

DOCTOR FAUSTUS

a devilish new musical

book, music and lyrics by

RYAN MICHAEL DECKER

inspired by

Marlowe's The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus

based on Goethe's Faust

DRINKS & DIALOGUE REWRITE

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THE PLAYERS

FAUSTUS, *a medical doctor and apothecary; our hero?*

GRETCHEN, *his loving wife*

WAGNER, *his friend; a physics professor and philosopher*

CHRISTOPHER, *his son; a stranger*

MARIE LAVEAU, *the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans*

PAPA LEGBA, *a devil*

THE SONGS

ACT I	ACT II
"OVERTURE" (<i>instrumental only</i>)	"ENTR' ACTE" (<i>instrumental only</i>)
"GATHER 'ROUND"	"24 YEARS"
"FAUSTUS"	"SINNERS DOWN"
"HEY, BABY"	"WHERE OFF / WHERE NOW"
"SOUL SEARCHIN'"	"SEVEN"
"MORE"	"DEVIL OUT OF HERE"
"MORE, REPRISE"	"GOIN' DOWN TO THE VALLEY"
"THERE MIGHT BE A WAY" *	"THE REAPING" (<i>instrumental only</i>)
"A MOTIF" (<i>instrumental only</i>)	"FAUSTUS, REPRISE"
"SECOND LINE" (<i>instrumental only</i>) **	"THE END" (<i>instrumental only</i>)
"THE DEAL"	

** arranged from Count Basie's "Count on the Blues"*

*** arranged from the traditional "Saint James Infirmary"*

MUSIC NOTE: ALL VAMPS IN THE MUSICAL SCORE LOOP UNTIL THE AFTER THE SPOKEN DIALOUGE INDICATED IN THE LIBRETTO BY AN ASTERISK (*).

PRODUCTION NOTES

As I write this show, very specific images and conceptual ideas fill my imagination in a way that very directly shapes its writing. While directors (and designers and actors) may completely abandon my notes, I feel compelled to include in this libretto my vision of the show to offer ideas and, if for no other reason, to provide insight as to how the script arrived in its current state.

This show is written to be an intimate production. The Players (excluding Faustus) frequently break the fourth wall to reveal themselves and their thoughts personally to the audience, and is *better* suited in a black box or thrust than a proscenium. For this reason, I have often imagined it working most successfully with very minimal, multipurpose scenic elements, such as rehearsal cubes and ropes. Perhaps projections of New Orleans' iconic cemeteries, plantations, row houses, or French Quarter shops could be utilized; or perhaps a floor treatment of a devil's trap. But all of the traditional stagecraft – set and props not least among them – should easily disappear or be forgotten, without a fuss. Allow the voice and body language of the actors to captivate. The set, if any, should enhance the actors, not compete with them.

Now, without contradicting what I've just mentioned: the show *is* intended to be **highly theatrical**. The script is very self-aware of itself as a story – as a stage production – and much attention should be put toward delivering exactly that. I have made an effort in the script and score to intentionally provide many opportunities for theatrics, which, in my humble opinion, have gone rather missing from the stage. What follows are my notes (in way too much detail) on specific opportunities that I think exist in this show.

Enjoy! – RMD

- **BLACK LIGHTS & MAKE-UP:**

The storytellers (Gretchen, Wagner, Marie Laveau, Papa Lega, and Christopher) should have as their outermost layer of makeup vividly colored, face paint designs in U.V.-only visible body/face paint. Something in the spirit sugar skulls (a la *Día de los Muertos*) would be appropriate. These designs combined with black lights in the lighting design can provide these characters an “other-worldly” distortion whenever blackouts, “black flashes,” or lightening take place. This effect is also intended to help communicate the idea that these characters are a sort of Greek chorus to the show.

- **MAKE-UP CHANGES:**

The aging of Faustus (and optionally, Gretchen and Wagner) is intended to take place in view of the audience and represent the 24 years we skip in the song “24 Years.”

(CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE...)

- **PHYSICAL PUPPETS / SHADOW PUPPETS / MASKS**

Hell hounds, the Seven Deadly Sins, mobs, parades. Plenty of opportunity to incorporate puppets, shadow puppets, Mardi Gras and/or Commedia dell'arte masks. Consider them. Just sayin' ... Or don't. It's your show. (See *Appendix, Fig. 4-5.*)

- **THE SECOND LINE:**

No specific notes here, other than to say this is a very specific New Orleans ritual. The libretto does not dedicate a lot of page space to its explanation, but this is intended to be an entire vignette.

- **CROSSROAD / PENNY RITUALS:**

For Faustus's first summoning of Papa Legba, I would have you explore variations of the "Penny Ritual." This here's one of many that may be adapted for choreography or blocking:

"Get three shiny pennies. Hold them in your right hand and tell them (Legba) your problem. Put them in your left hand and vision the solutions you have to your problems. Now cup both hands together, placing the pennies on the seam line between them and ask Legba to help you decide. Walk three blocks from your house in either direction. Stop at a crossroads; walk in a square, stopping at each corner. Then, walk diagonally through the crossroads. When you reach the center, toss the pennies over your left shoulder. Go home and do not worry about your problem anymore. Legba will influence people and situations in such a way that the best option will become clear to you..."

- **CASTING & ACTORS:**

- Do not cast more than six actors (Faustus and the five "storytellers").
- As far as the audience is aware, the cast should be the entirety of the stage and run crew. Perhaps they are the scenery and sound effects as well.
- Any Storyteller (which excludes Faustus) not explicitly in a scene is fair game to double as The Sins, Congregation, Townies, etc. at your production's discretion. Do, however, find a clear way to indicate that the Storyteller is no longer portraying him/herself (i.e. the actress playing Gretchen if also playing a member of the Congregation is NOT intended to represent Gretchen as part of the Congregation). I find Mardi Gras masks an appealing option.
- If a name change is necessary, MARIE LAVEAU may be renamed CORDELIA VALDES – an homage to Cornelius and Valdes, the magicians in Marlowe's "Faustus" whom the voodoo queen replaces in this adaptation.

A PROLOGUE: GATHER 'ROUND, FAUSTUS

(Optional "Overture." The evening's storytellers appear. They are PAPA LEGBA, CHRISTOPHER, GRETCHEN, WAGNER, and MARIE LAVEAU. "Gather 'Round" begins. They sing, but embody powerful stillness or limited movement. This is gritty.)

PAPA LEGBA

Oh gather 'round all you people

Add **CHRISTOPHER**

for a story we will tell

PAPA LEGBA

A-

Add **CHRISTOPHER, GRETCHEN**

'Bout a man named Faustus
and the people that he loved so well.

WAGNER

Well he

Add **MARIE LAVEAU, GRETCHEN**

Tried to do good
and he tried to be kind.
He tried to do what was best of all.

WAGNER

Yet

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

at the end of twenty-four years,
Faustus,

PAPA LEGBA

he did fall.

(Attacca to "Faustus." Here a flurry of activity may begin.)

WAGNER

Doctor Faustus, he was a guy,

MARIE LAVEAU

thought he could have it all and end up just fine.

CHRISTOPHER

But fate would hold a diff'rent path

PAPA LEGA

One that led to hell.

GRETCHEN

Ya know the ending, but it is the journey we tell.

PAPA LEGBA

It starts after he came from the north,

WAGNER

To the Crescent City; hoped to find some recourse
from a nation that was caught up in a downwardin' spin.

GRETCHEN

He set up shop and said, "New Orleans, Doctor is in."

PAPA LEGBA: I love the theatre. Not a lot of folks willing to give an evening to a dying art form, but you and we are different like that, aren't we?

MARIE LAVEAU: You see, lot of us 'afore you is dead.

CHRISTOPHER: Some of us here ain't ever rightly been alive. But we all have two things in common.

WAGNER: The first is Doctor Jonathan Faustus. (*FAUSTUS appears.*)

MARIE LAVEAU: (*To FAUSTUS.*) I'm sorry... I'm so sorry... (*FAUSTUS disappears.*)

WAGNER: (*To AUDIENCE:*) We all knew him.

GRETCHEN: And we all loved him –

CHRISTOPHER: Ha! –

PAPA LEGBA: If only in our own way.

WAGNER: We are all a part of his story.

MARIE LAVEAU: A story that isn't his at all, but belongin' to every livin' soul.

PAPA LEGBA: Second:

WAGNER: We didn't adhered to the strictest of "moral codes."

CHRISTOPHER: We broke the rules.

GRETCHEN: We broke vows.

MARIE LAVEAU: Twisted them.

PAPA LEGBA: *Strayed* from the fine print.

CHRISTOPHER: This tale is our penance. Think of it as a sort of limbo or purgatory.

WAGNER: Sabbatical.

MARIE LAVEAU: A minor set-back.

