

L'ASSASSINER DE FAUX FAUX AMIS

by Luke McGrath

'And They All Called Me Kaplan' and 'The Little Drummer Girl'
by Nathan Gubler

EXORDIUM

A bleak, empty stage. Lit candles the colour of turned milk. Instruments lean on stands like crumbling tombstones.

THE BAND shuffle on and form a druidic huddle, a Spartan phalanx. Backs out-turned, rejecting everyone else.

THE BAND - MEL, KEV, ALICE, LUKE and JOSH - wear black hoods and robes. They CHANT softly, passing a jug around, taking long slugs.

An UNNAMED FIGURE, his face never revealed, arrives on stage. He stops at each instrument, testing each in turn by playing *that riff...*

Ba-doom, ba-doom...

Ba-doom, ba-doom....

It's primal, it's evil, it's sexy. It's the keystone of all popular music. It's the blues. The band chant in time.

Sound check complete, he SNAPS his fingers, and disappears. The band assume their positions and flick off their hoods, revealing corpse white faces and hollowed eyes. They launch into a CREEPY INSTRUMENTAL.

The band manager (NATHAN) enters. Tattered suit, oversized sunglasses.

NATHAN

Good evening kin, bonsoir mon amis!
By day I am this fine band's
manager - but tonight, I am
diabolically happy to be your
emcee.

Welcome to our metaphorical - dare
I say *metaphysical* - house upon the
hill, this mansion shrouded in fog
and mystery, surrounded by a forest
of **ghost** gums and **weeping** willows.

You were all invited to come, but
not all of you are permitted to
leave.

There is a murderer among our
number, but who?

(points out to audience)
Is it you, sir? Or you? Or you
madame?

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

And why?

And where?

And with what?

And to whom?

(sniffs)

Oh yes, there is death in the air
tonight, mon amis.

But first, let me introduce our
players, these impish sprites,
sprung forth from the thigh of *Papa*
Legba himself, called back from
their Underworld lair by the lute
of Orpheus, they've been down to
the crossroads, they've fallen on
their knees - they got back up and
caught the 232 here tonight -
ladies and gentlemen, our own
demigods from the demimonde,
they're existential, pan-sexual,
tridimensional, sensual yet
professional, completely
unforgettable--

(softer, as an aside)

--but all of them expendable--

-- join with me and get obsessional
over... FAUX FAUX AMIS!

PART 1 - DENIAL

1. TAKE A CHANCE ON MURDER (EVERYBODY SINGS)

This song is a Northern Soul stomper - a driving bass riff,
horn lines, and testifyin' vocals.

KEV

SO YOU GOT YOURSELF A PROBLEM
CAN'T FIND A WAY TO LICK IT
MAYBE THE ANSWER
IS TO PUNCH SOMEONE'S TICKET

ALICE

GUN, KNIFE OR ROCK
GRAB WHATEVER YOU CAN SEE
IF IT WORKED FOR CAIN
WELL IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME

LUKE

YOU CAN TRY TO RUN THE VODOO DOWN
ALL THE WAY TO THE KILLING FLOOR
YOU CAN BURY IT DEEP, BOTTLE IT UP
BUT IT'LL ALWAYS COME BACK FOR MORE

EVERYBODY

SO TAKE A CHANCE ON MURDER
YOU MIGHT GET AWAY WITH IT
AND IF YOU GET CAUGHT? WITH A FACE
LIKE YOURS?
THE JURY IS BOUND TO ACQUIT

JOSH

SIX MILLION WAYS TO DIE
ANOTHER MILLION WAYS TO KILL
THERE'S PLENTY OF REASONS
BUT I DO IT FOR THE THRILL

MEL

IT'S THERE INSIDE ALL OF US
WRITTEN IN OUR BLOOD
LIKE A ROSE BUSH IN WINTER
JUST WAITING TO BUD

EVERYBODY

CAUGHT YOUR HUSBAND CHEATING?
TAKE A CHANCE!

LANDLORD WON'T FIX YOUR HEATING?
TAKE A CHANCE!

YOUR BOSS IS A PRICK?
TAKE A CHANCE!

NEIGHBOUR'S FACE MAKES YOU SICK?
TAKE A CHANCE!

(MORE)

EVERYBODY (CONT'D)

*YOUR EX IS NOW HAPPY?
TAKE A CHANCE!*

*YOUR KIDS TURNED OUT CRAPPY?
TAKE A CHANCE!*

*EVERYONE IN THE WORLD
TAKE A CHANCE!*

*EVERY BOY AND EVERY GIRL
TAKE A CHANCE!*

Over the outro--

LUKE

Allow me to introduce the band. On skins, the keeper of time, the trap lord herself - she can trace her lineage back to the first caveman to bang one rock against another - I give you... 'Malevolent' Melanie Twidale!

