

**Congressman Davy: A Musical**

by

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and

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What a pity it is that these theatres are not so contrived that everybody could go; but the fact is, backwoodsman as I am, I have heard some things in them that was a leetle too tough fir good women and modest men; and that's a great pity, because there are thousands of scenes of real life that might be exhibited, both for amusement and edification, without offending.

-- Davy Crockett

Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience,

-- Anne Royall

## **CAST**

### **Main Roles (Not Doubled)**

ANNE ROYALL  
DAVY CROCKETT  
MRS. BALL  
SARAH  
MRS. BROWN

### **Featured Roles (Also Ensemble)**

FLUNKY  
POE  
LEAD DEMOCRAT  
LEAD WHIG  
PICKPOCKET  
HUNTSMAN  
CHAPMAN  
BEAR

### **Ensemble Roles**

TOWNSPEOPLE  
DEMOCRATS  
WHIGS

### **Band**

The CANEBRAKERS: Country, folk, bluegrass. String instruments, accordion, percussion.

## **SETTING**

The main action takes place in Washington City in 1834-35 at the corner of Seventh Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW.

Other locales -- a clearing in Tennessee, Northeast cities, Crockett's rooms -- are played in a neutral space, with props and other indicators as indicated.

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

(ANNE ROYALL with a mandolin player.)

ANNE ROYALL

Yes, it's me. (A beat.) Anne Royall. (Revs up.) All you've heard is true. Sharp pen. Big mouth. Run my own newspaper. *The Huntress*. First woman to do that in these United States. And about time! My calendar reads: Eighteen Thirty Three!

(Mandolin starts to play "The Ballad of Anne Royall.")

ANNE ROYALL

I know why you're here tonight. Politics. You say you hate politics. Fine by me. But politics are that awful wagon wreck on the public turnpike. You've simply got to look. (A half beat.) And bad times are good business for any newspaper. Like I say, you can't help but look.

(ANNE ROYALL begins the ballad.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

My name is Anne Royall  
You're pleased to meet me  
Despite the idle tongues  
Who call me "Harpy!"  
What's a woman's business  
Printin' news?  
Especially when she's got  
A point of view!

Came here seekin' my  
Late husband's pension  
He was a Yankee Doodle  
I should mention  
But I got nothin' from  
The legislature  
So now I flay the Congress  
With my paper!

Cogitation Agitation  
 Speculation Denigration  
 Acclamation Exhortation  
 Vindication Conflagration  
 Tempers and the tantrums of the nation ...  
 Populate my weekly publication!

On Saturdays you'll  
 See me at the Li-bree  
 The latest *Huntress* costs  
 A couple pennies  
 When facts are short  
 I will supply opinions  
 And season them with  
 Vinegar and onions!

They say my blood runs black  
 As printer's ink.  
 A consequence of  
 Makin' people think  
 When poxy preachers prey  
 Upon the meek  
 They find *The Huntress*  
 Turns the other cheek!

Cogitation Agitation  
 Speculation Denigration  
 Acclamation Exhortation  
 Vindication Conflagration  
 Tempers and the tantrums of the nation ...  
 Populate my weekly publication!

I'm saddled with the weight  
 Of manners bold  
 Last year they tried me as  
 A "common scold."  
 Found me guilty.  
 Yes, I paid my fine.  
 But I will never toe  
 The party line!

My ballad's ending – now  
 You all must know,  
 I tell unvarnished truth  
 To friend and foe.  
 I'll still be scribblin'  
 When the hammer drops  
 And even then ...  
 My presses never stop!

Cogitation Agitation  
 Speculation Denigration  
 Acclamation Exhortation  
 Vindication Conflagration  
 Tempers and the tantrums of the nation ...  
 Populate my weekly publication!

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

I like to see things up close before I publish. That's why I am out here on the campaign trail. You know this candidate for sure. His name is Davy Crockett.

(A clearing in West Tennessee in 1833. A stump upon which a candidate might speak. TOWNSPEOPLE have gathered, along with HUNTSMAN -- who walks with the steady elegance of a man long accustomed to a wooden leg.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

Tennessee! The homespun politics of the canebrake ...

(CROCKETT, in buckskin and hunting hat, rolls a barrel of whisky on stage. He is accompanied by FLUNKY who has mugs with "DAVY" on them.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

And whisky sufficient to wash the nonsense down.

(The TOWNSPEOPLE get their whisky as CROCKETT speaks. HUNTSMAN stands slightly apart and does not partake of the liquor.)

CROCKETT

Come whet your whistles, friends! Ladies, too -- if your bonnets fancy a lift! And keep the mugs. They're free gratis! ( A beat.) I come today for your votes. And watch mighty close -- or I'll have 'em.

TOWNSPERSON ONE

(Wipes his mouth after a swig.) You got mine, Davy!

CROCKETT

Thanks, neighbor!

TOWNSPERSON TWO

You ain't got mine yet. (A big swig.) Despite the hospitality.

CROCKETT

Let me have it with pepper, friend!

TOWNSPERSON TWO

What's your beef with President Jackson?

CROCKETT

I knowed Old Hickory for a long spell. Carried a rifle under his command. Helped throw a blaze of glory 'round him. (A half beat.)

HUNTSMAN

He's earned all that glory!

CROCKETT

(Over.) Earned and spent it. Jackson's been up in that White House so long now that he plum forgot who put him there! You did! (A half beat.) Just who made him "King Andy?" Must we all bow down to a single man? Jackson's a Caesar now. A Boney-part.

TOWNSPEOPLE

No! No! No!

CROCKETT

Listen, neighbors: Two years ago, you voted me out. Plumb took my job away.

TOWNSPERSON ONE

(Over.) We're sorry, Davy!

CROCKETT

'Twas injury to you, not me. Did kickin' me out of Congress make you any happier?

TOWNSPEOPLE

No! No! No!

HUNTSMAN

What about the people's land, Colonel Crockett?

TOWNSPERSON ONE

Congress wants to drive us off it!

TOWNSPERSON TWO

We worked that land! We got a right to it!

CROCKETT

I have a word to say on that score right now!

(THE CANEBRAKERS begin "Poor Man's Friend.")

CROCKETT/TOWNSPEOPLE

(CROCKETT.)

Count up all the blessins'  
God poured out on Tennessee  
So why're we so uneasy here?  
Can't feel at liberty?

I'll tell you plain: You cleared the cane  
And made it fertile land  
Then legislators passed a law  
To rip it from your hands.

You can't own the sun  
Can't buy the moon  
That's lunacy  
So why they think  
You're gonna sell  
Your dignity?



A ballot can resolve it all  
 Bring bad times to an end  
 Mark down your X  
 Next to my name  
 I am the poor man's friend.

A wealthy man acts like he can  
 Box up a thousand stars  
 He'd auction off the sunset, too  
 If he could reach that far

But I won't let them take away  
 The land that you made good  
 You work the land, you own the land  
 Let that be understood.

You can't own the sun  
 Can't buy the moon  
 That's lunacy  
 So why they think  
 You're gonna sell  
 Your dignity?

(TOWNSPEOPLE.)

A ballot can resolve it all  
 Bring bad times to an end  
 Make an X  
 By Davy's name  
 He is the poor man's friend.  
 He is the poor man's friend.

(Euphoria. FLUNKY hands CROCKETT whisky as  
 leaps down from the stump. CROCKETT takes a swig.  
 The TOWNSPEOPLE carry him away. HUNTSMAN  
 shakes his head in disbelief.)

CROCKETT

(Calls out to ANNE ROYALL.) Let that rascal Jackson know I'm coming back! And I'll  
 be hot as mustard on him when I get there!

HUNTSMAN

(To ANNE ROYALL.) Have you ever seen such astonishing gullibility? There's not a scrap of meat on the bone that Crockett just tossed to this rabble!

ANNE ROYALL

Maybe next time you should be up on the stump yourself, Mister Huntsman.

HUNTSMAN

If that's what it takes.

(HUNTSMAN skulks off. ANNE ROYALL downs her whisky and hands the mug to FLUNKY, who scurries off with it.)

ANNE ROYALL

A splendid dram!

## SCENE TWO

(Tennessee dissolves behind ANNE ROYALL.)

ANNE ROYALL

So Tennessee sent Davy Crockett back to Congress. President Jackson and the Democrats were mighty sore. They counted on his permanent exile from the government -- and not a two year vacation.

(Washington City in 1834 appears behind her.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

Washington City, capital of these twenty-four United States!

(Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest -- between 6th and 7th Streets. Stage right, Brown's Indian Queen Hotel. Stage left, across the avenue, is Mrs. Ball's Boarding House.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

Plenty of people are glad to see Davy Crockett back in town.

(ANNE ROYALL steps away as MRS. BALL steps out of her establishment.)

MRS. BALL

(Breathes deep, coughs, and smiles.) I love this filthy city! (A beat.) Sarah!

(SARAH appears instantaneously.)

SARAH

Yes, Mrs. Ball!

MRS. BALL

Is every room empty? We'll need them all.

SARAH

Put the last bag in the alley just now. Mister Poe's luggage.

MRS. BALL

Poe?

SARAH

That literary man. From Richmond.

MRS. BALL

He'll make a sorrowful verse of it, no doubt.

SARAH

I wonder always: Why do congressmen pay to share a bed between them?

MRS. BALL

Such austerity funds their three necessities: gaming, women, and whiskey.

SARAH

Well, it's murder on the sheets. They should take their boots off when they go to bed. (A beat.) Do you think Davy...? (Catches herself.) Colonel Crockett will return to us?

MRS. BALL

I rely upon it.

SARAH

I wonder if he's changed?

MRS. BALL

He'll be the same old Davy.

SARAH

I do hope so. He always said I made his heart ...

SARAH/MRS. BALL

Flutter like a duck in a puddle ...

SARAH

Well, he did!

(MRS. BROWN, proprietor of Brown's Indian Queen Hotel, steps into view across the street.)

MRS. BROWN

(Calls.) Missus Ball!

SARAH

(To MRS. BALL.) She means to make conversation ...

(MRS. BROWN advances, holding a sprig of flowers under her nose.)

MRS. BROWN

A most maleficent odor this morning. My nosegays only partially ameliorate it.

MRS. BALL

Why frequent our side of the avenue this morning?

MRS. BROWN

The Congress returns today.

MRS. BALL

And we are ready for them.

MRS. BROWN

But are we ready? For our future? This wretched noise and foul odor shall not persist forever. We must have a vision for our city!

MRS. BALL

A vision.

MRS. BROWN

(Over.) A prosperous metropolis to rival the finest on the Continent.

MRS. BALL

I've never been to ... "The Continent."

MRS. BROWN

Oh, but I have. Our founders intended to establish such a city here. They even hired a Frenchman to design it.

SARAH

You mean Mister Elephant.

MRS. BROWN

(Enunciates.) Mister L'Enfant. (A half beat.) A purely voluntary collection of monies from local businesses would set the wheels in motion for all necessary improvements.

MRS. BALL

Improve Washington City?

(The CANEBRAKERS slide into "Washington City.")

MRS. BALL/ MRS. BROWN

(MRS. BALL.)

It's a swamp we live on  
A sinking quagmire stink  
That men would build a city here ...  
It really makes you think.

Mosquitoes eat us  
The mud is plenty thick  
A perfect place it seems to me  
To practice politics

More gambling houses  
Than places you can eat  
And every day we toss our trash  
To pigs that roam the streets

They send us villains

To keep them far from home  
 And call our creek the Tiber, too  
 To make a mock of Rome

This capital embraces what it knows itself to be:  
 A filthy den of double dealing thieves!  
 A teeming nest of foul iniquity!

(MRS. BROWN.)  
 There's glory brewing  
 Amidst calamity  
 In present grimy circumstance  
 It's difficult to see

Soon marble buildings  
 Will grace this thoroughfare  
 Imagine opera houses  
 And statues everywhere!

A famous forum  
 Where great men contemplate  
 Talk freely of important things  
 Debate and legislate

Hotels and fountains  
 Bars and restaurants  
 An endless cornucopia  
 Of anything you want

This capital will soon embrace a glorious destiny!  
 The Paris of the 19th Century!  
 A gleaming beacon of democracy!

(MRS. BALL.)  
 It's plain delusion  
 To wish away this blight  
 An outhouse is an outhouse  
 Even if you paint it white

The streets abound with

Sad orphans and glum whores  
And rats invade the market stalls  
Devouring all the stores

A perfumed fragrance  
Of sweat and horse manure  
And stench invades the White House  
From a filthy open sewer

A wretched city  
On earth it has no peer  
But if you have the stomach  
You can make a profit here

This capital embraces what it knows itself to be:  
A filthy den of double dealing thieves!  
A teeming nest of foul iniquity!

(The song ends.)

MRS. BROWN

So I put you down as a "Maybe?"

(ANNE ROYALL returns.)

ANNE ROYALL

Missus Ball! Missus Brown! Our Congress returns today -- and not a moment too soon.  
My publication is as dull as a grogless tavern without them!

MRS. BALL

Missus Brown intends to improve Washington City.

ANNE ROYALL

We must! It is the Capital of America and of Cholera.

SARAH

(To MRS. BALL.) Let's remind Congressman Davy about the cholera at supper.

MRS. BROWN

Are you certain Colonel Crockett dines with you tonight?

MRS. BALL

He stayed with us in both his previous terms.

MRS. BROWN

The eighteen-twenties were long ago now!

MRS. BALL

He lodged with us still in Eighteen Thirty-One.

MRS. BROWN

And now it's Eighteen Thirty-Four!

### SCENE THREE

(DEMOCRATS wearing blue and WHIGS wearing red enter bumptiously in a mix of color.)

ANNE ROYALL

Here come the men of the Congress!

(The confusion of colors sorts itself out. MRS. BROWN joins the WHIGS. MRS. BALL drags SARAH to join the DEMOCRATS' side.)

LEAD WHIG

The election settled nothing.

LEAD DEMOCRAT

It settled that we Democrats still run things!

LEAD WHIG

Yet lack votes sufficient to make laws without the Whigs!

LEAD DEMOCRAT

Government must bend to the popular will ... however thin.

LEAD WHIG

I count it fortunate our Founders placed hurdles in the path of such majorities.



(The CANEBRAKERS play “A Faction!”)

# WHIGS/DEMOCRATS

(ALL.)

Your party platform always aims  
At our dissatisfaction  
Your thinking's always nonsense  
It's a positive distraction  
We think it best you don't exist  
Addition by subtraction  
So we embrace our only hope  
The power of a faction

A faction! A faction!  
Needs overreaction  
Repulsion's attraction  
For a faction! A faction!

(LEAD WHIG.)

If you want better  
Government  
There's got to be  
Some money spent

A road or bridge won't  
Build itself  
The people need to  
Offer help

(LEAD DEMOCRAT.)

These projects are misuse  
Of power  
The money that you spend  
Is ours

The people should decide  
What's best  
And keep the feathers  
From your nest

(ALL)

A faction! A faction!

Needs overreaction

Repulsion's attraction

For a faction! A faction!

(LEAD WHIG.)

We need a tariff

High not low

To help our manu-

factures grow

This country can supply

Its needs

If we build up

Our factories

(LEAD DEMOCRAT.)

You count too much

On industry

When agriculture's

What we need

To spread the wealth

We contemplate

A proper bank for

Every state!

(ALL)

A faction! A faction!

Needs overreaction

Repulsion's attraction

For a faction! A faction!

#### SCENE FOUR

(CROCKETT saunters onstage in a fine suit.)

ANNE ROYALL

(To CROCKETT.) You stand apart from this fractious hubbub.

CROCKETT

I bow to neither man nor faction. (Notices SARAH.) Hello there, Sarah!

SARAH

You remember!

CROCKETT

'Course I do!

SARAH

May I see your hands, Colonel?

(CROCKETT produces them. SARAH takes them in hers and looks them over carefully.)

SARAH (CONT'D)

I heard you caught a great comet by its tail -- and worried you might have burnt them in the doing!

CROCKETT

You don't catch a comet bare handed, Sarah. You get the longest rope you can find, toss it up in the sky, and drag that pesky bit of starlight down to earth!

LEAD DEMOCRAT

A bit of common sense at last! The sort that should lead you back to Old Hickory's corner. We welcome you there!

LEAD WHIG

The Whigs count Colonel Crockett as our friend, even when we differ on a policy.

CROCKETT

You fatten me like a bear on honey, gentlemen. But a fat bear gets terrible slow -- and in powerful danger of becoming a rug.

ANNE ROYALL

So you still oppose President Jackson?

## CROCKETT

When a man acts as a king, any opposition seems treason most perfidious. (Ignores vocal protests from DEMOCRATS.) Man-worship ain't American, friends. It's just like a skunk. Leaves stink behind long after it's gone !