PAPA LEGBA: Yes, I love the theatre. The magic ain't hidden well, but that don't make it any less real.

CHRISTOPHER

Now it's time that we settle on in

MARIE LAVEAU

So that our purpose here can rightly begin.

WAGNER

We take you to New Orleans,

GRETCHEN

The year nineteen thirty,

PAPA LEGBA

Where the doc sets up as an apothecary.

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

Doctor Faustus...

PAPA LEGBA

On with the show.

(BLACKOUT.)

THE FIRST VIGNETTE: HEY, BABY

GRETCHEN: I'll go first, not because I knew him first, but because I knew him best.

The day John proposed to me, I saw it coming from miles away, but I didn't care. I didn't need to be surprised, because by that time the idea that we were meant to be together was no surprise. He proposed on a gorgeous, sunny afternoon, at one of our favorite spots along the river. This noisy family and their dog kept getting between us every time he went to come out with it. I knew he was asking and eventually he fumbled it out and gave me a ring. That was one of the happiest days of my life.

By that time, I had known John for two years, and I'm not ashamed to admit that I loved him just about as long. Waiting to be his wife seemed like an eternity. I don't think love strikes you all at once, but we did find ourselves there rather suddenly. When you know, you know.

("Hey, Baby" begins.)

FAUSTUS

Ain't love a grand and wonderful thing!
Makes me wanna open up my heart and sing. Oh yeah.
Baby, can't believe that you're my wife –
Get to spend every day with you in my life.
Ain't love a grand and wonderful thing!
Hey, baby! Hey, baby!
Life ain't easy, but I know with you it'll always be worth it.
Hey, baby! Hey, baby!
Gonna hold ya close, gonna treat ya right,
gonna dance 'til forever in the pale moonlight.
Ye-e-ah-e-ah!

GRETCHEN

Ain't we got the best life any can have!
Makes me smile and laugh 'cause, darlin', I'm so glad. Oh yeah.
Babe, our story together is just beginnin' –
in the game of life, I think we're winnin'.
Ain't we got the best life any can have!

FAUSTUS

Hey, baby! Hey, baby!
Life ain't easy, but I know with you it'll always be worth it.
Hey, baby! Hey, baby!

Gonna hold ya close, gonna treat ya right,
gonna dance 'til forever in the pale moonlight.

FAUSTUS: I am the luckiest man in the world.

GRETCHEN: Oh, I think so.

FAUSTUS: You make me stupid...

GRETCHEN: John!

FAUSTUS: I mean it – You make me so happy, I'm a complete idiot!

GRETCHEN: Well, someone does gotta keep you from getting too up on yourself.

FAUSTUS: True.

GRETCHEN: Just don't get too dull on me. We need your practice to take off if we're gonna start our family down here. Nobody trusts an idiot doctor.

FAUSTUS: Plenty of people trust an idiot doctor.

GRETCHEN: Just the same, I need you to be the best.

FAUSTUS: I will be.

GRETCHEN: I know you will.

For our baby. For our baby.
Life ain't easy, but I know with you it'll always be worth it.

FAUSTUS

For our baby. For our baby.
Gonna hold ya close, gonna treat ya right.

Add **GRETCHEN**

Gonna dance 'til forever...

FAUSTUS: I better be off. To the moon and back, sweetie.

GRETCHEN: More and more.

(They kiss. FAUSTUS exits.)

Yes, we were expecting. You might think it a terrible decision to pack up our lives and move to a big city at such a time, but *that's* why we had to do it. The roarin' '20s were over, even for medical doctors. Truth is black blizzards claimed too many good people in our parts, and that wasn't the world we wanted to bring our child into. Say what you will about New Orleans, but it didn't have any Dust Bowl dirt farms that could turn against us.

New Orleans has always had its sunnier and grimmer qualities. A lot of old money, and a lot of poor, hapless folks. But in a city so full of need and hocus pocus, a bonafide doctor could carve out a real life. And John truly was an expert one.

John ends up not a likeable guy. I know that. No one ever hears the story of “Doctor Faustus” and feels sympathy for him. No one has empathy for his actions or character. I’ll be the first to admit he ended up a pigheaded man with too much pride and not enough care. But he wasn’t always that way. Remember that. Please. If not for his sake, for mine.

We expected a long, happy life together. We were excited. Hopeful. So we moved south. Our story turned the same direction.

THE SECOND VIGNETTE: SOUL SEARCHIN'

(PAPA LEGBA and MARIE LAVEAU appear, in independent scenes. GRETCHEN disappears. "Soul Searchin'" begins.)

PAPA LEGBA

Uh-huh
Uh-huh
I need a soul says the Boss Man.
A righteous soul; that is the plan.
I'm going soul searchin'
In the Big Easy –
The Big Easy.
Uh-huh
Uh-huh

Uh-huh
Uh-huh
Uh-huh
Uh-huh
Goin' soul searchin' down
in New Orleans –
In New Orleans.

Gonna find a soul
in New Orleans.
Gonna reap a soul.
in New Orleans.
There's a glorious soul
in New Orleans.

MARIE LAVEAU

I keep these souls on the right path
I keep these souls right on the track
I look out for the folks
Of the Crescent City –
The Crescent City.

Mm-hmm
Mm-hmm
Oh yes
Mm-hmm
Goin' soul searchin' down
in New Orleans –
In New Orleans.

Gonna find a soul
in New Orleans.
Protect a soul.
in New Or-le-uns.
A beautiful soul
in New Orleans.

THE THIRD VIGNETTE: MORE

WAGNER: The universe is likely infinite. If not infinite, we know that it is enormous. With the rules of probability, it is incredibly likely that, somewhere out there, there are other planets like Earth. A great number *exactly* like Earth – the lands, the animals... and people. In an infinite universe, there are planets where history has or will play out virtually identical to our own. And I hope that it is discovered.

At heart, I am a scientist. I want to answer questions. I *need* to understand the mysteries. On another Earth billions of light years away, I could uncover one of the greatest: whether or not free will exists. Do we have a choice in the great scheme of things, or has the universe, our environment, designed an inescapable destiny for us all?

(FAUSTUS joins the scene.)

FAUSTUS: Another semester for the books!

WAGNER: And a spring semester to look forward to, I hope. So, you made it!

FAUSTUS: Sure did.

WAGNER: How's the place? Are you settled in?

FAUSTUS: Still settling, but we didn't bring much. We'll make a home soon.

WAGNER: Terrific. I take it you haven't done much exploring yet.

FAUSTUS: Not yet.

WAGNER: Would you like me to play tour guide some time?

FAUSTUS: Gretchen would love that!

WAGNER: Excellent! How is Gretchen?

FAUSTUS: She's well. Have to keep an expecting woman comfortable.

WAGNER: The move didn't take its toll on her, I hope?

FAUSTUS: Doesn't seem that way.

WAGNER: Good, good. After talking you two into moving down here, I want to be sure you're looked after. And you're actually here! You're going to love this city, I promise you that.

FAUSTUS: Oh, we're going to be great! Wouldn't be down here if we didn't want to.

WAGNER: That's true.

FAUSTUS: How are you?

WAGNER: Oh, just peachy, I am.

FAUSTUS: A spring semester, you hope?

WAGNER: Budget cuts. Tale as old as time, but I'm safe for now.

FAUSTUS: Being published again won't hurt your tenure review, I'm sure.

WAGNER: No, I suppose it won't. The university doesn't care much for my philosophy or inquires on metaphysics, but they let me teach, and I contribute to the "ongoing public discourse."

FAUSTUS: Just as long as you don't end up at the seminary, I'll be glad you're here.

WAGNER: Your sympathy means the world.

FAUSTUS: Which is worse: being a student of the seminary or being a student of yours'?

WAGNER: Ha! Whoever chooses to subject himself to Seminary deserves whatever hell it brings. Why anyone becomes a student to have someone tell them what to think?

FAUSTUS: Can't avoid it. Catholic University.

WAGNER: Catholic City. Mardi Gras 'til Easter, every day, an endless Parade of Saints of "Where's My Keys?" and "My Tooth Hurts." The regents would hang me if I look at a rosary funny!

FAUSTUS: No voodoo dolls, then?

WAGNER: God forbid...

FAUSTUS: I read it by the way; "Principals of the Multiverse Theory."

WAGNER: What did you make of it?

FAUSTUS: Very interesting speculation.

WAGNER: Ha! Thank you.

FAUSTUS: *Very* interesting.

WAGNER: And very plausible.

FAUSTUS: Maybe I should become a professor.

WAGNER: You? Have you ever heard of patience or understanding?

FAUSTUS: Someone at this wretched institution needs to challenge minds to grow.

WAGNER: Someone like you?

FAUSTUS: Absolutely. Any vapid mind can throw random thoughts together and force students to read it.