On bass, the ruler of rumble, the lodestar of the low-end - the God of Thunder prays to *this* guy - mon amis, it's 'Killer' Kev Lauro!

The queen of the guillotine, her voice makes angels weep and demons bay for blood - the halls of Valhalla still echo with her low groans and sweet high tones - the one, the only... 'Avaricious' Alice Cottee!

And giving it all on the horn of plenty, that Bodhisattva of brass with the Kingdom Come sound - the clarion caller's *caller*, he's hard-hearted, hard-bitten, you'll be totally smitten - it's your very own... 'Jackknife' Josh!

And last but not leastly, far from beastly, the mouth of the south, the wizard of rhyme, the six string massacre, direct from under the Queanbeyan Bridge, yours truly, Luke 'Murder Is My Middle Name' McGrath!

END SONG.

Nathan returns from side of stage.

NATHAN
(golf claps)
How about that, mon amis? So good,
it made my blood run **cold**.

The lights flicker in the room.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Apologies, they've been doing that
all night. Anyway--

He holds up a large yellow envelope with a PENTAGRAM and
other SIGILS drawn over it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
The rules are very simple tonight--

MEL
THERE AREN'T ANY!!!

Mel maniacally laughs.

NATHAN
Actually, there are several. And
who gave the drummer a microphone?

Much like the game Cluedo - or Clue
for those from the New World -
tonight, there will be a murder -
I hold in my hand an envelope
containing three cards - on card
one is the murderer's name - *it
could be anyone here* -

Card two, where the murder has
taken place - safe to say, that
card contains a picture of this
very music hall, you get that one
for free -

And thirdly, a card depicting the
murder weapon. Will it be--

The band take turns holding up a WEAPON.

LUKE
(holds a length of rope)
Rope!

ALICE
(holds up a knife)
The blade!

JOSH
[holds up a gun)
A gun!

MEL
(holds up cordless drill)
Trepanation!

KEV
(holds up bottles of
orange juice and vodka)
Screwdriver!

Nathan and the band turn to look at Kev.

MEL
You were *meant* to bring--

NATHAN
Meh, I guess that'll work.

KEV
Speaking of, can I get a glass?

Nathan shakes his head--

NATHAN
I'm not your *butler*, and there is
no butler to pin anything on
tonight.

Mel leans over, hands Kev two glasses, which he places atop
his amp.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
So we have a setting, we have
dangerous implements at hand - all
we need is a **magician**, one who with
a flick of his wrist--
(motions slicing his
throat)
-- or a snap of his fingers--
(motions pulling a
trigger)
-- can turn a room full of
potential victims into *suspects*,
who can raise the dead from the
living like a rabbit from a hat. Is
there such a conjurer among us?

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)
 Faux Faux Amis, perhaps a little
 thinking music, some of that old
 black magic, to get us in the mood?

LUKE
 I'd like to dedicate this one to my
 paramour...
 (turns to Alice, holds out
 his hand)
 Alice.

Mel accidentally KNOCKS OVER HER HI-HAT. Loud clanging noise.

MEL
 Sorry.

2. LOVE SONG #666 (LUKE/ALICE SINGS)

This song is a duet - a play on Sinatra-era songs like 'That Old Black Magic' and 'Witchcraft'. The lyrics push lines like 'you've got me under your spell' towards an occult conclusion.

ALICE
 YOU'RE SO ENCHANTING
 YOU GOT ME PANTING
 NOW I'M DECANTING
 A LITTLE POTION FOR YOU
 A NUMBER NINE

LUKE
 A NUMBER NINE?

ALICE
 IT'S LIKE FINE WINE

LUKE
 WELL I LIKE WINE... DIVINE

ALICE
 EYES SO ENTICING
 LIPS SO INVITING
 GOT ME RECITING
 A LITTLE SPELL FOR YOU
 SAY IT THREE TIMES

LUKE
 SAY WHAT THREE TIMES?

ALICE
 THAT YOU'LL BE MINE

LUKE
 THAT YOU'LL BE MINE... TINGLES UPPA
 MY SPINE

TOGETHER
 I'M GONNA SHARE IN MY DARK ARTS
 BABY
 TAKE A SIP FROM MY CUP-CUP-CUP
 LET ME BIND UP OUR TWO HEARTS BABY
 CAUSE ONCE AIN'T NEVER ENOUGH

LUKE
 WHEN OUR BODIES TOUCH
 FEELS LIKE I'M BURNING UP
 YOU GOT ME SPEAKING
 IN D-D-DOUBLE DUTCH
 MOUTH FULL OF TONGUES

ALICE
 MOUTH FULL OF TONGUES?

