

HAIL and REIGN
A Musical

Music by
Paul Lewis

Book and Lyrics by
Colin Speer Crowley

© 2011 "Hail and Reign"
Colin Speer Crowley
Paul Lewis

Contact: Colin Speer Crowley
508-280-7504
lernerresque@msn.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(6+ men, 4+ women, 1 boy)

The Chronicler (a young to middle-aged male)

The Empress Matilda (30s-40s)

Stephen of Blois (30s-40s)

Henry, Bishop of Winchester (30s-40s)

Robert, Earl of Gloucester (30s-50s)

Matty, Countess of Boulogne (30s-40s)

William Marshal, a boy of 8 or 9

The Players: 2+ Men, 2+ Women

TIME

Roughly, December, 1135 to November, 1141
with slight incursions into the years before and after.

PLACE

Various locations in England and France.

A NOTE ON THE SET

For "Hail and Reign," the simplest of sets will suffice. Briefly, the stage should be divided into two main areas: the Arena and the Throne Room. In the center of the latter rests a throne. All other furniture and props will be brought onstage when needed. All changes in time and place will be indicated by changes in lighting or the Chronicler's narration. Background projections are also available from the authors upon request.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE—

- 1) Overture
- 2) A Little Bit of History (CHRONICLER, ENSEMBLE)
- 3) I'll Rule You A Lovely Reign (MATILDA, PLAYERS)
- 4) Take the Door (STEPHEN, CHRONICLER)
- 5) We're Having A Little War (CHRONICLER, PLAYERS, MATILDA, WILL)
- 6) King Stevie Couldn't Hurt A Fly (PLAYERS, CHRONICLER, HENRY)
- 7) When Christ And All His Angels Slept (WILL, PLAYERS, ROBERT)
- 8) Eulogy (ROBERT)
- 9) Hush (Go To Sleep, Dear) (STEPHEN, MATILDA, MATTY)
- 10) Transition (STEPHEN, CHRONICLER, PLAYERS)
- 11) Fanfare (PLAYERS)
- 12) Now It's In Your Hands (CHRONICLER, MATTY, WILL, PLAYERS)

ACT TWO—

- 13) Act Two Introduction (CHRONICLER, PLAYERS)
- 14) Smile, Make Nice (MATILDA, HENRY, ROBERT)
- 15) Military Indecisions (MATTY, MALE PLAYERS)
- 16) A Kiss Is All I've Left To Give (MATTY, STEPHEN)
- 17) A Kiss Is All I've Left To Give (Reprise) (MATILDA)
- 18) I Hate Her (HENRY, CHRONICLER, PLAYERS)
- 19) Hail and Reign (MATTY, PLAYERS, WILL)
- 20) I'll Rule You A Lovely Reign (Reprise) (MATILDA)
- 21) Finale (CHRONICLER, ENSEMBLE)
- 22) Curtain Call and Exit Music (ENSEMBLE)

ACT ONE**1) Overture**

Some 2 minutes into the OVERTURE,
the CHRONICLER enters.

CHRONICLER

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I welcome you most humbly to history. You are about to witness a story of mayhem, majesty, and mirth. In essence, it's a tale of three people - Stephen and Matilda. Don't worry; you'll understand it all later.

(Singing.)

2) A Little Bit of History

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
COME JOIN US ONE AND ALL FOR
A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE ON CALL FOR
A LITTLE BIT OF SCANDAL,
A LITTLE BIT OF PASSION.
NO PIPE DREAM HOLDS A CANDLE
TO THIS PLAY YOU PUT YOUR CASH IN.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
COME JOIN US TO ENJOY HERE
A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
THROUGHOUT IT, WE'LL EMPLOY HERE
A WHOLESOME DOSE OF WAR AND BETRAYAL.
AS YOU WILL NOTE
THERE'S NO REMOTE
SO SIT, RELAX, AND HAIL THE SHOW.

As the LIGHTS rise to reveal the
set in full, the CAST enters.

ALL

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
COME JOIN US FOR A SPOT OF
A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
YOU'LL SEE AN AWFUL LOT OF
A LITTLE BIT OF ROMANCE,
A LITTLE BIT OF GLORY.

CHRONICLER

FROM BEING BUT A NO MAN'S
LAND THIS STAGE WILL SPROUT A STORY.

OF QUEENS AND KINGS. FEMALE PLAYERS

OF CROWNS RE-CROWNED. MALE PLAYERS

AND OTHER THINGS PLAYERS
TIME LOST AND FOUND.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY. FEMALE PLAYERS

THE PAST SO ENTERTAINS ONE. CHRONICLER

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY. MALE PLAYERS

THE PRESENT JUST MIGRAINES ONE. CHRONICLER
BUT HISTORY CRIES OUT FOR SURVEYING.
SO THAT IN MIND
LET'S FACE BEHIND
AND PEER DOWN MEM'RY LANE... LIKE SO!

The CHRONICLER gestures. ALL SAVE HIM exit.

(Spoken, as MUSIC continues.)
Now, ladies and gentlemen, it's the early 1100's. England is ruled by a cool-headed king... Henry the First.

A MALE PLAYER (as KING HENRY I) enters pompously and deposits himself on the throne.

By his wife, King Henry has two children: a son, William...

The CHRONICLER holds up a faded etching of Prince William.

And a daughter, Matilda... CHRONICLER

HE holds up a headshot of Matilda brandishing a steely gaze.

A stringent ruler, King Henry brings peace to England and sets the stage for son William to rule a rich and

CHRONICLER (CONT)

prosperous kingdom. However, in the year 1120, God sayeth "no" and the Prince drowns in the English Channel during a nasty shipping accident.

HE throws the etching of Prince William into the wings.

CHRONICLER

Distraught but undeterred, King Henry has only Matilda left to succeed him on the English throne. Married to the Holy Roman Emperor at age seven, widowed at age twenty-two, re-married to the Count of Anjou soon after, Matilda has zig-zagged her life around Europe, leaving a string of trampled and annoyed persons in her wake. The question is: Will the lords of England accept a woman as sovereign? Especially a woman such as she?

HE throws the headshot of Matilda into the wings. The MUSIC fades out.

CHRONICLER

It's now 1132: King Henry has called a meeting of the greatest lords and prelates of the land to demand they officially recognize his daughter's right of succession.

A FANFARE. The LIGHTS rise on the Throne Room. During what follows, various English lords will enter the Throne Room, bow to KING HENRY, and assemble around HIM.

Enter HENRY, BISHOP OF WINCHESTER: a clever fellow, regal and determined, clad in fancy Church garments.

CHRONICLER

First up: Henry, Bishop of Winchester. The second mightiest churchman in the kingdom. A master politician who thinks God is a good idea.

Enter STEPHEN OF BLOIS: a good-natured gentleman, pleasant and popular, dressed handsomely.

CHRONICLER

Second up: Stephen of Blois, Count of Mortain and Boulogne. The greatest landowner in England. Nephew of King Henry and brother of the Bishop of Winchester.

Enter ROBERT, EARL OF GLOUCESTER:
a stern-looking soldier, erect in
posture, dressed in knightly pomp.

CHRONICLER

Third up: Robert, Earl of Gloucester. A real bastard.

(Responding to the audience's reaction.)

No, honestly. He is the illegitimate son of King Henry and
a minor noblewoman.

Enter the remaining MALE PLAYER
and the FEMALE PLAYERS (NOBLES).
KING HENRY uh-hums for silence.

KING HENRY

My lords, every kingdom needs a stable line of succession
in order to survive the endless tottering of this topsy-
turvy world. Ours is no exception to this rule. Now, you
all know my daughter, Matilda...

CRIES OF AFFECTION for Matilda.

KING HENRY

Well, as my loyal vassals, I hereby command that you
recognize her as my rightful successor.

Muffled MOANS and GROANS.

KING HENRY

What was that?!

Sudden CRIES OF ASSENT.

KING HENRY

Good. You will now all sign this oath to that effect.

The CHRONICLER hands a large piece
of paper and a pen to the nearest
lord (say, HENRY OF WINCHESTER).
After a momentary hesitation,
HENRY signs the paper, then passes
it onto another lord, who signs it
and passes it on to yet another
lord, etc., etc., while KING HENRY
loudly barks:

KING HENRY

Come along now. Very good. Hurry up. We don't have all day!

When all assembled nobles have
penned their signatures to the
document, the last lord hands the
paper to KING HENRY.

CHRONICLER

So the deed is done! Alas, so is King Henry, for he has not long to live. Three years later, in December of 1135, he dies after overdosing on stewed eels.

With a cry, KING HENRY ignobly tumbles from the throne. A pause as ALL consider HIS corpse. The MUSIC rises anew.

CHRONICLER

On that note, we can start our play.

Joined by MATILDA, MATTY, and WILL, HENRY (BISHOP), ROBERT, STEPHEN, and the OTHER PLAYERS turn to us and sing.

2) A Little Bit of History (Continued)

ALL SAVE KING HENRY

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
IT'S TIME NOW TO ENGAGE IN
A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.
WE'RE ENT'RING A NEW AGE.

MATILDA

(Charging to the front.)
IN IT YOU'LL SEE LOTS OF ME THERE!

THE THREE PLAYERS

(Indicating STEPHEN and MATTY.)
PLUS MORE OF HE AND SHE THERE.

KING HENRY

(Rising, grumpily.)
I WISH THAT I COULD BE THERE, TOO.

ALL watch KING HENRY stalk off,
then resume.

ALL SAVE KING HENRY

YES, HERE'S A BIT OF HISTORY FOR YOU.

THE THREE PLAYERS

SO SIT BACK WE DO IMPLORER YOU.

CHRONICLER

FOR CRITICS, WE ADORE YOU.

ALL SAVE KING HENRY

WE PROMISE NOT TO BORE YOU THROUGH.
A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY FOR YOU.

The LIGHTS fall. A SPOTLIGHT remains on the CHRONICLER. The OTHER CAST MEMBERS exit.

CHRONICLER

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. So it's 1135 and King Henry is goodly gone. It's time to inform the Empress Matilda of her succession. Visa in hand, I am off to the County of Anjou in northwest France.

The CHRONICLER gestures. A WEAK FANFARE. The LIGHTS rise on the Throne Room. The PLAYERS (as ANGEVIN NOBILITY) lay about casually. A bored lot, ONE yawns heavily, ANOTHER fights to stay awake, and TWO OTHERS are fast asleep. Surrounded by French flags, THEY wear berets.

CHRONICLER

Yes, ladies and gentlemen - Anjou. The home of soon-to-be Queen Matilda. However, the palace therein is not single occupancy. The Empress shares it with her second husband, Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou. Troubadours of the day celebrate their sweet and tender love.

CRASH. BANG.

MATILDA'S VOICE

Geoffrey! Geoffrey?!

CHRONICLER

They lie.

The PLAYERS awaken from their slumber. The EMPRESS MATILDA thunders in. An awe-inspiring Amazon, MATILDA is a truly remarkable personality whose excellence is in constant competition with her arrogance. As SHE enters, A SMALL STUFFED ANIMAL dangles desperately from one of HER hands. Immediately, MATILDA proceeds to kick the helpless PLAYERS to attention.

MATILDA

Hey you! Siesta sops! Up, up, up! Where is Geoffrey? Where is my husband?

A PLAYER

Count Geoffrey is off on another campaign, Your Majesty.

ANOTHER PLAYER

Fear not, Sire, for he is safe and should return soon.

MATILDA

With any luck, one piece at a time. I don't give a damn about him. I just want Henry. Give me Henry.

(Pointing to a traumatized PLAYER.)

Where is Henry?

CHRONICLER

(To us.)

The Empress's three-year-old son.

ANOTHER PLAYER

His lordship and your son are on campaign together, Sire.

MATILDA

As I thought! Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy. The only word my three-year-old knows. He's like a nickelodeon stuck on the worst tune.

MATILDA looks at the STUFFED ANIMAL.

MATILDA

Meanwhile, I'm stuck, too, and with this damn silly thing. I bought it for my little one's birthday. What am I supposed to do with it now?

CHRONICLER

(To us.)

No comment.

Finally, MATILDA turns and notices the CHRONICLER.

MATILDA

What? Excuse me? Who the hell are you? I don't remember collecting you on the bottom of my shoe.

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, I am but a humble messenger, with tidings from England.

MATILDA

Well, then, what have you been waiting for?

CHRONICLER

Silence.

MATILDA glares. The CHRONICLER coughs and recites:

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, with the heaviest of hearts, I must inform you that your most excellent father, Henry, King of England, the most magnificent of sovereigns, is no longer of this world, but rather above it, now lying contentedly in the lap of Our Lord.

MATILDA and the PLAYERS stare.

CHRONICLER

He's dead.

MATILDA

Dead? That's horrible. That's terrible. That... means I can finally leave this landfill.

(To the ground.)

Thank you, Daddy.

(To us, waving.)

Hello, English! Don't even try to count your blessings now. Numericals, Inc. doesn't even make numbers that high. From here on in, you people have nothing to fear but fear itself... Well, that and the Dark Ages...

(MUSIC begins.)

But, apart from them, it's all Easy Street. City: Utopia. State: Of Bliss!

3) I'll Rule You A Lovely Reign

NIX THE FIRE
UPON YOUR PYRE
FOR A QUEEN
UNSEEN
IN GRACE AND BEAUTY
WILL RULE YOU A LOVELY REIGN.
A LOVELY REIGN.

NO, NO TO
MERCY BEAU COUP
FOR TO BRING
THE SPRING
IN IS MY DUTY.
I'LL RULE YOU A LOVELY REIGN.

EVERY FROWN
I'LL UPSIDE DOWN
THROUGHOUT YOUR LITTLE REALM.
MANDALAY
WILL SEEM BLASÉ
WITH THIS SWEETIE AT THE HELM.

TURN EACH TEAR
INTO A CHEER
FOR A TIME
SUBLIME

MATILDA (CONT)

WILL GRACE YOUR ISLE SOON.
 YES, I'LL BOON EACH LITTLE BANE.
 OH, MY SWEET DEARS, I'LL RULE YOU A LOVELY REIGN.

The PLAYERS spring to life and
 choreographically fawn.

PLAYERS

HALLELU
 AND PRAISE JESU
 FOR IT SEEMS
 OUR DREAMS
 FIN'LLY WILL COME TRUE.
 MATILDA WILL RULE HER REIGN.

MATILDA

YES, RULE MY REIGN!

PLAYERS

AFTER SLEEP
 DREAMS SELDOM KEEP
 BUT AT TIMES
 GOD CHIMES
 IN TO MAKE SOME TRUE.
 MATILDA WILL RULE HER REIGN.

MATILDA

WITH PANACHE
 I'LL ADD A DASH
 OF CULTURE TO YOUR ISLE.
 WITH ME IN CHARGE
 PAIN LIVES AT LARGE
 AND ANGUISH LIVES IN EXILE.

NIX EACH POUT
 FOR I'LL PICK OUT
 THAT DEAD FLY
 THAT'S GLI-
 DING IN YOUR TEACUP.
 I'LL CHIC UP YOUR KINGDOM PLAIN.
 YES, MY SWEET DEARS, I'LL RULE YOU A LOVELY REIGN.

The CHRONICLER brings in glamorous
 traveling attire for MATILDA to
 put on while the PLAYERS chirp:

PLAYERS

THE CLOCK IS
 TICK-TOCKING,
 THE FATES ARE
 NOW KNOCKING,
 SO PLEASE START
 YOUR JOURNEY

PLAYERS (CONT)

ON PLANE, SHIP,
 OR GURNEY,
 OR BROOMSTICK,
 IF NEED BE
 FOR WITHOUT
 YOU WE'D BE
 LIKE FEET WITH-
 OUT FROLIC
 OR LAUGH WITH-
 OUT ROLLICK.

SO HASTEN!
 PLEASE HASTEN!
 THESE HOURS
 TO PACE IN
 WITH WORRI-
 SOME WAITING
 ARE PAST TOL-
 ERATING.
 SO TELL TIME
 TO SPEED UP.
 ALL ENGLAND
 IS KEYED UP.
 WE NEED YOU
 TO DEED YOU
 A CROWN.

The PLAYERS gasp. MATILDA poses dramatically. SHE is gorgeously attired and ready to leave. Dazzling LIGHTS shine on HER.

MATILDA

HERE I COME
 TO SAVE YOU FROM
 YOUR CURRENT GHASTLY STATE.
 HISTORY
 WILL CHRISTEN ME
 MATILDA THE REALLY GREAT.

PLAYERS

SHE'S SO GREAT, BOYS.