WAGNER: Preaching your own theories does not challenge minds to grow.

FAUSTUS: I don't deal in theories. I deal in reality.

WAGNER: May your students disagree with you?

FAUSTUS: They are welcome to. But they'd be wrong.

WAGNER: I enjoy our chats. You reveal me as a very humble man.

FAUSTUS: You're quite welcome. (*Beat.*) I could become a professor, though. I could teach.

WAGNER: Why would you want to do that? Soon you'll have so many sick and lame at your door, you won't be able to keep up.

FAUSTUS: I've been wondering if my life is meant for more than medicine, lately.

WAGNER: But you're *Doctor* Faustus. A renowned physician back north – isn't a person who doesn't know who you are.

FAUSTUS: Well...

WAGNER: And I hate to admit it, but anyone on their deathbed better hope to end up on your table if they want a fighting chance. Everyone needs a doctor sooner or later.

(*"More" begins.*)

FAUSTUS: Medicine is a fruitful pursuit. A gamut of miraculous cures and more we have yet to discover. But I've grown tired of it.

WAGNER: We're all unsatisfied at times, John. That's life.

FAUSTUS: I enjoy logic, but disputing well is the chief end – a skill I already possess. Law is petty. Courts are occupied with trivial matters. Divinity, religion, theology – they offer wider outlooks, yet "all men sin" and "the reward of sin is Death." I can't stand it.

Settle thy studies and Faustus begin
to be divine in show.

WAGNER

You know all that I need to know,
that's more than any man should know.

FAUSTUS

And I want something more.
I want more.

WAGNER

More?

FAUSTUS

I want so much more.
More.

WANGER: You have more than any man I know, John – a beautiful wife, your first child on the way. Maybe you should learn contentedness.

FAUSTUS

Helen of Troy and Alexander the Great –
of both you know their name.
Desire led them to their fame,
I only wish to have the same.
I long for something more.
I want more.
More.
I want so much more.
More.

WAGNER

John, why can't you take a look around and
see you have what every man like you would
want and need and take as happy as can be?

FAUSTUS

I want more.

WAGNER: For what?

FAUSTUS: For Gretchen. For our child. (*Beat.*) For myself. It's human nature, Wagner, to aspire to bigger, better things. To provide for those we love and seek comfort for ourselves.

WAGNER: Just don't lose sight of what's most important.

FAUSTUS: You think I am?

WAGNER: Don't desire to have more. Aspire to be more.

FAUSTUS: Wagner... I will be a mighty god.

FAUSTUS

Settle thy studies and
Faustus begin to
be divine in show. I
know all that I need to know. That's
more than any man should know.

WAGNER

John, why can't you
take a look around and
see you have what
every man like you would
want and need and

I want something
More. I want
More.
More.
So much
more.

take as happy as can
be?

(A telephone rings. WANGER answers it.)

WAGNER: Professor Wagner. – I'm sorry, who is this? – Gretchen?

FAUSTUS: Gretchen?

WAGNER: Are you okay? – Well... yes he's right here, actually. – Yes, I'll put him on.

(FAUSTUS takes over the telephone.)

FAUSTUS: Gretchen? – Hey, hey! Slow down... what's wrong? – Stay right there, I'm on the way. Don't move! I'm on the way. *(FAUSTUS hangs up the phone.)* I have to go...

WAGNER: Should I –

FAUSTUS: No-no-no – thank you.

(FAUSTUS exits in haste.)

WAGNER: The multiverse theory says that not just our planet, but our universe is not alone. A theory in which many universes co-exist simultaneously and parallel to each other. The ongoing debate is whether or not parallel universes actually exist, but in theory, it is possible. We have no conventional means to travel to or communicate with them, but many would like to point to the multiverse theory as a scientific explanation for heaven. And for hell.

Makes me wonder which one our universe is.

THE FOURTH VIGNETTE: EVEN MORE

FAUSTUS: How are you feeling?

GRETCHEN: Scared.

FAUSTUS: Physically?

GRETCHEN: Well... better now, I suppose.

FAUSTUS: No pains or anything like that?

GRETCHEN: Not at the moment.

FAUSTUS: Well, I don't know what to tell you. Everything appears to be in order.

GRETCHEN: Everything's fine?

FAUSTUS: Everything's fine. I mean a little bit of blood isn't terribly uncommon.

GRETCHEN: Doesn't seem like a normal pregnancy thing...

FAUSTUS: Everything is absolutely perfect. I promise.

GRETCHEN: You need blood tests to tell you that?

FAUSTUS: Well, I maybe have a special interest in this patient.

GRETCHEN: You're not very good at lying to me, John.

FAUSTUS: What?

GRETCHEN: Lies and secrets, you can't keep 'em from me.

FAUSTUS: You can't keep secrets from me!

GRETCHEN: I can keep any secret I want from you. (*FAUSTUS chuckles.*) Something's wrong. What is it?

FAUSTUS: Oh... it's not you. It's just... On the way over, this woman on Bourbon Street called out to me.

GRETCHEN: Get used to that –

FAUSTUS: But she called me "Doctor Faustus." I mean – How could she...?

GRETCHEN: Crafty criminal, John. She could probably tell by a handkerchief you dropped or the hem of your shirt.

FAUSTUS: You think so?

GRETCHEN: Some people have a real knack for that sort of thing. Especially in the French Quarter. You're a mark, just like everyone else.

FAUSTUS: Her voice was urgent. "Doctor Faustus." Her eyes were heavy. They pooled with some knowledge. "I'm so sorry." That's all she said. "I'm so sorry."

GRETCHEN: Don't over think it. That's what she wants. Shake you up, get you to come back so she can pick your pocket while reading your palm or cards.

FAUSTUS: Yeah. Yes, you're probably right. She certainly did an expert job of "shaking me up."

GRETCHEN: Ooo... (*Presses her abdomen.*) The baby's kicking... (*FAUSTUS touches GRETCHEN.*) You and me and baby makes three.

FAUSTUS: Any day now.

GRETCHEN: You ready?

FAUSTUS: Ready as I can be.

(*They kiss. A moment*)

GRETCHEN: Well, I've had enough excitement today. I'm gonna lay down for a spell.

FAUSTUS: There's an idea.

GRETCHEN: To the moon and back, sweetie.

FAUSTUS: More and more.

(*GRETCHEN exits. "More, Reprise" begins.*)

The greatest woman that I've ever known –
she's everything and mine.
I know her pregnancy's not fine,
that we are running out of time,
And all I want is more.
I need more.

THE FIFTH VIGNETTE: THERE MIGHT BE A WAY

MARIE LAVEAU: Ahem. At this point, there might be some explanations in order. First, you're probably wonderin' who I am, and second, how I'm tied up in all this nonsense. I am Marie Laveau, the one and only Voodoo Queen of New Orleans. Now if you know who I am – and shame on you if you do not – I outta be 100 years in the grave by the time the doctor's story takes place. Most people have a linear understandin' of life – of time. That you move from birth to death on one chord, one time, but that simply ain't how it works. I could get into particulars of it, but honestly, I wanna be here less than y'all do, and at the end of the day, it don't rightly matter. Suffice it to say, I *am* Marie Laveau, and Marie Laveau will *always* be doin' her bit in New Orleans. Now, let's keep moving, shall we:

*By the dragons light, on this autumn night,
I call to thee to give me your might.
By the power of three, I conjure thee,
To protect all that surrounds me,
So mote it be!
Protect me with all your might
Goddess gracious day and night!
Trice around the circle's bound
Sink all evil into the ground.
So mote it be!*

(Pause.) Hello, Doctor. (Beat.) I know you're here. Linger in the shadows long enough, you become one.

(FAUSTUS appears.)

FAUSTUS: You knew I was coming?

MARIE LAVEAU: I can smell a Yankee from way out.

FAUSTUS: You claim to know many things, don't you?

MARIE LAVEAU: I know nothing, Doctor. But I do know whatever you're lookin' for in the Quarter, you won't get it from me.

FAUSTUS: That's not true. I'm told for a little bit of money you have valuable insights. Tarot cards. Palm readings.

MARIE LAVEAU: I am a hairdresser, sir, and unless you need finger waves or pin curls, your money's no good here.

FAUSTUS: But I need to know something...

MARIE LAVEAU: You're a smart guy, there ain't nothing I can tell you that you don't already know.

FAUSTUS: But you can confirm it.

MARIE LAVEAU: (*Beat.*) I'm not gonna pretend that I don't like you, because I do. Ya got moxie, but we've got nothing more to say to each other.

FAUSTUS: "I'm so sorry." That's all you had to say?

MARIE LAVEAU: Mistook ya for a different Okie.

FAUSTUS: Yeah?