LUKE
 NO TEETH OR GUMS

ALICE
 NAME NAMELESS ONES... FUN

LUKE
 I CALLED IT WITCHCRAFT
 BUT YOU JUST LAUGHED
 TOLD ME DON'T BE DAFT
 IT'S ONLY ROMANCE
 A RUSH OF FEELING

ALICE
 A RUSH OF FEELING?

LUKE
 LIKE BELLS ARE PEALING
 SENDS ME REELING

ALICE
 ... GOOD

Towards the end of the song, the stage lights flicker and go out. When they return, **JOSH is slumped on the ground. DEAD.**

END SONG.

The band finish playing, the applause dies.

Nathan has not returned to the stage. The band shoot daggers at each other. Their eyes fix stage right, anticipating his return.

Eventually, Nathan returns, a deferential nod to the band, a quick smile to the audience.

He sees Josh AND STOPS IN HIS TRACKS. Hesitates, then leaves the stage again.

The band stand in place, no idea what's going on - a thick silence presses upon the room. We want to draw this out, make it uncomfortable for the audience.

Nathan returns, this time with the yellow envelope in his hand, tapping it nervously against his thigh.

He walks to Josh, kneels and whispers in his ear.

He stands, and begins walking slowly back. The band surround him, listen as he speaks *sotto voce*.

Some let out GASPS. En masse, they rush to Josh and crowd his prostrate body.

Nathan approaches the microphone, tapping the envelope against his leg.

NATHAN

I'm terribly sorry for this, mon amis. There's been - well, 'mix-up' is not the right word. You see, the wrong person has died.

Mel jumps up, grabs her mic--

MEL

More to the point, he's actually DEAD!

NATHAN

I was getting to that.

Mel takes her phone out of her pocket, dials. The band all return to their positions.

PART 2 - ANGER

LUKE

Bolt the doors, no one is to leave--

KEV

We should have done that at our last gig. Literally a captive audience.

LUKE

How can you joke at a time like this? Josh is dead!

KEV

It's my defence mechanism.

LUKE

(returns to audience)

No one is to leave. You are all now suspects, implicated in this heinous act, the murder of Josh...

(to band)

... does anyone know his last name?

The band all shrug.

ALICE

Beats me. We found him on Gumtree yesterday.

Mel hangs up her phone.

MEL

The police are on their way. They said it's been a strange night, lots of *phenomena*. It'll take them another forty minutes to get here.

LUKE

Perfect. We wait.

An awkward silence.

KEV

Or--

ALICE

I'm listening.

KEV

-- we could finish the set? It's what, uh,

(forgets name, just points)

he would have wanted.

LUKE

Finish the set?! Are you insane? No one could expect us to finish the set now...

Nathan unfurls a piece of paper from his pocket.

NATHAN

Actually, our You Are Here contract is pretty specific.

The organisers even included a clause covering this very possibility - "in the event of the death of a band member during the performance, the remaining members must, to the best of their abilities, proceed with the performance, or be replaced with a poetry reading".

(looks out at audience)

We just couldn't do that to these good folks...

LUKE

That's ridiculous, I don't remember signing that!

Nathan holds out the contract for Luke to see--

NATHAN

So that's not your signature? *In your blood?*

Luke peruses it, confirms it to be true.

LUKE

MERDE!!! Why do I insist on signing everything in blood?

He looks to Mel, hoping for a more rational take on the situation.

MEL

We may as well - it'll feel a lot longer just sitting here in silence.

LUKE

Fine! We'll do another song!

KEV

Oh goodie!

The band all smile, readjust their instruments. Nathan bows and skulks off stage...

... Luke scans the ground around--

LUKE

Has anyone seen my pick?

The band all check the floor. Kev spots it, sticking out from underneath Josh's fallen body.

KEV

(pointing to Josh)

Over here.

Luke walks over, pulls it out from half underneath Josh.

LUKE

Ha ha - how did that get there?

Thank you so much, Kevin.

3. NUMBERS ON THE WALL (LUKE SINGS)

THE FIRST STALL - OVERFLOWING WATER
SO I HEADED ON DOWN THE LINE
THE NEXT ONE WAS OUT OF ORDER
BUT IT'S THERE I WAS GIVEN A SIGN

NUMBER'S ON THE WALL
NUMBER'S ON THE WALL
NUMBER'S ON THE WALL
FOR A GOOD TIME CALL -
THE NUMBER ON THAT WALL!

DIALED HER UP AND SHE CAME RIGHT OVER
JUST LIKE SHE WAS HEAVEN-SENT
THEN I SAW A GLIMMER IN HER EYES
AND I KNEW SHE WAS HELLBENT

MY NUMBER'S ON THE WALL
NUMBERS ON THE WALL
NUMBERS ON THE WALL
NO SAY AT ALL - MY NUMBER'S ON THAT WALL!

