl you never see

 MACK

 Go straight take a left take a left go straight

 Take a left take a left go straight

Go straight take a left take a left go straight

 Take a left take a left go straight

 I like NASCAR and beer

 I kinda like to lose myself in anything that ain’t right here

 Elenore cooks real good, but she ain’t no fun bein’ with

 (motions to closed door STAGE RIGHT)

 And our boy’s less like a boy

 Than like a little bitch

 ELENORE

 Shhh Mack! Willard’ll hear ya!

Both look at door.

 MACK

 I can’t believe he’s not shriekin’ at one of his stupid video games

 ELENORE

 But you bought him that computer ‘cause he was drivin’ you insane

 MACK

 (spoken)

 Little shit kept wantin’ to change the channel from NASCAR

 MACK (cont)

 I traded all that whinin’ for “BOOMS” and “KA-POWS”

 BOTH

 But he sure is quiet now

MACK

 (back to race)

 I like NASCAR, and NASCAR likes me

 Go straight take a left take a left go straight

 Take a left take a left go…I gotta pee

Mack rises and limps to bathroom. He stops at door and looks up, noticing the accompanying MUSIC. He sighs, shakes his head, enters bathroom, closes door.

We hear PEEING.

 MACK (from behind door)

 Really?

PEEING continues, wanes, stops. SFX flush. Mack exits bathroom, looks quizzically at Willard’s door. Limps over, puts his ear to door. Looks up, irritated at the MUSIC volume. MUSIC fades. TYPING rises.

 MACK (cont)

 I know I’ve heard that sound before

 Like squirrels in the attic

 But that can’t be it

He listens more intently, his face reflecting his puzzlement. His eyes widen as it dawns on him.

 MACK (cont)

 Goddamn it Elenore!

 I think Willard’s in there goddamn typing!

 ELENORE

 (stands, shocked)

 Shut the front door! That’s not like him at all!

 MACK

 I said Goddamn it Elenore!

 I think our boy’s in there goddamn typing!

 ELENORE

 I know, I heard you, I said that’s not like him at all

She lays down her knitting and crosses to Mack.

BOTH

 Not like him at all…

They listen at the closed door as TYPING fades.

 MACK

 Well we ain’t real educated, ain’t had too many chances

 ELENORE

 Our fam’ly tree ain’t exactly overrun with branches

 MACK

 It was one thing when that gizmo was more like a toy

MUSIC fades, TYPING rises.

 BOTH

 I just don’t know what’s got into our little boy

 ELENORE

 Maybe he’s just playin’, pretending that he’s writing

 MACK

 I hear what you’re saying, that has to be it

 ELENORE

 He’s sure doing it quickly, no way he could have learned

Mack looks at the TV, frowns.

 MACK

 Dammit, I just missed the part where the guy crashed and burned

 ELENORE

 There’s got to be an explanation

 BOTH

 Let’s bring this mystery to an end

Mack flings open door, LIGHTS UP on WILLARD, sitting in his bed, typing rapidly on a laptop, eyes straight ahead, trance-like.

 MACK

 (spoken)

 Fuck a bird!

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 Shut the front door!

Willard blinks, notices his parents, slams the laptop shut, annoyed.

 WILLARD/JARED

 I can’t believe I fucking lost my fucking capo again!

 MACK

 (spoken)

 What the fuck’s a capo?

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 3**

SPOT on Jared, STAGE LEFT, still wearing the white suit, standing beside the table and chair. He steps to a coat/hat rack, from which hangs a worn flannel shirt and old hat.

TYPING resumes in BG, barely audible.

 JARED

 Sometimes all you’ve got are the memories

 Sometimes the future’s in the past

He removes his jacket, revealing a crude t-shirt. Hangs the jacket on the rack, removes the flannel shirt and puts it on.

 JARED (cont)

 Sometimes lookin’ back’s the only way to see

A worn pair of sneakers lies beneath the rack. He picks them up, crosses to chair. He sits, removes his dress shoes.

 JARED (cont)

 Questions that were better left unasked

He stands and removes his slacks, revealing torn jeans beneath. Hangs his slacks on the rack. He sits and slips on sneakers. Stands. SPOT follows as he crosses to STAGE CENTER.

LIGHTS UP DIMMED on a BAR INTERIOR, PATRONS at tables in front of a small stage on which stands CHAD on guitar, and DAN on bass. There are a few more PATRONS at the bar, behind which stands the BARTENDER. All are still and silent.

Jared makes his way toward the stage.

JARED

Come with me to a time, things were dandy and fine

 And every sin we sinned was forgiven

 Man those were the days, just a-baskin’ in the rays

He picks up his guitar from a stand, puts it on.

 JARED (cont)

 Lookin’ back, it sure seemed like Heaven

LIGHTS RISE FULL, Patrons and Band come to life. A banner reading *JARED WHALEY & THE COWTIPPERS* hangs behind the stage.

Jared sways a bit, takes a long pull from a beer, sets it down.

 JARED (cont)

 Now that was livin’

Shouts and applause from the crowd.

 JARED AND BAND

 Now that was livin’

 JARED

 Yeah I was raisin’ hell, not really livin’ well

 BAND

 Sowin’ wild seeds with an imaginary need

 JARED AND BAND

 Now that was livin’

 Now that was livin’

 JARED

 Preachin’ to the choir, man I was on fire

 BAND

Playin’ with matches just ‘cause you liked the heat

 JARED AND BAND

Now that was livin’

 Now that was livin’

 BAND

 Walkin’ on a razor just ‘cause you liked to bleed

 JARED

 But I was bleedin’ high

 BAND

 Drinkin’ mind-erasers till you turned into a dream

 JARED

 Most every night

 Some might say I missed it, but I didn’t

 ‘Cause I was livin’

 Man that was livin’

**LEAD BREAK**

 BAND

 Walkin’ on a razor just ‘cause you liked to bleed

 JARED

 But I was bleedin’ high

 BAND

 Drinkin’ mind-erasers till you turned into a dream

 JARED

 Most every night

 Some might say I missed it, but I didn’t

 JARED AND BAND

 ‘Cause I was livin’

 Now that was livin’

 That was livin’

 Man I was livin’

 BAND

 Doo do do-do do do doo…

Song ends to enthusiastic applause. Jared whoops drunkenly.

LIGHTS DIM, SPOT on Jared. Band and Crowd motionless.

Jared continues to play guitar throughout, slowly. He no longer seems drunk.

 JARED (cont)

 Sometimes all you’ve got are the memories

 Sometimes reminiscin’ is a blast

SPOT on ANGEL, standing at a table near the stage. She and Jared’s eyes meet, hold.

 JARED (cont)

 Sometimes there’s that moment that changed everything

Angel holds her glance a moment longer, then exits out of SPOT.

 JARED(cont)

 Questions that you wished you’d never asked

 (spoken, slurred)

 Hey! What’s your name?

Jared steps to bar, where Angel sits. Hands guitar to Bartender.

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

 My name’s Angel.

 JARED

 Angel…that’s freakin’ perfect

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

 Perfect?

 JARED

 I’m guessin’ it’s meant to be ironic?

 ANGEL

 ‘Cause I like drinkin’ and smokin’ and lovin’ all night too?

 JARED

 Good God in Heaven, I think you’ll do

 ANGEL

 I’ve got both your CDs, will ya sign ‘em?

She hands him two CDs and a Sharpie.

 JARED

 I’ll sign anything that you want me too

He opens the CDs, signs them.

ANGEL

 I love your music and your style, but what really makes me smile

 Is your first tattoo

A COUPLE at the bar overhear.

 MAN

 (spoken)

 His first tattoo?

 WOMAN

 (spoken)

 His first tattoo?

 BARTENDER

 (spoken)

 His first tattoo?

Angel smiles and nods.

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

 It’s on his first CD.

She shows them as Jared smiles, removes his flannel shirt, pulls up his left sleeve. Tattooed on his arm is MY FIRST TATTOO. In fancy lettering like that. The Man leans in, then looks up, smiling.

 MAN

 (spoken)

 It says “My First Tattoo.”

Bartender leans in to see.

BARTENDER

 (spoken)

 In fancy letterin’ like that.

 WOMAN

 Oh that’s priceless.

Onstage, Band starts back up.

 JARED

 My first tattoo

 BAND

 His first tattoo

 BARTENDER

 In fancy letterin’ like that

 JARED

 My first tattoo

 BAND

 His first tattoo

 JARED

 It’s a weird one

 ANGEL

 I’ve got one too

 BAND

 She’s got one too

Man and Woman look at each other, puzzled.

 MAN AND WOMAN

 She’s got one too?

 BARTENDER

 (spoken)

 Imagine that.

 ANGEL

 I’ve got one too

 BAND

 She’s got one too

Drum roll, all eyes on Angel.

 MAN AND WOMAN

 She’s got one too

She opens her shirt, revealing her low-cut bra and a tattoo – it’s the same tattoo as Jared’s.

 ANGEL (cont)

 But it’s a titty-tat

 BAND

 She’s got a titty-tat

Man leans in, looking.

 MAN

 (spoken)

 It says “My First Tattoo” too!

 BARTENDER

 (spoken)

 In fancy letterin’ like that!

 WOMAN

 That’s priceless!

 JARED

 Well she’s easy on the eyes, and she just showed me her breasts

 BAND

 She’s got a titty-tat, she’s got a titty-tat

 ANGEL

 Maybe later on I’ll show you the rest

 BAND

 Not just her titty-tat, she’s got a titty-tat

 JARED and ANGEL

 (to Crowd)

 Well loneliness is desperate

And desperation messes with your mind

He looks at Angel, staring back.