MATILDA

WAIT AND SEE
 YOU'LL TREASURE ME
 BECAUSE I
 DEFY
 WHAT MURPHY'S LAW SAYS.
 WHAT MOIS SAYS IS MUCH MORE SANE.

MATILDA, PLAYERS

NAMELY THAT I/SHE WILL RULE YOU/US A LOVELY REIGN.

MATILDA

OH, MY SWEET DEARS, I'LL RULE YOU A LOVELY REIGN.

MATILDA and the PLAYERS exit.

CHRONICLER

Thus, Matilda the Loud is prepared to claim her new crown. However, back in England, a plot has been set afoot to deny her the throne.

HENRY OF WINCHESTER thunders in
with MALE PLAYERS (NOBLES) in tow.

HENRY

God save us! The last thing we need is that Franco-German steamroller as queen! I'll remind you that her father was no friend of the Church and I predict the Empress will be none better. Once enthroned, she will squash the rights of lords and clergy alike. We simply must find a more suitable monarch to rule in her stead.

ROBERT enters.

CHRONICLER

(To us.)

Robert, Earl of Gloucester. You remember. The bastard.

HENRY

Ah, my dear earl. We were just debating whom to crown as our next king.

ROBERT

I should have thought that issue had already been solved for us. If I recall, Your Grace, we all signed an oath to follow the royal line.

HENRY

The royal rope, you mean, for the Empress as queen would hang the realm and us along with it.

ROBERT

Perhaps so, but if I fall, Your Grace, it will only be to rise again ever higher.

ROBERT stalks off.

HENRY

(To the MALE PLAYERS.)

Don't worry about him, my lords. He'll travel our highway after we've paved it. In the meantime, I know a charming man who could be our next king: my brother Stephen. I'll ring him now.

The MALE PLAYERS exit. HENRY snaps HIS fingers. FEMALE PLAYER #1 enters and stands on one side of the stage with a pay-phone in hand. HENRY takes the receiver, produces a wallet, puts a coin in the box, and dials.

HENRY

(Into the phone.)

The royal palace at Boulogne, please.

(To us.)

The telephone. Wonderful invention. Saves so much tiresome exposition.

RING, RING! FEMALE PLAYER #2 sticks out a HAND holding a regular house phone on the opposite side of the stage. MATILDA of BOULOGNE (hereafter MATTY) enters nearby carrying a little baby (EUSTACE) in HER arms. A fulltime housewife, MATTY is a kind, soft-spoken, gentle soul with little interest in limelight. Her baby, EUSTACE, whom SHE will carry from time to time, cries without end. Indeed, he is doing so now. Trying to hear over his bawling, MATTY answers the phone:

MATTY

(Into the phone.)

Hello?

CHRONICLER

(To us, indicating MATTY.)

That lady there is Stephen's wife, also named Matilda. She is the Countess of Boulogne.

HENRY

(Into the phone.)

Hello, Matty. It's Henry. I need to talk with Stephen.

MATTY

(Into the phone.)

Yes, of course, Henry. I'll get him.

(Calling offstage.)

Stevie? Are you there? It's Henry!

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

CHRONICLER

(To us, indicating EUSTACE.)
That baby there is Eustace, Stephen and Matilda's son. A loud bundle of... joy.

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

Annoyed by the crying, the CHRONICLER glares at MATTY. Embarrassed, SHE grins back. After a beat, STEPHEN enters, having come from a relaxing lie-down on the family couch. As HE emerges, MATTY smiles warmly at HIM, hands HIM the phone, and swiftly exits.

STEPHEN

(Into the phone - a cheerful fellow.)
Hello, Henry. How are you doing? This isn't another one of your collect calls, is it?

HENRY

(Into the phone.)
Never mind that. Listen, Stephen: We've just elected you King of England.

STEPHEN

What? Elected me? King? Henry, I think we have a bad line.

HENRY

We have a perfectly good line. Do you want the job or not?

STEPHEN

Well, yes... I guess... but what about the Empress Matilda? The rightful heir to the throne?

HENRY

What about her? She has a mouth like a garbage disposal and a temper like a tornado. Her reign will turn us all into understudies on the stage of politics. Now, Stephen, please, before I have to put another penny in. Do you want the job? Yes or no, Stephen? Yes or no?

STEPHEN

Well, Henry... No, I don't think... Yes, maybe... Or not... No, wait... I think... No, no, the answer is...

A CLICK. The LIGHTS fall on HENRY. HE needs another quarter.

HENRY

Goddammit!

Grateful, STEPHEN hangs up the phone. Thinking better of this, HE then takes it off the hook, waves the HAND away, and ponders. As HENRY and FEMALE PLAYER #1 exit, MATTY enters with EUSTACE.

MATTY

What did Henry want, Stevie?

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

STEPHEN

Hm?... Oh, he called to tell me I've been elected King of England. Me.

MATTY

Oh. That's nice.

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

Sheepishly, MATTY smiles at STEPHEN and exits.

CHRONICLER

Excuse me, Sire. Hello. You can talk to me.

STEPHEN

(Mostly to HIMSELF.)

Should I accept the English throne or should I not? An old man inside me cries out 'no,' but then a nearby child kicks him in the shins - that's 'yes.'

STEPHEN ponders. MUSIC begins.

CHRONICLER

What is it, Sire?

STEPHEN

This whole dilemma. It makes me think of my father.
(Singing.)

4) Take the Door

WHEN I WAS A BOY
THEY CALLED A CRUSADE.
MY FATHER, HE LEAPT
TO THE HOLY LAND'S AID.
AS HE KISSED ME GOODBYE
I CRIED OUT 'FATHER, WHY?
PLEASE DON'T GO.'

HE SAID: SON, YOU KNOW,
GOD GAVE ME THIS DOOR.

STEPHEN (CONT)

IN EACH LIFE HE'LL PRE-
SENT YOU A FEW AND NO MORE.
SO WHEN ONE BLOSSOMS OUT FROM THE FLOOR

YOU MUST OPEN THE DOOR.
TAKE THE DOOR, SON.
FATHER SAID TO TAKE THE DOOR.
HE MENTIONED DEATH AND TIME
AND MOUNTAINS YET TO CLIMB
AND STARS TO SHOOT FOR.
HE SPOKE OF DREAMS TO LIVE IN...
OF CHANCES GONE REGIVEN...
JUST BEYOND THAT DOOR.

SO FATHER WENT OFF
TO THE HOLY LAND'S AID.
HE MARCHED THROUGH THAT DOOR
WITH HIS COLORS ARRAYED.
AS HE LEFT WITH THE TIDE,
I JUST CRIED AND I CRIED
WITHOUT END.

I TRIED TO DEFEND
THOSE TEARS THAT I SHED.
BUT THEN FATHER AWOKE
IN THE BACK OF MY HEAD.
LIKE A SUNRISE, HIS VOICE ROSE AND SAID

YOU MUST OPEN THE DOOR.
TAKE THE DOOR, SON.
FATHER SAID TO TAKE THE DOOR.
HE MENTIONED AGE AND FROST
AND HOURS FOREVER LOST
AND MEM'RIES TO STORE.
HE SPOKE OF DAWNS TO RING IN...
OF KINGDOMS TO PLAY KING IN...
JUST BEYOND THAT DOOR.

A pause as STEPHEN remembers.
MUSIC continues.

CHRONICLER
So what happened, Sire? To your father?

STEPHEN
He died... in the Battle of Ramla.

CHRONICLER
Ramla? A small world, Sire. My father may have served under
yours. What was his name?

STEPHEN
Stephen.

STEPHEN (CONT)

(A beat.)

Now, sir, tell me, what should this Stephen do?

(Singing.)

SHOULD I TAKE THE DOOR, SIR?
SHOULD I BRAVELY TAKE THE DOOR?
WHICH PATH NOW SHOULD I CHOOSE?

CHRONICLER

WELL, LIVES DON'T COME IN TWOS.

STEPHEN, CHRONICLER

HEAD FOR THE DOOR.

CHRONICLER

ALL DOORS ARE MEANT TO OPEN.

STEPHEN, CHRONICLER

A NEW LIFE TO ELOPE IN
WAITS BEYOND THAT DOOR.

STEPHEN

TAKE THE DOOR. YES,
FATHER SAID TO TAKE THE DOOR.
HE MENTIONED PATHS TO PAVE
AND GUESTBOOKS TO ENGRAVE

STEPHEN, CHRONICLER

AND WORLDS TO EXPLORE.

STEPHEN

HE SPOKE OF SKIES TO FLY IN
AND YEARS STILL LEFT TO TRY IN
AND THAT GOLDEN DOOR.

STEPHEN, CHRONICLER

OPEN UP THE DOOR.
OPEN UP THE DOOR.
OPEN UP THE DOOR!

HENRY and the MALE PLAYERS
(NOBLES) burst in. MATTY (with
EUSTACE) follows.

HENRY

Excellent! Bravo! Congratulations, Stephen. We knew you'd
come around. You're as good as crowned.

CHRONICLER

And he's right! With barely a protest, Bishop Henry and his
allies garner the support of the prelates and nobles of the
land. On December 22nd, in the Year of Our Lord 1135,
Stephen of Blois is crowned King of England by the
Archbishop of Canterbury himself.

A SCRATCHY RECORDING of SACRED ORGAN MUSIC plays. The CAST begins to assemble for a homily by HENRY.

HENRY

My lords - my friends - my dear people of England - I am pleased to announce that we fortunate few are about to witness the dawning of a golden age...

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

The MUSIC stops. HENRY glares. Shyly, MATTY exits with EUSTACE. The MUSIC starts anew.

HENRY

Now, as I was saying... From Heaven, God has sent a savior in the mortal guise of Stephen of Blois to guide us into the Promised Land, where...

A SCREECH. The MUSIC stops.

HENRY

Christ!

A backstage RACKET of noise. MATILDA thunders in.

MATILDA

You faithless fiends! You two-timing turncoats!

The CHRONICLER rushes towards HER.

CHRONICLER

(In a stage whisper.)

This is highly irregular, ma'am. You're still back in France.

MATILDA

(To the CHRONICLER.)

You? Again? Stop them! I won't stand for this deceit.

CHRONICLER

But what can I do, Your Majesty? It's history.

(Singing.)

A little bit of history...

MATILDA

(Interrupting.)

"History?" I'll go make some history of my own.

The LIGHTS dim menacingly. MATILDA faces front. In the darkness, STEPHEN, HENRY, and the PLAYERS exit.

5) We're Having A Little War

MATILDA

SO THEY'RE TRYING TO SWINDLE THIS DEAR MISS.
WELL, THOSE BASTARDS WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.
BY THE TIME THAT HOLLY'S FIT TO DECK
I'LL BE QUEEN AND HEADS HERE WILL BE SHORT A NECK.
TO GET MY THRONE BACK, WE SHALL HAVE A WAR NOW.
IT'S TIME TO SEE WHO GOD IS FOR NOW.

MATILDA storms out.

CHRONICLER

Thus, ladies and gentlemen, the war began. The war over the throne of England. The war between Stephen and Matilda.

(Singing.)

YES, WE'RE HAVING A LITTLE WAR, MY FRIENDS.
A SUPREMELY WASTEFUL YET SO TASTEFUL WAR.
FOR TOO LONG NOW WE'VE SOUGHT ONE.
IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE WE FOUGHT ONE.
WELL, MY GOODNESS, IT SEEMS THAT WE'VE GOT ONE.
THANK THE LORD.
GRAB YOUR SWORD.

The PLAYERS march onstage, dressed in wartime attire; the MALE PLAYERS as GENERALS, the FEMALE PLAYERS as SOLDIERS.

CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

YES, WE'RE HAVING A LITTLE WAR, MY FRIENDS.
A DELIGHTFUL, THRILLING, GRAVEYARD-FILLING WAR.

MALE PLAYERS

HOW I PRAYED WE'D PURSUE ONE.

FEMALE PLAYERS

(To EACH OTHER.)

D'YOU RECALL HOW TO DO ONE?

CHRONICLER

MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW TO LIVE THROUGH ONE?
COME ON, GUESS.

CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

LET'S PRAY 'YES.'

CHRONICLER

BOREDOM LIFE YIELDS
WHEN YOU HAVE FIELDS
THAT YOU CAN TILL AT EASE.

FEMALE PLAYERS

SCREW PLANTING SEEDS.
EACH TRUE MAN NEEDS
THE CHANCE TO KILL AT EASE.

MALE PLAYERS

IT'S THAT OLD ATTILA-TEASE.

CHRONICLER, ALL PLAYERS

OH, IT WILL BE GRAND
WHEN WAR SKIPS CROSS THIS LAND.
YES, WE'RE HAVING A LITTLE WAR, MY FRIENDS.
A SUPERB, BREATHTAKING, WIDOW-MAKING WAR.

FEMALE PLAYERS

TIME TO HITCH UP YOUR PANTS NOW.

MALE PLAYERS

GRAB YOUR BAND-AIDS AND LANCE NOW.

CHRONICLER

LET US JUMP TO THE NORTH COAST OF FRANCE NOW...

MUSIC continues. The CHRONICLER
gestures. MATILDA, clutching the
STUFFED ANIMAL, with a suitcase
marked "England or Bust," charges
towards the MALE PLAYERS, who
salute.

MATILDA

General, is the army ready to sail?

MALE PLAYER #1

We should be in England by twilight, Your Majesty. The news
there is most encouraging. The King of Scotland has invaded
and many barons have risen in support of your cause.

MATILDA

They had better! Those who are MIA will soon be RIP. When
my son and I enter London...

MALE PLAYER #2

Alas, Your Majesty, your son has joined his father to
recapture your father's lands in Normandy.

(Handing HER a letter.)

He wrote you this.

MATILDA

(Heartfelt disappointment.)

What? But he said... I have this present to...

(HER face freezes into stone.)

I don't give a damn. So Henry frolics with Daddy. They can go charge sand castles together. When I'm Queen of England, I'll give my son real castles to play with. Now let's get this blasted war on the road.

(Singing.)

EACH CANNON BLAST

I PRAY WILL LAST

IN PERPETUITY.

BRING ON THE LOOT.

THIS WAR WILL SUIT

'KING' STEPHEN TO A T.

JUST WAIT! I'LL SEE TO IT, HE

WILL TREAT WITH A GROAN

THE DAY HE STOLE MY THRONE.

MATILDA fumes out, as:

CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

YES, WE'RE HAVING A CIVIL WAR, MY FRIENDS.

A SUBLIME, UNEQUALED, HIDE-THE-WEAK-WILLED WAR.

MALE PLAYERS

GOD, WE CAN'T WAIT TO RUN ONE.

FEMALE PLAYERS

MAKE THIS WAR HERE A FUN ONE.

WILLIAM MARSHAL

(Sticking HIS head in.)

I'M SO YOUTHFUL I NEVER HAVE DONE ONE.

CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

OH, WILL MIRACLES NEVER CEASE?

WE'VE A WAR TO BRING AN END TO ALL THIS PEACE.

WAR IS SOMETHING TO TREASURE.

ONE OR TWO IS GOOD MEASURE.

HERE'S ONE MORE NOW FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE.

OH, WE'RE HAVING A CIVIL WAR.

HAVING A CIVIL WAR.

HAVING A CIVIL WAR.

A DAMNED FULFILLING

TAKE-TOP-BILLING

KEEP-ON-KILLING

CHILLING WAR.

The LIGHTS rise on the Throne Room. The PLAYERS take their places therein: the FEMALE PLAYERS stand on either side of the

throne; the MALE PLAYERS
(GENERALS) await the King.

CHRONICLER

Let us now turn to the court of the newly crowned King Stephen. How is he faring with his country at war?

HENRY thunders in with a telegram
in hand.

HENRY

Rebellions! Nothing but rebellions! That bastard swine Redvers has held Exeter captive for three months now with his moth-eaten army. Meantime, the King's forces dally outside with the patience of Job and the guts of Prometheus. Charge the damn place, I say.

STEPHEN and MATTY (with EUSTACE)
enter. HENRY and the FEMALE
PLAYERS bow. The MALE PLAYERS
salute.

STEPHEN

Should you be using words like 'damn,' Henry?
(Waving a bag of candy.)
Look what I've brought for everyone.

STEPHEN doles out candies; first,
to the PLAYERS; second, to the
CHRONICLER; and third, to HENRY.

STEPHEN

Two for you - two for you - two for you - two for you - two
for you -
(Reaching HENRY, patting HIS stomach playfully.)
Only one for you, Henry.