ONE'S PAIN AND ONE'S PLEASURE
 UP TO YOU WHICH IS WHICH
 SHE DISHED IT OUT IN EQUAL MEASURE
 NOW I'M FLAPPING LIKE A LANDLOCKED FISH

OLDER NOW THAN WHEN I STARTED THIS SONG,
 AND I'LL BE OLDER STILL WHEN I'M DONE
 I INVITE YOU ALL TO SING ALONG,
 'CAUSE THERE'S A NUMBER FOR EVERYONE,

IT'S UP ON THAT WALL
 WE'RE ALL ON THAT WALL
 ALL ON THAT WALL
 WE ALL GONNA FALL -
 UP OFFA THAT WALL!

Towards the end of the song, the stage lights again flicker and go out. When they return, **KEV IS DEAD.**

END SONG.

The band finish, turn and notice Kev.

ALICE
 (sarcastic)
 Ha ha, Kev.

LUKE
 Yeah, Kev, there's inconsiderate
 and then there's just plain cruel.
 Get up.

Beat.

LUKE (CONT'D)
 Dude, get up!

Alice walks over and inspects him.

ALICE
 Uh-oh.

She recoils.

MEL
 What?

ALICE
 He's dead!

LUKE
 Are you kidding me?

ALICE

The drill bit's still lodged in his head.

She picks up the cordless drill - sans drill bit - and pulls the trigger, letting out a soft but chilling *whirr*.

Nathan bounds onto stage--

NATHAN

Sorry, bathroom break. What did I miss?

THE REMAINING BAND IN UNISON

YOU!!!

NATHAN

What?

LUKE

You killed Kev!

MEL

And what's-his-name!

NATHAN

What? No! I took a leak, that's all.

Alice pushes him square in the chest.

ALICE

Murderer! *J'accuse!*

LUKE

(to audience)

For those that don't know, Nathan here was our original bass player. When he broke both his arms cage-fighting, we brought Kev in. We liked him so much, he stayed, and Nathan became our manager.

(to Nathan)

But you always resented him, didn't you, you weak-boned ponce! I thought you were kin, but you're just another savage!

NATHAN

Oh, it all makes perfect sense. Except riddle me this - why did I kill Josh?

MEL
For the royalties!

Blank looks all around. Mel rolls her eyes--

MEL (CONT'D)
One dead band member would see a
dramatic spike in album sales, but
two? And who owns half our
publishing?

NATHAN
That's plain cuckoo! You're all out
of your skulls! Who's to say it
wasn't one of you?

ALICE
We can't be killers, we're
musicians.

NATHAN
Charles Manson was a musician!

Luke delivers an aside to the audience--

ALICE
Fun fact, hipsters. Charles Manson
was indeed a songwriter - his song
'Cease To Exist' was even recorded
by The Beach Boys under the title
'Never Learn Not To Love'.
(back to Nathan and band)
But that's beside the point! You're
the only one with a motive.

NATHAN
Oh you want to talk motive, do you?
Well let me tell you--

Luke quickly interrupts--

LUKE
I say we tie him up 'til the police
get here!

MEL
Captial idea.

LUKE
And I happen to have **some rope**.

The band proceed to tie him up, assisted by members of the
audience. Nathan feebly objects the whole time--

NATHAN

This is ridiculous. You've got the wrong 'em boyo. I ain't your Stagger Lee. Where's your proof?

What about all these other people? Who are they? And what are their alibis?

(to audience)

Are you going to let them do this to me? You'll all hang for this - you're all complicit now! This is false imprisonment!

As he makes his pleas, Mel stuffs a gag in his mouth. Once he's tied up, the band return to their positions, satisfied.

LUKE

(turning to the others)

Another song?

ALICE

Damn straight.

MEL

Lock and load.

Luke looks down at his feet, to the set list. He shakes his head in disbelief--

LUKE

I don't believe this... but it's the next song on the list.

He takes a deep breath.

LUKE (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, monsieurs et madames, it gives me dubious pleasure to introduce a guest vocalist for this next song... Mr. Nathan Gubler!

Luke walks over to Nathan, plucks the gag from his mouth.

4. *AND THEY ALL CALLED ME KAPLAN* (NATHAN SINGS)

A murder ballad in 3/4 time.