(The CANEBRAKERS play "A Permanent State of Affairs.")

## CROCKETT

To be a king's a marvelous thing  
If you're a king  
But any subject finds  
A king's a different thing

Taxes stamps and taxes tea  
Lets you know you're colonies  
'Til you make a freedom bell  
And let it ring

Independence is  
Transcendence from that mess  
Still prefer our George  
To their George, I confess

The only way to make it so  
Is to get some blood to flow  
Just enough to get the country  
Repossessed

Our founders taught us  
Freedom's flame  
Is kept by those who dare  
Seems to me the best solution  
Is to keep the revolution  
As a permanent state of affairs  
Seems to me the best solution  
Is to keep the revolution  
As a permanent state of affairs

Today our king's called Hickory

Save him God!  
 Demands that we  
 Bow to him and applaud

Vetoes laws and closes banks  
 'xpecting nothing but our thanks  
 If there's any logic here  
 I think it flawed

All patriots reject  
 Such bold decrees!  
 And seek to end  
 His reign as remedy

Let's snatch up ol' Andy's crown!  
 Turn his whole world upside down  
 Make him flee to Mexico  
 Or Canady!

Our founders taught us  
 Freedom's flame  
 Is kept by those who dare  
 Seems to me the best solution  
 Is to keep the revolution  
 As a permanent state of affairs  
 Seems to me the best solution  
 Is to keep the revolution  
 As a permanent state of affairs

A permanent state of affairs

(CROCKETT's song sets the parties squabbling again.)

CROCKETT

(To ANNE ROYALL.) Does my answer satisfy?

ANNE ROYALL

You clarified positively nothing, congressman.

CROCKETT

Good politics, ain't it?

(MRS. BALL and SARAH sidle up to CROCKETT,  
followed by MRS. BROWN.)

SARAH

May I show you to your room at Missus Ball's?

(SARAH offers her arm to CROCKETT, who takes it.  
MRS. BROWN takes CROCKETT's other arm.)

MRS. BROWN

Brown's Indian Queen Hotel awaits! Our rooms are first-class, commodious, and private.

(SARAH and MRS. BROWN yank CROCKETT in  
opposite directions.)

CROCKETT

This was Ol' King Solomon's predicament!

(CROCKETT shakes like a wet dog. Both women let go  
of his arms. )

(The CANEBRAKERS play "The Comforts of Home.")

MRS. BALL/SARAH

(MRS. BALL.)

A wave

Come in

There's cheer

Within

These are the comforts of home

A glass

A fire

A place

To retire

These are the comforts of home

Simple is as simple does

The only reason “just because”  
 Our rooms are cozy, that is best  
 For tired men to find their rest

These are the comforts of home.

The clock  
 We wind  
 There’s sleep  
 To find  
 These are the comforts of home.

Cock crows  
 To you  
 There’s work  
 To do  
 These are the comforts of home

Simple is as simple does  
 The only reason “just because”

(SARAH.)  
 Sarah smiles and pours a cup  
 Of coffee, strong, to wake you up.

(MRS. BALL/SARAH.)  
 These are the comforts of home  
 These are the comforts of home  
 These are the comforts of home

(MRS. BALL and SARAH take CROCKETT’s arms and  
 lead him away.)

SARAH  
 I’ll make coffee right now! With lots of cream and sugar.

MRS. BROWN  
 (Calls after.) We have coffee at the Indian Queen! Clocks, too!

(LEAD WHIG approaches MRS. BROWN. He opens his wallet and pulls out a wad of cash. ANNE ROYALL hovers nearby.)

LEAD WHIG

What does cream and sugar cost these days?

(MRS. BROWN takes the cash, counts out some bills, and pockets them. She hands the balance back.)

LEAD WHIG

A change of residence is essential.

MRS. BROWN

Rely upon it.

LEAD WHIG

Discreetly, if possible?

MRS. BROWN

I run a hotel, sir. Discretion is my middle name.

(LEAD WHIG and MRS. BROWN depart.)

## SCENE FIVE

ANNE ROYALL

While flattery and ready money are indispensable commodities in Washington City, they are not on offer to everyone -- even men and women of infinite potential.

(POE enters with suitcase and approaches ANNE ROYALL.)

POE

Excuse me, Madame. To whom may I report an injustice suffered in Washington City?

ANNE ROYALL

Injustices are legion here, sir -- and attract scant notice.



POE

Mine is particular. I was cast out of my boarding house in untimely fashion. My suitcase deposited in the alley as I breakfasted.

ANNE ROYALL

(Over.) Which establishment?

POE

Mrs. Ball's.

ANNE ROYALL

You were booted to make room for congressmen, Mister ...

POE

Poe. Edgar Poe.

ANNE ROYALL

Anne Royall.

POE

The Anne Royall? Editrix of *The Huntress*?

ANNE ROYALL

Care to purchase a copy?

(POE pulls out his pockets.)

POE

I am a poet, and ...

ANNE ROYALL

(Finishes.) ... a man without a room.

(POE opens his suitcase and pulls out a magazine.)

POE

*The Southern Literary Messenger*. Published monthly in Richmond. (A half beat.) I am the deputy editor.

ANNE ROYALL

I shall peruse it with my afternoon coffee.

POE

(Bubbling over a bit.) Technology is marvelous, yes? There is a machine in Constantinople that can actually play chess! But the march of progress never seems to keep pace with the racing of our minds, does it? I live in hope that some inventor can devise a mechanism to set our thoughts directly onto the page! Sheets and sheets of perfect copy from our fevered brains.

ANNE ROYALL

I'll be first in line to buy such a contraption!

POE

I despair at times. Will there ever be an enlightened citizenry to appreciate our work?

ANNE ROYALL

I fear not, Mister Poe.

(The CANEBRAKERS begin "The Bitter End.")

ANNE ROYALL/POE

(ANNE ROYALL.)

Any gentleman can see  
The greatest fruit of liberty  
Is that the populace is free  
To languish in stupidity

From city street to countryside  
Intelligence is nullified  
While ignorance still multiplies  
One cannot hope to stem the tide

(ANNE ROYALL/POE.)

And that's why genius suffers so  
The genius suffers 'cause s/he knows  
That fools pursue their folly  
To the bitter bitter end

(POE.)

Just leave the classics in your drawer

(ANNE ROYALL.)

Ol' Aristotle makes 'em snore

(POE.)

And mathematics is a bore

(ANNE ROYALL.)

Unless you're on the trading floor

(POE.)

An eager imbecility

Bears no responsibility

It makes a man feel truly free

To wander through life blissfully

(ROYALL/POE.)

And that's why genius suffers so

The genius suffers 'cause s/he knows

That fools cling to their folly

To the bitter bitter end

And that's why genius suffers so

The genius suffers 'cause s/he knows

That fools cling to their folly

To the bitter bitter end

(The song ends.)

POE

A pleasure, Missus Royall.

ANNE ROYALL

Godspeed, Mister Poe.

(POE departs.)

ANNE ROYALL

I wonder if we'll hear from him again?

## SCENE SIX

(ANNE ROYALL departs, talking as she leaves.)

## ANNE ROYALL

The press of time compels us to skip ahead. Months have passed now, and the battle for our hero from the Tennessee canebrake rages on. (A beat.) Have you ever seen a canebrake? Vast stands of what the Chinese call “bamboo” -- so thick you can’t see through it. (A half beat.) You try to farm that land. It breeds a certain ... “temperament.” (A beat.) So who will win the day? I have my suspicions, of course. But it’s best to confirm any fact before you publish it.

(MRS. BROWN steps out of her hotel. LEAD WHIG appears and calls to her.)

LEAD WHIG

Any progress?

MRS. BROWN

The Colonel still resists our blandishments.

LEAD WHIG

He knows he’ll have a bed all to himself?

MRS. BROWN

And also that it is “free gratis” -- as he is wont to say. Yet we must persist until the white flag is raised.

LEAD WHIG

By Crockett? Or by us?

(WHIGS enter.)

LEAD WHIG (CONT'D)

The devil take propriety and principles! We must have a man like Crockett for our next campaign!

(The CANEBRAKERS pluck out “The Proper Party.”)

LEAD WHIG

I admit

It makes me sad

To beat the Jackson men

We must adopt a vulgar ... fad

A simple bumpkin  
 Unconstrained  
 Is now the right ingredient  
 To win a tough campaign

Old Hickory's  
 The man to beat  
 If we don't find our Hickory  
 We'll go down to defeat

We need a boastful homespun ruffian  
 Terror from the cane  
 To put the proper party  
 In the White House once again.