 BAND

 She’s got a titty-tat

 JARED and ANGEL

 You know you can’t resist it

 Fate finds its own place and time

Slumped at the bar, a DRUNK raises his head.

 DRUNK

 (a la Sylvester the Cat)

 I tink I taw a titty-tat

 BAND

 She’s got a titty-tat, she’s gotta titty-tat…

SONG ENDS – cold.

Stage lights down. Band starts tearing down.

Jared steps forward from bar, addressing Crowd.

 JARED

 Sometimes all you’ve got are the memories

He looks at Angel.

 JARED (cont)

 I know things now I wish I’d known then

He crosses to stage, starts wrapping cords.

 ANGEL

 When you’re ready to go, I’m here waiting you know

Jared finishes wrapping a cord. He looks around the stage.

TYPING rises.

 JARED

 (spoken)

 God-DAMMIT!

All eyes on Jared.

 JARED (cont)

 I can’t believe I fuckin’ lost my fuckin’ capo again!

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 4**

LIGHTS UP on a Barber Shop. Mack sits in the chair, getting a trim from NORVILLE. Willard sits in a waiting chair opposite, typing, staring into space.

 NORVILLE

 Hey Mack, your boy’s sure actin’ goofy

 Like some kind of un-dead court stenographer

 MACK

 Fuck a bird, Norville, this shit’s gettin’ spooky

 What the hell’s a court stenographer?

 NORVILLE

 It’s just weird that’s all

 BOTH

 It’s just weird that’s all

 NORVILLE

 Hey Mack, have ya seen just what he’s writin’?

 It could all be just gobbledy-gook

 MACK

 He’s huggin’ the damn thing when he’s not typin’

 And slams the fucker shut when I try to look

 It’s just weird that’s all

 BOTH

 It’s just weird that’s all

 NORVILLE

 Maybe it’s just a phase, like zits or masturbatin’

 MACK

 (spoken)

 What the hell?

He quickly shakes his head.

 MACK (cont)

 He’s yellin’ shit out in a weird voice though

 NORVILLE

 Aw, hell, you didn’t tell me that

 Definitely Satan

 MACK

 Norville, what the fuck’s a capo?

 NORVILLE

 (spoken)

 I think it’s a Mafia thing…

 MACK

 It’s just weird that’s all

 BOTH

 It’s just weird that’s all

 It’s just weird that’s all

 It’s just weird that’s all

Willard slams laptop shut.

 WILLARD/JARED

 Almost every dime I get from that music shit’s recoupable!

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 5**

LIGHTS UP on a dingy kitchen, Jared and Angel sitting together at a small table. Jared’s drinking a beer, Angel’s cleaning a pistol.

 JARED

 Goddamn it Angel, a vacation’s just not do-able

 Almost every dime I get from that music shit’s recoupable!

 ANGEL

 But your CD’s climbin’ up the charts, you’re on the radio

 JARED

 But what the record label spent getting me there was just a loan

 If ya don’t know much about the music biz

 I’m gonna help ya out, gonna clue you in

 It’s recoupable, recoupable

 All the money they spend on your great big hit

 Comes off the top, you don’t get shit

 Till they recoup it all, recoupable

 ANGEL

 So you’re damned near rich and famous

 But not so much with the rich

 This ain’t what I expected

She blows through chambers of the revolver, begins re-loading it.

 ANGEL (cont)

 And I can sure be a bitch

 JARED

 (spoken)

 It always makes me nervous when you do that

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

 Daddy says always keep it clean. You never know when you might

 need it.

 JARED (cont)

 If ya don’t know much about the music-biz

 All the promises, all they love they give

 Is recoupable, damned recoupable

 ANGEL

 Don’t whine so much about your heavy load

 I know what you do when you’re on the road

 THAT’S recoupable, recoupable

 JARED

 Angel, what happened? We were so meant to be

 You were love’s embodiment, my reason to breathe

 ANGEL

 Jared, I’m sorry I just had this fantasy

 I didn’t expect so many hurdles

 JARED

 Won’t you come with me tonight to the show at The Thirsty Turtle?

Angel smiles sweetly, nods.

 ANGEL

 (whispers)

 That’d be nice

 JARED

 If ya don’t know much about the music biz

 Not a dime I get from playin’ gigs

 Is recoupable, so they don’t get it all

 ANGEL

 I won’t worry ‘bout the state we’re in

 I won’t shed a tear, ‘cause I’ve got him

 Someday we’ll have it all, misery’s recoupable

 JARED

 Soon we’ll play arenas and the money’ll roll in

 And I’ll be the man you dared to dream of

Angel rises, crosses to guitar leaning against a wall, brings it to him.

 ANGEL

 Jared, won’t you play that song you wrote for me back when?

Jared smiles and takes the guitar.

 JARED

 (spoken)

 Speechless?

Angel smiles and nods.

 JARED

 Anything for you, love

 I could write a song, clean as a summer breeze

 Soft as a baby’s cheek, fresh as mornin’ dew

 And I could write a song about your Angel smile

 How you’re the girl that I just can’t believe is true

 But I just write the words, the music’s you

 And words don’t even have a clue

 ‘Bout how you make me feel

 I might as well be speechless

 I could write a song, maybe make ya cry

 With little thoughts that I just conjure into view

 And I could write a song about a lover’s wish

 A song might get a kiss, might write about that too

 But I just write the words, the music’s you

 And words don’t even have a clue

 ‘Bout how you make me feel

 I might as well be speechless

 JARED AND ANGEL

 There’s a part of my heart always been achin’

 Empty, waitin’, I think for you

 And I just die when I look into your eyes

 And see what justice words could never do

 JARED

 But I just write the words, the music’s you

 And words don’t even have a clue

 ‘Bout how you make me feel

 I might as well be speechless

 ANGEL

 ‘Bout how you make me feel, I might as well be speechless

 JARED AND ANGEL

 I might as well be speechless

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 6**

TYPING AND LIGHTS UP on the Blevins’ kitchen table. Mack and Elenore eating, Elenore also knitting. And smoking. Willard typing and singing.

 WILLARD/JARED

 I might as well be speechless

The last notes rise as Willard mimes playing them on the guitar.

 MACK

 (spoken)

 Well fuck a bird

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 Shut the front door

Willard hears them, breaks from his trance, slams the laptop shut. Silence. He sets the laptop down on the floor beside his chair.

 WILLARD

 (spoken)

 Taters please.

Elenore starts dishing potatoes onto his plate.

 MACK

 Goddammit Willard, you ain’t sung no songs before

 WILLARD

 I don’t know what you’re talkin’ ‘bout

 (to Elenore)

 Please, could I have more

 ELENORE

 He’s an only child, so I can’t say for sure

 ELENORE AND MACK

 But is this something normally endured?

 MACK

 (spoken)

 Norville says it might be just like zits or masturbatin’

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 What?

 MACK

 (spoken)

 That’s what I said

 MACK (cont)

 Goddamn it Willard, you’re gettin’ weirder every day

He picks up remote beside him on the table, points it at an unseen TV. We hear racing.

 MACK (cont)

 Go straight take a left take a left go straight

 Take a left take a left go straight (x2)

 WILLARD

 Guess what? I’m gonna be on the radio

 MACK

 (spoken)

 They got a radio Freak Show?

Willard shakes his head.

 WILLARD

 It’s a field trip Thursday morning we all get to say hello

 ELENORE

 Honey, that’s neat! I can’t wait to hear your voice

 MACK

 I’d use the non-cussin’ one if you’ve got a choice

 ELENORE

 I seen that DJ from the radio at the courthouse just the other day

 MACK

 (spoken)

 That’s right, they got that big murder trial startin’

 MACK (cont)

 They shut down the Thirsty Turtle

 I guess that singer had some sorta name

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 I think it was Jason or Jerry or somethin’

 Wife shot him right in the head

Willard changes character again. Jared steps from the shadows and stands next to Willard. No one seems to notice.

 WILLARD/JARED

 Jared Whaley’s who you’re talkin’ about

 And if you get me a thumb drive

 I’ll get this shit out there

 MACK

 (spoken)

 What the fuck’s a thumb drive?

WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken)

 Shit. A little doo-dad looks like a thumb. Goes in a computer.

He/They motions to his laptop on the floor.

 MACK

 (spoken)

 Damn, boy. You’re doin’ that shit without your gizmo now.

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 Shut the front door.

 WILLARD/JARED

 Well I ain’t done too much talkin’

 Since I got shot in the noggin

 But I really got a lot to say

 I gotta lotta aggravation

 At this fuckin’ situation

 At the cards that I’ve been dealt to play

 Fat kid in a Redneck House

 I’m a fat kid in a Redneck House

 MACK

 (to Elenore)

 Elenore – you see what’s goin’ on here, don’t ya?

 ELENORE

 Shut the front door!

 MACK

 Well I really ain’t no genius

 But you kinda got me thinkin’

 Things are kinda fin’ly makin’ sense

 Ya started actin’ creepy

 Like a zombie on the TV

 ‘Bout the time that feller met his end

 That country singer done possessed my boy

 MACK/ELENORE

 That country singer done possessed our boy

 WILLARD/JARED

 I guess that maybe in about a little while I’ll have forever

 Til then I got more important things I gotta do

 Gotta get a story out there

 ‘Cause I’m all about the truth

 Gonna use the tools I’m given

 Gonna be a fat kid on the news

 MACK

 That country singer done possessed my boy

 MACK AND ELENORE

 That country singer done possessed our boy

 WILLARD/JARED

 This country singer done possessed your boy

 MACK

 What the fuck’s a capo?

 WILLARD/JARED

 I don’t really wanna know how the story ends

 You don’t really wanna know how the story ends

 ALL

 We don’t really wanna know how the story ends

Willard becomes just Willard again as Jared slowly steps backwards from the lights.