NATHAN

THEY CAME A-KNOCKIN' ONE WRITERLY
NIGHT
WHEN ICE WAS THICK IN THE AIR
THAT KNOCK WAS A KNOCK THAT KNOCKED
ME RIGHT OFF MY SOCKS
AND BLEW ME RIGHT OUT OF MY CHAIR

THEY CAME IN WITH ROPES AND WITH
CANDLES
AND LOCKED SILVER UPON MY FISTS
AND THE WOMEN CRIED, AND THE FATHER
OF THE MAIDEN
CUT HER NAME ACROSS MY WRISTS

AND THEY ALL CALLED ME KAPLAN
BUT I'M TOLD THAT'S JUST A NAME
WELL, I WAS NEVER ONE TO SAY SUCH
THINGS
BUT I GUESS THAT'S HOW YA GET IN
THE GAME
I GUESS THAT'S HOW YOU GET IN THE
GAME

THEY STRIPPED ME BARE IN FRONT OF
THE JUDGE'S CHAIR
AND CURSED ME FROM BEHIND THEIR
TEETH
THEY DRAGGED CLOTH LIKE WIRES
ACROSS MY SHOULDERS
AND, LIKE FLOWERS, THEY BOUND UP MY
FEET

THE BLIND-HEARTED JUDGE CHECKED MY
CHEEK WITH CHAGRIN
AND ASKED ME "HOW DO YOU PLEA?"
I CRIED, "WHICH FLIGHT AM I ON, MR
PILATE?!"
AND WITH THAT I WAS FLOWN TO BELIZE

AND YOU WHO CALL ME ADNAN SAED
AND TAKE EVE TO BE MY MOTHER!
I NEVER KNEW THE MAIDEN IN QUESTION
I ONLY KNEW HER TO BE MY LOVER
I ONLY KNEW THAT BITCH TO BE MY
LOVER

Towards the end of the song, the stage lights again flicker
and go out. When they return, **LUKE IS DEAD.**

END SONG.

PART 3 - BARGAINING

The band turn and see Luke dead centre-stage. A solemn beat, then--

NATHAN

Ha ha, I told you I wasn't the
killer! Ha ha! You fools!

ALICE

What is happening? One death is an
accident, two a tragedy. But three?
That's just irresponsible.

MEL

This is... it's all... we're
doomed. Cursed.

Nathan tries to shake his binds loose.

NATHAN

Little help?

Alice and Mel assist him, the rope falls away. He springs
back, fists raised in a Victorian pugilist stance.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Keep away, harpy!

Alice and Mel look at each other.

ALICE

Who are you talking to?

NATHAN

(points, starting with
Mel)

You! Or maybe you! But probably
you.

MEL

What?

NATHAN

You killed Luke.

MEL

Why?

NATHAN

Because you're in love with Alice!

MEL

Nathan!

NATHAN
Oh come on, everyone knows that.

ALICE
(to Mel)
You're in love with me?

NATHAN
Everyone except Alice.

Mel takes a moment.

MEL
(at Alice)
Fine. It's true.
(at Nathan)
But that doesn't mean I killed
Luke.

NATHAN
Well, what about that knife
sticking out from your sleeve?

As Mel slowly pulls out a metal object, the others both inch
backwards--

MEL
This? This is a drum tuning key.

ALICE
(exasperated, at Nathan)
You said tonight would be easy -
this is even worse than that
seniors cruise you booked us on.

NATHAN
My plan was perfect. It was your
execution that-- sorry, poor choice
of words.

ALICE
What was the plan, exactly?

NATHAN
Well--

He retrieves the envelope and holds it aloft. They all stop
circling. He opens it and tips out its contents. THREE CARDS.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Hmm.

MEL
What?

NATHAN

These aren't the cards I put in. It should have had Kev, on the stage, with the knife. As planned.

ALICE

And what's it got?

He holds the cards up to the audience. They are OVERSIZED TAROT CARDS - THE DEVIL, THE MOON, and THE SIX OF SWORDS.

MEL

What does it mean?

ALICE

Well, everything is open to interpretation in tarot. Except--
(takes another look at the cards)

In fact, the only thing ever determined as scientifically, verifiably true, is these three cards, in this order, means... certain death.

Nathan drops the cards.

MEL

Pffft, hocus pocus horseshit. But this many deaths - it's not natural.

ALICE

It's *supernatural*.

NATHAN

Or - dig this - when people play rock'n'roll, they're hoping for something, right? Same as drugs, same as sex, they're looking to transcend reality. It's all an attempt at a direct encounter with the GODHEAD, isn't it? Well, what if Luke did it? What if he saw the GODHEAD and it was so beautiful that, well, that it killed him?

MEL

(very slowly)

Are you saying what I think you are saying? That we rocked so hard he died?

NATHAN

Maybe?

MEL

You're an idiot. *Un imbécile!*

NATHAN

Well, I'm sorry. *Je suis désolé.*
I'm happy to hear alternate
suggestions.

ALICE

It's got to be a curse. But who
would curse us?

MEL

You had that ex-boyfriend that kept
following us to shows. Wasn't he
Wiccan, or a Warlock, or something?

ALICE

He was gluten intolerant. A celiac.