MARIE LAVEAU: You know what *cataracts* are, Doc? I got 'em. Both eyes. Real bad.

FAUSTUS: You called me by name.

MARIE LAVEAU: Well maybe I had something to say, and then maybe I thought better of it. And maybe, now, I'm asking you to please leave.

FAUSTUS: I have a sawback, if that helps.

MARIE LAVEAU: It really doesn't.

FAUSTUS: It's pre-eclampsia, isn't it? (*Silence.*) The signs are there. High blood pressure, protein in the urine, signs of organ failure. (*Beat.*) I need to know.

(*MARIE LAVEAU refuse to answer... and confirms his suspicion.*)

Jesus Christ...

MARIE LAVEAU: Oh, come on now.

FAUSTUS: You're wrong! You have to be wrong!

MARIE LAVEAU: Wrong?! Honey, I ain't trying to *tell* you anything.

FAUSTUS: What can I do? Huh!? (*Losing it...*) What can I do?

MARIE LAVEAU: I'm not sure there's anything that can be done...

FAUSTUS: THEN WHAT GOOD ARE YOU!?

MARIE LAVEAU: (*Beat.*) Excuse me.

FAUSTUS: I'm sorry.

MARIE LAVEAU: Now, Doctor Faustus, we have to get together on a few things here. I am sorry about what's going on with your wife. I understand you're reacting out of pain, and I probably shouldn't have said anything at all to you before. But you have no idea the losses I've suffered, the depth of my love, the burdens I live with. You have no right, no right at all to come to me and question what good am I.

FAUSTUS: You're right. I'm sorry.

MARIE LAVEAU: If this is how you seek help from others, Doctor, you best rethink your tactics.

FAUSTUS: But you can help?

MARIE LAVEAU: Doctor...

FAUSTUS: You know great loss. You know I'm not ready for mine. Not yet –

MARIE LAVEAU: No one is.

FAUSTUS: *She* is my great love. Spare me from the pain you know. Please. (*Beat.*) I'll be damned before I lose her...

(*"There Might Be a Way" begins.*)

MARIE LAVEAU

There might be a way of which I can help,
but you must remain mindful and protect yourself.
For I have a tool, one that you may use
only because I think that you're not a fool.
Lesser men can't handle this responsibly.

This tool is a book, a book full of spells –
a book that summons demons from the depths of hell.
The magic's not yours, but theirs if they choose
and if you afford something that you can lose.
Be careful, they're always looking out for themselves.

I know you think that I'm crazy,
but I won't chance this course myself.

So that is the help that I can provide
if that is what it takes to keep your wife alive.
Take from me this book. Take it off my hands,
yet heed my plea, it is my final demand.
Know what you can lose. What to exchange
and where you draw the line that you will not cross.

This will get you just what you want,
for this book is the last resort.

(*MARIE LAVEAU sets out a book.*)

Everything's inside.

FAUSTUS: Thank you.

MARIE LAVEAU: Uh-huh.

(FAUSTUS takes the book and begins to exit. MARIE LAVEAU stops him)

Doctor. You be careful with that. *(Beat.)* And don't you *ever* try to find me again.

(FAUSTUS exits.)

I probably shouldn't have done it. In fact, I *know* I shouldn't have done it. None of us would be here if I had done otherwise. But Faustus and I... our crossroads was just one of *many* where everything coulda gone different.

Parents aren't supposed to know the death of their children. I chose to be the exception to that rule a long time ago and I regret it every single day. This man, he was about to know the death of his child and his wife all at once. Times are hard enough as it is. Why let a man, one who could provide hope for a whole city, go through that if he didn't have to?

I made a mistake, and I know that now. *Now*. That most unfortunate time when we all realize our missteps. That man's wife was meant to die, his child never to be, and I gave him the ammunition to fuck that all up.

Oh well, right?

THE SIXTH VIGNETTE: A CROSSROAD

(A crossroad. FAUSTUS appears and conducts a crossroads ritual. A distant church bell tolls the four quarters, then twelve chimes begin. PAPA LEGBA appears, not recognized by FAUSTUS – they do not interact.)

PAPA LEGBA: I love beignets. May be my favorite part about Louisiana. Sittin' down with a cup of coffee, few beignets, hashing out the Ps and Qs of a rider. The closet thing I get to heaven.

'While back, café owner, real hard on his luck, wanted to increase his fortune a little bit. We made a deal and came up with a couple recipes that would keep him in steady business. Not wealthy, but taken care of. One of the best deals I ever made. Mind you: didn't cost the café owner as much as the doctor, but fried dough and powdered sugar was a brilliant idea bound to happen sooner or later.

Take my coffee with half-and-half and sugar. That surprises folks – assume I'd prefer chicory, but it's too savory for my pallet. Bit of a sweet tooth. Chicory is too meaty and bitter for my tastes.

FAUSTUS: *(Mid-ritual.)* Mephistopheles!

(Lights begin to subtly flicker. A soft, droning hum slightly audible. Both grow in intensity...)

PAPA LEGBA: I have many forms and many names 'cross the Earth. Crowley. Loki. Mephistopheles. Down here I'm called Papa Legba. But I'm the same devil of the deal. King of the Crossroads, top salesman of the other side, at your service.

FAUSTUS: Mephistopheles!

(Strangely colored lights flash like lighting accompanied by loud, cacophonous thunder, roaring lions, and other twisted, beastly sounds, and shadow creatures. If possible, there is wind on stage. These effects give the impression of a presence: the disembodied PAPA LEGBA.)

I charge thee – change thy shape!

(Effects fade. A moment of chilling silence. Then “a Motif” is played. Re-appear PAPA LEGBA in priest collar.)

PAPA LEGBA: Doctor Faustus, what would'st thou have me to do?

FAUSTUS: You know who I am?

PAPA LEGBA: Of course I do, Doctor. It is written on your soul. I know who you are and you know who I am.

FAUSTUS: You can read my soul?

PAPA LEGBA: As plain as any book your eyes can read.

FAUSTUS: Huh...

PAPA LEGBA: “Huh” indeed. I appreciate your lack of words, but the devils have a busy evening. Let’s keep this short and sweet. What would'st thou have me to do?

FAUSTUS: I’d have you chat with me a bit longer.

PAPA LEGBA: If I could be flattered, I am sure I would be. But I’m not here for idle conversation. More importantly, I’m not in the habit of providing something for nothing. (*Beat.*) You, sir, Doctor Jonathan Faustus, identify yourself as a doctor of medicine, a mildly fascinating although equally trivial field of study as any. You are wedded in holy matrimony to Gretchen Marlowe-Faustus. The once-love... still-love? It’s a bit hazy... ah, yes ... the love of your life... among persons at least and apart from yourself. You are expecting your first child and – here’s where it gets interesting – she will not survive the birth. You know it, she doesn’t. Her ailment is not morning sickness, and you both know that. Now, you desire this conference between us because you need a miracle to save her. Why? Undying love? Enormous arrogance? Stubborn ignorance? I’ll let you work that out for yourself. But here we are, we know what’s at stake, and you’re not gonna get an offer anywhere else. You can ask me for the miracle you need, which is no small feat, or, given the cost, we can do much, much more. Now, if I know you as well as I think I do, Faustus – and I am completely sure I do – I already know how this ends. Let’s not be coy, Doctor, you have a tall order for me.

FAUSTUS: And you are...?

PAPA LEGBA: – taking customers. (*Beat.*) What would'st thou have me to do?

FAUSTUS: I charge thee, Papa Legba, wait upon me while I live and do whatever I shall command. Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere or the ocean to overwhelm the world.

PAPA LEGBA: Aye – there’s the rub! Doctor, I am a servant, but not yours. I may not follow you without leave of the Boss. I must perform no more than he commands.

FAUSTUS: Did he not charge you to appear?

PAPA LEGBA: I came here of my own accord.

FAUSTUS: Did my conjuring raise you?

PAPA LEGBA: It was the cause, but did not raise me. When one racks the name of God, abjures Scriptures, or summons devils to play, I hope to get a glorious soul. Sticking toes into the dark arts has been noticed by the Prince of Hell and has put your soul in danger.

FAUSTUS: In danger of –

PAPA LEGBA: Damnation, Faustus.

FAUSTUS: Of course. Tell me, your boss –

PAPA LEGBA: My Lord...

FAUSTUS: He was an angel once?

PAPA LEGBA: The most dearly loved of God.

FAUSTUS: How did he then become the prince of devils?

PAPA LEGBA: For his insolence and pride, God threw him from the face of Heaven. Those of us who conspired with him also fell – damned forever in Hell.

FAUSTUS: Hell!

PAPA LEGBA: Yes.

FAUSTUS: Hell is a myth – a device to control the masses to the will of the Church.

PAPA LEGBA: A device: perhaps. A myth: certainly not. Hell is quite real.