 WILLARD

 (spoken)

 Somebody tellin’ a story? Cool!

 JARED

 Let’s just pretend

LIGHTS DOWN

**ACT II**

**Scene 1**

LIGHTS remain down as we hear:

 RADIO SPOT

 (sung)

 Well Tony’s Famiy Restaurant’s the restaurant for you

 The food’s great, the folk’re friendly

 And they’ll always wear their shoes

 (spoken)

 Ya ever go out to eat, hungry for a satisfyin’ meal

 Only to have your appetite ruined by the dirty bare feet of your server?

 Doesn’t that gross ya out? Make ya wanna puke?

 Well, you’ll be glad to know that since 1987

 The fine folks at Tony’s Family Restaurant have been committed

 To not only serving you a fine meal at a reasonable price

 But to doing so with their shoes on!

 So they won’t picking up your salad croutons with their toes

 Or walking through your lasagna, or anything like that

 And they won’t play with your food either – although you’re welcome to!

 And if they do, say, tap-dance on your Salisbury steak

Or juggle your French fries, the meal’s on us!

Tony’s Family Restaurant, at the corner of 4th & McMurray

Where, when we say “Shirts and Shoes Required,”

We mean US too!

 (sung)

 Well Tony’s Famiy Restaurant’s the restaurant for you

 The food’s great, the folk’re friendly

 And they’ll always wear their shoes

As the spot ends, LIGHTS UP on HARVEY BOYD, STAGE LEFT. He’s behind a radio mic, computer monitors to either side, touching each screen, then turning to a laptop and typing. He turns back to the mic, puts on a set of headphones and touches a screen again. We hear:

 RADIO JINGLE

 Get rid of your blues, it’s time for the news

 With Harvey Boyd!

 On W-T-O-R…

Harvey touches a monitor screen and an ON-AIR light above his head goes on.

 HARVEY

 Murder

 That’s what’s on everybody’s minds

 Murder

 Ratings have never been so high

 A trial

 Better than a TV show

 And here’s the things you need to know

 We got the biggest baddest Nashville lawyer money allows

 ‘Cause Angel Whaley’s daddy went and sold his house

 If there’s a TV camera you know Laughlin’s around

 Proclaiming she didn’t do it

SPOT UP on MARSHALL LAUGHLIN, standing APRON RIGHT, behind a podium. He’s immaculately-dressed, exuding an air of power and confidence.

 LAUGHLIN

 The Prosecution thinks they’ve got an easy road

 What with the motive and ballistics and the so-and-so

 But just a tiny seed of doubt’s all I need to grow

 And I’m damned sure gonna sow it

 (spoken)

 We’ve got DNA evidence there was another woman besides

 Angel in that dressing room. Not a single piece of the State’s

 evidence is overwhelming enough to diminish the power of that

 single fact!

SPOT UP on HAYWOOD BRICE, also at a podium, standing near Laughlin. He is the Defense Attorney’s antithesis. Slight of build, rumpled suit, hair in disarray.

 BRICE

 (spoken, barely above a whisper)

 Guilty…

 VOICES (OS)

 (spoken)

 What? Prosecutor Brice, we can’t hear you!

 BRICE

 (louder)

 Guilty!

 Plain as the nose on your face

 She did it!

 Fingerprints all over the place

 We’ll prove it!

 The jury won’t be able to resist

 HARVEY

 We’ll be right back with more after this

SPOTS DOWN on Laughlin and Brice. Harvey touches a screen, then another, then back to the laptop. He briefly types, then clicks a mouse.

 HARVEY (cont)

 Well I’m a man of many hats

 They call me the Voice of Wilson County

 Nothing wrong with that

 I don’t mind playing songs and writing ads

 But there’s a yearning that I have

 Not a choice, but a force deep down inside me

 That really doesn’t like the place I’m at

 And thinks this murder trial might be my chance

 To show the whole world I’m the man

I was meant to be

He shuts the laptop and crosses from behind the broadcast console.

 HARVEY (cont)

I don’t want to be the country star

Gets shot in the head at a redneck bar

But I damned sure want to be the guy

Who spills it

I don’t want to be that girl in black

 Either devastated, or just an actress

 I just want to be the guy

From whom you heard it

All in all I’d rather

Fucking be Dan Rather

A STYLIST, TV DIRECTOR, and CAMERAMAN enter as an Anchor Desk and Chair are rolled onstage. Harvey sits, the Stylist touches up his hair.

 HARVEY (cont)

 I want to be the guy you turn to

 When your world’s in disarray

 I want my face in your living room

 Most every single day

 STYLIST, DIRECTOR, CAMERAMAN

 All in all he’d rather

 Fucking be Dan Rather

 HARVEY

 I want to be the guy who asks the

 Questions no one dares to ask

 S/D/C

 He wants to tell you there were no survivors

 In the latest airline crash

 HARVEY

 All in all I’d rather

 Fucking be Dan Rather

 S/D/C

 All in all he’d rather

 Fucking be Dan Rather

Enter RECEPTIONIST as S/D/C exit.

 RECEPTIONIST

 Harvey I don’t mean to burst your bubble at all

 But your 9 o’clock’s arrived,

 They’re waiting in the hall

 KIDS (OS)

 All in all we’d rather

 Not listen to you blather

 HARVEY

 As if there’s not enough for me to do

 There’s a goddamned field trip coming through

 I really just want to do the news

 In peace

KIDS file in, followed by TEACHER, as Harvey returns to microphone, puts on his headphones.

 HARVEY (cont)

 All in all I’d rather

 (mindful of the kids)

 Freakin’ be Dan Rather

 KIDS AND TEACHER

 All in all we’d rather

 You fucking were Dan Rather

 KID

 (spoken)

 Who’s Dan Rather?

Harvey flips switch, ON-AIR light flashes on.

HARVEY

 I’ve never been so happy to be back

 The trial

Just wrapped up its second day

 An expert

Testified of DNA

 The jury

Was shocked by what they heard next

 The gunshot closely followed oral sex

SPOT on Witness Booth APRON LEFT, where sits WITNESS 1.

 WITNESS 1

 The saliva on his penis was a different strain

 Than the Defendant’s or his own, that would be real strange

 His pants around his ankles and his splattered brains

 Made one hell of a crime scene

LITTLE GIRL raises her hand.

 LITTLE GIRL

 (spoken)

 What’s oral sex?

A pause as Harvey and the Witness look at one another uncomfortably.

Laughlin steps forward and questions the Witness.

 LAUGHLIN

 But none of the physical evidence shows

 That the same mystery woman didn’t also blow

 The head off the victim, maybe in the throes

 Of post-oral-coital psychopathy?

 WITNESS 1

 (spoken)

 Um…what? No…I guess not.

 HARVEY

 Laughlin

 On cross-examination

 Sowing

 Those seeds of doubt he finds so fun

 The Prosecution

 Wraps up its case later this week

 Will we hear the Defendant speak?

 ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

 We’ve got your Farm Report coming up next

ON AIR light goes off.

Harvey removes his headphones, pushes some buttons.

 HARVEY (cont)

 Okay kids, I’ve got a few minutes

 Won’t you gather ‘round and ask your questions

 I can tell ‘bout my job and everything that goes with it

 Just ask me

LITTLE BOY raises his hand.

 LITTLE BOY

 Why would that guy have saliva on his penis?

KIDS titter.

Little Girl raises her hand.

 LITTLE GIRL

 What’s post-oral-coital psychopathy?

Willard, clutching his own lap-top to his bosom, points at Harveys.

 WILLARD

 What do you do with your gizmo there?

 Please tell me

Harvey looks at first two Kids, then at Willard.

 HARVEY

 Well, gosh, it seems I’ve just got time for one question

 That’s the laptop I use to write the news

 What’s yours for? If you don’t mind me asking

Willard looks at his laptop, then back at Harvey. Kids giggle.

 WILLARD

 Beats me

There’s a pause.

 HARVEY

 Let’s go

 To the offices upstairs

 Meet the Boss-Man

 You’re just so cute I want to share

Teacher begins herding the students.

 TEACHER

 Come on kids

 Mr. Boyd knows where to go

 Let’s form a line and keep your voices low

The Kids line up, Harvey walks from behind console and walks toward EXIT LEFT.

 HARVEY

 (to Audience)

 All in all I’d rather

 Fucking be Dan Rather

 KIDS

 All in all we’d rather

 Be texting one another

Harvey leads the group offstage, Willard trailing, then stopping.

 WILLARD

 I don’t really know what I’m doin’ here

 Sometimes I lose the time

 Why ain’t I followin’ the line?

Willard suddenly changes demeanor, back to one of his trances. He crosses to the radio console, turns Harvey’s open laptop to face him. He removes a thumb drive from his pocket.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

 All in all I’d rather

 He fucking was Dan Rather

He inserts the thumb drive into Harvey’s computer, clicks a couple of times, then scans over what’s on the screen. He clicks again, and a printer to the side begins silently spitting out pages.

The Teacher pokes her head in the door and sees him.

 TEACHER

 Willard! What are you doing with Mr. Boyd’s computer?

Willard quickly closes the laptop and whirls around.

 WILLARD

 (spoken as a boy again)

 Nothin’.

The Teacher crosses to him, unaware of the printer, and pulls him away. He reaches behind him and attempts but fails to retrieve the thumb drive. They exit.

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 2**

LIGHTS UP APRON RIGHT. Jared, again dressed in white.

 JARED

 Got a disenchanted mirror hangin’ on the wall

 And I can only see behind me

He rises, crosses to the hat rack.