MEL

Celiac, that's right! So nothing to
do with the dark arts or gypsies?

ALICE

(shakes head)

Just a lot of quinoa.

They all mull it over.

NATHAN

Venue's built on a hellmouth?

ALICE

(points)

Nope, Hellmouth's fifteen clicks
that way. Under Queanbeyan.

More cogitating.

MEL

We used the tritone - the devil's
note - in that first song - maybe
we summoned something forth?

ALICE

Maybe it's in our instruments!

She rushes to her guitar, hesitates, picks up Kev's bass
instead. **AND SMASHES IT.** SMASHES IT GOOD.

She turns to Mel and Nathan, satisfied. Mel protectively steps between her and her kit.

NATHAN

It's not the instruments killing anyone - remember Kev? Drillbit to the noggin.

ALICE

The 'how' doesn't matter. But if it's a curse, maybe we can break it?

MEL

With what, a spell? An incantation? Blood? Sugar? Sex magick?

ALICE

Not necessarily - just need something *lucky*.

Nathan chuckles to himself.

MEL

What?

NATHAN

It's nothing. Just... well I wrote this song, and... I've always gotten pretty lucky whenever I've played it. If you know what I mean.

MEL & ALICE

(bored)

We know what you mean.

MEL

Still, no harm in trying.

Alice shrugs her approval. Nathan picks up the guitar--

NATHAN

There was magic in this song once, the toe-curling kind... let's see if it'll work again.

5. *LET ME BE YOUR MAN* (NATHAN SINGS)

A New Orleans-style blues ballad, easily fitting into Dr. John or Tom Waits' repertoire.

GAVE YOU MY HEART, OR DID YOU FORGET?
 WELL NOTHING'S WORTH NOTHING
 IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY FOR IT
 I'M NOT GONNA BEG, LET ME BE YOUR MAN

I KNOW IT'S WRONG, WE SHOULD WAIT 'TIL WE'RE WED
 BUT FOR ONE NIGHT BABY, SEND YOUR GOD EARLY TO BED
 AND FALL INTO MY ARMS, LET ME BE YOUR MAN

I KNOW WHO I AM, BUT WHO AM I TO YOU?
 WE GO TOGETHER LIKE BARE SKIN AND TATTOOS
 YOUR BLUE WISHES AND YOUR PURPLE PRAYERS
 I'M THE ONE THAT'S GONNA GET YOU THERE

PUT ASIDE YOUR DOUBTS, THE RULES OF THE BOURGEOIS
 YOUR WRINGING HANDS WILL RUB THAT ROSARY RAW
 AND COME TO ME, LET ME BE YOUR MAN

SO LIKE A GAMBLER, I PLAYED MY TRUMP
 I ROLLED THE DICE AND HAD TO TAKE MY LUMPS
 YOU SENT ME PACKIN', DON'T WANT ME FOR YOUR MAN

NOW I'M HEADING NORTH, LEAVE THIS CURSED PLACE
 I COULD KICK THAT MOON FOR SHOWING THESE TEARS UPON MY FACE
 LOOK ME UP IF YOU GET LONELY, I STILL WANNA BE YOUR MAN

Towards the end of the song, the stage lights again flicker
 and go out. When they return, **NATHAN IS DEAD.**

PART 4 - DEPRESSION

MEL

That could have gone better. I
 suggest we stick to the setlist
 from now on.

Alice looks down at the list.

ALICE

This is pointless. And futile. I
 don't want to do this song.

MEL

You have to, it's next on the list.

ALICE

I don't **have** to do anything. What,
 you think someone else is pulling
 the strings? That we're puppets,
 fated to dance up here--
 (indicates audience)
 -- for their amusement?

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
Is that what's happening?

Fuck that! I can walk away from
this any time I want.

She storms off stage right, but stops short of exiting. She stands in place, hovering, trapped, at the edge of the stage - a real 'theatre' moment.

Mel walks over to Kev's bass amp, pours them both some orange juice and vodka. She walks to her, hands her the glass--

MEL
Here, a little pot valour. To us.

They toast, clink glasses, drink.

ALICE
Hmm, tastes funky.

MEL
Does it?
(grins at audience)
Drink up.

Alice walks back to the microphone--

ALICE
This is a blues. The names are old-fashioned, but the faces remain the same.

6. *THE DAY DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN* (ALICE SINGS)

"Part 4 - Depression" - had to be a blues, right? It's a story-song sans chorus, in the mold of Bob Dylan's *Isis*.