FAUSTUS: Then how do you stand before me? Have you escaped?

PAPA LEGBA: You think I can escape?! *This is Hell, Faustus. (Beat.)* I saw the face of God. I tasted the eternal joys of heaven, the everlasting bliss. I am tormented with ten thousand hells. But, we're not so different, Doctor.

FAUSTUS: Is that so?

PAPA LEGBA: You face your own eternal death.

FAUSTUS: *(Beat.)* You want my soul.

PAPA LEGBA: Oh yes... but let's not get carried away. I'd like to make a deal.

FAUSTUS: A deal –

PAPA LEGBA: – for exactly what you wish. I'll inform the Boss that you desire me as your attendant. Do whatever you ask, tell you whatever you demand, obey your will. Teach you my ways, slay your enemies... aid your loved ones.

FAUSTUS: Can I trust you?

PAPA LEGBA: If you like. But where's the fun in that? Summon me again at the next midnight.

FAUSTUS: I will.

PAPA LEGBA: Excellent. Don't worry, Doc... we'll keep this short and sweet.

(PAPA LEGBA disappears. A beastly roar and thunder is heard.)

FAUSTUS: If I had as many souls as stars, I'd give them all.

THE SEVENTH VIGNETTE: SECOND LINE

(“Second Line” begins. ALL except FAUSTUS participate in a second line funeral parade. Brightly colored parasols and handkerchiefs are a must. This is a very stylized ritual. Something between a brass marching band parade and a dance – a specific dance – akin to “moving tableaux.”)

CHRISTOPHER: The Second Line. It’s a bizarre phenomenon in NOLA culture. There’s a parade, what you might consider a proper parade. The main line. Then there’s the groupies. The people that follow in a faux parade to enjoy the music and bring up the rear. The second line.

MARIE LAVEAU: It’s considered a quintessential art form in New Orleans and hasn’t taken off anywhere else in the world quite the same. Without an official parade, second lining happens for any reason and no reason at all. And frequently. It’s a popular funeral tradition. It allows grieving friends and family a chance at something they don’t have a real opportunity to do otherwise: to celebrate the life.

GRETCHEN: Earlier I mentioned that I didn’t know John first.

WAGNER: I did. We were students at the Iowa State Teachers College and for \$9 a term, we fed our appetites for knowledge. John and I were both rather science-stricken. We shared a number of classes together and became fast friends. I had a knack for physics and astronomy; he an attraction to chemistry and biology. Obviously, we went our own paths. His kept him in Iowa and led away from academia. Mine farther down the rabbit hole and to Louisiana. But we kept in touch. And whenever we did cross paths, it was like no time passed at all. Our friendship just as strong as where we left it.

GRETCHEN: Wagner and I, we have a history as well.

WAGNER: I introduced the two. And, frankly, I wish I hadn’t.

GRETCHEN: You see, just as old friendships have a way of returning to where you left them, romance can do the same. *(To WAGNER.)* Coming to New Orleans at your encouragement probably wasn’t the smartest move.

WAGNER: No. It probably wasn’t. But I’m glad you did. *(To AUDIENCE.)* I hate to spell it out, because I’m not proud of it. But... well... we’re all here for our reasons.

THE ACT ULTIMO: THE DEAL

(Enter PAPA LEGBA, unseen by FAUSTUS.)

PAPA LEGBA: Good evening, doctor.

FAUSTUS: God! You scared me.

PAPA LEGBA: Watch it. Don't forget who you're dealing business with.

FAUSTUS: Apologies.

PAPA LEGBA: I never want to hear you use that name again. I talked to the Boss.

FAUSTUS: You did?

PAPA LEGBA: He's a very accessible guy; patient too. He's willing to make you a deal.

("The Deal" begins.)

FAUSTUS: He is?

PAPA LEGBA: Didn't take much convincing either; never really does. * He wants to make an exchange. *

Doctor Faustus, I'll be your slave
I'll teach you magic and in your will behave,
but in twenty-four years, that's when you'll meet the grave,
be taken to hell with no chance to be saved.

Faustus, Faustus, the exchange you see
is twenty-four years for your eternity.
You can have all of the power now, but it's not for free.
Your time will run our and then you'll go to hell, back with me.

FAUSTUS: That's it, that's the deal?

PAPA LEGBA: That's it.

FAUSTUS: No tricks?

PAPA LEGBA: I don't do tricks. Withal, Faustus, I'm honest.

FAUSTUS: An even exchange?

PAPA LEGBA: A fair exchange. *

Doctor, sir, be advised
this is quite a heavy compromise.
If the dark arts be your greatest goal,
then all we ask in return is your soul.

I've got the contract right here. (*Hands it to FAUSTUS. It's notecard sized.*)

FAUSTUS: (*Reading aloud:*) "I, Jonathan Faustus, doctor of medicine, in exchange for the unyielding and continuous service of Lucifer's devil Mephistophilis, agree to yield my soul unto hell upon the conclusion of four and twenty years' time."

PAPA LEGBA: I feel like I'd be misleading you if I didn't also mention there's a standard rider.

FAUSTUS: Standard rider?

(*PAPA LEGBA lets a comically long scroll descend.*)

PAPA LEGBA: Devil's in the detail.

FAUSTUS: (*Looking it over.*) I see.

PAPA LEGBA

Faustus, Faustus, I hope that you see
twenty-four years is not the same as eternity.
You will master all the darkest ways, the greatest you'll be
if you choose to take this formal decree.

FAUSTUS

I don't know what to do
making bargains with the likes of you...

PAPA LEGBA

Take the deal, or leave it alone.

FAUSTUS

I'm trying to think...

PAPA LEGBA

Well, you're thinking to slow.
Listen, doc, I don't have all day.
Don't be wasting all my time away.
This deal is not the most ideal and I know that's true,
But you have a choice to make and that is all up to you.

I don't mean to rush you, Doc, but this is a limited offer – one that *you* requested. If you deny it now, I'm afraid you won't get a second chance. Perhaps there was a reason you were interested.

(*"Hey, Baby" is heard in brief reprise. Silence. WAGNER enters, hurried.*)

WAGNER: John! It's time – the baby's coming!

FAUSTUS: How's Gretchen?

WAGNER: ... Not good. John... We have to hurry.

FAUSTUS: I'll be right there.

WAGNER: Who is this?

FAUSTUS: An old friend.

WAGNER: John –

FAUSTUS: I SAID GO!

(WAGNER reluctantly exits. "The Deal" theme returns.)

Alight, devil, I sign on the line?

PAPA LEGBA

A drop of blood upon the page should do it just fine.

FAUSTUS

I take the deal.

PAPA LEGBA

You take it and you'll never be free.

FAUSTUS

Living a hollow life is not an option for me.

PAPA LEGBA

Faustus, Faustus...

(Chord is held and fades to silence. FAUSTUS takes a pin, pricks a finger, drawing blood. He presses his finger to the page, slowly removes his finger, folds the contract and presents it to PAPA LEGBA. The devil takes it.)

See you in hell.

WAGNER: *(off stage.)* John!

PAPA LEGBA: Take this.

(PAPA LEGBA hands FAUSTUS a hex bag.)

Keep it in your pocket. Everything will be just fine.

WAGNER: *(off stage.)* John!

(GRETCHEN screams off stage.)

PAPA LEBA: Go.

FAUSTUS: I'm coming!

(FAUSTUS exits hastily.)

PAPA LEGBA: Most people think of contract law as black-and-white, set-in-stone pacts, but there's a whole lotta grey area. That's why written agreements are so wordy. They attempt to remove as much doubt and misunderstanding as possible, but language – poetry – is open to interpretation.

Clause 310, Sub A. Buried but vital: (*Carefully.*) “In the event of the First Party's death, deemed an Act of God, notwithstanding intervention of the Second Party, the First Party is relieved of all debts owed the Second Party.”

Our rules are simple: Make a deal, keep it. After all, in my line of work, consumer confidence is key.

But we all make mistakes now and then, don't we?

(*PAPA LEGBA begins to stroll offstage. The “Terrible Chords” play. LIGHTS OUT. END OF ACT.*)

THE EIGHTH VIGNETTE: 24 YEARS LATER...

(Optional "Entr'acte" may play. After which, CHRISTOPHER appears.)

CHRISTOPHER: Hello. I haven't introduced myself 'til now, because I wasn't part of the story 'til now. Music is a "language which the soul alone understands..." As you may have noticed, in this tale, I don't have a song – not of my own. And that is because I have no soul of my own.

Twenty-four years ago, my mother was not long for this Earth – her soul was not long for this Earth. But she was "saved." I was too was "saved," from what, I don't know. The universe likes balance. When I was born, an extra life came into this world, but not the accompanying soul. And I overcompensate for that imbalance.