JARED (cont)

But that don’t hardly bother me at all

 ‘Cause I know it won’t blind me

And it’s fun to sight-see

He removes his jacket, puts on the flannel shirt. He kicks off his shoes, begins to remove the pants, blue jeans beneath.

He stumbles, cusses, falls. Cusses some more. Gets the pants removed, throws them angrily off-stage. Crosses back to chair, starts to put on sneakers, mutters “Fuck it,” rises and crosses to guitar stand puts on the guitar, and grabs his hat.

LIGHTS UP on the Thirsty Turtle Green Room. Chad and Dan are standing, holding their instruments. Seated on a sofa, at opposite ends, are Angel and AMANDA. On an end table closest Amanda sits a bong, beer bottles, and a bottle of whiskey.

Jared enters playing, pauses at the table to take a shot of whiskey, sits on the sofa between the two women.

 JARED (cont)

We gotta little show to do, it’s gonna be a blast

But we’ve got an hour or two, Amanda’s got the grass

Amanda smile and holds up bag.

 DAN

It’s just like back in college, still barely gettin’ by

Amanda surreptitiously rubs Jared’s thigh, leans into his ear and whispers. Angel notices, scowling. Jared rises.

 JARED

But we’re high high high high high high high

Amanda rises, dancing to Jared. She puts her arms on his shoulders, they look into one another’s eyes.

 ALL

High high high high high high high

Amanda dances away from Jared, sits, grabs her bag and the bong.

 CHAD

Funny after all these years ol’ Jared hasn’t changed

Jared dances back to Amanda.

 CHAD (cont)

He’d prob’ly do my woman here, if it could be arranged

Jared stands in front of Amanda. Thrusts his hips.

 DAN

It seems he’s getting bolder

Maybe Angel doesn’t mind

All eyes turn to Angel.

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

Oh, she minds

 JARED

 (spoken)

Aw, honey, you know I don’t mean no harm

Amanda grabs his ass. He turns to her, smiles and winks.

 JARED (cont)

Man, I’m high high high high high high high

 ALL

High high high high high high high

LIGHTS DOWN, SPOT UP on Angel as she rises and walks FRONT.

 ANGEL

Maybe if I changed some things

Made him feel more like a king

Maybe then he’d notice me

And not the other ones

Amanda rises, joins Angel as spot widens.

 AMANDA

Maybe I can make him smile

Only for a little while

He’s a crazy grown-up trouble child

Pretending that it’s fun

BOTH

Ooh ooh what’s a lonely girl to do?

Ooh ooh is there any getting through?

Ooh ooh I’m about to come unglued

Ooh ooh what’s a lonely girl to do?

 ANGEL

Maybe he’s just tired of me

A million fish, a thousand seas

 AMANDA

Maybe loves not all it’s cracked up to be?

 ANGEL

Maybe I’m the cracked-up one

BOTH

Ooh ooh what’s a lonely girl to do?

Ooh ooh, how do we make it through?

 JARED

Hello there?

SPOT moves to Jared.

 JARED (cont)

I’m right here with a suggestion

A simple answer to a complex question

SPOT moves to Chad and Dan as they play opening riff.

LIGHTS UP as Jared rises and steps FRONT CENTER.

JARED AND BAND

Hey girls, listen hard, if you wanna sure way to your man’s heart

Don’t be prude, don’t be a snob

Do the Pecker Bob

 ANGEL AND AMANDA

 (spoken)

 You’re drunk!

 JARED AND BAND

It’s been around, they say it’s true

Since the caveman found out that the lips work too

If you wanna make your man smile a lot

Do the Pecker Bob

BAND

*DO IT, DO IT, DO IT, AAAAAH* (repeats through)

JARED

 (Reggae-style)

Well they do it in the North, they do it in the South

Lonely cowboys used to get it from the horse’s mouth

You can do it in the kitchen, you can do it in the yard

 It’s really easy but you can make it hard

 You can do it with your fingers, you can do it with your toes

 But you’ll get the best results right under your nose

 If you wanna make your man smile a lot

 Do the Pecker Bob (x3)

Angel stands angrily, her arms crossed.

 ANGEL

Dammit Jared, I already do that

 AMANDA

I do that too…

CHAD

She does that too…

DAN

She does that too

 GUY IN AUDIENCE

She does that too

 JARED

 (spoken)

I know, it’s just a fun song to sing

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 3**

LIGHTS UP on Blevins’ living room. Mack’s watching NASCAR, Elenore’s knitting.

MACK

Go straight take a left take a left go straight go straight

Take a left take a left go straight

Mack and Elenore sing their following lines in unison:

 MACK

Go straight take a left take a left go straight go straight

Take a left take a left go straight

 ELENORE

I like knitting, it helps relax my mind

There’s a KNOCK. Mack rises and crosses to front door, opens it.

Harvey has a manila folder under one arm, holding up a thumb drive in the other.

HARVEY

Is there any chance there’s something weird going on?

Mack turns to Elenore.

 MACK

Hey Hon, it’s that radio man, he seems to know our spawn.

 ELENORE

(spoken)

Shut the front door.

Mack looks at Harvey, shrugs, shuts the front door.

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

Figure of speech Mack.

Mack looks at her, shrugs, opens door. Harvey enters.

ELENORE

(spoken)

Shut the front door…please.

Mack shuts door.

 HARVEY

 (holding up thumb drive)

I found this in my laptop and I’m really quite confused

 MACK

 That’s a doo-dad for your gizmo, Sybil’s got one too

HARVEY

(spoken)

 No…that’s what I mean…it’s HIS

 His teacher said he…never mind

 It’s not the method but the madness,

I’m more puzzled than annoyed

 MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 MACK AND ELENORE

That country singer done possessed our boy

 MACK

 (spoken)

 What the fuck’s a capo?

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 He keeps asking that…

 HARVEY

Do you have the internet? This stuff might be online

 MACK

We don’t need that fancy shit

 ELENORE

Cable works just fine

Harvey opens the folder, pulls out two stacks of stapled pages.

 HARVEY

I thought that you might say that, you live simpler than most

 (handing out the pages)

So I read it to the label head, it was like he’d heard a ghost

 MACK

 (sitting)

That country singer done possessed my boy

 HARVEY

I think you oughta read this, then let’s talk to your son

Mack looks incredulously at the pages, then at the TV, then to Harvey.

 MACK

But there’s a Sprint Race in an hour, I’m not sure we’ll be done

He and Elenore both look rather grim as they peruse the print-outs.

Mack looks skyward, referring to MUSIC.

 HARVEY (to the air)

(spoken)

 You might wanna come down on the tempo just a smidge.

Music slows tempo as Mack and Elenore read.

 HARVEY (cont)

 (spoken)

 There ya go.

Dim SPOT on Dead Jared w/guitar, APRON FRONT.

JARED

Some folks believe that when you die, you go to Heaven

Some folks think it’s better up there

I don’t really wanna know how the story ends

She gotta titty-tat, she gotta titty-tat

I can’t believe I fuckin’ lost my fuckin’ capo again!

Mack and Elenore, reading throughout, recognize this.

 MACK

 (spoken)

 Fuck a BIRD!

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

 Shut the front door!

MACK

 (shouts)

 Willard!

Willard emerges from his room, clutching his laptop to his chest, looking fearful.

Harvey places a calming hand on his shoulder.

 HARVEY

Hey son, remember me? From the radio

 MACK

 And how’d your doo-dad get in his gizmo?

Your mother wants to know

Elenore looks up from her knitting.

 ELENORE

 (spoken)

Remember Mack? He *said* he was gonna do it

Willard’s bewildered.

WILLARD

I don’t know what you’re talkin’ about

But I remember meetin’ you

But the doo-dad and the gizmo?

Can I go to my room?

Mack thrusts out the pages.

MACK

And what the hell exactly is this shit?

Willard cowers. Harvey again tries to calm the boy. He reaches into his pocket and removes the thumb drive.

 HARVEY

 (spoken)

 Willard, do you remember this?

In an instant, Willard’s expression changes completely. The fear is gone, and he’s a grinning scamp.He grabs the thumb drive.

WILLARD/JARED

I’m gonna need that back a spell, my story ain’t quite done

We ain’t got to the juicy part – man, I’m havin’ fun

MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 WILLARD/JARED

Harvey, you know what you gotta do and who you gotta see

You need corroboration, you-know-who’s the key

 MACK AND ELENORE

That country singer done possessed our boy

Willard turns and starts slowly toward his bedroom.

 WILLARD/JARED

Well they do it in the North, they do it in the South

Lonely cowboys used to get it from the horse’s mouth

If you wanna make your man smile a lot

Do the Pecker Bob

 HARVEY

 (to Mack and Elenore)

That country singer done possessed your boy

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 4**

LIGHTS UP on Angel in her cell. She looks through the barred windows, then at a picture of she and Jared taped to the wall.

 ANGEL

 Jail in Wilson County’s a lonely place to be

But it don’t hurt nearly as much as why

On the way to beautiful we detoured tragically

And my eyes are the only ones can cry

 ‘Cause don’t look now, but you’re dead

I’m sorry I got angry, and that you lost your head

I still recall the last words you said

 “Put that thing away” Now you’re dead

You know I wasn’t playin’, you knew I had a gun

You thought that I’d gone home mad

And while I ain’t sayin’ my finger was the one

That pulled the trigger, it still makes me sad

Laughlin and Harvey are let in by a GUARD, unseen by Angel.

 ANGEL (cont)

But don’t look now, you’re dead

Your smile’s less disarming when it’s full of melted lead

Do you recall those words I said?

“*You* put that thing away” Now you’re dead

Laughlin clears his throat. Angel starts.

 LAUGHLIN

 Harvey, I’m assumin’ this is all off the record?