HENRY smiles uncomfortably.
STEPHEN sits on the throne. A
FEMALE PLAYER approaches with
papers in hand. STEPHEN begins
signing them... and signing... and
signing. Meanwhile:

HENRY

(Abruptly, dying to bring it up.)
Your Majesty, is it true that you've signed a peace treaty
with the King of Scotland?

STEPHEN nods absent-mindedly.

HENRY

Alas, Your Majesty, without a battle, no one wins.

STEPHEN

Au contraire, Henry - without a battle, everyone wins.

HENRY

In storybooks, perhaps. In reality, never. A treaty for peace is but a rain check for war.

(Noticing.)

Speaking of which, what are those?

STEPHEN

Pardons.

HENRY

For who?

STEPHEN

For whom.

HENRY

For everybody, it seems.

STEPHEN

(To ALL, annoyed with HENRY.)

Now, what's on the agenda today? Any news?

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

MALE PLAYER #1

Good news, Your Majesty: Baldwin de Redvers has offered to surrender Exeter in exchange for a royal pardon.

HENRY

Never.

STEPHEN

You will tell Redvers that I happily grant him his request. Blood is meant for circulation, not shedding. Let no one ever say such logic ran contrary during my reign.

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

MALE PLAYER #1 salutes and exits.

MALE PLAYER #2 steps up.

MALE PLAYER #2

More good news, Your Majesty: The Lord Marshal reports successful raids against rebel forces in Wiltshire.

STEPHEN

Good. Faithful Johnny. Bold action deserves a bold gift in return. Let the Lord Marshall know I award him the castles of Marlborough and Ludgershall.

EUSTACE: WAAAAAAAAA.

Irritated, ALL look censoriously towards MATTY. With a weak smile, SHE exits with EUSTACE. STEPHEN continues HIS signing.

HENRY

About the Lord Marshal, Sire... Is it wise to reward a magnate with such power in times of disloyalty?

STEPHEN gestures: Eight-year-old WILLIAM MARSHAL sticks HIS head out from behind the throne.

HENRY

What is that?

STEPHEN

It's a son, Henry. The Lord Marshal's son - William. Faithful Johnny sent him as a sign of camaraderie. We may kill the son should the father forsake our cause. What more proof of loyalty could you want from the man?

WILL emerges and sits on the floor near the throne. There HE begins to play with some toys. Touched, STEPHEN considers the lad with a fatherly smile. ROBERT enters.

CHRONICLER

(To us.)

Ah, Robert of Gloucester. You remember? The bastard?

STEPHEN

Hm? Oh, yes. Robert. In these troubled times, a king sorely needs a good soldier on his side. Now Henry here tells me that you are one of our greatest.

ROBERT

That I am one of the greatest? If Your Majesty wishes. I come to bring belated regards to you, Sire. I've been ill.

STEPHEN

Not in feeling, I hope.

ROBERT

A small case of treacheritis, Sire.

STEPHEN laughs. HENRY is appalled.

HENRY

Your Majesty, will you take such venom lightly from a...

STEPHEN

Now, Henry, we must convince the Earl our cause is just before insisting he flies our standard. His tardiness in this matter, I trust, is ethics, not evasion.

(To ROBERT.)

For that, Robert, you may leave, with my respect.

Stiffly, ROBERT salutes and exits. HENRY scoffs and storms out. The CHRONICLER shakes HIS head regrettably. The MALE PLAYERS (GENERALS) enter and join HIM in dismay. MUSIC begins.

6) King Stevie Couldn't Hurt A Fly.

MALE PLAYER #1

WHEN MARTIAL DRUMS SOUND FROM FAR AND NEAR,
WHEN STANDARDS CLUTTER THE STRATOSPHERE,
ONE LITTLE THING IS QUITE CLEARLY CLEAR:
TIMES DEMAND A STRONG HAND AT THE WHEEL.

MALE PLAYER #2

WHEN FIELDS OF GREEN TURN TO FIELDS OF WHITE
BECAUSE THE SUN SETS ALL SWORDS ALIGHT
YOU NEED NOT CLAUSEWITZ NEARBY TO CITE
TIMES COMMAND A STRONG HAND TO THE WHEEL.

CHRONICLER

BUT THIS MAN HERE HAS FAR FROM A STRONG HAND.
MORE LIKELY A WRONG HAND.
YES, THIS MAN HERE HAS TOO MUCH A GLAD HAND
WHEN TIMES CALL FOR A BAD HAND
TO BE CLOSELY AT HAND.

(Spoken.)

And yet, as our girls will explain...

Like schoolgirls enraptured by the school hunk, the FEMALE PLAYERS giggle and rush over to STEPHEN. Disgusted by such musical limelight, the MALE PLAYERS stomp out. Meanwhile, the FEMALE PLAYERS fawn over their crush.

FEMALE PLAYERS

KING STEVIE COULDN'T HURT A FLY.
HE'D NEVER EVER DARE.
THE MAN IS SWEET AS PIE.
HE WOULDN'T HARM A HAIR
UPON THE HEAD OF MAN OR MOLE.
IT'S JUST NOT IN HIS SOUL.

FEMALE PLAYERS (CONT)

NO, STEVIE COULDN'T HURT A FLY.
 HE HASN'T GOT THE NERVE.
 THAT FACT YOU CAN'T DENY.
 NO HATE LIES IN RESERVE
 NO MATTER WHERE ON HIM YOU LOOK.
 CHECK EACH CREVICE AND EACH NOOK.

FEMALE PLAYER #1

HE'D NEVER EVER TRY
 WHAT THAT SADISTIC
 MASOCHISTIC
 GENGHIS KHAN DID.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

THE THINGS THAT NASTY KHAN DID.

FEMALE PLAYERS

GENGHY KILLED INSTEAD OF BONDED.
 BUT THE THING IS
 OUR NEW KING IS
 TOO DAMN SHY
 TO HURT AN EENY
 EVER-SO-MEENY
 TINY-'N-TEENY
 FLY.

HENRY and MALE PLAYER #2 (GENERAL)
 charge in. The FEMALE PLAYERS
 freeze.

HENRY

Major news, Your Majesty! The Empress Matilda has landed on the southeastern coast. She clearly plans to move west from there to meet up with rebel armies in Bristol.

MALE PLAYER #2

I recommend we let the Empress join the rebel forces, Sire.

HENRY

That way we can confront the invaders in one great battle.

MALE PLAYER #2

With our superior army, we can't lose.

STEPHEN

Then let the Empress march west undisturbed.
 (A beat.)
 No. Wait. Bandits.

HENRY

Your Majesty?

STEPHEN

Bandits. The south is awash with them. The Empress will be in mortal danger.

MALE PLAYER #2

If God is good, Sire.

STEPHEN looks at HIM sternly.

STEPHEN

Let me make one thing clear: we will either win this war fairly and squarely or not at all.

HENRY

But, Your Majesty, we must let the Empress unite with her allies in the west.

STEPHEN

Oh, we will, Henry, thanks to you, because you will escort her there personally.

HENRY glumly stares. STEPHEN smiles innocently.

HENRY

(Beginning a speech.)

In the many annals of warfare, Your Majesty, I should point out that it is not an established custom to escort the enemy to their own armed forces...

STEPHEN

Perhaps, Henry, but victors are rich enough to pay the market price of morality.

MALE PLAYER #1 (GENERAL) enters.

MALE PLAYER #1

Your Majesty, I bring bad news. King David of Scotland has invaded Northumberland.

STEPHEN

King David? Northumberland? Yes, but... the treaty...

MALE PLAYER #1

There is also other news, Your Majesty. It concerns John FitzGilbert. There are reports that his men have been pillaging crown lands and that the Lord Marshal has met secretly with the enemy.

STEPHEN

Johnny? Oh, what nonsense. I refuse to believe that. The Lord Marshal has been a faithful friend throughout. King David must concern us now. Tell the Earl of Albemarle to raise an army against the Scottish king.

The MALE PLAYERS salute and exit.

HENRY

But, Your Majesty, the Lord Marshal...

STEPHEN wearily raises HIS hand
for silence.

STEPHEN

Not now, Henry. I promised Will mini-golf. Would you like
to come?

WILL looks up happily. HENRY
stares daggers.

HENRY

Alas, no, Sire. My schedule is fully booked. I have an
enemy to escort.

STEPHEN smiles cheerily.

STEPHEN

Good man!

HENRY stomps off, fuming:

HENRY

Good God!

The FEMALE PLAYERS burst alive.

FEMALE PLAYERS

KING STEVIE COULDN'T HURT A FLY.
HE'S FAR FROM LANCELOT.

(Producing a medical report.)

THE DOCTOR SAYS AYE-AYE.

(Reading.)

QUOTE: "STEVIE HASN'T GOT
ONE VI'LENT BONE INSIDE HIS FRAME.
LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL IS HIS GAME."

FOR STEVIE COULDN'T HURT A FLY.
HELL, NO, HE'S MISTER NICE.
HE SURE'S NOT CAPTAIN BLIGH.
IF HE HAD ONE SMALL VICE
IT'D BE BEING WAY TOO SOFT.
WAS THAT A GROWL? NO, HE JUST COUGHED.

FEMALE PLAYER #1

PERCHANCE, THOUGH, BY AND BY,
STEVE WILL ADJUST TO
WHAT HE MUST DO
WHEN IT'S NEEDED.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

ADJUST TO WHAT IS NEEDED?
NAME ONE NASTY THING THAT HE DID.

FEMALE PLAYERS

HE'S A NEW KIND.
FRANKLY, TOO KIND.
HELL, HE'D CRY
TO HURT AN EENY
EVER-SO-MEENY
TINY-'N-TEENY
FLY.

The FEMALE PLAYERS freeze. HENRY
rushes in.

HENRY

Your Majesty, have you heard the news?

Preoccupied, STEPHEN is playing
amiably with WILL. Jolting awake,
HE looks up.

STEPHEN

Hm? Oh. Henry. Hello. You have news?

HENRY

Yes, Your Majesty: Baldwin de Redvers has turned traitor...
again.

STEPHEN

What? Redvers? But... he and I... we...

HENRY

("I told you.")
Yes, Your Majesty?

STEPHEN sighs and turns to Will.

STEPHEN

At least we have your dad on our side, eh, Will?

The MALE PLAYERS (GENERALS) charge
in.

MALE PLAYER #1

Your Majesty!

Seeing WILL, HE instantly freezes.
STEPHEN stares: Yes?

MALE PLAYER #1

It's the Lord Marshal, Sire. He has taken Newbury Castle.

STEPHEN
Excellent! But I thought we already controlled Newbury.

HENRY
We did.

STEPHEN
Oh? When did we lose it?

HENRY
Just now. Faithful Johnny has turned traitor.

STEPHEN
But... but what about...

STEPHEN, HENRY, and the MALE PLAYERS slowly look to WILL. The boy plays obliviously. A pause.

STEPHEN
(Motioning HIM to leave.)
Eh, Will? Could you please?

WILL stops playing, looks around, rises, and exits.

STEPHEN
What about him? Surely, Johnny...

MALE PLAYER #2
The Lord Marshal sent you a message, Your Majesty.
(Producing a letter, reading.)
"Let Stephen of England know this: I have the hammer and the anvils to make more and better sons."

Speechless, STEPHEN takes the letter, reads it, then searches the room for aid, looking to the FEMALE PLAYERS, the MALE PLAYERS, then HENRY.

STEPHEN
Henry, I can't do it.

HENRY
(Exploding.)
Can't? Can't? Why ever not, Sire? What is it that horrifies you so? For years, you've let the barons of this land kill and pillage with immunity. Well, it's time to crack down and to crack down right now. No hesitation. No second thoughts. The axeman works twenty-four seven. Crack down now or your fatted calf is cooked.

Slowly, STEPHEN nods. A pregnant pause. Then HE calls offstage:

STEPHEN

Will?

WILL joyously bounces in and stands at attention.

FEMALE PLAYERS

SO COULD OUR STEVIE HURT A FLY?

STEPHEN

Eh... yes... Will... I must... I'd like you... Go with Uncle Henry, would you, please?

FEMALE PLAYERS

GOD, WOULD HE EVER DARE?

WILL picks up his toy.

WILL

May I bring my toy?

STEPHEN can't say anymore.

FEMALE PLAYERS

PERHAPS HE'S NOT THAT SHY.

HENRY

(Handing the toy to STEPHEN.)

Where you're going, there are many, many toys.

As the MUSIC resumes, WILL sadly leaves the toy behind. HENRY and the MALE PLAYERS lead HIM off. STEPHEN is alone now. The FEMALE PLAYERS grimace in shock.

FEMALE PLAYERS

WHO KNEW IT? MY OH MY.
IT SEEMS QUITE TRUE NOW
STEVE WILL DO NOW
WHAT TIMES CALL FOR.

STEPHEN exits slowly.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

CRUEL DEEDS THESE BAD TIMES CALL FOR.

FEMALE PLAYERS

MAKES YOU WONDER WHAT IT'S ALL FOR.
THAT POOR KIDDY.
LIFE IS 'PRIDDY'

FEMALE PLAYERS (CONT)

HIDDY-US.
IT'S 'PRIDDY'
HIDDY-US.

VOICES

Your Majesty! Wait! Stop!

Suddenly, STEPHEN bursts onstage with a frightened WILL in HIS arms. Without a word, HE scampers across the stage and exits. A second later, HENRY and the MALE PLAYERS enter. Protesting vociferously, THEY stop around center stage. Throughout, the FEMALE PLAYERS joyously watch. Then ALL turn and sing:

CHRONICLER

KING STEVIE COULDN'T HURT A FLY.

FEMALE PLAYERS

HE'S OH SO CUT AND DRY.

HENRY

I OFTEN ASK GOD WHY
ONE FLEA HE COULDN'T FRY.

FEMALE PLAYERS

HE COULDN'T HURT A-

MALE PLAYERS

COULDN'T HURT A-

CHRONICLER

COULDN'T HURT A-

HENRY

COULDN'T HURT A-

CHRONICLER, HENRY, PLAYERS

(Variously.)
FLY... FLY... FLY... FLY!

The FEMALE PLAYERS giggle and rush out. Annoyed, HENRY and the MALE PLAYERS follow THEM. As THEY do:

CHRONICLER

Now, from what's transpired, I think we can discern trouble for King Stephen. Similarly, from out of such, we can discern ecstasy for...

A LOUD and OBNOXIOUS CHEER comes from offstage.

CHRONICLER

Well... you know.

MATILDA charges in with the STUFFED ANIMAL. The MALE PLAYERS (GENERALS) follow HER in.

MATILDA

Oh, victory, thy name is me.

MALE PLAYER #1

Indeed, Your Majesty, the entire realm is rushing to join your flourishing cause.

MALE PLAYER #2

The only great noble who remains on the sidelines is Robert, Earl of Gloucester.

MALE PLAYER #1

To win this war, Your Majesty must first win him.

FEMALE PLAYER #1 rushes in.

FEMALE PLAYER #1

Your Majesty! Robert, Earl of Gloucester, waits outside.

MATILDA grins at the MALE PLAYERS.

MATILDA

Checkmate. Let him in.

FEMALE PLAYER #1 exits. ROBERT enters.

MATILDA

Ah, Bastard! I mean, eh... Bobby. Congrats. You've joined the right side.

ROBERT

Actually, Your Majesty, I am here to plead that you bring an end to this horrid war. There lies nothing but death to my right and death to my left. Before too long, we'll all have nowhere to look but to God.

MATILDA

Good speech. Wrong subject. I suggest you take it up with my criminal counter-king. Meantime, Bobby, the Victory Express is leaving the station.

ROBERT

Alas, Sire, God has not yet directed me to take this particular trip.

MATILDA

(Utterly peeved.)

Ah... I see... Well, in that case, don't take it. Go ahead and pass on through. When I reign, you'll pass on period.

(Shoving the STUFFED ANIMAL in ROBERT's face.)

Before too long, I'll be queen and he'll be king.

(Suddenly embarrassed - it looks ridiculous.)

Well, not him... but my son... who isn't here... yet.

Flustered, MATILDA glares at ROBERT. Abruptly, SHE turns to the MALE PLAYERS and points offstage.

MATILDA

To Lincoln!

Like an irate elephant, MATILDA stomps off with the MALE PLAYERS in tow. Forlornly, ROBERT is left to think in solitude. The CHRONICLER approaches HIM.

CHRONICLER

Oh, dear, my lord, I fear that the worries of indecision will be your undoing.