When I was a kid, the woman next door would feed the neighborhood cats. Kept the rats away she said. There were six cats. Then there were five. Then four... 'til there were none. The hatchet was never found and ashes are all that were left of those cats.

People think they're entitled things. That they have a right to something. They don't. My father was no exception.

I've done some things in my life you may not like, you might think I think I oughta feel guilty for, but I can honestly say I'm guilty of nothing.

Jazz music is my guilty pleasure. I don't enjoy much, but jazz... don't understand it. Can't play it. Can't translate it. Can't capture it. But there's just something... If I did have a song of my own, it would be a jazz song.

Hello. My name is Christopher Faustus. The Axeman of New Orleans.

Welcome to Act II.

(The rest of the cast appears. "24 Years" begins. The song is acted out while age makeup is also applied to FAUSTUS.)

PAPA LEGBA

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo, Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo,
Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo, Doo, doo-doo, doo doo, doo doo doo

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

Let's all take a little journey, let's all take a little trip.
Let's look at the past few years with Faustus; find out the doc has been.
We left in nineteen-thirty, he just saved his wife and his kid.
This is the start of miracle workin' – his whole life 'bout to begin:

WAGNER

He wants more. More...

GRETCHEN

Ain't we got the best life any can have?

FAUSTUS

Makes me laugh and smile, 'cause darlin', I'm so glad...

GRETCHEN

Oh yeah?

FAUSTUS

Oh yeah!

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

Oh yeah?! Well...

First he treated a lot of pneumonia, cancer which was also on the rise.

Heart disease, tuberculous and syphilis – just about anything he tried.

Nineteen thirty-four, bit of a turning point: his first case of Polio.

Ailment's really not that uncommon, but if there's a cure, seems no one knows.

MAIRE LAVEAU

There might be a way of which he can help...

PAPA LEGBA

Doctor Faustus, what have we here?

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo, Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo,

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo, Doo, doo-doo, doo doo, doo doo doo.

(minus CHRISTOPHER)

Let's not forget 'bout the son now, he seems just a little odd.

But what sort of boy don't give some grief and do 'few things that ain't allowed?

He kills a tiny kitten and starts to feel a little bit.

This is the start of his new addiction; blood running gives him a kick.

He wants more. More...

GRETCHEN

Right, we got the best life any can have?

FAUSTUS

Sorry, gotta run, hope that you're not too mad...

GRETCHEN

It's fine.

FAUSTUS

Okay.

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

Goodbye! Well...

Faustus has his magic and his medicine. Christopher seems never to be home.

Blood gets on their hands through the forties while Gretchen is just left alone.

Nineteen fifty-one, Chris is a murderer when he offs a lady friend.

Turns out he's adverse to adulterers and he leads many to their end.

PAPA LEGBA

There might be a way of which he can help...

GRETCHEN

Life ain't easy.

I want
more. More...

More... More...

ALL (except F & G)

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo,

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo,

Doo, doo-doo, doo doo, doo doo

WAGNER

Ain't love a grand and wonderful thing?

GRETCHEN

Makes me wanna open up my heart and sing...

WAGNER

Gretchen?

GRETCHEN

Hello.

PAPA LEBA, MARIE LAVEAU, & CHRISTOPHER

That's right!

***Add* GRETCHEN & WAGNER**

Now Gretchen, Wagner, they bed each other, which may not be that big a surprise.

Chris himself also becomes a lady-killer, mostly of the unfaithful kind.

Twenty-four years, they pass quickly for the doc who swiftly did rise.

And the means which led to his livelihood now point him to his demise.

Sing doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo, Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo,

Doo, doo, doo doo-doo doo doo, Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo.

MARIE LAVEAU: So now you're all caught up.

PAPA LEGBA: The Great Depression.

GRETCHEN: The Dust Bowl.

WAGNER: World War Two.

CHRISTOPHER: Hitler.

MARIE LAVEAU: The Third Reich.

PAPA LEGBA: The Atomic Bomb.

WAGNER: The Roswell Crash.

GRETCHEN: The world had come to see a lot of strange and terrible things. And during that time, John made a name for himself facilitating miracle.

CHRISTOPHER: Preferred a bit more anonymity, myself. I knew what I was growing up. Gave me no trouble. But when I started taking human garbage off the streets... well... that's when I realized what I was about.

MARIE LAVEAU: The eternal struggle between good and evil raged on, just as it always had, just as it always will. And we all were witness to the doctor's final act.

(BLACKOUT.)

THE NINTH VIGNETTE: SINNERS DOWN

(In DARKNESS.)

PAPA LEGBA: My children!

(LIGHTS UP on PAPA LEGBA as Reverend FR. LEGBA and his "Christian"
CONGREGATION in a church or revival tent.)

The Holy Spirit is a-talkin' to me! Praise-Jesus-Alleluia Praise-Jesus-Amen! Even in marvelous, modern age – even in 1954, God Almighty still speaks to us – yes He does! The Good Lord's a-lookin' down on our congregation and he's very pleased with the good lives y'all are livin'.

CONGREGATION: (*Ad lib*) Amen! Alleluia! Praise Jesus!

PAPA LEGBA: Well... the lives that most of y'all are livin'. Your deeds. Your relationships. Praise-Jesus-Alleluia Praise-Jesus-Amen. No one's perfect. You are human after all. But beyond our parish walls – outside of Father Legba's church – you're surrounded by temptation. You're surrounded by sin. You're surrounded by sinners. The Holy Spirit is a-talkin' to Father Legba and the Good Lord wants us to change that.

(*"Sinners Down"* begins.)

CONGREGATION: (*Ad lib*) Yes! Amen! Alleluia! Praise Jesus!

PAPA LEGBA: The Lord wants us to be a shining beacon – a community that reflects and spreads the Glory and Graciousness of God – Praise-Jesus-Alleluia Praise-Jesus-Amen – but we are surrounded by adulterers, thieves, liars... *murderers*. My children, we can change that!

CONGREGATION: (*Ad lib*) We can, we can! Amen! Alleluia! Praise Jesus! *

PAPA LEGBA

Gotta take those sinners down,
we gotta take those sinners down.
'Cause we're the righteous ones,
We're the army of God,
We gotta take those sinners down.

Gotta take those sinners down,
we gotta take those sinners down.
'Cause we're the righteous ones,

CONGREGATION

Alleluia!
Praise Jesus!

ALL

We're the army of God.

PAPA LEGBA

We gotta –

ALL

Take those sinners down.

PAPA LEGBA: Now it's not gonna be easy. Workin' for the Lord is tough work – but it is glorious work. It is satisfying, dirty work. For the Lord who suffered so much for you, is it not good and righteous for us to do the same? For the name of God and his justice? You'll get mud on your shoes, blood on your sleeves, and a seat in heaven – Praise-Jesus-Alleluia Praise-Jesus-Amen!

Take our crusade to the street;
take the fight to everyone you meet.
Force 'em to see the light;
encourage them with all your might.

ALL

Take those sinners down!

PAPA LEGBA

Ignorance is no excuse;
the Lord's good fight is our only use.
Actions are stronger than
words, and what's our plan?

ALL

Take those sinners down!

PAPA LEGBA

Gotta take those sinners down,
we gotta take those sinners down.
'Cause we're the righteous ones,

CONGREGATION

Alleluia!
Praise Jesus!

ALL

We're the army of God.

PAPA LEGBA

We gotta –

ALL

Take those sinners –

CONGREGATION

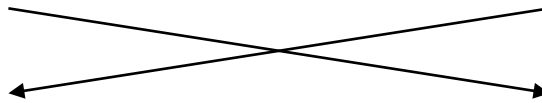
Take ‘em down!

PAPA LEGBA

Gotta
Go fight
Down
Take ‘em
to their knees
See the light and
encourage them
with all your might
Take those sinners...

CONGREGATION

Take those
Sinners gotta
Bring them, bring ‘em
to their knees
Force ‘em to see
encourage them
with all your might
Take those sinners



CONGRGATION

Gotta take those sinners down,
we gotta take those sinners down.
‘Cause we’re the righteous one,

PAPA LEGBA

Alleluia!
Yes, we gotta!

ALL

We’re the army of God.
We gotta take those sinners
Take those sinners
Take those sinners down!

THE TENTH VIGNETTE: DEAL WITH THE DEVIL

(MARIE LAVEAU appears. She hasn't aged, but she is blind. She's setting to invite a guest.)

MARIE LAVEAU: Papa Legba and me go way back. Ain't hard to spot him walkin' amongst us. He likes to butt in where he ought not to. Stirring up fear among folks. I don't like it. When people get scared they do some terrible things. Terrible things to other folks. And when people turn into holier-than-thou cuckoo birds, they do terrible things to folks like me. A little fear goes a very long way.