 HARVEY

I’m not here as a newsman today

 LAUGHLIN

Angel, this is Harvey, he’s found some sort of letters

 HARVEY

More like a journal, really…can I call you for a date?

 (spoken)

 Did I just say that out loud?

 ANGEL

 (nodding, murmuring)

 Well…you *sang* it…yeah

HARVEY

I found this on my laptop, I think you oughta see it

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

 What is it?

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

 Where’d ya get it?

HARVEY

I highlighted parts for you to read

ANGEL

I still don’t understand…

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

On your laptop?

ANGEL

 I don’t get it…

 HARVEY

I kinda doubt you’re ready to believe…just read…

Both read.

A look of horror crosses Angel’s face.

 ANGEL

(shouted)

 Where did you get this?!

 LAUGHLIN

 What is it Angel?

Angel holds up the pages.

 ANGEL

We met in a bar…I was a big fan

And this is word-for-word exactly how it happened

She goes back to reading.

ANGEL (cont)

(spoken)

 Oh great!

 LAUGHLIN

 What?

Angel sets down the pages, rises, and unzips jumper. She stands in front of Laughlin and Harvey, her back to audience, and shows them.

The men look at one another, wide-eyed.

LAUGHLIN AND HARVEY

She gotta titty-tat, she gotta titty-tat

Angel reads on. She looks up, unbelieving, terrified.

 ANGEL

 (shouted)

 Where the FUCK did you get this?!!

 LAUGHLIN

 Angel, what?!

She starts crying softly.

ANGEL

 (spoken)

 We always fought about money…and Jared said:

 (sung)

Goddammit Angel, a vacation’s just not doable

Almost every dime I get from that music shit’s recoupable

And then I said what it says here, and I swear it was all in fun

But every time we’d fight, I’d always clean my gun

Laughlin rises, shaking his head, indicating the pages.

 LAUGHLIN

If ya don’t know much about the legal biz

This is all real nice, but it don’t mean shit

It’s inadmissible, and what’s the point of it all?

He mighta written something on the day he died

But what’s the source? And will it help our side?

Improbable, so this is no use at all

 ANGEL

Harvey, I wanna know how this came to be

I have so many questions, could you spend more time with me?

HARVEY

 (to Laughlin)

Could you call the guard? I think I gotta pee

 (to both)

Oh wait…it just gets stranger

This was written recently by a

Redneck sixth-grader

ANGEL

 (spoken)

What the fuck?!

LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

Holy shit!!

HARVEY

I don’t think that he’s through with it

This makes no sense at all, but I think he wants to tell it all

LAUGHLIN

Angel, won’t you come clean with me –

Could his story set you free?

(to Harvey)

She’s been no help at all, but this could change it all

Laughlin and Harvey both look expectantly at Angel.

 ANGEL

Don’t look now, but he’s still dead

I don’t see gettin’ rescued by some pre-teen redneck kid

LAUGHLIN

I gotta tell the Judge, just shoot me in the head

Angel shoot him a sharp look. He shrugs.

 LAUGHLIN (cont)

Don’t look now…

ANGEL

(to Harvey)

Harvey, could this work somehow?

LAUGHLIN

Don’t look now

HARVEY

I’ve really got to pee right now

Guard approaches cell door.

LAUGHLIN AND ANGEL

Don’t look now

 LAUGHLIN

I’m not sure the law allows my star witness to be dead

GUARD

Shot right in the head

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

 I’m setting up a meeting. We’ll need to bring the kid.

He motions to Guard, who unlocks and opens cell door.

 LAUGHLIN (cont)

 (spoken, to Harvey)

 You still gotta pee?

 HARVEY

 Not really.

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 5**

LIGHTS UP on JUDGE WAY, sitting at her desk, reading the print-out of a document as Laughlin paces. Brice sits to one side of the desk, with Angel, Mack, Willard, and Harvey seated in front, facing the Judge. Standing at a distance is the Guard.

 JUDGE

 I used to tell all my law students

 Never close your eyes to possibilities

 But never in my jurisprudence

 Have I so needed a drink

She drains a large coffee mug, motions to the Guard, who takes mug and exits.

 JUDGE (cont)

 It’s just weird that’s all

 JUDGE AND LAUGHLIN

 It’s just weird that’s all

 BRICE

 Your Honor, you’ve got to be kidding…

 JUDGE

 (spoken)

 Huh?

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

 What?

 BRICE

 (louder)

 I said, You’ve got to be kidding!

 This is all some bizarre fantasy

 JUDGE

 (to Laughlin)

 I’m not even sure what you’re asking

 What you want us to believe

 BRICE

 It’s just weird that’s all

 (to Laughlin)

 What witness would you call?

All eyes on Willard, who clutches the laptop to his chest, staring at the floor.

Laughlin shakes his head dismissively.

 LAUGHLIN

 Just the writing is all

 JUDGE

 Well then we must verify that he wrote it…

All eyes again on Willard, who clutches the laptop even tighter, frowning.

The Guard returns with the Judge’s coffee mug, hands it to her. The Judge reaches into her drawer and retrieves a pint bottle, pours a shot into the coffee. She motions with her eyes toward Willard, the Guard takes a step toward the child. Willard clings to the laptop.

 MACK

 (to Willard)

 Boy, you don’t wanna go to jail over this

 ANGEL

 It’s a lonely place to be

 JUDGE

 (to Mack)

 Actually, as the parent…he’s a minor…you can guess

The Judge’s meaning registers with Mack.

 MACK

 (to Guard)

 Use your gun if you need

Mack and the Guard attempt to pry the laptop from Willard.

 JUDGE AND LAUGHLIN AND BRICE

 It’s just weird that’s all

 It’s just weird that’s all

Willard wails as the laptop is taken away. The Guard hands the laptop to the Judge, who opens it, takes a large drink from her mug, and starts tapping on the keyboard.

She takes another drink, searching the laptop’s files.

 JUDGE

 This Doc was created last Valentine’s day

 At twelve twenty-three in the morning

 ANGEL

 That’s not long after Jared’s brains blew away

 I can safely say not without warnin’

The Others look at her oddly.

 ANGEL (cont)

 It’s just weird, that’s all

 LAUGHLIN

 That was off the record, y’all.

Judge closes laptop, hands it to Guard, takes another large gulp from her mug. The Guard hands the laptop back to Willard, who stops crying.

 BRICE

 Your Honor let me get this straight, or at least somewhat clear

You’re thinkin’ you might tolerate this sideshow we’ve got here?

The case laid out by the State to a jury of her peers

Hasn’t come near bein’ refuted

LAUGHLIN

 Your Honor I appreciate the spot I’ve put you in

But I don’t deal the hands of fate, this ain’t about the win

I’ve looked at all the evidence, and much to my chagrin

 I just don’t see how it can be excluded

 JUDGE

 Now wait…do I have this right?

 You think he’ll write about that night,

 And prove this whole thing’s not just a ploy?

 BRICE

 Your Honor, we don’t have the time

 No precedent comes to mind…

 MACK

 That Country singer done possessed my boy

 LAUGHLIN

 That Country singer done possessed his boy

Willard clutches his laptop close, looks up at Mack.

 WILLARD

 (spoken)

 Daddy…I wanna go home.

 BRICE

 Before this thing gets out of hand

 Is the defendant willing to take the stand

 And swear these words from La-La Land ring true?

All eyes on Angel. She looks at Laughlin, then a moment at Harvey, then at Brice and the Judge.

 ANGEL

 That’s not something that I’m prepared to do

Laughlin is deflated, Brice and the Judge both breathe a sigh of relief.

 JUDGE

 That’s it, Brice, good call

 I might get to keep my job after all

 LAUGHLIN

 But Your Honor! My client has her rights!

 JUDGE

 Mr. Laughlin, I feel for your plight

Judge Way hands her mug to the Guard, makes a “refill” motion. Guard takes mug and exits.

 JUDGE (cont)

 That’s it, we’re done

 I’ll see y’all tomorrow, we’ll have some fun

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

 But Your Honor…

The Judge silences him with a stare.

 JUDGE

 You can’t have your cake and eat it both

Laughlin begins to interject again. Judge Way raises her finger.

 JUDGE (cont)

 Someone’ll have to swear under oath…

All eyes in the room seem to attempt to avoid looking at Willard, who sits sullenly clutching the laptop, staring at the floor. They’re not quite able.

After a beat, Judge Way rises, followed by those who were still seated. Except Willard, who doesn’t move.

The Judge heads toward the exit as Laughlin and Brice start gathering their things.

As the Judge reaches the door, Willard sighs loudly.

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken)

 Goddammit!

There’s a collective gasp as Willard smacks his left hand down on the closed laptop, then solemnly raises his right.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

 I Jared Whaley do solemnly swear

 Every fuckin’ thing I’m about to tell you is the truth

 I’ve handed you a miracle, but you don’t seem to care

 Either that, or you’re just real fuckin’ obtuse

Angel appears to be in shock.

 ANGEL

 Jared? Honey? Is that really you in there?

Willard/Jared scoff.

 WILLARD/JARED

 Baby tell ‘em ‘bout the mole just above your pubic hair

Angel cries out and runs from the room.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

 (spoken)

 It’s kinda shaped like a heart

 LAUGHLIN

 Your Honor, I guess this changes things

 I can’t say I’m relieved

 But I guess it’s up to the jury to believe

 WILLARD/JARED

 You ain’t seen nothin’ yet, I got more up my sleeve

 BRICE

 (looks toward door)

 Um…I don’t think the defendant’s s’posed to leave

There is a shocked silence.

Judge Way rushes to her desk and picks up her phone.

 JUDGE

 (spoken)

 Oh shit…

She starts dialing.