HALF-WORDS HALF-SPOKEN, HALF-PUNCHES HALF-THROWN,
 HALF-LIVES HALF-LIVED, HALF-LOVERS HALF-KNOWN
 ALL BEFORE THE DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

OTHER GODS HAD TEMPLES, BUT HE HAD THE WORLD
 AND TRAILING BEHIND, A MILLION WOOLY GIRLS
 ON THAT DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

MY MOTHER WAS SCARED, FOR MY SISTERS AND ME
 SHE GRIPPED US SO TIGHT, BUT I SOMEHOW GOT FREE
 THERE WAS NO PLACE ELSE THAT I'D RATHER BE
 ON THE DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

HE WALKED DOWN THE STREET, WILDFLOWERS IN HAND
 I'D KNOWN BOYS BEFORE, BUT NEVER SEEN A MAN
 UNTIL THAT DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

MY HEART WAS BEATING AS HARD AS IT COULD
 I FOLLOWED THEM DOWN DEEP INTO THE WOODS
 ON THE DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

FROM OUT OF THE GLOOM, I SAW BODIES COMBINED
 NEW BEASTS, WITH TWO HEADS AND LEGS INTERTWINED
 AND THEN I SENSED SOMEONE COMING FROM BEHIND
 THAT FATEFUL DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

MY WHOLE BODY TREMBLED, HIS HANDS ON MY HIPS
 MY FIRST TASTE OF WINE WAS FROM HIS LIPS
 ON THE DAY, DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

HE TAUGHT US ALL, 'BOUT THE FLEETNESS OF TIME
 ABOUT HOW IT SHOULD NEVER, BE LET WITHER ON THE VINE
 ON ANY DAY SINCE DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

OH HOW MY LIFE CHANGED, ON THAT BLESSED DATE
 AND EVERY YEAR NOW, I CELEBRATE
 THAT NECTAROUS MYSTERY, THAT SWEET TWIST OF FATE
 THE DAY DIONYSUS CAME TO TOWN

Towards the end of the song, the stage lights again flicker
 and go out. When they return, **ALICE IS...** well, she's nearly
 dead. Pre-dead. She's about to fall--

-- Mel rushes to her side, catches her. She drifts in and out
 of consciousness, but finds the strength to speak--

ALICE (CONT'D)
 I figured it out Mel.

MEL
 (panicked)
 Who the killer is?

ALICE

No, something **more** important. There are no individual songs. They're all movements in the same song, a song with endless writers - a serpent, a melody, forever devouring its own tail.

We think we're playing the songs, we think these--

(points to the guitar)

-- are the instruments. No man, **we're** the instruments, **we're** the ones getting played... show me, where do we end and the song begin?

Alice's eyes wander around the room.

MEL

What is it? What can you see? Angels?

ALICE

No... butterflies.

She reaches out to touch them, then collapses. **ALICE IS DEAD.**

Mel takes a moment to look at her face.

She gently lays her on the ground, returns to her kit.

PART 5 - ACCEPTANCE

MEL

(to audience)

I want to come clean.

A beat, the audience anticipating a confession.

MEL (CONT'D)

Before the gig, the band took part in an 'ayhuasca' ritual. Ayhuasca is an hallucinogenic tea made from the *caapi* vine. It grows freely in South America, but in Australia, it only grows in one sacred area - a patch of weeds behind the Woolies in Calwell.

First the vine is marinated in cask wine, before being cooked on a George Foreman grill.

(MORE)

MEL (CONT'D)

It's then steeped for twelve hours in Blue Powerade. Any deviation from this and it won't work. Artists and musicians have been using it for centuries to bring forth the muse.

So what I'm saying is - maybe all of this is a dream. Maybe none of you are real. Maybe I'll wake up from this and my friends are all still alive. Reality is just a consensus reached between consenting adults, right?

She hangs her head low before resuming.

MEL (CONT'D)

If there's a point, it's to keep playing. All of this - tonight, the music, music in general, film, painting, art, whatever, these stories we tell each other over and over and over...

The point of it is to distract ourselves from the fact *we're all going to die*. **That's it**. Brief respite from a cold universe, a gossamer diversion from contemplating our own morality.

And you know what? We need it. All of us, so I'm going to keep playing.

I kinda knew this was how it would end - not with a whimper, but with a bang--

BANG! She hits his snare drum, launches into--

7. THE LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL (MEL SINGS)

I'M JUST A LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL
 LOST IN A BIG AND BAD AND SCARY WORLD
 I'VE JUST LOST MY ONLY MAN
 HE RAN AWAY AS FAST AS HE CAN
 WE MET IN HOLLAND, BUT HE RAN AWAY IN FRANCE
 THAT TAUNTING, FLAUNTING LITTLE FLAUTIST MAN
 I'D BREAK HIS FLUTE UPON MY LEG
 BUT INSTEAD I WEAR A CROWN UPON MY HEAD
 THE QUEEN OF THE LONELIEST SUCKERS OF THIS WORLD
 THIS TINY LITTLE DRUMMER GIRL
 AN INCY-WINCY
 ITTY-BITTY
 TINY, MINUTE
 MICROSCOPIC
 INFINITESIMALLY SCARCE, LITTLE
 DRUMMER GIRL

Towards the end of the song, Mel stops abruptly--

MEL (CONT'D)
 Hold on, I've figured it out, it
 was--

She turns to stage right, and calls out--

MEL (CONT'D)
 YOU!!!