But that ain't on my front burner. There's a murder roaming the streets of this city. A vile man doin' horrific things to women. I've tried to find 'em. Used every bit of Voodoo and Hoodoo I got. Even sent my snake Zombi out for him. Nothin'. Can't track the soul down anywhere. Papa Legba's connected. That much I know.

Veni, veni, Mephistophile!

(Thunder/lighting. PAPA LEGBA appears.)

PAPA LEGBA: You. Me. Devil's trap. Must we always meet like this? Hello, Marie.

MARIE LAVEAU: Demon.

PAPA LEGBA: Please, call me "Papa." Looking good. Haven't aged a day.

MARIE LAVEAU: Keep it sealed if ya know what's good for ya.

PAPA LEGBA: Now you're just flirting. I can fix up those eyes, if you like. No charge, no tricks.

MARIE LAVEAU: Anyone who needs to say "no tricks" should not be trusted.

PAPA LEGBA: But you know I could.

MARIE LAVEAU: Lord, enough people walkin' 'round have eyes. Not enough see.

PAPA LEGBA: And yet you're missing something big.

MARIE LAVEAU: I need information, and I need ya to give it to me straight.

PAPA LEGBA: You know I'd do anything for you.

MARIE LAVEAU: Where is he?

PAPA LEGBA: I'm sure I don't know who you're talking about.

MARIE LAVEAU: The Axeman.

PAPA LEGBEA: Ahh...

MARIE LAVEAU: Ya know who he is?

PAPA LEGBEA: I have an idea.

MARIE LAVEAU: A strong idea?

PAPA LEGBEA: Not one-hundred percent, but fairly certain.

MARIE LAVEAU: He one-a yours?

PAPA LEGBEA: Not exactly... It's Faustus.

MARIE LAVEAU: You're lightin' up the tilt sign...

PAPA LEGBEA: Now, you know I can't lie.

MARIE LAVEAU: But you misrepresent.

PAPA LEGBA: When have I ever... *(She shuts that down.)* Okay, that may be possible.

MARIE LAVEAU: Doctor Faustus is a good man.

PAPA LEGBA: Indeed he is, but I don't mean the Doctor, I mean the Mister.

MARIE LAVEAU: What you sayin'?

PAPA LEGBA: Not the elder, but the younger. Christopher.

MARIE LAVEAU: Noo! The baby?

PAPA LEGBA: That's him.

MARIE LAVEAU: Can't say it surprises me. He always was a frosted one, that boy.

PAPA LEGBA: If it helps, I believe he was only playing the hand he was dealt.

MARIE LAVEAU: Well, just the same I can't in good conscious let him keep on what he's doin'.

PAPA LEGBA: You shouldn't. And I wouldn't stand in your way, but I think you're gonna have a hard time reaching him. Can't find the soul of a soulless man.

MARIE LAVEAU: And you have the access, right?

PAPA LEGBA: As it happens, there's something I need done that my hands can't do.

MARIE LAVEAU: Something mine could?

PAPA LEGBA: Perhaps. *(Beat.)* I need out of a deal.

MARIE LAVEAU: Well, well...

PAPA LEGBA: I have a soul coming due, I don't want it.

MARIE LAVEAU: You don't want it? –

PAPA LEGBA: I want to cut him loose.

MARIE LAVEAU: Well... can't say I'm not surprised. Ya think you've seen everything... Why can't you just let him go?

PAPA LEGBA: Soul's not in my possession. I brokered the deal, but it's not mine.

MARIE LAVEAU: Hmm... Well, middle man, you have a plan?

PAPA LEGBA: Clause 310, Sub A. "In the event of the First Party's death, deemed an Act of God, notwithstanding intervention of the Second Party, the First Party is relieved of all debts owed the Second Party."

MARIE LAVEAU: You're gonna kill him?

PAPA LEGBA: Not exactly.

MARIE LAVEAU: You want me to kill him?

PAPA LEGBA: You've done worse.

MARIE LAVEAU: Will that even work?

PAPA LEGBA: Probably not. There's grounds to call this little chat an "intervention." But... there's ambiguity. As long as I'm not the one to do the deed, there's a chance. A very, very small chance. *(Beat.)* He's gonna die, either way. A couple minutes early couldn't hurt, and it could make all the difference.

MARIE LAVEAU: So... you kill the Axeman, I kill your mark?

PAPA LEGBA: We have a deal?

MARIE LAVEAU: What's going on with you?

PAPA LEGBA: What do you mean?

MARIE LAVEAU: Breaking a deal? Leading a "bless-me-Jesus" church? Not your game, Legba. You're up to something.

PAPA LEGBA: *(Beat.)* Call it an honest attempt.

MARIE LAVEAU: At what?

PAPA LEGBA: Going home. *(MARIE LAVEAU shoots him a look.)* Upstairs. I've been gone too long. I want back in. *(Beat.)* So, I kill the Axeman, you kill the deal.

MARIE LAVEAU: Well... I'll need –

PAPA LEGBA: I know what ya need.

MARIE LAVEAU: Alright, then. *(They shake hands.)* "Makin' a deal with the devil."

PAPA LEGBA: Oh, come now. You're not that bad.

THE ELEVENTH VIGNETTE: WHERE OFF / WHERE NOW

(Ambiguous, isolated settings. "Where Off / Where Now" begins.)

GRETCHEN

Where are you? Where did you go off to?
 The man I loved... The man I knew... I'm missing you.
 Oh, John...

Once we loved and held
 and dreamt of life that we'd spend together,
 but now where is that life?
 Where is the man I used to know?
 Where off did you go?

FAUSTUS

I don't know what I am doing
 but I try to keep on moving.
 Nowhere to run
 and there's nowhere to hide.
 Soon my time on Earth is ending,
 I cannot keep on pretending
 that all is fine.
 This power should be mine.
 Look ahead and set a new course.
 Find a shelter that will save me
 From this life filled with fear... Somewhere.
 Where now can I go?

GRETCHEN

I don't know what I am doing
 but I try to keep on moving.
 Nowhere to run and
 there's nowhere to hide.
 Soon my time on Earth is ending,
 I cannot keep on pretending
 that all is fine. This
 power should be mine.
 Look ahead and
 set a new course.
 Find a shelter that will
 save me
 from this life

Where are
 you? Where did you
 go off
 to? The man I
 loved... The man I
 knew... I'm missing
 you.
 Oh, John...
 Once we loved and
 held and dreamt of
 life that we'd
 spend together, but
 now where is that

filled with fear...
Some-
where.

Where now can I go?
Where now can I go?

life? Where is the
man I used to
know?
Where of did you go?

Where off did you go?

THE TWELFTH VIGNETTE: SEVEN

(LIGHTS UP. The crossroads.)

PAPA LEGBA: Faustus...

FAUSTUS: "Father" Legba.

PAPA LEGBA: *(A satisfied laugh.)* Never gets old.

FAUSTUS: Clever.

PAPA LEGBA: A holy shape becomes a devil best. How are you on this fine evening? *(Beat.)* Come, come now, old friend. Don't think of it as your final hours. Think of this as a new beginning.

FAUSTUS: Beginning of what? Huh, devil? Ongoing misery – greater than life now.

PAPA LEGBA: You're the greatest doctor that ever was, Faustus. And that was not part of the deal. Impossible cures, plus miraculous one-offs. I gave you the tools, but Faustus, that was all you. You've seen things no one else will ever see. You've experienced what no one ever will.

FAUSTUS: I could have done more. I could have done better. *(A beat. PAPA LEGBA laughs to himself.)* What?

PAPA LEGBA: Humans. How quickly you forget a lifetime. You are The Great Doctor Jonathan Faustus. The greatest mind of the twentieth century! You may not be long for this Earth, but you'll be written about, studied, and praised for the history of mankind. Your story will be passed on forever.

FAUSTUS: As cautionary one, I hope.

PAPA LEGBA: Perhaps it will be. You've led a good life.

FAUSTUS: Have I though? *(Beat.)* If you put the good things I've done in my life against the bad and the terrible things I brought into this world... have I led a good life?

PAPA LEGBA: I suppose I'm not the one to judge.

FAUSTUS: Then who is?

PAPA LEGBA: Would you like to travel the heavens on a dragon-pulled chariot! Huh? Your final hours and it's Mardi Gras, Faustus – don't surrender yet! *Anything* is still possible! Measure the coasts and kingdoms! Know the secrets of the cosmos!

FAUSTUS: Show me hell. *(Long beat. PAPA LEGBA is hesitant.)* For twenty-four years, I've imagined the horrors. Think I'm fond to believe that after this life, there is pain?

PAPA LEGBA: Hell is not a fable. It's not an old wives' tale. You have no idea how tame your worst imaginings are.

FAUSTUS: Who made Hell?