An orator  
 Can charm a snake  
 But silver tongues alone  
 Won't cure our bellyaches

We have ideas  
 We have the cash  
 Necessity demands  
 We dress it up in balderdash

Crockett grins  
 The bears from trees  
 We need his sort of roughneck  
 Honest frontier poetry

I think a boastful homespun ruffian  
 A terror from the cane  
 Might put the proper party  
 In the White House once again.

(The WHIGS cheers the strategy and depart. MRS.  
 BROWN pulls LEAD WHIG aside.)

MRS. BROWN

Crockett is no mere bumpkin.

LEAD WHIG

He is unlettered.

MRS. BROWN

Hardly. He wrote a book. *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett By Himself*.

LEAD WHIG

Ill-lettered, then.

MRS. BROWN

Crockett is a uncommon mixture of amiability and ambition. Accepts a gift from an excess of politeness, not avarice. Yet on matters of principle, he can be stubborn as candle wax on a rug. (A half beat.) You must be a friend to him. Offer him a platform to talk about his principles. Then you'll have him.

LEAD WHIG

Anything within reason.

MRS. BROWN

I shall resume our bombardment.

(LEAD WHIG bows quickly and departs. )

## SCENE SEVEN

(MRS. BROWN muses. Darkness descends. Men light street lamps along the avenue. CROCKETT arrives at his boarding house.)

MRS. BROWN

(Calls out.) Colonel Crockett!

CROCKETT

(A slight bow.) Missus Brown.

MRS. BROWN

A word?

(CROCKETT crosses the street. They regard each other silently in the illumination.)

MRS. BROWN (CONT'D)

(A few beats.) I believe you are greatly misunderstood.

CROCKETT

That's the fate of every rustic in the big eternal city.

MRS. BROWN

No, Colonel. You are very clever. (A sliver of a beat.) Cunning perhaps.

CROCKETT

You make a burlesque of me, Missus Brown.

MRS. BROWN

Remind me: How many bears did you kill in a single year? (Nothing from CROCKETT.)  
Come now. It's in your book.

CROCKETT

A hundred and five.

MRS. BROWN

(Over.) One hundred and five. Impressive.

CROCKETT

Made an impression on the ba'rs.

MRS. BROWN

(Confides.) There's game aplenty in Washington City, too.

CROCKETT

I've thought upon that once or twice.

MRS. BROWN

Of course you have. Greatness attaches itself to you already. And it attracts many friends. Friends who can make the little things that weigh a great man down ... disappear. A bankruptcy, say. Or a loan gone bad.

CROCKETT

Little things can be heavy.

MRS. BROWN

Our Founding Fathers had calamities, you know. And friends to help them. You don't read that in history books.

CROCKETT

(A beat.) When I was justice of the peace in Tennessee, I made the courthouse benches with my own two hands.

MRS. BROWN

Scandalous.

CROCKETT

Not in Tennessee, ma'am.

MRS. BROWN

(Confiding, again.) To run for president requires many hands. Two alone won't do.

CROCKETT

I wouldn't say that out loud.

MRS. BROWN

No need. The Whigs say it for you.

(The CANEBRAKERS play "The Finer Things.")

MRS. BROWN (CONT'D)

It's not a sin  
To want to have  
The finer things

A flower turns  
To seek the sun  
It's coveting

A silk luxuriates  
In skin  
To which it clings

And crystal sparkles  
In a light  
That's shimmering



Some men earn  
And some inherit  
What's important  
Is to get it  
Cultivate  
An aspiration  
Make the finer things  
Your expectation

You've never had  
A chance to try  
The finer things

But once you do  
I'm sure you'll find  
A taste for them

To grasp the best  
Things on display  
Can give you wings

You soar above  
And see a world  
That's glimmering

Some men earn  
And some inherit  
What's important  
Is to get it  
Cultivate  
An aspiration  
Make the finer things  
Your expectation

The finer things

CROCKETT

You grind it all up fine as ginger.

MRS. BROWN

May I reserve your room at the Indian Queen? Our supper tonight is roast duck.

CROCKETT

What do my new friends want from Davy Crockett?

MRS. BROWN

Hear them out. Let them make their case to you.

CROCKETT

That's the limit?

MRS. BROWN

Well, they hope not.

(MRS. BROWN spits in her palm, and offers her hand.  
CROCKETT guffaws in astonishment.)

CROCKETT

Missus Brown!

MRS. BROWN

It's how you seal a deal in Tennessee, yes?

(CROCKETT spits in his hand. They shake.)

CROCKETT

(A beat.) I'll fetch my things. There ain't many. (A slight beat.) Hate to disappoint Missus Ball.

MRS. BROWN

It's a wicked world, Congressman. We must find what's good for ourselves in it.

(CROCKETT departs.)

MRS. BROWN (CONT'D)

Victory!

SCENE EIGHT

(The WHIGS gather at the hotel holding CROCKETT signs. MRS. BALL emerges and stares angrily. SARAH holds back tears.)

(The WHIGS clamor for CROCKETT, who comes out of the hotel with MRS. BROWN and ANNE ROYALL. )

CROCKETT

Many thanks for this tip top frolickin' welcome!

WHIG ONE

Davy for President!

CROCKETT

I sink or swim on merit, friends.

WHIG TWO

What's the best way to deal with a bully like King Andy?

(Hisses from the WHIGS.)

CROCKETT

Step right up to him. Stare him through. Make that bully try and lick you. (A half beat.) Most times, he cain't.

WHIG ONE

But what if he does lick you?

CROCKETT

You jump back up and make him do it again. Make that bully give up before you do.

WHIG TWO

That's a recipe for a perpetual beating.

CROCKETT

Well, sometimes a bully's arms just get tired.

(Laughter from the WHIGS.)

## WHIG ONE

Will you run for President?

## CROCKETT

Should I be voted into the White House, I'll serve the people and uphold the Constitution. And all of it, too. Not just the parts I favor.

(Cheers of "Davy for President" from the WHIGS.)

## LEAD WHIG

Congressman Crockett hails from the Far West. But we want him to see every part of our great nation. (To CROCKETT.) The Whig Party shall underwrite your journey to do so!

## ANNE ROYALL

What do you say, Congressman?

(The CANEBRAKERS launch into "Just Go Ahead.")

## CROCKETT/WHIGS

(CROCKETT.)

When life gets dark as deepest night  
You'll find a star's a handy thing  
To guide you to the place that's right

For me that star's a simple phrase  
"Be sure you're right, then go ahead"  
It's served me very well in all my days

Cause life can put you on the spot  
So think it over 'til you're sure --  
Then give it, give it everything you've got

Just go ahead  
Just go ahead  
Sharpen up your plow  
And drive it through  
The boneyard of the dead

Just go ahead  
Just go ahead

Fancy dreams are only  
Schemes until  
You up and go ahead

An alligator never thinks  
It waits until its supper comes  
And snaps a good thing up before it sinks

Just dive on in, the water's fine  
Don't worry if it's cold or hot  
And you'll get yours the same way I get mine

Don't let a good thing pass you by  
Don't let your supper swim away  
And leave you empty-handed high and dry

Just go ahead  
Just go ahead  
Sharpen up your plow  
And drive it through  
The boneyard of the dead

Just go ahead  
Just go ahead  
Fancy dreams are only  
Schemes until  
You up and go ahead

(CROCKETT and LEAD WHIG spit and shake hands.  
ANNE ROYALL scribbles,)

SARAH

Congressman Davy's a Whig!

END ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

(SARAH sweeps the boarding house porch.)

(The CANEBRAKERS play “Sarah’s Song of Fruitless Yearning.”)

SARAH (CONT'D)

It’s very hard  
To lose a thing  
You’ve only had  
By thinkin’ it  
It’s always close  
Right by your nose  
But you can’t get  
A hold of it.

A pretty yarn  
You tell yourself  
With only you  
Believin’ it  
A thing you knit  
With all your hopes  
'Til circumstance  
Unravels it.

ANNE ROYALL

(To the audience.) Poor Sarah. I feel for her. I do. Politics always bursts the soapy bubble of our sentiment. We think we know a politician. Then they flip -- or flop -- and break our hearts. (A half beat.) But Sarah’s misery is my good fortune. Politics is like that, too. My journeys to great events have become exhausting. A sturdy young lass to accompany me is just the thing. Not getting any younger, you know. (Calls out to SARAH.) Hello, Sarah!