ROBERT

Sir, sir, these shameful times present a fighting man with little else. Since his earliest hour, a soldier is trained to serve one master alone - his king. To give that soldier a selection of kings is to tear him apart.

(MUSIC begins.)

I face one destination, but two doors - and both lead to damnation.

(Singing.)

7) When Christ And All His Angels Slept

PLUS I CONFESS
 IN THIS GRAND MESS
 EACH SIDE'S A NEST OF THIEVES.
 TO MY DESPAIR
 THEY PROUDLY WEAR
 THE ROTTING CREST OF THIEVES.
 MUST I CHOOSE THE BEST OF THIEVES?
 IF UP TO ME, SIR,
 I'D SAY DAMN HIM AND HER!

YES, I HATE THIS CRUEL AND GHASTLY WAR.
 I CONDEMN EACH FLAG AND EVERY CANNON ROAR.
 WHAT A MESS WE HAVE GOT, SIR.

ROBERT (CONT)

IN ITS QUICKSAND WE'RE CAUGHT, SIR.
ALL THIS VIOLENCE AND DEATH... AND FOR WHAT, SIR?
SAD TO SEE.

ROBERT storms out. A LIGHT rises
on the back of the stage to reveal
a solitary WILL.

WILL

I AGREE.

ON EV'RY PAGE
THIS WARRING AGE
HAS WRITTEN DEATH AND PAIN.
IN EV'RY CHAPT-
ER WE'RE ALL APT
TO FIND THERE DEATHS IN VAIN.
IN FUTURE TIMES
OUR HORRID CRIMES
GOOD PEOPLE WILL SURVEY.
THEY'LL SEE THE DEATH.
THEY'LL TAKE A BREATH.
THEN, WITH A SIGH, THEY'LL SAY

WHEN CHRIST AND ALL HIS ANGELS SLEPT
THE FLOWERS SUNK IN THE GROUND.
THE CLOUDS ABOVE JUST WEPT AND WEPT.
THE SUN TURNED BLACK.
THE WORLD GREW DARK.
THE DOGS WOULD QUACK.
THE DUCKS WOULD BARK.
THE FISHES, THEY ALL DROWNED.

WHEN CHRIST AND ALL HIS ANGELS SLEPT
THE MOON CAUGHT IN A TREE.
THE RATS FLEW WHILE THE SPARROWS CREPT.
THE STREAMS GUSHED MUD.
THE LAKES WENT DRY.
DARK BLUE WAS BLOOD.
DARK RED WAS SKY.
DARK PURPLE WAS THE SEA.

The LIGHTS faintly rise in the
back. The PLAYERS (WAR REFUGEES)
slowly enter. THEY are beaten and
oppressed and carry bundles of
clothes and food. One by one, THEY
look up and sing:

FEMALE PLAYER #1

AS TERROR REIGNS
DOWN ENDLESS DRAINS
GOOD, KINDLY SOULS ARE FLUSHED.

MALE PLAYER #1

THE DOWNSIDE TO
OUR WORM'S EYE VIEW
IS THAT WE'RE ALSO CRUSHED.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

TO GOD I PRAY
CONSIGN THIS MAY-
HEM TO A MOLDY TOMB.

MALE PLAYER #2

BUT SINCE THIS CURSE
GROWS GREATER WORSE

ALL PLAYERS

WE THEREFORE MUST ASSUME

WILL, ALL PLAYERS

THAT CHRIST AND ALL HIS ANGELS SLEEP.
NOW GARDENS BEG FOR GREEN.

MALE PLAYERS

THE LIMPING CREEKS NO LONGER LEAP.
THE WINDS WON'T BLOW.
THE LEAVES CAN'T FLY.

FEMALE PLAYERS

THE SKY HANGS LOW.
THE EARTH JUTS HIGH.

WILL, ALL PLAYERS

WE'RE ALL CRUSHED IN-BETWEEN.

POOR CHRIST AND ALL HIS ANGELS SLEEP.
NOW RAINBOWS SAG AND SIGH.
THE PASTURES CHURN OUT STONES TO REAP.
THE BRANCHES SNAP.
THE BIRDS CAN'T REST.
OUR NIGHTMARES TAP.
OUR DREAMS CAN'T NEST.
OUR PRAYERS CAN'T PIERCE THE SKY.

WILL

AND THUS CAN'T CLIMB SO HIGH
THAT THEY WARRANT A REPLY.

Then, from offstage:

STEPHEN'S VOICE

Oh, Henry. Not more warrants.

The PLAYERS exit, WILL sits by the
throne. The LIGHTS rise on the
Throne Room. STEPHEN and HENRY

(with papers) enter. STEPHEN sits on the throne and signs them.

HENRY

Here we are, Sire. One warrant for Randolph of Chester. The other for Roger of... something. I forget. Anyway, traitors and traitors-to-be must be snuffed out. On that subject, we come to Robert of Gloucester...

STEPHEN

Robert? But... you don't think... you can't think...

HENRY

No, no, Sire. Robert isn't a traitor... yet. Then again, he hasn't been your raging supporter either. I believe the proper expression is "on the fence." Trouble is, Sire, in this war, the fence is about to fall. And when it does, on which side will the good Earl land?

STEPHEN

All right, Henry. You've made your point. What exactly do you suggest?

ROBERT enters the Arena and paces pensively. STEPHEN and HENRY notice HIM.

HENRY

I recommend we preempt the Earl's treason with... an abduction.

The LIGHTS fall on the Throne Room. Concerned, the CHRONICLER turns to us.

CHRONICLER

Oh, dear.

ROBERT ruminates to himself.

ROBERT

From his first breath, a soldier is not trained to think, but to obey. What is he then to do when his decision becomes the tour guide of lives?

CHRONICLER

My friend, I hate to bother you, but you had better rush the sabbatical.

ROBERT

But, sir, I still know not where to turn.

CHRONICLER

(Looking offstage.)

Well, my lord, here comes someone now who might be able to provide you with some spiritual sustenance.

(To us, gesturing.)

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome William de Corbeil, Archbishop of Canterbury.

A FANFARE. MALE PLAYER #2 enters as the frail and wheezing WILLIAM DE CORBEIL. Upon entering, HE blesses us - barely.

ROBERT

(Kneeling.)

Comfort me, Your Grace.

CORBEIL wheezes something (yes?). HE then hobbles over to ROBERT, when... Cough. Wheeze. Clunk. HE drops down dead. MUSIC begins.

CHRONICLER

(Inspecting the body.)

Oh, no. That was hardly worth the trip.

ROBERT

God. The shame. He was a good man, a good man.

ROBERT kneels beside the body and sings to God. Meanwhile, MALE PLAYER #1 and the FEMALE PLAYERS (KIDNAPPERS), covered in black robes, enter the Arena and sneak up to ROBERT. Seeing THEM, the CHRONICLER attempts to warn ROBERT of THEIR approach, but the latter is too engrossed.

8) Eulogy

ROBERT

JEHOVE AND JESU
A NEW SOUL FOR YOU
STANDS IN HEAVEN'S QUEUE.
OH, DO LET HIM IN, SIR.
HE LIVED WITHOUT SIN, SIR.
JUST OPEN UP THAT PEARLY GATE.
COME LET HIM PASS THROUGH.
PLEASE, LET HIM PASS THROUGH.
I BEG YOU, LORD - DO.
I TELL YOU, HE'S EARNED IT.
THE BIBLE, HE LEARNED IT.
ABOVE ALL, HE LIKED CHAPTER EIGHT.

ROBERT (CONT)

NO, I'M THINKING OF
'THE GUIDE TO FREE LOVE.'
STILL, LET THIS MAN LIVE UP A-

With a great yell, the PLAYERS
jump ROBERT.

A sudden BLACKOUT. A long pause.
The LIGHTS rise slightly. The
CHRONICLER is still there. A
gleeful HENRY bursts in.

CHRONICLER

Your Grace! Have you heard the news?

HENRY

Yes! He's dead. The Archbishop of Canterbury.

CHRONICLER

You put up a brave front, Your Grace.

HENRY

I fear the King will have to find a replacement.

CHRONICLER

(Coyly.)

I wonder who that will be.

The LIGHTS rise on the Throne
Room. STEPHEN strolls in and sits.

STEPHEN

Alas, Henry, the Archbishop of Canterbury is dead.
Fortunately, I know exactly who should replace him. The
choice is obvious. Would you do the honors?

HENRY

With pleasure, Sire!

STEPHEN

Good. Telephone Theobald, Abbot of Bec. Tell him I've
appointed him to the See of Canterbury.

An eternal pause. HENRY is frozen.

STEPHEN

Henry? Did you hear me?

HENRY

(Suddenly exploding.)

Theobald of Bec?! But... but...

STEPHEN

(Understanding.)

Oh, Henry. My family and my kingdom must be ruled separately. You will be rewarded in Heaven.

HENRY

I'd prefer a down payment.

VOICES

Your Majesty, Your Majesty!

HENRY

(Looking offstage.)

It's your ambushers. They've come about the Earl's capture.

Looking ragged, bloodied, MALE
PLAYER #1 and the FEMALE PLAYERS
(KIDNAPPERS) limp in.

MALE PLAYER #1

Your Majesty...

HENRY

(Immediately nervous.)

What is it? What's wrong?

FEMALE PLAYER #1

We jumped him. We jumped the Earl... but he got away.

STEPHEN hides HIS head.

HENRY

You incompetents! You fools! Do you know what you've done? Do you know what your idiocy has caused us?

STEPHEN

(Fed up, with meek anger.)

Idiocy, Henry? Whose idiocy? This silly abduction thing was your idea. And what has it given me? A scorched palm and a crippled cause.

HENRY

Crippled cause? That's rich! By the time I was allowed at the grown-ups' table, that damn cause you cry about was already knee-deep in doctors' bills and calling for a confessor. Well, congratulations, Stephen, to you and your weak knees. You've crowned yourself King of a Cul-de-Sac. Damn you, you're a fool, Stephen. A goddamn fool. A farce. A flop. A...

STEPHEN

(Rising, exploding, with utter command.)

Enough!

Instant silence. ALL stand shocked and stunned. A pause while STEPHEN regains his composure.

MALE PLAYER #1

(Coming forward, producing a letter.)
Your Majesty? The Earl asked me to give this letter to you.

Slowly, STEPHEN turns, looks, and takes the letter. With great care, HE opens it and reads silently. After a long pause, HE painfully closes his eyes, folds up the letter, hands it to HENRY, then stands and announces:

STEPHEN

Gentleman, the greatest military man in England is now our enemy... and your king has made him so.

With a sigh, STEPHEN steps down from the Throne Room. The LIGHTS fall on the Throne Room and rise on each side of the Arena. There we find two beds opposite each other.

In one bed: MATTY, dressed in a nightgown, HER hair in curlers, reads a homemaker's magazine. WILL sleeps peacefully beside HER.

In the other bed: MATILDA, forlorn and pensive, clutching the STUFFED ANIMAL, reads a letter from Henry. A telephone lies near HER on the bed.

After the LIGHTS have risen and the MUSIC starts, STEPHEN approaches MATTY. SHE looks up and smiles at HIM.

STEPHEN

Where's Eustace?

MATTY

Oh, I put him to bed hours ago.

STEPHEN nods wearily and sits on the bed.

Reading her letter, MATILDA huffs and turns to the STUFFED ANIMAL:

MATILDA

Delayed. Again.

SHE continues reading.

Meanwhile, MATTY notices STEPHEN's somberness:

MATTY

What's wrong, Stevie?

STEPHEN

Oh... Everything.

MATILDA turns to speak with the STUFFED ANIMAL again:

MATILDA

Daddy took another castle.

Meantime, STEPHEN gives in to MATTY's stare:

STEPHEN

Robert. He's turned. I made him do it.

MATILDA tosses the letter aside.

MATILDA

A big castle.

MUSIC begins.

MATTY

Oh, Stevie.

STEPHEN

Oh, Matty.

MATILDA

(Forlornly and into the distance.)
Oh, Henry...

9) Hush (Go To Sleep, Dear)

MATTY

HUSH. GO TO SLEEP, DEAR.
NOT ONE PEEP, DEAR.
TRY TO REST.

MATTY (CONT)

HUSH. COUNT YOUR SHEEP, DEAR.
GO TO SLEEP, DEAR.
YOU'VE DONE YOUR BEST.

GOBLINS MAY BE AT THE DOOR
BUT HERE IN MY ARMS YOU WILL BE SAFE TILL MORNING.

DREAM AND DREAM DEEP, DEAR.
TRY TO SLEEP, DEAR.
YOU'LL BE BLESSED.

MATTY
HUSH. GO TO SLEEP, DEAR.
NOT ONE PEEP, DEAR.
TRY TO REST.

HUSH. COUNT YOUR SHEEP, DEAR.
GO TO SLEEP, DEAR.
YOU'VE DONE YOUR BEST.

STEPHEN
OH, MATTY, HOW WILL IT END?
HOW WILL IT END?
WITH THE LAND TORN AND
TOSSED?
WHAT A TERRIBLE COST.
ARE CROWNS WORTHY TO DEFEND
OR TOO WORTHY TO BE LOST?

STEPHEN
OH, MATTY, IS IT WORTH THE PRICE?

MATTY
YES, YES, DEAR - HAVE NO FEAR.

STEPHEN, MATTY
(MATTY) IS IT/IT IS ... WORTH THE SACRIFICE?

MUSIC continues. Then RING, RING!
It's the phone beside MATILDA's
bed. With noticeable eagerness,
SHE picks it up.

MATILDA
(Fragile as a glass heart.)
Hello?... Oh, Henry. Hello, my little one. Mommy misses you
so very much. It's so grand we've taken Bristol. Now you
and I can talk by phone all the time... Sorry? Daddy's done
what? Conquered a castle, has he? Oh, brave, brave Daddy.
Brave, brave Mommy, too. Remember, she's invading England.
Some bas...

(Quickly correcting.)
sket case stole her throne from her, so... No, no. England,
pet. That little walnut of land up north. You really must
come to see Mommy in England. Yes, I'll send a little man
over with a boat for you and... Oh, now, you really must
come, Henry. I have a lovely little present for your
birthday...

MATILDA (CONT)

(SHE is clutching the STUFFED ANIMAL.)

Yes, I know you had it already. It's just that Daddy took you away - again - so... Oh, now, Henry. Don't cry, my pet. Please, please, don't cry...

(Singing.)

HUSH. PLEASE DON'T WEEP, DEAR.

NOT ONE PEEP, DEAR.

COME, BE STRONG.

HUSH. TRY TO SLEEP, DEAR.

PLEASE DON'T WEEP, DEAR.

BEFORE TOO LONG

YOU'LL BE NESTLED IN MY SKIRT

SO COZY AND WARM THAT YOU WILL NOT DESERT ME.

(Spoken, as music continues.)

Yes, that's how it'll be, my pet. So now dry all your tears and head off to bed. I love you very much and I... Hello? Hello? Henry?

(A snort of displeasure.)

Oh, it's you.

Back to STEPHEN and MATTY:

STEPHEN

Oh, Matty, I feel so lost. I'm the sole author of this monumental mess we're in. I'm done with the beginning and I've just now started on the end.

MATILDA

(Into the phone.)

Damn you, Geoffrey! You're not going to tell me to abandon my war. If you want Normandy, go and conquer it with your own blasted army.

MATTY

Now, Stevie, you mustn't blame yourself.

MATILDA

(Into the phone.)

This is my throne and you've taken my son and I intend to get them both in the end.

MATTY

HUSH...

MATILDA

(Into the phone.)

YOU, YOU CAN JUMP IN A LAKE.

STEPHEN

I FEEL LIKE A FAKE.

MATTY
I HAVE FAITH IN YOU.

MATILDA
(Into the phone.)
YOU KNOW WHERE YOU CAN STEW!

MATTY
HUSH...

MATILDA
(Into the phone.)
MUSH.

MATTY
GO TO SLEEP, DEAR.

MATILDA
(Into the phone.)
YOU'RE A CREEP, DEAR.

MATILDA slams down the phone.

STEPHEN, MATTY
(I'LL) TRY TO REST.

MATILDA
I'M STAYING IN THIS FIGHT!

MATTY
GOD WILL GUIDE US THROUGH THIS PLIGHT.

MATTY
WE'LL GET
THROUGH
EVEN THE DARKEST
NIGHT.
WHEN YOU FEAR
THAT THE NIGHT
WON'T END

THERE'S THE SUN
JUST AROUND THE
BEND.

AHHHH...

HUSH

STEPHEN
WHAT WOULD I DO
WITHOUT YOU TO
HELP ME THROUGH
EVEN THE DARKEST
NIGHT?