 HARVEY

 I’ll get her, Your Honor

Harvey exits.

 LAUGHLIN

 Your Honor, I’ll need just a couple days

 Gotta know what my witness has to say

 BRICE

 Your Honor, this charade’s gone on long enough!

 JUDGE

 My God, the press is gonna be all over this

 Gonna open up a practice in Anchorage

 WILLARD/JARED

 Judge, I think the voters’ll eat this shit right up

 ‘Cause I’m livin’ dead proof that dyin’ ain’t so rough x2

 WILLARD

 (spoken)

 Daddy, I’ve gotta pee

Willard exits.

 MACK

 That Country singer done possessed my boy

 LAUGHLIN

 That Country singer done possessed his boy

LIGHTS fade, SPOT UP on APRON LEFT. Harvey catches up to Angel, turns her around.

 HARVEY

 That Country singer done possessed that boy

 ANGEL

 My husband’s all up in him

Angel’s and Harvey’s eyes meet. They kiss. Angel takes a step back and unsnaps her pants.

 HARVEY

 (spoken anxiously)

 No…we can’t…

Angel shakes her head, slides the front of her panties down, but slightly. Harvey looks.

 HARVEY

 Oh my God, she’s got that tattoo and a heart on

 Her skin

 ANGEL

 Play your cards right and I just might let you in

Willard appears behind the couple, Jared behind Willard.

 WILLARD/JARED

 I’m livin’ dead proof that dyin’ ain’t so bad

 And babycakes you know your fate is in my hands

Willard turns to leave.

SPOT DOWN on APRON, LIGHTS UP on Judge’s Chambers.

 JUDGE

(to Laughlin)

 I’m gonna give ya two days, and then he takes the stand

Harvey and Angel and Willard re-enter.

 BRICE

 (spoken protest)

 But Your Honor…

 ALL (except Brice and Judge)

 (spoken)

 Huh?

 JUDGE

(to Brice)

 I know this trial ain’t goin’ like you planned

 MACK

 That country singer done possessed my boy

 ANGEL

This man of mine done possessed this boy

Jared steps back into the light.

 ALL (except Mack)

This country singer done possessed this boy

MACK

What the fuck’s a capo?

 WILLARD/JARED (sighs)

 (spoken)

 It’s that little springy contraption that a mediocre

 guitar player such as myself clamps onto the neck of

his guitar to change keys without actually changing

 chords.

 ALL (except W/J and Judge)

 (spoken)

 Fuck a bird!

 JUDGE

 See you in court!

LIGHTS DOWN

**ACT III**

**Scene 1**

Far STAGE LEFT is the interior of a coffee shop, with several CUSTOMERS and a CASHIER.

Far STAGE RIGHT is the interior of the bar, also with several Customers and a BARTENDER.

VARIOUS CUSTOMERS

Did ya hear, did ya hear, did ya hear the news

About the Whaley trial?

Gotta hand it to that Laughlin, that lawyer’s got some style

It’s already on CNN and all over the dial

Fox says it’s a prophesy, but I don’t see that in my bible

 FEMALE CUSTOMER

I don’t know if this is a hoax for sure

 ALL

 But Wilson ain’t a sleepy little town no more

VARIOUS CUSTOMERS

We got an almost famous country singer, murdered by his missus

We got the dead guy in a fat kid’s suit, gonna be a witness

MALE CUSTOMER

We might just be a laughingstock

 FEMALE CUSTOMER

Or we might become a Mecca

CASHIER

Right now we don’t really care a lot

BARTENDER

‘Cause are we makin’ bank?

BOTH

You betcha…

Jared enters CENTER STAGE, through Customers. They seem oblivious to him, and go back to chatting and ordering.

 JARED

Some folks believe that when you die you go to Heaven

That may be true, but the jury’s out on when

I’ve got some truths to tell, but if that’s the only reason

I’ll be damned if other truths I’ve gotta tell ain’t gettin’ in

The Bartender hands Jared his guitar, SPOT UP on Band.

JARED (cont)

I was born in California, but like many Californians

I was raised in neighboring OK

 BAND

Born in California, raised in Oklahoma

JARED

 Yeah the winds, they’ll sweep you down the drain

Bar customer spins on his stool, sings bass.

BASS SINGER

Sweep you down the drain

He spins back.

JARED

I was gonna be a clown, I was gonna be a rock star

I went from Hollywood to Tennessee

Where I learned to write a song and I learned to play a gee-tar

Where I searched but never quite found me

Bass Singer spins back around.

BASS SINGER

He never quite found…um…him

Spins back.

 JARED

Well I found a little love and she gave me little kids

So I ran away to Austin, I kinda think I flipped my lid

By the time I made it home, my family had run and hid

When Karma comes callin’ it can be a bitch

Or was it something I did?

Bass singer does that spinning thing again.

BASS SINGER

You were a drunken piece of shit

Guess what he does now? He spins.

 JARED

Sleepin’ on the street, sellin’ blood for drinkin’ money

Borrowin’ guitars so I could play

Lots-a shattered dreams, lots-a wishful thinkin’ honey

Lots-a songs written and thrown away

Spinny.

 BASS SINGER

But a few turned out okay

A Female Coffee-Shop Customer turns around from the counter.

 FEMALE CUSTOMER2

(spoken)

Um…music people? I’ve got to get back to work.

 BASS SINGER

I think he’s still got more to say

 FEMALE CUSTOMER2

 (spoken, sighing)

Great. Can you speed it up a little?

 BASS SINGER

Okay…

JARED

(faster)

So I got back on my feet, made a lot of sammiches

For country stars over by Music Row

Played a lotta gigs, and nothin’ rhymes with sammiches

I fell in love and got my fool heart broke

 BASS SINGER

So guess what? He had to go

 JARED

Headed back to Austin, got myself a record deal

A label from up New York way

Who flew me back to Nashville, lookin’ for that country feel

The rest of the Customers turn back around

 JARED/ALL

May the circle jerk be unbroken

Then I met Angel, but you know about that

Then I cheated, then expired

 JARED

I’d tell you more, but the fat kid needs a nap

BASS SINGER

He’d tell you more but the fat kid needs a nap

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 2**

LIGHTS UP on a HOTEL ROOM. Willard naps in a chair, Mack sits in another. Harvey and Laughlin are both standing, Harvey peering around Laughlin’s shoulder to read what Willard has written.

 LAUGHLIN (reading)

 I’d tell you more, but the fat kid needs a nap

Harvey opens his mouth to sing, but the Bass Singer quickly opens the door and pokes his head in.

 BASS SINGER

 He’d tell you more but the fat kid needs a nap

 HARVEY

 (spoken)

 Thank you.

The Bass Singer nods, closes door.

 MACK

 (spoken)

He’s just big-boned, like me and his mama.

Laughlin fumes.

 LAUGHLIN

Goddamn it Willard, you little big-boned asshole

Willard leaps awake.

 LAUGHLIN (cont)

Nobody gives a shit about what he did

Before that final blow

 HARVEY

Doesn't it lay a foundation of credibility?

 MACK

All I understood was "lay," can I turn on the TV?

Laughlin scowls, shakes his head. Mack sulks.

 WILLARD

Daddy I gotta pee

He rises from the bed, crosses to a bathroom door, and enters.

 LAUGHLIN

If ya don't know much about the shape we're in

We're fucked as fuck, we just can't win

Unless he spills it all

About his curtain call

 HARVEY

Do you think it's wishful thinkin' what he has to say

Is gonna get her off? Gonna go our way?

Dammit all

I meant *your* way is all

Laughlin looks at him suspiciously.

 LAUGHLIN

It ain't just Angel's life we're trying here to save

My distinguished career has got one foot in the grave

 HARVEY

I wish I could say I had no ponies in the race

Sometimes the heart don't break, but it bends....

Willard emerges from the bathroom. He ain’t alone.

 WILLARD/JARED

I know ya wanna know how the story ends

 MACK

Seems like he wants to know how the story ends

 LAUGHLIN

Shit yeah, I need to know how the story ends

 HARVEY

I'd also like to know how the story ends

He looks at the room and smiles.

 WILLARD/JARED

Well I once had a friend and he had himself a girl

And I'm a covetous narcissistic SOB

 MACK

 (spoken)

What the hell's a covetous narci-what?

 WILLARD/JARED

And since my Angel flew I thought I'd give that girl a whirl

And like what goes up, she went down on me

 MACK

 (spoken)

Now don't be talkin' smut, son

 WILLARD/JARED

And next thing I know, there's Angel with that fuckin' gun

It was the worst kind of oral-coitus interruption

 MACK

 (spoken)

He didn't used to use the scientific dirty words

 WILLARD/JARED

Well the girl under the table liked to pitch herself a bitch

And she jumped up and they struggled

And they scratched and they hissed

And then there was a flash, but I didn't feel no pain

I'd been relieved of that portion of my brain

 MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 LAUGHLIN

I smell a victory, I could jump for joy

 WILLARD/JARED

And I ain't sayin' that's how it happened

But I ain't sayin' it ain't

Laughlin damned near explodes.

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

Fuck a BIRD!!

 MACK

 (spoken)

Took the words right outta my mouth

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 3**

LIGHTS UP on Judge’s Chambers. Judge Way is reading while Laughlin, Brice, Mack, Willard, and Angel look on – Laughlin and Brice are standing, the rest seated around the Judge’s desk.

 JUDGE WAY

 (reading)

And I ain't sayin' that's how it happened

But I ain't sayin' it ain't

She looks quizzically at Laughlin. Brice just shakes his head.

 LAUGHLIN

Your Honor, I'm just askin' for a little delay

While Harvey tracks down a witness we think might corroborate

At this, Angel looks up and frowns.