SARAH

(Not looking up.) Hello, Missus Royall.

ANNE ROYALL

Still mooning over Congressman Davy?

(SARAH brushes furiously. Suddenly, she drops the broom and bursts into tears.)

SARAH

How could he do it?

ANNE ROYALL

You heard the cheers.

(SARAH nods and picks up her broom.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

Applause is like good whisky. Makes anyone a little drunk.

SARAH

Will Congressman Davy ever sober up?

ANNE ROYALL

Want to find out? (SARAH nods.) Come along with me, then. You'll see Davy Crockett all the time. Keep an eye on him. (Sliver of a beat.) And I'll pay you to do it.

SARAH

Really?

ANNE ROYALL

Of course! Bring your broom along! Let's sweep a different dirty porch!

SARAH

I'll leave the broom right here if that's OK with you!

## SCENE TWO

(SARAH drops her broom. The stage bursts into frenetic activity. CROCKETT emerges with his baggage.)

MRS. BALL watches SARAH accompany ANNE ROYALL. She picks up the broom and departs in a huff.)

ANNE ROYALL

(Declaims.) Davy Crockett's Tour to the North and Down East!

LEAD WHIG

(Declaims.) To visit Great Manufacturing Establishments of our Nation!

SARAH

(Declaims.) Observe its Morals and its Literature!

CROCKETT

(Loud.) See with my own two eyes how this great big eternal democracy works!

(The CANEBRAKERS play "Crockett's Tour.")

CROCKETT/CAST

(ALL.)

We're born in our appointed place  
But if we stick around  
We'll miss out on the wonders to be found.

(CAST.)

Philadelphia!

(CROCKETT.)

(Sing/Speaks) The city where it all began  
Where freedom was declared.  
They also kept the bell that rang  
But it ain't been repaired.  
They print up all our money here  
And keep it in a vault.  
And while we argue if that's best  
We teeter on default!

(PICKPOCKET emerges from the throng with wallets.)

(WHIG ONE.)

Our pockets picked in Camden!



(CROCKETT.)

Must have been some Jackson men!

(CROCKETT/CAST.)

We're born in our appointed place  
But if we stick around  
We miss out on the wonders to be found.

(CAST.)

New York City!

(CROCKETT.)

New York's got a Battery, friends  
Without a single gun.  
Just people promenadin'  
In shiny springtime sun  
But only when that sun goes down  
Does New York come alive.  
The drama in the theatres  
Spills out to streets outside!

(WHIG TWO.)

Don't get sea sick, Congressman!

(CROCKETT.)

My constitution's steady, friend! What'er I et leaves at the proper end!

(ALL.)

We're born in our appointed place  
But if we stick around  
We'll miss out on the wonders to be found.

(CAST.)

Boston!

(CROCKETT.)

They took me to the 'Ol North Church  
Where famous Paul Revere  
Put lanterns in the tower  
To warn of redcoats near

(MORE)

## CROCKETT/CAST (CONT'D)

Their statue of George Washington  
 Don't sit that well with me  
 A toga – Not a uniform!  
 How's that for history?

(ALL.)

We're born in our appointed place  
 But if we stick around  
 We'll miss out on the wonders to be found.

(The CANEBRAKERS stop.)

LEAD WHIG

(Shouts.) You speak of manners, Congressman! And history!  
 What of manufactures? Factories?

(The CANEBRAKERS launch into "Busy Hands.")

LEAD WHIG / CROCKETT / WHIGS

(CROCKETT.)

That calico produced in Lowell  
 Is soft and mighty pretty  
 How do you make a thing so fine  
 From the grindin' of machinery!

(The WHIGS form an assembly line.)

(LEAD WHIG.)

Trust me it's a simple tale  
 Give industry a cotton bale  
 Allow the human energies  
 Collected in our factories  
 A wond'rous miracle perform  
 Raw materials transformed  
 With zero loss of quality  
 A mass production alchemy!  
 (To CROCKETT.) Get it now?

(CROCKETT.)

The gist.

(LEAD WHIG.)

There's more!

(WHIGS.)

We're listening!

(LEAD WHIG.)

The best part I confess

Is commerce makes us virtuous

There's no time for idleness

When busy hands seek righteousness

A sound commodity

Requires full efficiency

Perfect productivity

Reflects divine theology!

(CROCKETT.)

Now that I've seen

A factory

I've had a great

Epiphany!

And someday soon

I do agree

We'll have machines

In Tennessee!

(Assembly line dissolves. The WHIGS engulf  
CROCKETT.)

(WHIGS.)

Commerce makes us virtuous

Busy hands seek righteousness

Perfect productivity

Reflects divine theology

And someday soon we all agree ...

They'll bring machines to Tennessee!

(The CANEBRAKERS play as the tour melts away.)

SCENE THREE

(ANNE ROYALL and SARAH alone on stage. Behind them, Washington City appears as dawn breaks.)

ANNE ROYALL

Crockett's tour was a triumph -- though not without its controversies. He turned down an honorary degree from Harvard College. He did. Really. Told its professors that he wouldn't recite the necessary words in Latin -- or "Old Roman" as he calls it. (A beat.) Anyway, I wonder how it all played back here in Washington City.

(MRS. BROWN emerges from her hotel with nosegays.  
MRS. BALL comes out from her boarding house.)

MRS. BROWN

Lovely morning! (Nothing from MRS. BALL.) Spring in the air! Fresh nosegays! (Still nothing.) I expect Colonel Crockett by supper!

MRS. BALL

(Bursts out at last.) Only a fool takes a fancy trip up north, paid for by Whigs and bankers, as the Congress sits in session without him! (Sees SARAH.) And I suppose you want your old job back!

SARAH

Not a chance, Missus Ball! I am busy with politics now.!

MRS. BROWN

(To ANNE ROYALL.) The papers say Crockett's tour met with jubilant crowds!

MRS. BALL

He was gallivanting through exotic landscapes, trying on the role of President ...

MRS. BROWN

(Over.) Perhaps it fits.

MRS. BALL

(Through.) And paying no mind to his present position. (A half beat.) Tennessee called Davy Crockett home once before. Perhaps it will do so again!

SARAH

They can't! Congressman Davy's going to bring them factories!

MRS. BROWN

Jackson's met his match. That is your prime vexation.

ANNE ROYALL

I can ask President Jackson's opinion directly when next I interview him.

MRS. BALL

(Sniggers.) Will you meet at the Potomack River?

MRS. BROWN

(Sniggers.) As you met with President Adams?

(MRS. BALL and MRS. BROWN cackle with glee.)

SARAH

I don't get it.

MRS. BROWN

Missus Royall snatched away John Quincy Adams' garments as he swam in the Potomack.

MRS. BALL

Held them to ransom as ransom until he agreed to an interview.

SARAH

Missus Royall!

ANNE ROYALL

It worked, didn't it? Front page of the next issue!

MRS. BALL

You went too far!

ANNE ROYALL

Such radical measures might prove unnecessary if women held real power.

SARAH

The Congress could be improved mightily by women!

MRS. BALL

Go ahead and yoke your carriage to Pegasus as you dream of that!

(THE CANEBRAKERS play “A Song About Power.”)

MRS. BROWN/ANNE ROYAL/MRS. BALL/SARAH

(MRS. BROWN.)

Our power's better  
Where it's at  
Behind the throne  
Discreet. Alone.  
Where we can  
Whisper softly  
Make 'em think  
Our thought's their own

(ANNE ROYALL.)

If you speak loud  
They cry and bray  
You're much too bold  
A common scold  
But bite your tongue  
And you will find  
Silence isn't any-  
Thing like gold

(MRS. BALL/ MRS. BROWN.)

Why should women take up arms  
If we possess sufficient charms?  
No need to grab for power like a mob

(ANNE ROYALL/ SARAH.)

Little boys who play in dirt  
Then run home to mummy's skirt!  
Tell me women wouldn't do a better job!

(MRS. BALL.)

Dustups get you  
Filthy dirty  
Only crumbs  
In bitter scrums.  
Spoon out sugar  
Honey talk

Sweetness makes the  
Sour man succumb

(SARAH.)

Why do you sell  
Women short?  
Civility  
Won't set us free.  
We have voices  
Let 'em soar  
Abandon our  
Humility!

(MRS. BALL/ MRS. BROWN.)

Why should women take up arms  
If we possess sufficient charms?  
No need to grab for power like a mob

(ANNE ROYALL/SARAH.)