WHEN WILL ALL THIS
END?

THE SUN

CAN'T TELL FOE
FROM FRIEND.

AHHHH...

THIS WAR

MATILDA
I'M IN THE RIGHT.
I'LL GET THROUGH
EVEN THE DARKEST
NIGHT.
I WILL FIGHT
TO THE BITTER
END

I'VE A RIGHT
THAT I WILL
DEFEND

TO THE BITTER END.
AHHHH...

THIS WAR

MATTY (CONT) STEPHEN (CONT) MATILDA (CONT)
 GO TO SLEEP, WHY DID SHE BEGIN WHY DID HE BEGIN
 DEAR. IT? IT?
 NOT ONE PEEP, DEAR. I'M GOING TO WIN IT

TRY TO REST.

THAT'S NO JEST.

MATTY

HUSH. GO TO SLEEP, DEAR.
 NOT ONE PEEP, DEAR.
 GO TO SLEEP.

The LIGHTS fall on MATILDA. The
 CHRONICLER rushes into the lit
 space around STEPHEN and MATTY.

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, there is an urgent message awaiting you in
 the throne room. It's from the city of Lincoln.

STEPHEN

(Jumping up.)
 Lincoln? Lead the way.

As the LIGHTS rise on the Throne
 Room, STEPHEN and the CHRONICLER
 burst in. The MALE PLAYERS
 (GENERALS) lie in wait along with
 a bloodied and wearied FEMALE
 PLAYER #1 (the MESSENGER FROM
 LINCOLN). During the following,
 MATTY and WILL eventually enter
 the Throne Room and listen.

STEPHEN

Gentlemen, I have heard there is some news for me from...

STEPHEN spots FEMALE PLAYER #1.
 SHE tries to bow, but struggles.
 Concerned, STEPHEN raises HER up.

FEMALE PLAYER #1

Your Highness, I have been sent to you by the people of
 Lincoln. Randolph, Earl of Chester, has besieged our city
 for the Empress's cause. Your Majesty, please, we beg you
 to save us from the death that awaits us.

STEPHEN pauses, touched.

CHRONICLER

Before making a decision, perhaps Your Majesty should
 consult with the Bishop of Winchester?

STEPHEN

Damn the Bishop of Winchester. I will personally lead an army to save the people of Lincoln.

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, that is very risky.

STEPHEN

Friends are rare and hard to come by these days, I fear. Those few we have left must be well-loved.

(To the MALE PLAYERS.)

Ready the army, gentlemen. We will leave immediately.

(To FEMALE PLAYER #1)

Rest yourself, my friend. Your city is not yet lost.

The MALE PLAYERS salute and exit.
FEMALE PLAYER #1 bows and exits.

CHRONICLER

(Extending HIS hand.)

I wish you luck, Your Majesty.

The CHRONICLER bows and exits.
STEPHEN and MATTY exchange an eternal glance. Then:

A MALE PLAYER'S VOICE

Your Majesty?

STEPHEN

Coming!

MATTY

(Hugging HIM, as MUSIC begins.)

Oh, Stevie, be careful.

WILL

Why must you go?

10) Transition

STEPHEN

(Singing.)

I MUST TAKE THE DOOR, WILL.
I MUST CHARGE THIS FATEFUL DOOR.
SOME FOOTSTEPS I'LL RE-TAKE...
SOME CHOICES I'LL RE-MAKE...
SOME DREAMS I'LL RESTORE.
WHILE THERE ARE SKIES TO FLY IN
AND YEARS STILL LEFT TO TRY IN...

WILL

Don't take the door.

STEPHEN

Oh, now. Don't worry. Everything will be fine. Chin up, little one.

STEPHEN smiles at THEM, then dashes off. Shaken, MATTY and WILL look after HIM. The LIGHTS fall on the Throne Room. A WAR DRUM sounds. The CHRONICLER enters the Arena.

CHRONICLER

Thus, King Stephen goes off to fight the Battle of Lincoln.

The PLAYERS have started to materialize out of the darkness.

PLAYERS

OH, WHATEVER WILL HAPPEN THEN?
WILL OR WON'T THE ENGLISH THRONE CHANGE HANDS AGAIN?

CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

WELL, HOLD ON TIGHT
FOR ON WE PLOW
TOWARDS THE BATTLE SITE
RIGHT NOW - NOW - NOW - NOW.

The LIGHTS dim to near darkness. WAR SOUNDS descend: BOMBS, ROCKETS, EXPLOSIONS, GUNFIRE. The PLAYERS drop to the ground - dead. In the din, we hear:

STEPHEN'S VOICE

Henry! Matty! Will! Christ Jesus, where is everyone?

STEPHEN, bloodied, bemused from a head wound, dressed in military gear, comes staggering onstage and navigates among the sprawled bodies of the PLAYERS.

CHRONICLER

(Shining a flashlight on HIM.)
Your Majesty? Is that you? You must flee the field!

STEPHEN

(Not hearing above the clamor.)
The Lord Marshal... The Earl of Gloucester... The King of Scotland... Is there not an honest man left?

CHRONICLER

You must flee, Your Highness! You must...

STEPHEN

(Grabbing HIM by HIS collar.)

Where are they? Where are they? My officers... my men...

CHRONICLER

They've abandoned you, Your Majesty. There's no one left fighting but you.

Horrorified, STEPHEN just stares.

ROBERT'S VOICE

There he is - the King!

A MASSIVE EXPLOSION. BLACKOUT.

A pause follows, during which ALL SAVE THE CHRONICLER exit.

A SCREAM. MATTY comes rushing in with a note in hand. The LIGHTS rise dimly on the Arena.

MATTY

(Rushing over to the CHRONICLER.)

Oh, sir, sir! Dear God, help us! Have you heard the news? It's about my poor Stevie. Our generals report that he has been taken prisoner by the Empress.

CHRONICLER

It's worse than that, Your Majesty.

MATTY freezes: What?

CHRONICLER

I'm sorry, ma'am. The Empress has occupied London. Her supporters have proclaimed her Queen of England.

A FANFARE sounds. HENRY, ROBERT, and the PLAYERS emerge.

11) Fanfare

PLAYERS

LONG LIVE MATILDA,
QUEEN OF THE ENGLISH.
LONG LIVE MATILDA,
QUEEN OF THE ENGLISH.

MALE PLAYERS

LONG MAY SHE RULE.

FEMALE PLAYERS

LONG MAY SHE RULE.

ALL PLAYERS

MAY THE QUEEN REIGN FOREVER.

MATILDA is about to speak when:

HENRY, ROBERT, ALL PLAYERS

GOD BLESS OUR QUEEN MATILDA!

HENRY, ROBERT, and the PLAYERS
prostrate themselves before
MATILDA. SHE waits for silence,
then speaks:

MATILDA

Thank you, my little, little, little people. I love you,
one and small. You can stop all the royalty shopping now.
Close the market and eliminate the surplus. You've nabbed a
first-class queen with a lifetime warranty. No returns
allowed on penalty of death. On that high note, I announce
the liberation of the people of England from the clutches
of Stephen of Blois. Long live... me!

BELLS. CHEERS. VICTORY MUSIC. The
LIGHTS dim on MATILDA, HENRY,
ROBERT, and the PLAYERS.

WILL'S VOICE

Ma'am, ma'am!

WILL comes running in towards
MATTY. SHE takes HIM in HER arms.

WILL

Did you see it? Did you see it?

MATTY

Yes, Will. I saw it.

WILL

What do we do now?

MATTY

Henry. That's it. We must get Henry. He'll know what to do.

WILL

We need you, Uncle Henry!

MATTY and WILL rush towards the
kneeling HENRY.

CHRONICLER

(Blocking the way.)
Your Majesty? It's no use.
(Indicating HENRY.)
Upon hearing of the King's capture, the Bishop of
Winchester deserted to the enemy.

MATTY

(Stricken.)
Oh, God. Oh, God. So the Empress is right. It's over.

WILL

No.

MATTY looks at HIM. MUSIC begins.

CHRONICLER

He's right, ma'am. It isn't over. Not if you say it isn't.

MATTY

But there's no one to lead us. No one.

CHRONICLER

Yes, there is, ma'am. There's you.
(Singing.)

12) Now It's In Your Hands

NOW IT'S IN YOUR HANDS, MA'AM.
COME, WHAT'S YOUR REPLY?
YOU'RE THE ONE GOD'S CHOSEN.
STICK YOUR TOES IN.
DON'T BE SHY.

YOU ARE IN GOD'S PLANS, MA'AM.
HOW CAN YOU REFUSE?
YOU CANNOT OUTWAIT GOD.
DON'T DEBATE GOD.
YOU WILL LOSE.

TRUE, YOU'LL BEAR A HEAVY BURDEN.
YOU WILL THINK YOU CAN'T GET THROUGH.
BUT KEEP CARRYING THAT BURDEN.
THAT'S WHAT HEARTS WERE BUILT TO DO.

EACH OF US IS MADE FOR
SOMETHING TO CRUSADE FOR.
THIS PATH GOD HAS LAID FOR YOU.
(Spoken.)

At least think on it, Your Majesty.

The CHRONICLER bows and departs.
The stage is silent. A long pause.

WILL

Ma'am? You aren't going to let them win... are you?

MATTY

Oh, Will. I can't do it. I'm not a king. I'm just me. Will, Will, I'm so frightened.

(Singing.)

LOOK UPON MY HANDS, WILL.
THEY'RE SO SOFT AND PALE.
THEY WERE MEANT TO KNEAD, WILL.
THEY CAN'T LEAD, WILL.
THEY'RE TOO FRAIL.

THESE AREN'T IN GOD'S PLANS, WILL.
KNITTING MAKES THEM ACHE.
WORLDS FROM THEM AREN'T MADE, WILL.
I'M AFRAID, WILL.
SEE THEM SHAKE.

WILL

(Taking HER hands in HIS.)

THERE'S NO NEED TO BE FRIGHTENED.
I'M NOT NEARLY SCARED AS YOU.

MATTY

BUT WHY SHOULDN'T I BE FRIGHTENED?

WILL

CAUSE I'LL BE BESIDE YOU, TOO.
LAND OR SKY OR SEA, MA'AM,
ANYWHERE YOU'LL BE, MA'AM,
LOOK AND YOU'LL FIND ME, MA'AM, TOO.

Touched, MATTY hugs WILL close.
The MUSIC rises. The LIGHTS fall
on the Throne Room (MATILDA,
HENRY, and ROBERT) as the PLAYERS
face out and sing:

FEMALE PLAYERS

NOW IT'S IN YOUR HANDS, MA'AM.
HEAR THE KINGDOM'S CRIES.

MALE PLAYERS

DON'T YOU LET THE LAND DOWN.
REACH YOUR HAND DOWN.

ALL PLAYERS

HELP HER RISE.

FEMALE PLAYERS

YOU ARE IN GOD'S PLANS, MA'AM.
COME, NOW, PLAY YOUR PART.

MALE PLAYERS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO READ LINES.
YOU DON'T NEED LINES.
USE YOUR HEART.

ALL PLAYERS

YOU'LL FACE A WORLD OF THUNDER.
ALL THE STARS WILL FADE AND DIE.
BUT KEEP STRONG THROUGHOUT THAT THUNDER.
EVEN STORM CLOUDS MUST RUN DRY.

DARE THEM ALL TO DRAIN ON—
SHOUT OUT "POUR IN VAIN ON"—
FOR YOUR SUN SHALL REIGN ON HIGH.

The MUSIC quiets. The LIGHTS fall
on the PLAYERS. Only a small spot
now shines on MATTY and WILL.

MATTY

THIS IS HOW IT STANDS, WILL.
NOW THE FIGHT IS OURS.
DON'T BE OVERAWED, WILL.
JUST PRAY THAT GOD WILL
GUIDE US WITH HIS STARS.

As the LIGHTS fall, MATTY and WILL
look into the distance.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

MUSIC plays. The CURTAIN swiftly rises. The LIGHTS shine on the Arena. The CHRONICLER enters.

CHRONICLER

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back. I do hope you had a pleasant intermission. During your sojourn, time has conveniently frozen. Now, we shall return to England, 1141, and thaw it out.

The FEMALE PLAYERS jump out from behind the throne.

13) Act Two Introduction

FEMALE PLAYERS

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.

CHRONICLER

IT'S TIME NOW TO REVISIT

CHRONICLER, FEMALE PLAYERS

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.

CHRONICLER

(To the FEMALE PLAYERS.)

THE BIGGEST CHANGE - WHAT IS IT?

FEMALE PLAYERS

MATILDA IS THE QUEEN NOW.

CHRONICLER

RIGHT! SHE'S THE QUEEN AND GLAD, TOO.
KING STEPHEN IS OUT CLEAN NOW.

FEMALE PLAYERS

UP AND LEFT BECAUSE HE HAD TO.

CHRONICLER, FEMALE PLAYERS

SO LET'S RETURN TO HISTORY.
SUCH WONDROUS THINGS WILL HAPPEN.
YES, LET'S RETURN TO HISTORY.
THIS TIME YOU WILL NOT NAP IN.

CHRONICLER

COME, LET'S GO BACK AND CHECK UP ON ENGLAND.

FEMALE PLAYERS

ALTHOUGH TIS FIT
TO BAPTIZE IT
NO-LONGER-WITH-A-KING-LAND... HO, HO!

The LIGHTS rise generally. The
MALE PLAYERS emerge from the dark.
The FEMALE PLAYERS join THEM.
MATILDA sits on the throne with
the STUFFED ANIMAL in HER lap.

PLAYERS

LONG LIVE MATILDA,
QUEEN OF THE ENGLISH.
LONG LIVE MATILDA,
QUEEN OF THE ENGLISH.
LONG MAY SHE RULE.
LONG MAY SHE RULE.
MAY THE QUEEN REIGN FOREVER.

MATILDA rises and moves to speak.

PLAYERS

GOD BLESS OUR QUEEN, MATILDA!

The PLAYERS bow. MATILDA glares.

MATILDA

He shall and He better.

MATILDA notices the CHRONICLER.

MATILDA

(Pointing aggressively towards HIM.)
You? Again? What are you doing here? King Stephen is kaput.
The story is over and your job is over with it. I suggest
you find another tale to tell.

CHRONICLER

But, Sire, I have bills to pay and a family to feed.

MATILDA

Fine. Then you can be my dogsbody. In good time, there'll
be plenty of traitor bones for you to bury. Until then,
schnell the hell out of here.

Silenced, the CHRONICLER bows and
exits. MATILDA turns on the shell-
shocked PLAYERS.

MATILDA

Well? What do you want? Follow Fido!

The PLAYERS exit. MATILDA goes to the throne and sits. As SHE prepares to rest, HENRY enters.

HENRY

(Bowing deeply.)
May God bless Your Majesty! May God...

MATILDA

Teach you manners, you cheeky churchman! Does anyone ever knock in Winchester?

HENRY

Your Majesty, I simply came to offer you my services.

MATILDA

Well, Bishy, dear, you can save your services for Sunday.

HENRY

Now, Sire, in these troubled times, I believe you could prosper from my personal counsel.

MATILDA

You mean like the kind you gave my predecessor before your most convenient betrayal?

HENRY

(Prickling up.)
"Betrayal," Your Majesty? Betrayal is when...

MATILDA

Oh, don't talk to me about betrayal, Bishy. I wrote a goddamn bestseller on betrayal. In fact, I've got a whole chapter in it on you.

(Looking offstage.)
Ah, the next chapter approacheth.

ROBERT enters and salutes.

MATILDA

Well, look who's here. The Eel of Gloucester. Tell me, Eely: how are my lovely armies doing?

ROBERT

Splendidly, Sire, but I fear the death toll rises and misery reigns throughout the land.

MATILDA

Well, what do you expect me to do about it? You helped start this blasted war. You can damn well finish it.

HENRY

Really, Your Majesty, I refuse to accept...

MATILDA

And I refuse to listen! My ears go on strike when your mouth goes on holiday. Just be glad that this race track accepts late entries.

MATILDA notices HENRY and ROBERT looking nervous.

MATILDA

Oh, now, there's no reason to sweat. Save the water for your tears - of joy. I don't hold a grudge, just a butcher's knife.

HENRY

(Outraged.)
Your Majesty!

MATILDA

Tut, tut, Bishy. Don't quake in your collar. My knife isn't meant for chopping traitors into tidbits. It's simply there for carving smiles into the faces of frowners. That's all I want - smiles.