The stage lights again flicker and go out. We hear TWO GUN SHOTS. When the lights return, **MEL IS DEAD**, slumped over her drum kit.

The lights DIM TO BLACK.

A stately pause, then the lights raise once more on a bleak, empty stage.

One by one, the band return. Their dark robes have been transformed to baby blue. Their faces and exposed skin are also painted BLUE.

No halos, no wings, but unmistakably ANGELS.

They pick up their instruments and begin to play.

8. THE LAST HURRAH (EVERYBODY SINGS)

A 3/4 folk-styled song full of evocative imagery, that builds to a long, repeated crescendo.

LUKE

THIS FEAR
MAYBE IT'S IRRATIONAL
WE'LL ALL DIE AS MONKEYS
BUT WE'RE LIVING LIKE ANIMALS

AND THE THING OF IT IS
NO ONE TALKS - THEY JUST SCREAM
THERE'S NO REALITY LEFT
IT'S JUST ONE CRAZY DREAM

ALICE

AND IN THE MEANTIME
IN BETWEEN TIME
THERE'S ALWAYS A LAST HURRAH

LUKE

AND THIS FEAR
THAT NO ONE HERE'S RESPONSIBLE
IT'S JUST BABIES AND CHILDREN AND
PETS AND HEART-THROBS
ALL CANNIBALS ON CHEMICALS
AND I STILL FEEL LIKE
I'VE GOT SO MUCH LEFT TO DO
AND WHEN YOU PUSH YOUR FACE INTO
MINE
I KNOW YOU FEEL IT TOO

EVERYBODY

AND IF I'M GOING DOWN DOWN DOWN
I'M GOING DOWN SWINGING
AND IF I'M GONNA DIE DIE DIE
I'M GONNA DIE SINGING...

One by one, they slowly take off their instruments, hold them above their heads, and offer them to the sky. They place them back down and exit. Song becomes echo, echo becomes silence.

Adieu.

EPILOGUE

The Unnamed Figure returns to the stage, lit from behind so we NEVER SEE HIS FACE.

UNNAMED FIGURE

There is no such thing as *human nature* - everything is a matter of choice. There's no *moral* right or wrong, only thinking that makes it so.

You know, a diamond is just a rock. Gold is just some shiny other rock, buried under soil and shit and whatever else. Nothing in this world has any value except that which we place on it. Remember that, and choose for yourself, what is worth holding onto and what you need to let go...

There's an infinite number of explanations for what happened here tonight - allow me to give you three.

One, Josh's death was an accident - a freak aneurysm cut his promising life short. Nathan, sensing an opportunity to wipe out his rival and rejoin the band, attacks and kills Kev with the cordless drill. Mel was in love with Alice, who was in love with Luke. Mel killed Luke, with the blade, so she could have Alice to herself.

You still with me? Nathan was killed by Alice, believing she was avenging Kev, and that Nathan was embezzling the band's money. She was right on both fronts.

Mel, who loved Alice more than anything, discovered she had murdered Nathan, and fearing for her own life, poisoned her drink. In a textbook definition of 'bittersweet', she died in her arms.

Mel, distraught over the night's events, after tracing back everything that happened, then chose to end her own life - like she prophetically said, 'not with a whimper, but with a bang'.

A beat, to let that all sink in.

UNNAMED FIGURE (CONT'D)

Hypothesis two - Luke was the killer all along. He feared the band was on the verge of a break-up. He killed Josh - the new guy - to unite the rest through tragedy. However, Kev saw Luke do the deed, so he had to go, and with him, Luke's entire plan. Luke then faked his own death, planning to have all the royalties routed to his new address in the Orkneys.

He killed Nathan for his share of the publishing, then poisoned Alice for hers. Mel figured it all out, but too late - Luke shot her before she could reveal the truth.

That second gun shot though?

He raises his hand, revealing he is holding the GUN.

UNNAMED FIGURE (CONT'D)

Let's just say Luke got his just desserts.

He lowers his hand.

UNNAMED FIGURE (CONT'D)

Hypothesis three - look, life has always been about balance. Not enough water and the fields don't grow. Too much water and everything rots. If a song can make you get up and dance, if a song can move you to tears, if a song can make you want to create life, maybe a song can **kill** you?

He hums *that* riff, clicks his fingers in time, struts off stage like a trickster god.

FIN.