 BRICE

He's actin' like the Sheriff didn't investigate

Makin' a circus of an open-and-shut case

 JUDGE WAY

I thought the kid was gonna name names

 MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 JUDGE WAY

 (to Laughlin)

In case ya didn't notice it's a cluster-fuck out there

We got satellite trucks and freakin' people everywhere

I'm puttin' you on notice you got two hours I swear

Or a goddamn mistrial I'll declare

 MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 ANGEL

There's a part of his heart always been achin'

I think he's waitin' just for me

Just give me five, let me look into his eyes

He'll tell the truth and it'll set me free

Judge Way looks at Laughlin, then at Angel. She seems to consider it.

 MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 BRICE

Come on, Your Honor, this is pure lunacy

Batshit crazy with no precedent I see

 MACK

She ain't gonna hurt 'im

 JUDGE

If it’s okay with the boy it’s fine by me

The Judge rises, as does Mack. Angel looks at Willard with sad affection.

 WILLARD

I gotta pee

 MACK

 (spoken)

I TOLD you to go before we left the hotel...you can wait five minutes

 (sung)

That country singer done possessed my boy

 LAUGHLIN

That country singer done possessed his boy

 ANGEL

My dear departed’s all up in this boy

 JUDGE WAY

What the fuck? Let's go...

They exit, leaving Angel and Willard alone.

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 4**

LIGHTS UP on Amanda’s and Chad’s APARTMENT. They open the front door to Harvey.

 AMANDA AND CHAD

Hello Harvey, we've been expecting you

All in all, we're kinda glad you came

Harvey enters, shuts the door.

 AMANDA AND CHAD (cont)

That Wilson County Sherrif can't add two and two

And from what we've seen you kinda have a brain

Chad motions to a chair. Harvey sits, as does Chad. Amanda fetches coffee.

 HARVEY

It's funny you should mention that

I'll keep this underneath my hat

 (to Amanda)

And you've not really been mentioned by name

But Jared had himself a fling

And it kinda seems you and he...aw crap...

Well you know what I mean

 (spoken, to Chad)

Sorry...

Amanda sets down the coffee tray, hands a cup each to Harvey and Chad, sits.

 CHAD

Don't worry Harvey, I know all about it

I've known about it since that night

I stand by my woman but I didn't want to shout it

And ruin her alibi, bye bye

 HARVEY

I hear there might-a been a struggle

Just an accident went down there

 AMANDA

I'm sorry that you went to all this trouble, Harvey

 It all went down when I came up for air

Harvey’s face falls.

 HARVEY

 (spoken)

What??!

 AMANDA

I stayed on my knees, prayin’ I’d be spared

 HARVEY

 (spoken, still confused)

Huh? I thought maybe...then why didn't you...

 AMANDA

I've been around a block or two, I've been a lot of things

I've seen more than my share of altercations

But folks'll do what folks'll do, and life brings what it brings

And I don't really see the need for complications

When the bullets fly, ya gotta duck your head

Otherwise you might find yourself dead

Pay no attention to what he said

After the bullet flew

 HARVEY

I've been around a block or two, I've seen a lot myself

Car wrecks and explosions and crime scenes

But I don't understand why you kept this to yourself

When you could've cleared up this whole thing

 AMANDA

When the bullets fly, ya gotta duck your head

I knew she'd be convicted no matter what I said

There wasn't any doubt until that voice from the dead

After the bullet flew

Harvey *still* seems confused.

 AMANDA (cont)

I don't wanna be that familiar face

Known for bein' in the wrong place

I'd rather be the girl you don't know of

I don't wanna be a celebrity

Not known for talent but a B-J

The girl whose ears the victim had ahold of

 CHAD

She thought it'd be a bummer

 CHAD AND AMANDA

Bein' famous for a hummer

 AMANDA

To be known as that dumb hick

AMANDA AND CHAD

Left lipstick on his dipstick

 HARVEY

When the bullets fly, you gotta duck your head

But I think he might be tryin' to get her off instead

Sow the seeds of doubt just like Laughlin said

 CHAD

 (spoken)

Maybe he’s just toying with the murdering whore...I'm

sorry, too harsh?

 AMANDA

 (spoken)

Maybe the murdering whore has a big surprise coming!

Harvey looks at a message he’s received on his phone. He leaps up.

 HARVEY

I think he might be in danger

I think the boy might be in danger

The poor kid might be in danger

They exit.

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 5**

LIGHTS UP on the Judge’s Chamber. Willard sits uncomfortable on a love seat, seeming to wish he could hide beneath the cushions.

Angel is lighting candles.

 ANGEL

Just you and me

An empty room, a closed door

Just like before, before the world went crazy

Just you and me

No distractions like before

Can broken hearts be restored

To doom or save me?

She sits beside Willard, looks into his eyes.

 ANGEL (cont)

And it only took bein' without you to make me understand alone

And it only took a second to get there

From the top of the world to nowhere

To here

She runs her fingers through Willard’s hair. He flinches.

 WILLARD

 (spoken)

Umm...ma'am?

 ANGEL

Just you and me

Fires burnin' deep inside

You can't hide

From what I know you're feelin'

And from what I've seen lately about you, you seem angry and alone

And I'm sorry I helped you get there

From the top of the world to nowhere

To here

She rises, crosses to the door, dims the lights.

 ANGEL (cont)

And I know that little voice inside you's crying out to just come home

And it only takes my touch to get there

Back to the top of the world we both shared

She crosses back to love seat, sits.

 ANGEL (cont)

Look in my eyes and you'll see I still care

Come to me, come to me

She tries to embrace the boy. Willard leaps up.

 WILLARD

Hey now, this is gettin' kinda creepy

But you're right, I just kinda wanna go home

Hey now, you're a little too old for me

But I'll sure tell my friends you tried

Tell a little cougar lie

Angel rises and storms to Willard, standing in front of him, glaring.

 ANGEL

Goddammit Jared! This is fucking unacceptable

 You're just playin' dumb but the time has come

To un-dig this hole

I told you I'm sorry for the part I had to play

And if you ever loved me you'll make

Everything turn out okay

Willard leaps up, possessed.

 WILLARD/JARED

This country singer done possessed this boy

This country singer done possessed this boy

 ANGEL

Jared, darling, please forgive me

The mem'ries of that night still haunt me

 WILLARD/JARED

There's a part of my heart still breakin' apart

Over you...

He touches her hair tenderly.

WILLARD/JARED (cont)

But you blew...

My damned head off

LIGHTS UP on Band.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

Hey bitch, listen hard

So you're sittin' in a cell with a broken heart

I'd be hurt too, I'd cry and sob

But you blew my damned head off

He turns away in anger. Angel, also angry, twirls him around.

 ANGEL

Listen dick, you got your due

How many times can I say I'm sorry to you?

I mean it though, I swear to God

But, yeah, I blew your damned head off

They dance during an instrumental break.

 BAND (continues through)

Blew it, blew it, blew it, aaah

 WILLARD/JARED

Well ya blew it on the wall and ya blew it on the chair

 ANGEL

I can't believe she didn't get any in her hair

 WILLARD/JARED

You popped it like a pimple, it exploded with a bang

 ANGEL

As long as she stays quiet, they won't even know her name

 WILLARD/JARED

Your fate is in my hands, am I a forgiving guy?

 ANGEL

If you say it was an accident, no one has to fry

 WILLARD/JARED

But she was under the table, just a-gobblin' my knob

He smirks. Angel explodes.

 ANGEL

THAT'S why I blew your damned head off

 WILLARD/JARED/BAND

Blew my damned head off

 BAND/ANGEL

Blew his damned off

Angel leads him back to the love seat, re-arranges some cushions. They sit.

 ANGEL

Jared darlin', please forgive me

But I can't chance your testimony

 WILLARD

 (spoken)

Ma'am?

With both hands, she rips open her blouse, then tussles her hair, then grabs a cushion.

 ANGEL

And it breaks my heart thinkin' about

What I've got to do

She places the cushion over Willard’s face, forcing him back onto the love seat.

He manages to momentarily push the cushion away.

 WILLARD

Hey now, this gettin' kinda creepy...

She places the cushion over his face again. He pushes it away again.

 WILLARD

She gotta titty tat...

She overpowers him this time, and his struggles weaken, then stop. Angel removes the cushion, places her ear to the boy’s face, seems satisfied.

The door bursts open and Mack, Laughlin, Brice, and Judge Way storm in. Angel jumps off the love seat, feigning horror.

 LAUGHLIN

What the fuck are you doing to my witness?

 MACK

Oh my God! My only son!

 ANGEL

He tried to kill me, as God is my witness

I swear this was my only option

It was my only option

 LAUGHLIN

 Self-defense with a cushion?!

The Judge, Laughlin, Brice and Mack all gather round the lifeless boy.

 BRICE

I told you this was nuts from the beginning

 JUDGE WAY

He's not breathing! Call the guard station!

Brice rises, crosses to her desk, picks up the phone, presses a button.

 MACK

 (to Laughlin)

All you fuckin' cared about was winning!

 (to Judge)

Please Judge, you gotta save my son!

Use that C-P-R if ya got one!

The Judge looks up.

 JUDGE WAY

I can't find a pulse - don't let her run!

 (to Laughlin)

I guess you got your delay

Brice returns to the boy’s side.

 MACK

 (spoken, crying)

What'll I tell his mama?

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken, to Brice)

Where are the fucking paramedics?!

 BRICE

 (spoken)

On their way! I told you this was nuts!

 ANGEL

I said I was sorry!

 BRICE

She said she was sorry?!

 MACK

So what! You're sorry?!

As all glare at Angel, a voice comes from behind them on the love seat.