MUSIC begins. MATILDA looks to ROBERT: "smile." ROBERT smiles. Then SHE turns to HENRY: "smile." HE smiles. MATILDA pats HIS cheek.

MATILDA

Good boy.
(Singing.)

14) Smile, Make Nice

SMILE, MAKE NICE.
GOODWILL HAS DAWNED.
COME, COME, LET'S BOND
LIKE CRUMPETS AND TEA DO.
SMILE, MAKE NICE.
UNCORK THE GLEE.
BETWEEN WE THREE
NO MORE "BRUTE, ET TU?"

MY REVENGE
HAS JOINED STONEHENGE
IN THOSE ANNALS IT'S EASY TO BORE WITH.
NO MORE DO I
CRAVE AND CRY
TO BE WIPING THE FLOOR WITH
YOU SLIMY TRAITORS.

SMILE, MAKE NICE.
LET'S MAKE AMENDS.
FROM FRIEND TO FRIENDS

MATILDA (CONT)

ALL GIRLS LOVE A TRAITOR.
 PAY THE PRICE.
 NEXT UP IS HELL.
 OUR CHUM B. L.
 WILL CATCH YOU BOTH LATER.

BUT PRE-DEATH
 DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH
 FOR I ONLY DESIRE DÉTENTE NOW.
 CIAO, SUN TZU.
 I FLIP THROUGH
 MISTER KANT NOW.
 CHEER UP, YOU LICE.
 LET'S SMILE AND MAKE NICE.
 (Spoken.)
 Come on, Bishy, let's take a twirl.

MATILDA starts dancing with the
 desperately unpleased HENRY.
 Meanwhile, ROBERT waits on the
 sidelines in hope that HE won't be
 next - but no luck. MATILDA soon
 grabs HIM, too, and THEY ALL dance
 together. Then, a big finale that
 leaves HENRY and ROBERT damaged
 for life. With that, MATILDA
 freezes, the LIGHTS dim, and HENRY
 and ROBERT look to God and sing:

HENRY, ROBERT

SAVE US.
 WE'RE ON OUR KNEES.
 PLEASE...
 PLEASE...
PLEASE.
 BE A SPORT.

COME SAVE US.
 HEAR AS WE PRAY.
 SAY
 'NAY'
 AS A
 LAST RESORT.

COME SAVE US FROM THIS CRUEL HADES.
 PLEASE PUT A GAG IN-
 SIDE THIS DRAGON
 LADY'S JAWS.
 DON'T SWAY OR PAUSE.
 SET US FREE OR IT'S ISLAM FOR ME.

The LIGHTS brighten. MATILDA comes
 alive again.

MATILDA

Not a chance! Friends stick by each other - always. That's how you can get close enough to stab them in the back.

MATILDA

SMILE, MAKE NICE.
REHEARSE THAT GRIN.
NO WRESTLING IN
THE MUCK AND
THE MUD HERE.

HERE'S ADVICE.
DON'T PLAY THE FOE.
WATCH, WORLD, AS RO-
MANCE DOTH BLOOM AND BUD HERE.

'ME' IS DONE.
NOW ALL FOR ONE.
YES, SIR, THAT IS OUR
NEW JOLLY MAXIM.

HENRY, ROBERT

SMILE, MAKE NICE.
REHEARSE THAT LOVELY GRIN.
FROWNS ARE A SIN.

THE MUD HERE.

HERE'S ADVICE.
WON'T PLAY THE FOE.
HEY, WORLD, STOP AND WATCH
FOR ROMANCE WILL BUD HERE.

'ME' IS DONE
AND 'WE' HAS WON.
NOW 'ALL FOR ONE'
IS OUR NEW MAXIM.

MATILDA

THOUGH IN MY DREAMS
SOME VOICE SCREAMS
TO ME 'AXE 'EM!
THEY'RE TRAITORS!

MATILDA, HENRY, ROBERT

LET'S MELT THE ICE.
LET'S SMILE AND MAKE NICE.
MAKE NICE.
MAKE NICE.

MATILDA

WHY DON'T WE SMILE AND MAKE NICE?

MATILDA, HENRY, ROBERT

NICE.

The CHRONICLER enters with a
telephone.

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, a call has come for you from France. It's...

MATILDA

Henry? Bring it here, Dogsboddy.

The CHRONICLER gives MATILDA the
phone and exits.

MATILDA

(Pointing to the exit.)
Mush!

HENRY and ROBERT scurry out.

MATILDA

(Into the phone, lovingly.)
Hello, Henry! How are you and Daddy? Still alive, is he?...
Oh, did he now? Another castle? How lovely. Remember, Mommy
has conquered England... England, pet. Eng-gul-land.
Remember, it's that... No, England. E-N-G-L... Never mind.
It's big and it's wet and it's mine.

The FEMALE PLAYERS (the DELEGATES)
enter. MATILDA eyes THEM.

MATILDA

(Into the phone.)
Hold on. Visitors.
(Clasping HER hand over the receiver.)
Yes? May I help you?

FEMALE PLAYER #1

Your Majesty, my colleague and I here represent the fair
city of London. We have come to express concern about the
rumors that you plan to raise our city's taxes. The war
against the Usurper has wrought devastation across the
entire kingdom. We merely ask that...

MATILDA

Yes, I know, and yes, I shall raise your taxes - lots. You
supported the Usurper. You helped start the war. You can
pay for it. Now goodbye.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

Your Majesty, please, our people are starving as it is...

MATILDA

I said goodbye - and here's to his cousin, good riddance!

FEMALE PLAYER #2

But... Sire!

MATILDA

Now get out!

The FEMALE PLAYERS scamper out.
MATILDA grunts and picks up the
phone anew.

MATILDA

(Loving again, into the phone.)
Hello?

A loud DIAL TONE sounds: 'Henry'
hung up. Hurt, MATILDA remains

frozen for a moment, then slowly hangs up the phone. Suddenly, the CHRONICLER runs in with a poster showcasing a picture of Matilda with an unflattering mustache drawn on her face.

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, Your Majesty! Your soldiers have found these posters plastered all over the city.

MATILDA

(Grabbing the poster.)

Damn cheek! It's those loyal-less Londoners. Tell the Earl of Gloucester to round up people for questioning. I'll hang every one of those treasonous townsmen.

MATILDA rushes out in a rage.

CHRONICLER

(To us.)

So Matilda is Queen of England. Sympathy cards are flooding in from all over Europe. Already the common people are pining for the rule of King Stephen. On that note, we go now to the city of Bristol, where...

MATILDA'S VOICE

Dogsbody!

The CHRONICLER shrugs at us apologetically and scampers out.

The LIGHTS dim with melancholy. The RATTLE of an iron door sounds. ROBERT glumly enters the Arena. Behind him, in chains, comes STEPHEN.

ROBERT

Your Majesty, this is your new home. The Empress feels it will keep you far and away from trouble. You are to be held here in her custody until further notice.

STEPHEN examines the surroundings.

ROBERT

Perhaps if Your Majesty wrote the Empress a letter to remind her of the initial comfort she promised you...

STEPHEN

I don't think it fair to hold the Empress to her promises when I've ridden high on transgressing my own.

ROBERT nods in understanding.

ROBERT

In that case, I'm sorry, Sire, that I'm here and you're there.

STEPHEN shrugs. MUSIC begins.

STEPHEN

(Singing.)

EACH MUST TAKE HIS DOOR, SIR.
EVERY MAN MUST TAKE HIS DOOR.
I TOOK ONE OF MY OWN
AND HERE I END ALONE
FOR TIME EVERMORE...

The MUSIC stops. ROBERT considers STEPHEN sympathetically. Then:

ROBERT

This way, Your Majesty.

ROBERT walks off into the darkness towards the back of the stage. An EERIE LIGHT glows there as if given off by a moon through a cell window. STEPHEN enters this spot and sits on a wooden stool. ROBERT bows and starts to walk out. Then, with sudden desperation:

STEPHEN

Robert? What about Matty? What has become of the Queen?

But ROBERT is gone. Despondent, STEPHEN sits and buries HIS head in HIS hands. Throughout the following, HE will remain visible:

A FANFARE. The LIGHTS rise on the Arena. The MALE PLAYERS (GENERALS) enter. They wheel in a large map of England. On this hangs little tags marked 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E', 'F', and 'G' and little tacks indicating the positions of army units.

Accompanied by WILL, MATTY enters. Dressed royally, SHE looks awkward but not foolish. The MALE PLAYERS salute.

MATTY

Gentlemen, I am ready for your report.

MALE PLAYER #2 has brought in a chair for MATTY. HE is about to speak when:

MALE PLAYER #1

Your Highness, as you know, our armies are exhausted and depleted. To survive, we must fight sparingly and with guerrilla cunning. I suggest...

MALE PLAYER #2

(Interrupting.)

Currently, ma'am, the Usurper Matilda has nestled her army snugly around London. To win this war, we must break through her mighty ranks.

MUSIC begins.

MALE PLAYER #1

(Bursting in.)

Sadly, we only have the following forces by which to do so.

MATTY

Then what do you suggest we do?

MALE PLAYER #2 moves to speak...

15) Military Indecisions

MALE PLAYER #1

WELL, TO SLAY THE HORRID BEAST...

MALE PLAYER #2

MARCH TO THE EAST.

MALE PLAYER #1

NO, TO THE WEST.

MALE PLAYER #2

YOUR LOGIC LACKS A COURSE TO CHART.

MALE PLAYER #1

AND YOURS A START.

MALE PLAYER #2

OH, WHAT A JEST!
FIT FOR RE-MAKING
IN THE EAST.

MALE PLAYER #1

WHEN YOU'RE RE-TAKING
PRE-PRE-SCHOOL.

MALE PLAYER #2

(To MATTY.)
OH, HE-HE-HE, MA'AM!

MALE PLAYER #1

COULD IT BE, MA'AM?
SOME POOR KING HAS LOST A FOOL.

MATTY

WILL YOU PLEASE
STOP IT, STOP IT, STOP IT?
NOW, GENTLEMEN, DEAR GENTLEMEN,
I BEG YOU, DON'T SHOUT.
NOW, GENTLEMEN, DEAR GENTLEMEN,
LET'S WORK ALL THIS OUT.
I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE TRIED YOUR VERY BEST.
STILL, IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME, I SUGGEST...

(Rising, approaching the map.)

WE SEND OUR FORCES HERE AT 'B'
TO MEET OUR TWO BRIGADES NEAR KENT
WHILE THESE MILITIAS MOVE TO 'C'
TO JOIN THE TROOPS THERE TO PREVENT
A REAR ATTACK ON THOSE NEAR 'E'
WHO VIA 'F' WILL MARCH TO 'G'
FROM WHICH BEFORE THE MONTH IS SPENT
WE'LL CIRCLE FAST THE ENEMY.

(Spoken, MUSIC resumes after a beat.)

That would eliminate some of the Empress's forces, yes?

MALE PLAYERS

Eh... Yes. Very good. I suppose it would, Your Majesty.

MATTY

(Sitting again.)
Good. What do we do from there?

MALE PLAYER #1

I SUGGEST THAT WE CHARGE FORTH...

MALE PLAYER #2

STRAIGHT TO THE NORTH.

MALE PLAYER #1

OH, WHAT A CON.

MALE PLAYER #2

I PRAY YOUR BRAIN IS WELL-INSURED.

MALE PLAYER #1

AT LEAST MINE'S CURED.
CAN WE GET ON?

MALE PLAYER #2

NO! LET'S RESOLVE FIRST
WHY YOU'RE HERE.

MALE PLAYER #1

IF YOU'LL EVOLVE FIRST
UP TO APE.

MALE PLAYER #2

YOU ARE A BRUTE, SIR!

MALE PLAYER #1

KISS MY BOOTS, SIR!

MALE PLAYER #2

HAH! GEN'RAL FULLAY DE CREPE.

MATTY

WILL YOU PLEASE
STOP IT, STOP IT, STOP IT?
NOW, GENTLEMEN, DEAR GENTLEMEN,
I BEG YOU, DON'T FIGHT.
NOW, GENTLEMEN, DEAR GENTLEMEN,
COME, LET'S GET IT RIGHT.
I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE WORKED HARD ON THIS TASK.
STILL, IF YOU'LL FORGIVE ME, I MUST ASK...

(Rising, approaching the map.)

WE SEND OUR THREE BRIGADES AT 'G'
TO JOIN THOSE MUSTERED HERE AT 'A'
WHILE OUR BATTALIONS DOWN AT 'E'
WILL FOLLOW THUS ON THIS FORAY
TO BUTTRESS LEEDS AND COVENTRY
HENCE FREEING UP OUR TROOPS AT 'D'
FROM WHICH WE SOON WILL GREET THE DAY
WHEN STEVIE WILL BE BACK WITH ME.

(Spoken; MUSIC resumes after a beat.)

Well, gentlemen? What do you think?

A pause.

MALE PLAYERS

Oh, yes. Excellent, ma'am. Bravo. Good thinking.

MATTY

(Sitting.)

Good. Now where from there?

The MALE PLAYERS warily look at
each other. The MUSIC starts anew.

MATTY

I know where, gentlemen... Here.

SHE points to 'London' on the map.

MALE PLAYER #2

London, ma'am? It's mighty, but risky. Our forces would crumble before the Empress's army.

MATTY

The Israelites did not merely crumble before the Philistines at Bethlehem.

MALE PLAYER #1

Aye, ma'am, but they were led by a king.

An uncomfortable pause.

MATTY

Gentlemen, twenty-three years ago, my uncle Baldwin, King of Jerusalem, died. My father, Eustace, Count of Boulogne, was then offered his throne. Feeling God watching over his shoulder, he thoughtfully dallied. In time, though, he said 'yes' and he made for Jerusalem. However, by the time he arrived, the crown had already been taken by another.

(Singing.)

THE PATHS WE NEVER CHOOSE
ARE FUTURES THAT WE LOSE
AND CANNOT RESTORE.

(Spoken, as MUSIC continues.)

You see, gentlemen, my family has already lost one kingdom. I have no intention of letting us lose another.

(Pointing to the map.)

To London.

FEMALE PLAYER #1 (SERVANT) enters and salutes. MUSIC ends.

FEMALE PLAYER #1

Sire, a messenger is here from the King of Scotland.

MATTY

(Looking uncertainly at the MALE PLAYERS.)

The King of Scotland? Please... send him in.

FEMALE PLAYER #1 bows and exits.

MALE PLAYER #2

The King of Scotland has been a great help to the Empress's cause. You must wean him away from her with pleasing words.

MATTY

But how? What should I say? What...?

FEMALE PLAYER #2 (the SCOTTISH AMBASSADOR) enters.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

Good evening, Countess of Boulogne.

A long pause. MATTY says nothing.
The MALE PLAYERS look anxiously at
each other - is she stumped?

FEMALE PLAYER #2

Your Majesty?

MATTY

I'm sorry. I was waiting for the second part of your
greeting. Countess of Boulogne, yes. Queen of England, as
well.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

His royal highness, David, King of Scotland, does not
recognize that title. The Empress Matilda is the true Queen
of England. Recall the signed document guaranteeing her
succession. Is it right to flaunt an oath pledged under the
Lord's gaze?

MATTY

Oaths coaxed from power and intimidation are simply the
subtlest of nays. Your Empress was forced upon this land
and its people by a conjurer's trick. My Stevie was instead
welcomed to the throne with open arms. Is not the fact that
God instilled love for my Stevie in His creations proof
enough of His support for our cause and His rebellion
against sovereigns who forge His signature to justify their
statecraft?

A beat - game, set, match.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

Nevertheless, ma'am, the fact remains that your husband is
a usurper and a plunderer. On King David's behalf, I urge
you to resign the throne to its rightful occupant.

MATTY

I am the one and only Queen of England. King David can take
that up with my army if he thinks otherwise. Furthermore,
you may tell your master that, when I win this war, my
troops will be restless and looking for someone else to
fight. Let your king know I am currently contemplating
whether I should allow them to release their energies to
the south... or the north.

FEMALE PLAYER #2

My lady!

MATTY

Go now. When next you greet me, it will be as Queen of England. If you see me before that, it will be with my armies in Edinburgh.

A little shocked, FEMALE PLAYER #2 bows and exits. WILL and the MALE PLAYERS regard MATTY with astonishment. However, SHE is embarrassed. A pause, then:

MATTY

Please leave me, gentlemen. I am weary.

With newfound respect, the MALE PLAYERS salute and exit with the map and the chair. MATTY breathes a deep sigh of relief. Concerned, WILL goes to HER.