Little boys who play in dirt  
Then run home to mummy's skirt!  
Tell me women wouldn't do a better job!

(ALL.)

Little boys who play in dirt  
Then run home to mummy's skirt!  
Tell me women wouldn't do a better job!

(The song ends.)

SARAH

Could a woman truly be elected to the Congress? Or to the President's House?

MRS. BALL

You've misplaced your common sense tagging along with Missus Royall.

ANNE ROYALL

No one imagined a woman could run a newspaper. Until I did it.

(An immense hubbub offstage.)

MRS. BROWN

Here come the men. Ask them.

SCENE FOUR

(The DEMOCRATS enter disputatiously, including  
LEAD DEMOCRAT and HUNTSMAN)

ANNE ROYALL

(Steps forward.) Having seen the machinations of the Whigs, your correspondent now pulls back the curtain on the Democrats' plan to foil them. Both sides of the matter. It's only fair!

MRS. BROWN

Democrats! Even nosegays can't ameliorate this stink!

(MRS. BROWN returns to her hotel.)

LEAD DEMOCRAT

The Crockett crisis is upon us, gentlemen.

DEMOCRAT ONE

He's a political giant.

HUNTSMAN

So we must chop him down to size.

MRS. BALL

Here's your axe, gentlemen. Crockett's missed a dozens of votes this session alone.

LEAD DEMOCRAT

(Pulls a paper out of his pocket.) Seventy. To be exact.

MRS. BALL

And drew his full salary for it!

SARAH

Missus Ball!



DEMOCRAT ONE

That's eight dollars a day!

MRS. BALL

(Instantly.) Five hundred and sixty dollars.

HUNTSMAN

Swindled from the taxpayers!

LEAD DEMOCRAT

(To ANNE ROYALL.) I'd like to see that fact in *The Huntress*.

ANNE ROYALL

And in a place of prominence!

(The CANEBRAKERS play "Hickory Dockery.")

LEAD DEMOCRAT

Hickory dockery  
Tall tales and mockery  
Puffed-up peacockery  
That's how you win  
How you take in  
A ballot castin'  
Citizen

Moonshine and honey  
Sweet words, or funny  
And barrels of money  
That's how you win  
How you take in  
A ballot castin'  
Citizen

Find yourself people who feed on a dream  
Sell better times even when we're in shit  
Don't let reality push its way in  
Sell a dream

Don't 'pologize if you're caught in a lie

Polish up old shoes and sell 'em as new  
 Trust that the low road will get  
 Get you back home...

Duck all the arrows  
 Feast on the marrow  
 Cast off tomorrow  
 That's how you win  
 How you take in  
 A ballot castin'  
 Citizen

(HUNTSMAN pipes up boldly,)

HUNTSMAN  
 Gentlemen! You need a hunter to bag this game ...

LEAD DEMOCRAT  
 Says Mister Huntsman.

DEMOCRAT ONE  
 Our candidate must match Crockett, sir. (Looks HUNTSMAN over.) In every way.

HUNTSMAN  
 So my wooden leg disqualifies me, sir ... ?

DEMOCRAT ONE  
 I mean no slight ...

HUNTSMAN  
 I lost this limb in service. (A thump for effect.) To our nation. (Thump.) At President Jackson's side. (Thump.) Will you find a man to outshoot or "outtwrassle" Crockett? Hell, no. But good hunters trap as well as chase.

(The CANEBRAKERS play "Down a Peg.")

HUNTSMAN/DEMOCRATS  
 (HUNTSMAN.)  
 Take a man  
 A common man  
 Build him up until

He puts you in his shadow

There's not a man  
You understand  
Can't be beat if  
Voters watch him eat some crow

They say that Crockett kills  
A hundred bears a night  
Saw a frozen dawn  
And simply melted it to light  
Leaps the Mississippi  
Like a boy of seven might  
If Davy Crockett says it's so  
You know it must be right

I'm a man  
A simple man  
Gave my right leg  
In America's defense

And I'm a man  
Who understands  
A vic'try only comes by  
Speaking common sense

You hear that Crockett kills  
A hundred bears a night  
Saw a frozen dawn  
And simply melted it to light  
Leaps the Mississippi  
Like a boy of seven might  
You 're something way past gullible  
If that's the hook you bite

I'm the man for beatin' Davy  
Gimme cash and gimme whiskey  
I'll let voters get to know me  
So familiar that they're comfy  
Just forget I got this stubborn wooden leg

I'm the man to take ol' Crockett down a peg!

(DEMOCRATS carry HUNTSMAN off. MRS. BALL exits. SARAH looks to ANNE ROYALL, who shrugs. SARAH exits.)

## SCENE FIVE

ANNE ROYALL

Can Adam Huntsman smother Crockett's ambitions in the crib? A formidable task, for sure!

(POE strides briskly across the stage, absorbed in a magazine. A near collision.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)  
I beg your pardon, sir.

POE  
Apologies, madam.

(A mutual recognition.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)  
Mister Poe.

POE (CONT'D)  
Missus Royall.

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)  
How's business?

POE  
Subscribers in abundance.

ANNE ROYALL  
Wonderful!

POE  
(Over.) But none of them ever pay us for their copies.

ANNE ROYALL  
I'm in the same canoe! I flog the most egregious freeloaders in print, you know. I name names.

POE

Doesn't public shaming make them less inclined to pay?

ANNE ROYALL

One can't afford readers at any price, Mister Poe.

POE

I am ashamed to confess that I have -- of late -- stooped to indulge the vulgar popular taste in search of readers.

ANNE ROYALL

Success depends on it, I'm afraid.

POE

But my fall has been precipitous. My review of Crockett's new book is printed in our latest issue!

ANNE ROYALL

A notice for Davy Crockett? From Edgar Poe?

POE

Not a positive one, of course.

(POE hands ANNE ROYALL a copy, open to the appropriate page. ANNE ROYALL reads aloud.)

ANNE ROYALL

"We see no reason why Colonel Crockett should not be permitted to expose himself if he pleases, and to be as much laughed at as he thinks proper -- but works of this kind have had their day, and have fortunately lost their attractions. We think this work especially censurable for the frequent vulgarity of its language." (A half beat.) Pithy.

POE

Debased public taste has won the day.

(The CANEBRAKERS begin "Poison Pens.")

ANNE ROYALL /POE

(ANNE ROYALL.)

Readers don't want anything sublime  
Scandals. Gossip.

(MORE)

## ANNE ROYALL /POE (CONT'D)

Corruption and crime.  
 No market for an elevated taste.  
 Keep it dirty,  
 Dizzy and debased.

(POE/ANNE ROYALL.)

Each morning's edition  
 Is rife with malediction  
 Pages filled with fictions  
 To behold  
 Inane repetition  
 And rote inquisition  
 Breed keen opposition  
 Uncontrolled  
 Yet every penny that we spend  
 Fills up the inkwells for the poison pens!

(POE.)

Nobody ever wants their noggin taxed  
 Amusements. Diversions.  
 Free of facts.  
 And if you ever find you're getting stuck?  
 Raise some ruckus  
 Fling some muck

(POE/ANNE ROYALL.)

Each morning's edition  
 Is rife with malediction  
 Pages filled with fictions  
 To behold  
 Inane repetition  
 And rote inquisition  
 Breed keen opposition  
 Uncontrolled  
 Yet every penny that we spend  
 Fills up the inkwells for the poison pens!  
 Every penny that we spend  
 Fills up the inkwells for the poison pens!

(ANNE ROYALL offers the magazine back to POE. )

POE

Keep it with my compliments, Missus Royall.

ANNE ROYALL

Godspeed, Mister Poe.

(POE bows and departs.)

### SCENE SIX

(The WHIGS enter in a ferment.)

ANNE ROYALL (CONT'D)

Have look at this, gentlemen!

(ANNE ROYALL hands the *Southern Literary Messenger* to LEAD WHIG, and points to the review. She exits. LEAD WHIG skims unhappily. He passes it to other WHIGS, who also read it and get angry.)

(CROCKETT enters, dressed in buckskin and carrying his rifle: Ol' Betsey. The WHIGS hands him the magazine and he reads it.)

CROCKETT

Who's this Edgar Allan Poe?

LEAD WHIG

A malicious cockalorum!

(WHIG ONE takes the magazine from CROCKETT and nails it to a post. MRS. BROWN steps outside.)

CROCKETT

Target practice!

(CROCKETT takes aim and shoots at the magazine. WHIGS cheer. CROCKETT reloads and shoots again. Then a third time.