 WILLARD/JARED

She told me she was sorry

Willard sits up, grinning his Jared grin.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

She gotta titty tat

Guess what? I'm back?

 (to Angel)

You don't like that?

 (to All)

Let's go to court!

 LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 6**

LIGHTS UP on the COURTROOM. All stand as Judge Way enters, takes her seat.

Laughlin and Angel sit at one table, Brice at another. To STAGE RIGHT sits the JURY. Mack and Willard sit side-by-side on the front row of gallery seats.

 BAILIFF

The People of the State of Tennessee vs Angel Whaley

 Is now in session

All sit.

 JUDGE WAY

Mr. Laughlin, would you like to call the witness everyone's here to see

And ask some questions?

 LAUGHLIN

The Defense calls Jared Whaley

Brice rises.

 BRICE

 (spoken)

Objection!

 ALL

 (spoken)

What?!

 BRICE

 (spoken)

I said -

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Shut up!

Brice sits, as Willard shyly walks to the waiting CLERK, who holds a bible.

 MACK

That country singer done possessed my boy

 WILLARD

Daddy I've got to pee

 MACK

 (spoken)

I told you you should-a -

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Shut up!

Willard places his right hand on the bible and raises his left. The Clerk tersely shakes her head. Willard looks at Mack pleadingly. Mack motions Willard to reverse the positions of his hands.

 OBSERVER

 (spoken)

Boring!

Willard/Jared smirks.

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken)

Ah hell, I'm just messin' with ya

Excited murmuring from the Gallery. Judge Way bangs her gavel.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

I, Jared Whaley, do solemnly swear

Everything I’m about to tell you is the truth

I'll tell my little story 'neath the spotlight's hungry glare

I'm more famous than a goddamned Baby Ruth

Willard crosses to the witness stand, takes a seat.

 OBSERVER

 (spoken)

That don't even make sen-

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Shut up!

 MACK

That country singer done poss-

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Shut up!

 (to W/J)

The witness will refrain from using profanity

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken)

Or what?

 (sung)

I'm pretty fuckin' prosecution-proof

 (spoken, to Judge)

What're ya gonna do - throw the *kid* in jail?

 LAUGHLIN

Jared won't you tell us your story?

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken)

Be glad to.

 (sung)

I was born in California, but like many Californians

I was raised in neighboring OK

 JURY

Born in California, raised in Oklahoma

Laughlin interrupts.

 LAUGHLIN

Let's not go back that far, what say?

 OBSERVER (Bass Singer)

We don't have all damn day

 WILLARD/JARED

I guess ya wanna know all about what happened

On the night I lost my head

It was a good day 'til then

But I had to be an asshole instead

And I don't blame Angel for the anger she felt

I cheated and I lied

But I didn't have a clue I'd draw the card I was dealt

Until it hit me between the eyes

 JURY

Hit him between the eyes

 LAUGHLIN

Be more specific, tell about it

 BRICE

I wonder which story he'll tell

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Shut up!

 LAUGHLIN

You said it was an accident

At least that's what you wrote about it

Angel shouldn't be in jail

 BRICE

 (spoken)

Um...? Leading, Your Honor?

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Yeah, kinda

 LAUGHLIN

Cruel fate just prevailed

 WILLARD/JARED

I always lie, and that's the truth

This thing I always never do

He looks at the Jury.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

But it ain't even me, it's you

Has to tell the difference

I gotta little story to tell, don't really turn out that well

But what the hell does if ya think about it

And sure, it sounds like it might be fun

Two cheaters and a psycho with a gun

But it ain't, and I'm here to testify about it

I always lie, and that's the truth

But I'm the dyin' livin' proof

Ain't namin' names or sayin' who

Does it really make a difference?

When Karma comes callin', it can be a bitch

 JURY

Be a bitch

 WILLARD/JARED

When Karma comes callin', it can be a bitch

In a room full of sinners it can take its pick

 JURY

 Bitch can take its pick

 WILLARD/JARED

But when Karma comes callin' it can be a bitch

It can be a mean-ass dick

Patiently, or really quick

A shattered life or splattered bits

Of brain on dingy curtains

 LAUGHLIN

When Karma comes callin', it can be a bitch

 JURY

Bitch bitch bitch bitch

 LAUGHLIN

I feel I'm payin' for past transgressions

And I don't give a shit which story that you pitch

 JURY

Pitch pitch pitch pitch

 LAUGHLIN

Karma's gonna make its own impression

 WILLARD/JARED

Well that ain't very lawyerly,

Angel she's countin' on you and me

Come on, keep your dignity

 LAUGHLIN

I only want the truth!

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken, a la Jack Nicholson)

You can't handle the truth!

He looks at the Jury, the Gallery.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

 (spoken)

Aw, come on - that was a pretty good Jack Nicholson impression...

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

I think you *want* to tell us the truth! I think you *need* to tell us the truth!

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken – again – a la Nicholson)

You're goddamn right I do!

He looks again to the room.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

Huh? Anything?

Silence.

 MACK

That aging actor done possessed my boy...

Harvey, Amanda, and Chad enter the courtroom.

 WILLARD/JARED

When Karma comes callin', it can be a bitch

 JURY

A nasty bitch

W/J notices the new arrivals.

 WILLARD/JARED

I see we've added something to the mix

Well I was gonna be real nice

Be Angel's savior, let it slide

But now I gotta testify

The damned bitch killed me twice!!

 OBSERVER (bass)

 E7

She freakin' killed him twice

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken)

 And not ONCE was it an accident!

The Gallery erupts. Judge Way bangs her gavel. Angel rises, furious.

 ANGEL

 (spoken)

Jared, you're a fucking ASSHOLE!

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

Twice?

 WILLARD/JARED

 (spoken, to Angel)

What the hell did you expect?!

Kill me once, shame on you - kill me *twice*...

Well, shame on you both times

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

What do you mean *twice*?!

 WILLARD/JARED

When Karma comes callin' it can be a bitch

 ANGEL

Don't look now, but you're dead

 WILLARD/JARED

Which presents its share of complications

 ANGEL

I'll languish in a cell, you keep the damned worms fed

 WILLARD/JARED

Gonna rid myself of these limitations

 ANGEL

I still recall those last words you said

"Put that thing away"

"I saw a titty tat"

 JURY

 (spoken)

What did you mean by "twice"?

 WILLARD/JARED

 (to Judge)

Just hold your horses, soon you'll know

When Karma deals its fatal blow

It ain't just the guilty go

He looks at Mack.

 WILLARD/JARED (cont)

I'm sorry, Mack, this happened...

He rises from the witness stand, steps down, and collapses. The Gallery and Jury erupt again. Judge Way bangs her gavel.

Jared quietly exits as Laughlin, Brice, the Bailiff, and Mack quickly surround the boy.

 BRICE

 (spoken)

Oh my God!

 LAUGHLIN

 (spoken)

He's not breathing!

 BAILIFF

 (spoken)

There's no pulse!

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

Is there a doctor in the house?!

No response, as the pandemonium dies down.

 JURY AND GALLERY

(a la "Ding Dong the Witch is Dead”)

Holy shit, the little boy is dead

Which little boy?

The dead little boy!

Holy shit –

Judge Way interrupts with the banging of her gavel.

 JUDGE WAY

 (spoken)

No no no no...that is just...no.

Mack looks up at Angel, still at the defense table.

 MACK

 (spoken)

What have you done to my boy!?

He rushes toward her, but is restrained by the Bailiff and Laughlin

 JURY

Pray for the dead and the dead will pray for you

LIGHTS DOWN

**Scene 7**

**Epilogue**

LIGHTS UP on HARVEY’S OFFICE. Harvey sits alone at his laptop, listening to another ANNOUNCER’s newscast.

 ANNOUNCER (OS)

 (spoken)

 Judge Myra Way declared a mistrial Tuesday in the first-degree

 murder trial of Angel Whaley, accused in the shooting death of her

 husband, rising country star Jared Whaley. The proceedings were halted

after the Defense’s star witness - 12-year-old Willard Blevins – tragically collapsed and died moments after - as Jared Whaley - implicating the

 defendant not only of the murder in question, but also in the boy's death.

 Angel Whaley confessed to both crimes at the trial, but wasn’t under oath,

 and has since recanted.

 HARVEY

Some folks believe that when you die

You go to Heaven

That may be so, but I've still got Hell to pay

I played my part, and a nightmare happened

And hearts which once beat strong

 Broke apart along the way

 ANNOUNCER (OS)

 (spoken)

 Preliminary findings from Wilson County Medical Examiner Roger

 Humphries indicate the boy died from suffocation, and – in a bizarre twist

 among many bizarre twists – that Blevins’ body temperature seemed to

 indicate he had expired prior to his testimony.

HARVEY

 I don't believe all things happen for a reason

 Nothing but pain will ever come of this

 ANNOUNCER (OS)

 (spoken)

 Amanda Carlyle, the "Mystery Woman" from the Whaley murder case,

 has now stepped forward and is expected to be the prosecution's star

 witness in the Whaley re-trial.

 HARVEY

 And I fell for a psycho with a tattoo on her tit

 ANNOUNCER

 (spoken)

 Angel Whaley remains remanded in the Wilson County jail.

 HARVEY

 All in all I'd rather

 Be a wannabe Dan Rather

Harvey’s eyes grow heavy, his head nods.

Suddenly, he stares straight ahead and begins typing.

 WILLARD (VO)

 When I was twelve years old a dead guy taught me how to type

 Then his hot wife kilt me now all I do is write

 I'm not really sure how this story ends

 I ain't too good with words but I'll pretend

 Don't be afraid Harvey, you're my friend

LIGHTS DOWN

 **THE FREAKIN' END**