MATTY

Will, Will, I feel like such a fraud.

WILL

I think you're doing splendidly, ma'am.

MATTY

Oh, dear Will, I hope so.

MUSIC begins. MATTY and WILL embrace for a moment.

MATTY

Go check on Eustace for me, would you?

WILL nods, smiles, kisses MATTY, and exits. MUSIC rises.

MATTY

Oh, Stevie, I do miss you so.
(Singing.)

16) A Kiss Is All I've Left To Give

I BLOW A KISS
UPON THE BREEZE
NOT KNOWING WHERE IT FLIES.
WITH GOD'S ASSIS-
TANCE IT WILL SEIZE
A CLOUD BOUND FOR YOUR SKIES.
THERE LIKE A STAR
MY KISS WILL SPAR-
KLE KNOWLEDGE THAT I'M NEAR.
BUT AM I SO?

MATTY (CONT)

WELL, SEMI-SO.
NO, NO, I AM HERE.

By now, from his "cell," STEPHEN slowly looks up. HE sees A SMALL SPECKLE of LIGHT above HIM in the dark.

MATTY

A KISS IS ALL I'VE LEFT TO GIVE.
THAT'S ALL I'VE LEFT TO SHARE.
I'D SELL MY SOUL TO TOUCH YOUR FACE
OR SHARE WITH YOU A SMALL EMBRACE
OR SIMPLY SEE YOU FILL THE SPACE
WHERE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE.

A KISS IS ALL I'VE LEFT TO GIVE.
THAT'S ALL I'VE LEFT TO SPARE.
EACH TIME I GIVE THE WORLD A GLANCE
I CLOSELY SCOW'R ITS GRIM EXPANSE
TO FIND YOU EVERYWHERE PERCHANCE
IN EACH TOMBSTONE OR TREE.

STEPHEN rises to reach for the star as MATTY sings with greater passion:

MATTY

UNTIL THEY'RE YOU
I'LL SEND A KISS
EACH NIGHT TO GRACE YOUR SKY.
FAITH WILL RENEW
AS THERE IT GLIS-
TENS LOVE AND HOPE ON HIGH.

STEPHEN seems to hear MATTY singing and looks towards HER.

MATTY

FORGET THE WORLD
THAT LIES UNFURLED
BETWEEN WE SOLEMN TWO.
NO LAND BETWEEN
CAN STAND BETWEEN
THIS QUEEN AND YOU.

MUSIC continues. But MATTY is too exhausted to go on. Seeing HER from the darkness, STEPHEN speaks:

STEPHEN

No, Matty. It won't and it never will.

MATTY looks up and out - but not at STEPHEN.

MATTY

Stevie?... Stevie?... Is that you?

STEPHEN reaches out HIS arms for HER.

STEPHEN

GOBLINS MAY BE AT THE DOOR
BUT KEEP UP YOUR HEART
AND THEY'LL BE GONE BY MORNING.

Knowing STEPHEN is there, MATTY swiftly turns towards HIM. But, by then, the LIGHT in the back has faded. Only darkness there remains. But MATTY is inspired. SHE turns back towards us. The MUSIC swells.

MATTY

Oh, Stevie, Stevie... I won't let them do this to us. I won't. I won't.

(Singing.)

I'LL FIGHT AS LONG
AS I SHALL LIVE
WITH SWORD AND SHIELD IN HAND.
THOUGH FAR FROM STRONG
I SHALL NOT GIVE
UP ONE SMALL INCH OF LAND.
I'LL RESCUE YOU, I SWEAR, I VOW.
BEFORE YOU ALL YOUR FOES WILL BOW.
EACH INCH BELOW THE EARTH I'LL PLOW,
EACH WAVE UPON THE SEA
TILL YOU'RE FREE
AND BACK WITH ME.

The LIGHTS fall on MATTY and rise on the Throne Room. The phone is still on the throne.

Then - RING, RING! Like an eagle swooping in, MATILDA charges onstage from the wings. Dressed in a nightie and carrying the STUFFED ANIMAL, SHE dives for the phone and picks it up.

MATILDA

Hello? Henry?... Oh, it's you, general... What? What do you mean you're calling from Bristol? Your army should be in... What? That munchkin and her mimsy army? You medal-mottled

MATILDA (CONT)

moron! Where did we get you from anyway? A raffle? If so, we lost... Hello? Hello?

MATILDA slams down the phone and snorts. Then:

MATILDA

Dogsbody! Cable!

Wearing a nightcap and a nightshirt, the CHRONICLER peeps up from behind the throne. His rest interrupted, HE yawns broadly, rises, produces a pad and pencil in hand, and stands at attention, as:

MATILDA

Take a note to General Redvers. Tell him to march south against the Usurper's army. Tell him to...

The CHRONICLER isn't writing.

MATILDA

Didn't they teach you how to write at Dogsbody School?

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty, I'm afraid that General Redvers has turned.

MATILDA

Turned? Turned? That sneak! The next time he turns will be in his grave.

CHRONICLER

Not likely, Your Majesty: he took the whole of his army along with him.

MATILDA

Fine. Never mind. Don't need him. Cable the Earl of Chester instead. Tell him to march west against...

(No writing.)

What? Has he turned too?

CHRONICLER

No, but he won't accept our calls.

MATILDA

Hah. Like Windchester and the Eel.

CHRONICLER

Alas, Your Majesty, I believe neither they nor your generals respect your refreshing brand of honesty.

The CHRONICLER bows and exits. A long pause. MATILDA waits and smolders alone on a dim stage. SHE then pivots and glares at the phone - no ring. After a pause, SHE grabs it and puts it up to HER ear - still no ring. Lonely, SHE catches sight of the STUFFED ANIMAL and cuddles it. MUSIC rises.

17) A Kiss Is All I've Left To Give (Reprise - Matilda)

MATILDA

(Singing, to the STUFFED ANIMAL.)

ALL BY MYSELF
I OWN THIS SHELF
IN LIFE'S SMALL CORNER STORE.
TO BE ALONE
WITH ME ALONE
IS ONLY FOR
THOSE WITH HEARTS OF RIGAMOR.

MATILDA laughs with bitter mockery, then grows somber.

MATILDA

A KISS IS ALL I'VE LEFT TO GIVE.
I'LL WRAP IT IN A PRAYER.
I'VE FIN'LLY GOT THE ENGLISH THRONE.
WITH THAT, HOW COULD I BE ALONE?
WHAT'S WRONG IF YOU ARE JUST A PHONE?
CAN'T BOUNCE THAT ON YOUR KNEE...

All at once, MATILDA explodes.

MATILDA

Goddammit! How dare those fickle fiends treat me like this. I'm the Queen of England. I rule here and they rule nothing. They don't even rule themselves. I rule that, too. They've just forgotten it. Well, I'll remind them. I'll remind them.

MATILDA stomps out, leaving the STUFFED ANIMAL on the throne.

HENRY'S VOICE

That damned viper!

The LIGHTS fall on the Throne Room and rise on the Arena. HENRY and ROBERT enter.

HENRY

It's that damned woman again. Imagine summoning us to court for a party in her honor. Now we can spend another hour of life bowing and scraping before her. We're all of us fish on a hook, my lord. Why, oh why, did we ever take the bait?

ROBERT

Because we pledged to, Your Grace. We might as well accept our capture and pray. Pray that the fisherman will graciously throw us back.

HENRY

Not damn likely. It's Friday.

The PLAYERS (NOBLES) glumly enter.

HENRY

Ah, we have company on the gallows.

PARTY MUSIC. The LIGHTS rise generally. HENRY, ROBERT, and the PLAYERS exchange nervous glances. MATILDA, slightly soused, a drink in HER hand, stumbles in.

MATILDA

(Singing.)

SMILE, MAKE NICE.

LA-DA-DE-DA-

LA-DA-DE-DA-

DE-DA-DE-DA-DA-DA-DA-DA.

(Jingling her glass.)

NEED MORE ICE!

LA-DE-DE-DA-

LA-DE-DA-DA-DE-DA... DA... DA...

(In HENRY's face.)

...DUH.

Laughing, MATILDA turns to address all - slurringly.

MATILDA

Greetings, greetings, lords and ladies of Angle-land. Thank you for coming to my party. The drinks are on and in me.

SHE laughs. The OTHERS just stare.

MATILDA

(Checking her drink.)

Dogsbody! Drinks!

The CHRONICLER exits.

MATILDA

I trust you all heard about our little losses on the field of battle today. But don't you worry your itty bitty little noggins off. I beat down the Usurper and I'll beat down his Usurpress just as easily.

The CHRONICLER enters wheeling in a small portable bar. No one moves.

MATILDA

What? You think I spiked the whiskey with arsenic? Well, now, don't you fret or frown. I tested every drink out personally. Unlike English nobility, they all live up to their promises.

SHE approaches HENRY and blares in HIS face:

MATILDA

Right, Bishy?

HENRY smiles stiffly. MATILDA slaps HIM on HIS back.

MATILDA

You know, Bishy, there are only two things I don't like about you - your face. Quite a ghastly pair you scraped together, too.

(Holding up her drink.)

Long live a third option!

Grabbing ROBERT, MATILDA starts to stumble off, as:

MATILDA

Hey, Bobby, here's an idea... Let's you and me play a round of "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." We've got the jackasses here already.

MATILDA howls with laughter. SHE then turns on the CROWD. MUSIC begins.

MATILDA

I'll be right back, but don't you falter. We have a whole evening here together. The night is so young it's an embryo.

MATILDA drags poor ROBERT off.

HENRY

(To us.)

I change my views on abortion.

18) I Hate Her

HENRY

I'D JUMP FOR JOY TO BOIL
 THAT MEG'LOMANIC WITCH IN OIL
 TO TERMINATE HER SMIRK SO SMUG AND VILE.
 MY JOY WOULD KNOW NO BOUNDS
 TO FEED HER TO SOME HOUNDS
 OR BETTER YET A FAMISHED CROCODILE.
 SHE'S SUCH A GHASTLY SNOB.
 TO MAKE FROM HER A SHISH KABOB
 WOULD TURN MY HEAVY FROWN INTO A SMILE.
 PLEASE, GOD, EXTERMINATE HER.
 MAY MADMEN MUTILATE HER.
 FOR I HATE HER.
 YES, I HATE HER.

CHRONICLER

Now, Your Grace, that really is a bit harsh.

HENRY

What? Are you saying that you have never felt the urge to
 smite that pretentious Franco-German sow? You who must
 daily scrub her feet and kiss her fanny?

CHRONICLER

Well, now that you mention it...

(Singing.)

IT'S TRUE I'D LOVE TO TACK
 THE EMPRESS TO A RAILROAD TRACK
 A TICK BEFORE THE CHOO-CHOO PASSES BY.

HENRY

SUCH JOY I WOULD UNLOCK
 TO PLACE HER ON THE BLOCK
 BEFORE A DRUNK, SWORD-SWINGING SAMURAI.

CHRONICLER

HER MOUTH GOD NEEDS TO BOLT.

HENRY

TO HAND HER TO A DRUID CULT
 WOULD PUT A LOVELY TWINKLE IN MY EYE.
 PLEASE, GOD, BOX UP AND CRATE HER.

CHRONICLER

MAY LIONS LACERATE HER.

HENRY, CHRONICLER

FOR WE HATE HER
 YES, WE HATE HER.

CHRONICLER

PRAY, WHAT IF THE QUEEN
PERSISTS IN HER CATERWAULING?

HENRY

ON HER A CHANDELIER
WILL THEN SOON BE FALLING.

HENRY, CHRONICLER

AND WHAT IF THE QUEEN
STOOD PROUD ON THE CLIFFS OF DOVER?

HENRY

THEN WITH A LITTLE CHEER
I'D PUSH THE COW OVER.

CHRONICLER

IF IT WERE UP TO ME
I'D VOTE TO BURY HER AT SEA
BUT ONLY IF SHE'S LIVING AT THE TIME.

HENRY

THAT PROMENADING HEN!
I'D TIE HER TO BIG BEN
FOR WHAT WOULD BE A PLEASURABLE CHIME.

CHRONICLER

NO, HERE'S A BETTER PLAN:
LET'S DROP HER IN TURKMENISTAN
WHERE STANDARDS ARE BELOW SUB-SUB-SUBLIME.

HENRY

THEY MIGHT DECAPITATE HER.

CHRONICLER

AT LEAST DOMESTICATE HER.

HENRY, CHRONICLER

FOR WE HATE HER.
YES, WE HATE HER.

BONG, BONG, BONG. The LIGHTS rise.
MUSIC continues. MATILDA enters
banging a gong.

MATILDA

Dinner time, boys and girls!

Clad as a waiter, ROBERT slinks in
with a serving platter, covered by
a silver dome, which HE places on
the drinks trolley. Approaching
the trolley, MATILDA picks up the
dome to reveal the evening dinner:

a shredded document. EVERYONE
stares dumbly.

MATILDA

It's the oath you signed for Daddy respecting my rights to
the throne. Sorry to give you leftovers, but Chef is off
tonight. Busboy Eely here will dish your portion out for
you. He'll even slice you each a sliver of your own
signature. Isn't that clever? Bon appetit! Now eat.

MATILDA freezes. The PLAYERS rush
out front.

MALE PLAYER #1

THE QUEEN IS SUCH A PAIN...

MALE PLAYER #2

SO EGOTISTIC AND SO VAIN...

MALE PLAYERS

NO EARTHLY EGO COULD BE BETTER MANNED.

FEMALE PLAYERS

WE'D GLADLY GO SO FAR
TO HIT HER WITH A CAR
THEN CRUSH HER WITH A MASSIVE MARCHING BAND.

HENRY

NO, NO, THAT'S FAR TOO KIND.
ATTEMPTING SOMETHING MORE REFINED
I'D SOONER SEE HER QUARTERED, CURED, AND CANNED.

MALE PLAYERS

MAY MONGOLS DECIMATE HER.

FEMALE PLAYERS

MAY FRENCHMEN INFILTRATE HER.

ALL PLAYERS

FOR WE HATE HER.

HENRY, CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

YES, WE HATE HER.

THEY ALL dance.

HENRY

PRAY, WHAT IF THE QUEEN
WERE DANGLING HIGH FROM A RAFTER?

MALE PLAYERS

WE'D GRIN FROM EAR-TO-EAR.

FEMALE PLAYERS

WE'D FILL THE ROOM WITH LAUGHTER.

CHRONICLER

AND WHAT IF THE QUEEN
WERE DICED UP IN TINY PIECES?

ALL PLAYERS

WE'D SHED A JOYFUL TEAR.

HENRY

I'D THANK ALMIGHTY JESUS.

HENRY, CHRONICLER, PLAYERS

OUR HEARTS WOULD SURELY SWELL
TO SEE THE EMPRESS BURN IN HELL
UNTIL SHE IS WELL COOKED AND CRISPED AND BROWNEED.
IF EVEN AT HER BEST
SHE WERE A TREASURE CHEST
WE'D THINK IT BETTER IF SHE WERE NOT FOUND.
OH, FOR THIS PAIN TO END!
WE PRAY TO FIND A DARING FRIEND
WHO'D BRAVELY TAKE THE QUEEN BACK TO THE POUND.
MAY PLAGUE CONTAMINATE HER.
IN MAGMA MARINATE HER.
FOR WE HATE HER.
HOW WE HATE HER.
REALLY HATE HER.
TRULY HATE HER.
DO WE HATE HER? YES!

HENRY barks and moves to exit.
MATILDA unfreezes.

MATILDA

You! Bishy! Where are you going?

HENRY

Anywhere but here, Your Majesty. I will not strut to your megalomaniac cakewalk one second longer. In all my life, I have never been treated with such nauseating contempt by so unworthy a courier of contempt as you!

HENRY thunders out.

MATILDA

You son of a bishop! Once a traitor, always a traitor.

In the distance, a faint COMMOTION
(YELLING, SCREAMING, FOOT-
STOMPING) slowly rises in volume.

MATILDA

Wait. Wait. Wait. What's that?

The CHRONICLER swiftly exits.
EVERYONE listens. The CLAMOR
continues to magnify.

CHRONICLER

(Running back in.)
Your Majesty, it's a crowd of people with sickles and
pikes. They are rushing towards the castle and shouting.

MATILDA

Shouting? Shouting what? What are they...?

The CLAMOR grows. We can hear the
phrase "Down With Matilda."

MATILDA

(To ROBERT, exploding.)
Well, Bobby? Don't just stand there. Send out the troops!

ROBERT salutes and exits. The
PLAYERS start to disperse.