WHIG ONE retrieves the magazine and hands it to CROCKETT, who holds it up. There are three bullet holes in the center of the magazine. Cheers.)

WHIG TWO

Ready for the hunt!

CROCKETT

My quarry is votes, friends!

WHIG ONE

The Democrat Huntsman contests your seat.

CROCKETT

No worries at all. He's a perfect possum head.

WHIG ONE

A possum head?

CROCKETT

Ever cut open a possum's head? Not a brain inside it!

WHIG TWO

How will you lick Huntsman, Davy?

CROCKETT

(A bolder register.) Common sense -- and Ol' Betsey here -- will help the voters decide the right path!

(CROCKETT begins "The Betsy Song.")

CROCKETT (CONT'D)

Ask me why I call my rifle Betsy  
No secret. It's a simple kind of thing.  
She cuts a lovely figure  
But when you squeeze her trigger  
She kicks up noise to make the valley ring

Each man should take unto himself a Betsy  
Commandment that the Lord above decrees  
Take Betsy in your arms



You'll n'er come to harm  
 You're ready if the day brings war or peace

If you want to ascend  
 Defend higher ground  
 Keep a pretty Betsy around  
 A cupboard that's bare  
 Is something to dread  
 But Betsy will keep a man fed

You need a troop of Betsies for militia  
 A powr'ful cure when tyrants raise a hand  
 A few determined men  
 Can turn the tide agin'  
 Whenever threats are risin' in the land

But me, my favorite Betsy's solitary  
 A Betsy held by me and me alone  
 She's not a gal to talk  
 If quarry's bein' stalked  
 But when she speaks her piece the deed is done

Hanker to make  
 A powerful stand  
 You need to keep your Betsy at hand  
 Want to weigh in  
 On a pressin' debate  
 Your Betsy will keep the facts straight.

#### CROCKETT/WHIGS

Want to ascend  
 Defend higher ground  
 Keep a pretty Betsy around  
 Want to weigh in  
 On a pressin' debate  
 Betsy will keep the facts straight.

(Cheers from the WHIGS, who carry CROCKETT off.  
 LEAD WHIG lingers to speak with MRS. BROWN.)

LEAD WHIG

We need a portrait of Crockett in that garb. For the campaign lithograph.

MRS. BROWN

The painter Chapman lodges with us.

(LEAD WHIG takes out his wallet and counts out bills.)

LEAD WHIG

Expensive business, politics.

MRS. BROWN

Good thing it's not your money.

LEAD WHIG

To be the bankers' party is a convenient thing, I suppose.

MRS. BROWN

Best not tell the congressman.

(LEAD WHIG exits. MRS. BROWN goes into hotel.)

## SCENE SEVEN

(Washington City vanishes again. CHAPMAN enters with canvas and easel and sets up. CROCKETT saunters in, still dressed in buckskin with hunting hat. He has his Betsy, powder horn, and knife.)

CROCKETT

I put my kit on again.

(CROCKETT strikes the pose of CHAPMAN's famous painting. The painter works, then stops.)

CROCKETT (CONT'D)

What?

CHAPMAN

We're missing something. A touch of nature.

(CHAPMAN exits. CROCKETT inspects himself.  
CHAPMAN quickly wheels in BEAR.)

CHAPMAN (CONT'D)

Borrowed this from Carusi's Assembly Rooms. The taxidermy process preserves the beast in perfect order.

CROCKETT

(Examines BEAR.) Strange pose for a b'ar. They go about usually on all fours.

CHAPMAN

Stand a bit closer. Like a drawing in your almanac.

(CROCKETT poses but keeps a distance.)

CROCKETT

Not a word in that almanac's my own. They wrote it all down without me.

CHAPMAN

You don't say.

CROCKETT

I do say. I just did say. Let me give you a "for instance." They write that I chased a b'ar like this one up a tree at dusk. And through some sort of magic, the b'ar can speak the speech of human beings. "Is that you, Colonel Crockett?" That's what the b'ar says to me. And I reply: "You have me." And the b'ar says: "Don't shoot! I'll climb down." (A half beat.) Like I'd take a b'ar prisoner.

CHAPMAN

They say you grin them out of the trees.

CROCKETT

Now that's a true relation! No varnish at all. (A half beat.) Well, mebbe my grinnin's ain't what done it. I did see a ba'r stuck up on a branch one day. I grinned up. It plumb fell out of the tree. Maybe had itself a heart attack. (A half beat.) But that ba'r didn't talk.

(CHAPMAN works a bit, then smiles.)

CHAPMAN

I don't need you to grin, Congressman. But a grimace plays poorly.

CROCKETT

(Relaxes.) My heart ain't in it today.

(CHAPMAN reluctantly starts to pack up.)

CHAPMAN

May I leave the bear with you? Too late for me to return it tonight.

CROCKETT

Let it be. I've shared my bunk with worse.

(CHAPMAN exits. CROCKETT looks at BEAR.)

CROCKETT (CONT'D)

Mebbe I should hibernate 'til Election Day.

(CROCKETT takes off his powder horn and knife, eases himself to the floor, and curls up. Within seconds, he snores. The light becomes the light of dreams. BEAR steps out of the pose.)

BEAR

I was dangling my paws in the river. Minding my own business. (Feels for the back of its head.) At least they patched me up before they put me on show. (Looks at CROCKETT, then to the audience.) Should I wake him?

(BEAR pushes weapons away from CROCKETT.)

BEAR (CONT'D)

Let's prolong the conversation.

(BEAR pokes at CROCKETT with its paw.)

BEAR (CONT'D)

Is that you, Colonel Crockett?

CROCKETT

(In sleep.) You have me.

BEAR

I do. Don't I? (Growls.)

(CROCKETT sits up, startled.)

BEAR (CONT'D)

"Don't shoot!"

(CROCKETT looks for his weapons, then spies them a distance away. CROCKETT grins at BEAR.)

CROCKETT

Bears cain't talk.

BEAR

In dreams they do. Or is this a nightmare?

CROCKETT

I ask no favors past civility.

BEAR

Davy Crockett wants civility from a bear. That's the world upside down!

(The CANEBRAKERS play "A Bear's Life." During the song, BEAR attempts to maul CROCKETT.)

BEAR (CONT'D)

A bear's life is round  
Sun up to sun down  
One day to the next  
Nothing complex  
Or deeply profound

A man's life is straight  
Don't envy his state  
All striving, conniving  
Climbing, then finding  
He got there too late

Me? Well I slumber  
Unencumbered

All winter if I want to  
Not caring is bliss

You awaken  
In a vexation  
Your frustration  
Each day an abyss

A bear's life is free  
To be envied, you see  
That's why you take aim  
Put an end to my game  
Inflict misery.

Feed on our fat  
Make rugs or a hat  
Don't happen to you  
Bears aren't so cruel  
It's men who do that

Oh it would feel good  
To lash out and draw blood!  
Watch you drop with a dull thud  
Cold dead on the ground

Or give you a bear hug  
Somethin' you can't shrug  
Squeeze tight 'til you're quite snug  
And don't make a sound

But bears can't get close  
We can't make the most  
Of the weapons we got  
All comes to nought  
We're too loud and too slow

So let's stipulate  
We bears learn too late  
That life is unkind  
We're too easy to find

And eliminate

(Exit CROCKETT, pursued by BEAR.)

## SCENE EIGHT

(Washington City appears again at dawn. ANNE ROYALL enters, takes in the sunrise, and then addresses the audience.)

ANNE ROYALL

The Tennessee post is due today. We'll have our answer at last. Who will be the victor?

(ANNE ROYALL exits. MRS. BALL steps out of her boarding house.

MRS. BALL

(Breathes deep. Coughs. Smiles.) I love this filthy city! (A sliver of a beat.) Say whatever you like about fresh winds and shifting tides. This town remains the same. No matter whose dirty boots are trampling through it at a particular moment.

(CROCKETT appears, still in his buckskin and bit disheveled.)

MRS. BALL (CONT'D)

Congressman.

CROCKETT

(Bows.) Missus Ball.

MRS. BALL

A momentous day. Nervous?

CROCKETT

I have confidence in the voters.

MRS. BALL

A risky sentiment.

CROCKETT

I've been true to myself. (A sliver of a beat.) I have been.

MRS. BALL

Have you?

CROCKETT

(A beat, then chuckles.) Truth is ... most times a feller in politics can't rightly tell.

MRS. BALL

I miss the fellow who could tell.