MATILDA

Hey! You! You disloyal dolts will stay by your queen.

CRASH! Shards of glass and stones
fly onstage. The CROWD is just
outside. The PLAYERS rush off.

MATILDA

(Calling after THEM.)
Traitors!
(To CHRONICLER.)
You. Dogsboddy. Go to Windchester. Tell him to...

CHRONICLER

I'm sorry, Sire. I shan't play with a fire I didn't start.
It's every man for himself now.

The CHRONICLER exits.

MATILDA

Every man is right! Leave the woman in the kitchen with a
frying pan and bug spray. Well, good riddance to you and to
all those other cowards. With that yellow streak down your
backs, you're dead-ringers for a road. And that's just as
well, since you all deserve to be trampled on!

CLICK. SPARKS. The LIGHTS go out.
The stage is completely dark.

MATILDA

Uh-oh.

A pause. MATILDA is in shock.

MATILDA

He... hello? Is anyone there?

SHE starts feeling around in the darkness.

MATILDA

Henry? Robert? Someone? Christ, they all left me.

A light shines on MATILDA. ROBERT has entered with a flashlight.

ROBERT

I'm still here, Your Majesty. Are you all right?

MATILDA nods. ROBERT hands HER a flashlight. MUSIC underscoring begins.

ROBERT

The crowd is too large, Sire - too large.

MATILDA

I don't care. Try anything. Anything. And Bobby...

SHE wants to say something, but can't. ROBERT understands.

ROBERT

No apologies needed, ma'am. It is I who should apologize to you. And I do so.

ROBERT salutes and exits. MATILDA is now alone. The CLAMOR grows more violent. As it peaks in volume, the LIGHTS rise slowly on the Throne Room to expose the throne, on which sits the STUFFED ANIMAL. Spotting it, seeking comfort, MATILDA enters the Throne Room, picks up the STUFFED ANIMAL, sits on the throne, and cuddles it desperately.

The LIGHTS dim on the Throne Room. The CHRONICLER enters.

CHRONICLER

That summer night, the Empress Matilda found herself with a city in full-blown revolt. Unable to disband the crowd, she had no choice but to flee London with her army.

Ecstatic, MATTY rushes in.

MATTY

Oh, sir, sir! Have you heard the news?

CHRONICLER

Indeed, I have, ma'am. If you act quickly now, the city of London is yours for the taking. Seize that and your cause will again flourish.

MUSIC begins.

MATTY

Oh, the joy, the happiness, the bliss! I feel like Persia before it became Iran. From here on in, I check my doldrums at the door.

(Singing.)

19) Hail and Reign

GRIM AND GRUESOME
ONCE SUMMED UP MY SORRY LOT.
THAT BLEAK TWOSOME
WAS THE SOLE PAIR THAT I'D GOT.
WELL, LET'S LOSE 'UM
FOR A CHEERIER REFRAIN.
WHY NOT TRY HAIL AND REIGN?

TRUE, FATE TOLD ME
THAT MY PLACE WAS IN THE REAR.
HOW HE'D SCOLD ME
IF I EVER TRIED TO STEER.
LITTLE BOLD ME
I'VE CARVED OUT MY OWN DOMAIN.
WELL, NOW I HAIL AND REIGN.

SO GOODBYE NOW
TO THOSE DOORMAT DAYS OF YORE.
EVERY SIGH NOW
MIRRORS LESS A NOISY SHORE.
HELLO SKY NOW.
IT'S TIME TO HAIL A GALE AND SOAR.

YES, I'LL RISE TO
ALTITUDES WHERE ANGELS SWOON.
SAY MY HI'S TO
MY NEW NEIGHBORS, SUN AND MOON.
BREAK MY TIES TO
EV'RY POTHOLE, RUT, AND DRAIN.
IT'S TIME TO HAIL AND REIGN.

MUSIC continues. The LIGHTS rise
in the back to reveal the PLAYERS

(PEOPLE OF ENGLAND). THEY are
oppressed, toiling, and in chains.
MATTY faces front and proclaims:

MATTY

People of England! Your days of suffering are over. The
Empress Matilda has been overthrown. Soon the banners of
King Stephen will be flying over London.

Overjoyed, the PLAYERS break their
chains and cheer.

MALE PLAYERS

ONCE OUR HEYDAY
WAS KEPT WAITING IN THE WINGS.

FEMALE PLAYERS

WE'D SCREAM MAYDAY
FROM LIFE'S ARROWS AND LIFE'S SLINGS.

MATTY

NOW EACH GRAY DAY
CAN GO PLAGUE A PRINCELY DANE.

MATTY, FEMALE PLAYERS

IT'S TIME TO HAIL AND REIGN.

ALL PLAYERS

COME, LET'S PIN UP
ALL OUR HOPES AMONG THE STARS.

MATTY

KEEP THAT CHIN UP
FOR THE WORLD OUT THERE IS OURS.

MATTY, ALL PLAYERS

PROP THAT GRIN UP
LIKE THE U IN THE UKRAINE.
COME ALL, LET'S HAIL AND...

WILL

(Bouncing in.)
REIGN!
OF US, EACH IS
BUT A LIGHT THAT BEGS TO GLEAM.

MATTY

NOW IN REACH IS
EVERY RAINBOW AND SUNBEAM.

MATTY, WILL, PLAYERS

STORM THE BEACHES.
IT'S TIME TO SNAG AND BAG THE DREAM.

Jubilantly, THEY ALL dance.

MATTY

LIFE WAS WHEEZING.
NOW IT RUNS A MARATHON.
TIME FOR SEIZING
EV'RY BREATH WE COME UPON.

WILL, PLAYERS

WITH SOME SQUEEZING
AND SOME PULL BY THE DIVINE
OUR WATER TURNED TO WINE.

MATTY

OOPS! PLEASE RE-SING.
IT IN TRUTH TURNED TO CHAMPAGNE.

MATTY, WILL, PLAYERS

IT'S TIME TO HAIL AND REIGN.

CHRONICLER

Well, well! Is not life full of twists and turns? Finally,
King Stephen is restored to the throne.

A GRAND FANFARE. The LIGHTS
abruptly rise on the throne.
Overjoyed, MATTY runs towards it -
but it is bare.

CHRONICLER

...but not yet.

The FANFARE dies. MATTY gasps.

CHRONICLER

Yes, the King's forces have taken London, but the King
remains imprisoned in Bristol.

MATTY bursts into tears. WILL runs
to comfort HER. The CHRONICLER
gestures to the PLAYERS, who exit.

MATTY

Oh, Will, Will... When will all this fighting end? I can't
do it anymore. I can't do it.

CHRONICLER

Keep up the faith, ma'am. England needs its king.

MATTY

England and I both. How much longer must we wait?

HENRY enters.

HENRY

That all depends, Your Majesty.

A deathly pause. MATTY turns and glares at HENRY. The CHRONICLER tactfully leads WILL out. After a pause, HENRY bows.

HENRY

Good day, Sire. I have returned to right a wrong. I have returned to help you.

MATTY

Help me, Your Grace? You can help yourself to the hangman. I cannot forgive you for your betrayal and I hope God cannot either.

HENRY

Your Majesty, I think it is fair to say that God has much forgiving to do nowadays. We will all have to take our number and wait. In the meantime, I hold the key to your husband's cell.

HENRY snaps HIS fingers. The MALE PLAYERS enter. With THEM, in chains, is ROBERT.

MATTY

The Earl of Gloucester?

HENRY

My private militia found him defending the rear of the Empress's army in Winchester. The greatest military mind the enemy ever possessed is now in my custody.

(Cheekily.)

..or should I say "our" custody?

MATTY considers HENRY for a moment, then smiles.

MATTY

Yes, indeed, Your Grace, perhaps forgiveness is the best policy after all. We will discuss forgetting in the afterlife. I fear geography will demand we use a telephone.

HENRY frowns.

MATTY

You may leave, Your Grace. I wish to be alone with the Earl. But, before you go, please undo his chains.

Reluctantly, HENRY nods. The MALE PLAYERS free ROBERT. THEY then salute and exit with HENRY.

MATTY

We meet again, my lord - in very different circumstances.

ROBERT says nothing.

MATTY

So, tell me, what should I do with you now? Should I try to convince you to join our cause?

ROBERT

I have made the decision where I stand, ma'am.

MATTY

In that case, the Empress is very lucky to have you - for both your prowess and your loyalty. However, your true value to me lies not in those qualities but in your necessity to the Empress's cause. She is losing this war and she needs you now more than ever. You, my lord, are worth more than a king to her. And a king is what she shall trade to get you back.

A pause. MATTY goes and sits on the throne.

MATTY

Tell me a little about your Empress. Stevie and I live for each other. Whom does she live for?

ROBERT

Her son, Henry, ma'am.

MATTY

And does he live for her?

ROBERT

No, ma'am. I don't think anyone does.

MATTY

I find that sad. Perhaps it is her personality. The people of London call her arrogant. What do you call her?

MUSIC underscoring begins.

ROBERT

Frightened, ma'am. The Empress is the most frightened woman I've ever known.

MATTY

Oh, dear. I know how she feels.

ROBERT

Oh, no, ma'am. You are the least frightened woman in the entire world.

MATTY and ROBERT regard each other respectfully. The LIGHTS fall on the Throne Room. The CHRONICLER enters the Arena.

CHRONICLER

Thus, like a popular trinket, the English crown changed hands yet again. Facing little choice, the Empress Matilda gave up a king for a knight. Finally, truly, England returned to the rule of King Stephen.

MATILDA

It's not fair.

MATILDA, hugging the STUFFED ANIMAL, has entered the Arena.

CHRONICLER

Your Majesty?

MATILDA

(With deep bitterness.)

I said it's not fair. It's my throne, my property, my inheritance. My father nursed it and gave it to me as his gift of love. He was a king and kings are not people, but offices. We can't give love, because we're too busy ruling things. So we give counties and duchies and kingdoms instead. Love is counted in hectares and titles, not kisses and hugs. And England was the kiss and the hug my father never gave me when he was alive.

SHE looks at the STUFFED ANIMAL.

MATILDA

And your inheritance? What shall I give you? Kingdoms or kisses? The first I no longer have. The second you never wanted. What a pathetic joke.

MATILDA turns and throws the STUFFED ANIMAL offstage... But ROBERT catches it. HE has just entered.

ROBERT

Your Majesty. Thank you. Thank you for freeing me.

MATILDA

(We don't quite believe her.)

Don't. Don't thank me. I would have preferred seeing you rot than to have released the Usurper.

The LIGHTS dimly rise in the Throne Room to reveal HENRY, MATTY (with EUSTACE), WILL, and the

PLAYERS standing at attention. As MATILDA watches, STEPHEN, dignified, limping slightly, enters. Happiness and reconciliation ensue.

MATILDA

Well, now, what a touching ending. Now they'll cheer him, the Usurper. They'll cheer him like they never cheered me.

The PLAYERS silently cheer and applaud STEPHEN. MATILDA turns away in pain. MUSIC rises.

20) I'll Rule You A Lovely Reign (Reprise)

MATILDA

(Singing, shakingly.)

NIX THE FIRE
UPON YOUR PYRE
FOR A QUEEN
UNSEEN
IN GRACE AND BEAUTY
WILL RULE YOU A LOVELY REIGN.
A LOVELY REIGN.

NO, NO TO
MERCY BEAU COUP
FOR TO BRING
THE SPRING
IN IS MY DUTY.
I'LL RULE YOU A LOVELY...

SHE can't go on. A dark pause. Tentatively, ROBERT approaches. MUSIC resumes.

ROBERT

Your Majesty, we should leave. The King's army will be after you. There's a boat sailing now for France. If we hurry, we can...

MATILDA

(Turning on HIM with volcanic fury.)

Flee?! Flee like a failure? Flee to what? A son who doesn't care? A husband who never did? That goddamn crown is all I have. I'm never going to give it up - never, never, never. I'm going to fight, fight, and fight again!

MATILDA turns on the CROWD, which remains oblivious to her ranting.

MATILDA

You wait! You'll see! You'll see and you'll be sorry!

A SOUR CHORD. MATILDA storms off with ROBERT. The LIGHTS fall. The CHRONICLER steps up.

CHRONICLER

Indeed, the battle did continue - for six long years. However, never again did Matilda regain the English crown. Then, on October 31st, 1147, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, died. Without an effective army, the Empress's cause collapsed. Yet, even then, Matilda made sporadic nuisance attempts to retake her throne. She had ruled England for only 6 months.

MUSIC begins. The LIGHTS rise in the Arena. STEPHEN, MATTY (with EUSTACE), HENRY, ROBERT, WILL, and the PLAYERS start assembling before us.

21) Finale

CHRONICLER

(Singing.)

THUS, THAT CONCLUDES OUR HISTORY.
WE HOPE THAT YOU'RE ALL GLAD THAT
YOU SAW A BIT OF HISTORY.
WE HOPE YOU THINK "NOT BAD, THAT;
I'M HAPPY TO HAVE BEEN THERE,
I'M HAPPY TO HAVE SEEN IT.
SO SAD IT HAD TO END THERE.
YES, I REALLY TRULY MEAN IT."

ALL

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.

CHRONICLER

WE MUST BID A GOODBYE TO

ALL

OUR LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY.

CHRONICLER

THOUGH HARD, WE HAVE TO TRY TO.

ALL

THE CLOCK IS TICK-TICK-TOCKING.
OLD FATHER TIME NOW BECKONS.

CHRONICLER

THE DAWN HAS STARTED STALKING
SO THESE ARE OUR FINAL SECONDS.

WILL emerges and tugs on the CHRONICLER's sleeve. The MUSIC stops for a moment. Then, softly, it resumes. ALL watch and listen:

WILL

Excuse me, sir. But what's your name?

CHRONICLER

I'm the Chronicler. The storyteller. Why do you ask?

WILL

Well, it's just... Then you know everything, sir? About this story?

CHRONICLER

Oh, maybe not everything. Just what happened in the past and what will happen in the future.

WILL

Then what about the Empress Matilda? Whatever happened to her? I look around and I don't see her about and I feel so very sorry for her.

CHRONICLER

Sorry? But why?

WILL

Because she lost... everything.

The CHRONICLER smiles, bends down, removes a scroll from HIS jacket, hands it to WILL, and whispers.

CHRONICLER

Not everything.

The CHRONICLER turns to us and indicates the treaty.

CHRONICLER

The Treaty of Wallingford between King Stephen and the Empress. Born of pure exhaustion and signed in November, 1153 at Westminster. The treaty reads...

(Turning to WILL.)

Well?

During the following, MATILDA gradually emerges from the darkness.

WILL

(Reading, as MUSIC swells.)

That Stephen, King of England, shall be recognized as such until his dying day, but that, upon his death, Henry of Anjou, son of the Empress Matilda, shall inherit the throne and become King Henry II of England.

A SPOTLIGHT rises on the throne.
There sits the STUFFED ANIMAL.
Softly, the PLAYERS sing to
MATILDA.

FEMALE PLAYERS

EACH OF US IS MADE FOR
SOMETHING TO CRUSADE FOR.

MALE PLAYERS

THAT'S WHAT HEARTS ARE BUILT TO DO.

Majestically, MATILDA goes to
'Henry,' picks 'him' up, kisses
'him,' and hugs 'him' close, as
ALL sing with growing passion:

ALL SAVE MATILDA

YOU WILL FACE A WORLD OF THUNDER.
ALL THE STARS WILL FADE AND DIE.
BUT KEEP STRONG THROUGHOUT THAT THUNDER.
EVEN STORM CLOUDS MUST RUN DRY.
DARE THEM ALL TO DRAIN ON—
SHOUT OUT "POUR IN VAIN ON"—
FOR YOUR SON SHALL REIGN ON HIGH.
YES, YOUR SON SHALL REIGN ON HIGH.

The LIGHTS dim on ALL SAVE MATILDA
AND 'HENRY.' Softly, SHE cuddles
and sings to 'him.'

MATILDA

YES, THAT'S HOW IT STANDS, PET.
NOW THE CROWN IS YOURS.
YOU WILL HERETOFORE REIGN.
AND UNDER YOUR REIGN
ENGLAND SMILES AND SOARS.

Hugging the STUFFED ANIMAL,
MATILDA strolls off as:

The CURTAIN FALLS.

MUSIC RISES anew.

22) Curtain Call and Exit Music

The CAST bursts back onstage for bows. Then:

ALL

(Singing.)

AND NOW WE BID YOU ALL ADIEU.
A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY FOR YOU.

BLACKOUT.

THE END.