CROCKETT

I always say: Be sure you're right, then go ahead. But it just gets harder bein' sure.  
(A beat.) People think I jump rivers, and catch comets, and talk with animals. But I get up ev'ry mornin' in my fancy hotel room and look in the mirror and I just see me. Davy Crockett. That's all.

MRS. BALL

There's nothing wrong with that, Congressman. Nothing at all.

(THE CANEBRAKERS play "I Don't Need You.")

MRS. BALL (CONT'D)

I don't need you  
To be taller than your tale  
It's wonderful to have you  
On a less imposing scale

I don't need you  
To be fleeter than a fox  
An amble lets me keep up  
So we have a chance to talk

Silvers find tarnish  
Soils tire of harvest  
Perhaps there's some ease  
In simplicities

At the end of the day, Davy



Life can seem weighty  
 The cares of the day  
 Must be put away

I don't need you  
 To collect up all the stars  
 Candlelight's just fine  
 Leave constellations where they are

I don't need you  
 To grin bears out of the trees  
 No bears here in the city  
 Only birds, and squirrels, and leaves

Clocks can be broken  
 Harsh words are spoken  
 Brawls stretch our strength  
 To impossible lengths

Political glory's  
 A quickly run story  
 Sometimes in the shade  
 We find things we mislaid

I don't need you  
 To be legendary  
 Just remember  
 Plain ol' Davy  
 That's the you we find most true.  
 Just remember  
 Plain ol' Davy  
 That's the you we find most true.

CROCKETT

I wronged you in my leavin' as I did.

MRS. BALL

Apology accepted.

CROCKETT

Find room for me next term?

MRS. BALL

Certainly.

CROCKETT

Unless the voters install me in the White House, of course.

MRS. BALL

By day's end, you may not need a Washington City address.

CROCKETT

If it's a fair fight, I'll win it.

#### SCENE NINE

(WHIGS and DEMOCRATS arrive. ANNE ROYALL and SARAH join them, as does MRS. BROWN. HUNTSMAN brims with confidence.)

HUNTSMAN

(Approaches.) A vigorous campaign, Crockett.

CROCKETT

You set the Jackson men on me like a plague of locusts.

HUNTSMAN

You chose to abscond from the Congress, sir. Not me.

CROCKETT

Keep talkin'. Talk here's like a holler down a well. Your own voice is all that comes back up to you.

LEAD WHIG

The post!

(SARAH holds the envelope. ANNE ROYALL takes it.)

ANNE ROYALL

Tennessee's Twelfth District! (Opens and reads aloud.) Votes for Adam Huntsman: Four thousand. Six hundred. And fifty two! (Huzzahs from DEMOCRATS.) Votes for Congressman David Crockett: Four thousand... (A slight hiccup of breath.) And four hundred votes!

(Pandemonium. CROCKETT stands alone in the din.  
SARAH weeps. HUNTSMAN seeks out CROCKETT. )

HUNTSMAN

An end to our business, then. Tough, but fair.

CROCKETT

Tough, I'll allow. But fair? (To all assembled.) I have been rascalled out of this election by this ... this ... Timber Toe!

HUNTSMAN

My leg may be wooden, but my foot is iron. And it has stomped you. They'll sing hymns over dead horses before Davy Crockett lives in the White House.

ANNE ROYALL

(To CROCKETT.) Do you have any evidence of chicanery?

LEAD DEMOCRAT

None at all.

LEAD WHIG

It's custom to bury the tomahawk, gentlemen.

MRS. BALL

And not in each other's heads!

(THE CANEBRAKERS play "The Great Licking.")

CAST

(MRS. BALL.)

When you're licked, you're licked. Admit it.

Don't be sore about the verdict.

Take your final bow and let

The one who beat you have their moment

(MRS. BROWN.)

Never give in to a licking  
That's the moment when you're vanquished  
'Cause the battle is eternal  
And defeat is an illusion

(MRS. BALL.)

So why bother with elections  
If you never pick a winner?  
Might as well take all the ballots  
Burn 'em up before you tally!

(MRS. BROWN.)

No election's ever valid  
When the better fella falters.  
Surely there has been an error  
Or a swindle in the countin'!

(ANNE ROYALL.)

Democracy demands that we say "uncle" when we lose  
Not forever. Just for now.

(MRS. BROWN/WHIGS.)

Just depends how people choose!

(ANNE ROYALL.)

A ballot is a ballot – even if you lose the day!  
You can't shout the voters down!

(MRS. BALL/DEMOCRATS.)

Just depends on what they say!

(MRS. BROWN/WHIGS.)

Never give in to a lickin'  
When the better fella falters  
Surely there has been an error  
And defeat is an illusion

(MRS. BALL/DEMOCRATS.)

If you never pick a winner

Then why bother with elections?  
 When you're licked you're licked – admit it  
 Don't be sore about the verdict

(MRS. BROWN/WHIGS.)  
 Surely there has been an error

(MRS. BALL/DEMOCRATS.)  
 So why bother with elections?

(MRS. BROWN/WHIGS.)  
 'Cause the battle is eternal

(MRS. BALL/DEMOCRATS.)  
 Don't be sore about the verdict

(MRS. BROWN.)  
 Never give in to a lickin'

(MRS. BALL.)  
 When you're licked, you're licked – admit it.

## SCENE TEN

(ANNE ROYALL steps forward.)

ANNE ROYALL

I will always be your faithful reporter in Washington City. Come see me every Saturday at the Library of Congress and buy a copy of *The Huntress*. News so fresh it blacks your fingers with ink!

(DEMOCRATS approach CROCKETT.)

LEAD DEMOCRAT

Where's your talk of King Andy now?

HUNTSMAN

Ol' Hickory's broom swept your district clean.

SARAH

Mock and snicker all you like. But Davy Crockett caught a comet and he brought it down to earth! Not a one of you has ever done so great a thing. And you never will!

CROCKETT

Next comet I catch, Sarah, I reckon I'll just hang on and let it carry me away.

SARAH

And I'll grab your heels and come along for the ride!

MRS. BROWN

May I be indelicate, Colonel? I have need of your room tomorrow.

CROCKETT

You can have it right now.

(Everyone gathers to listen to CROCKETT.)

CROCKETT (CONT'D)

I've read many times in Missus Royall's paper of a vast new land. South it is, and far away. A brand fire new territory called Texas, where a feller named Santy Anny, the president of Mexico, invites men of ambition to blaze a path for themselves. And since the voters of Tennessee have cast me out a second time, I won't give 'em a third bite. To hell with them -- and Washington City!

(THE CANEBRAKERS launch into "Hell or Texas.")

CROCKETT/CAST

(CROCKETT.)

The time has come when I must apprehend  
That every party's got to have an end  
No man should make catastrophe his friend  
Besides, there's better things around the bend

I'm goin' to Texas  
Santy Anny's paradise  
I'm goin' to Texas  
I hear tell it's very nice  
I'm goin' to Texas  
Take my bony-fide advice  
Offer a farewell

And tell your voters go to hell  
 Texas is the place to make it right  
 Texas is the place to make it right  
 Texas is the place to make it right

I've no need for further adulation  
 Davy Crockett's done with legislatin'  
 Politickin's been pure aggravation  
 Best not keep ol' Santy Anny waitin'

I'm goin' to Texas  
 Santy Anny's paradise  
 I'm goin' to Texas  
 I hear tell it's very nice  
 I'm goin' to Texas  
 Take my bony-fide advice  
 Offer a farewell  
 And tell your voters go to hell  
 Texas is the place I'll make it right  
 Texas is the place I'll make it right  
 Texas is the place to make it right

Decades 'fore I'll need a rockin' chair  
 Texas is the answer to my prayers  
 It's a land that is beyond compare  
 Leave tonight and I can get my share

I'm goin' to Texas  
 Santy Anny's paradise  
 I'm goin' to Texas  
 I hear tell it's very nice  
 I'm goin' to Texas  
 Take my bony-fide advice  
 Offer a farewell  
 And tell your voters go to hell  
 Texas is the place I'll make it right  
 Texas is the place I'll make it right  
 Texas is the place to make it right

(CAST.)

He's goin' to Texas  
Santy Anny's paradise  
He's goin' to Texas  
We all hope it's very nice  
He's goin' to Texas  
Let a final word suffice  
Davy fare thee well  
And we will see you down in hell  
Texas is the place he'll make it right  
Texas is the place he'll make it right  
Texas is the place to make it right

CROCKETT/ANNE ROYALL

Good night!

END OF PLAY