PAPA LEGBA: The same who made Heaven and Earth.

FAUSTUS: Who is that?

PAPA LEGBA: I cannot say.

FAUSTUS: But –

PAPA LEGBA: The answer is against my kingdom. I cannot say. You'll have your answers soon enough.

FAUSTUS: Show me hell.

PAPA LEGBA: Again, I cannot! (*Beat.*) But if it pleases you, I can show you something else...

("Seven" begins. The SINS appear.)

SINS

From the depths of hell we rise, we the Sins.
We have been held down for too long now,
but we're here to introduce you ourselves
for you shall soon join us down in Hell.

No need to fear mortal, no need to fear.
You get to meet us on Earth while we're here.

PAPA LEGBA: Now, Faustus, examine them of their several names and dispositions.

PRIDE: I disdain to have any parents. I am like to Ovid's flea: I can creep into every corner of a wench; sometimes, like a periwig, I sit upon her brow; or like a fan of feathers, I kiss her lips; indeed I do – what do I not? *

COVETOUSNESS: I am begotten of an old churl in an old leathern bag; and, might I have my wish I would desire that this house and all the people in it were turned to gold, that I might lock you up in my good chest! *

SINS

We're out of hell now but we are not free.
Escape from hell one cannot, you will see.

ENVY: Begotten of a chimney sweeper and an oyster-wife, I cannot read, and therefore wish all books were burnt. I am lean with seeing others eat. O that there would come a famine through all the world, that all might die, and I live alone! then thou should'st see how fat I would be! *

WRATH: I had neither father nor mother: I leapt out of a lion's mouth when I was scarce half an hour old; * and ever since I have run up and down the world with this case of rapiers, * wounding myself when I had nobody to fight withal. *

GLUTTONY: My parents are all dead, and the devil a penny they have left me, but a bare pension, and that is thirty meals a day and ten bevers, — a small trifle to suffice nature. Wilt thou bid me to supper? *

SINS

From the depths of hell we rise, we the Sins!

SLOTH: I was begotten on a sunny bank, where I have lain ever since; and you have done me great injury to bring me from thence: let me be carried thither again. I'll not speak another word for a king's ransom. *

LECHERY: I am one that loves an inch of raw mutton better than an ell of fried stockfish; and the first letter of my name begins with L. *

SINS

From the depths of hell we rise, we the Sins.
We have been held down for too long now,
but we're here to introduce you ourselves
for you shall soon join us down in Hell.
No need to fear mortal, no need to fear.
Your time is running out, but it's not here.

PRIDE

Fie, what a scent is here!

COVETOUSNESS

O, my sweet gold!

ENVY

Come down with a vengeance!

WRATH

You shall be my father!

GLUTTONY

Bid me to supper!

SLOTH

I'll not speak a word!

LECHERY

An inch of raw mutton!

PAPA LEGBA: Away! Away, to hell, to hell!

(Exeunt the SINS.)

Now, Faustus, how do you like that?

FAUSTUS: O, this feeds my soul!

PAPA LEGBA: I'm glad. (*FAUSTUS, defeated, takes off his tie and hold it in his hands. A moment.*) May I? (*FAUSTUS gives PAPA LEGBA the tie.*)

FAUSTUS: (*A long beat.*) This is the last time we'll meet, isn't it?

PAPA LEGBA: I think it is.

FAUSTUS: There's one last thing I need you to do.

PAPA LEGBA: Doctor Faustus... what would'st thou have me to do?

(*LIGHTS OUT.*)

THE THIRTEENTH VIGNETTE: DEVIL OUTTA HERE

(Ambiguous, isolated settings. LIGHTS UP on WAGNER.)

WAGNER: The exam will be nothing to worry about. You're all very capable of doing very well. Be very familiar with the Newtonian laws and equations.

(LIGHTS UP on MARIE LAVEAU.)

MARIE LAVEAU: It's happening again.

WAGNER: The first law of motion: Every object in a state of uniform motion remains in that state of motion – unless an external force is applied to it.

(LIGHTS UP on CHRISTOPHER.)

CHRISTOPHER: Here kitty kitty...

MARIE LAVEAU: The visions! Lord, please no more visions...

WAGNER: The second law: The relationship between an object's mass, its acceleration, and the applied the force is force equals mass multiplied by acceleration. This is the most powerful of Newton's three laws, because it allows for quantitative calculations of dynamics: how do velocities change when force is applied?

(LIGHTS UP on FAUSTUS.)

FAUSTUS: For how long, I knew this night would come...

CHRISTOPHER: Anyone wanna play?

MARIE LAVEAU: Who are they coming for? Why can't I see who they are coming for?

WAGNER: The last one is very simple. Newton's third Law of Motion...

(LIGHTS UP on PAPA LEGBA.)

PAPA LEGBA: Almost done, now.

(LIGHTS UP on TOWNIE.)

TOWNIE: *(To the AUDIENCE.)* You know what we have to do! Sin is not welcome here!

CHRISTOPHER: – Come out, come out!

MARIE LAVEAU: – Who are they coming for?

FAUSTUS: – I can stop it...

WAGNER: For every action... there is an equal and opposite reaction...

(BLACKOUT. "Devil Outta Here" begins. Lights returns to parties as they join the round.)

CHRISTOPHER

I gotta hurry or miss the train.
It won't be long before they figure out my name.
My hands are soaked in blood, but I do not need the fame,
so I gotta hurry, gotta get the devil outta here.

MARIE LAVEAU

Something here is not right, I can feel it.
Something misguided and of darkened spirit.
It's not safe to stay here any longer.
Time to get the devil outa here.

TOWNIE / WAGNER

Save the town!

Save all of the souls we can!

Doesn't have a place 'round here.

We can fight it!

Hour's nigh!

Time to get the Devil out!

PAPA LEGBA

The work is almost done.

Faustus's time is almost out.

Soon we'll both go to back to Hell.

Can't be stopped!
Soon it will be time to get the
devil outta here.

TOWNIE / GRETCHEN

Save ourselves!

Wickedness, evil sin –

Won't stand for it!

We'll do one hell of a job!

Now's the time!
Time to get the Devil out!

FAUSTUS

I have to get out of this.

I have a plan.

Change the course!

Gonna get that
devil outta here.

(Music Note: After the modulation, verses 1, 2, and 4 are sung simultaneously, twice through, adding verse 3 – the TOWNIES countermelody – on the repeat.)

ALL

Devil outta here!

THE DÉNOUEMENT: GOIN' DOWN TO THE VALLEY

(The four quarters of a church bell are heard followed by twelve chimes scored throughout.)

WAGNER: Once upon a time, there was doctor.

GRETCHEN: The doctor had a wife. They were very happy –

CHRISTOPHER: And expecting child. But soon, it was obvious that the birth would be rather complicated.

MARIE LAVEAU: Dangerously complicated. So the good doctor sought the help of a reluctant voodoo queen.

PAPA LEGBA: Which led the reluctant doctor to a crossroads demon. They made a deal.

GRETCHEN: The good wife was saved.

CHRISTOPHER: So too, the bad son.

PAPA LEGBA: The doctor performed miracles and helped thousands of people.

MARIE LAVEAU: For twenty-four years he provided hope to an entire city.

PAPA LEGBA: But *hope*... Hope is a tease. Prevents us from accepting reality.

GRETCHEN: The doctor and his wife became less happy. They didn't know it. But the wife became less good.

WAGNER: As did his friend.

CHRISTOPHER: And worse still, the son.

MARIE LAVEAU: Because the doctor was blind. Couldn't see what he had right in front of him. Always wanted more, but knew what he needed.

GRETCHEN: For in the wake of the doctor's good deeds, was a lot evil.

CHRISTOPHER: Terror the son would make.

PAPA LEGBA: Fear the devil would stir.

MARIE LAVEAU: Danger the queen would wage.

WAGNER: The doctor, long suspecting, realized that he had brought a monster into the world.

CHRISTOPHER: A monster who, moments before his death, would slay the final victims of his disgust... (*CHRISTOPHER audibly lands the head of an axe on the stage.*) and those the doctor held most dear.

GRETCHEN: The doctor's wife.

WAGNER: And the doctor's friend.

GRETCHEN: Both of whom he neglected.

WAGNER: Both of whom, neglected him.

(GRETCHEN and WAGNER disappears.)

PAPA LEGBA: The devil, growing weary with his time on earth, slayed the son because the doctor could not. *(PAPA LEGBA kills CHRISTOPHER.)*

CHRISTOPHER: He missed his train. *(CHRISTOPHER disappears.)*

PAPA LEGBA: And so the devil fulfilled his final charge from the doctor, and kept his bargain with the queen.

MARIE LAVEAU: Who used voodoo the devil could not to end the doctor's life. *(MARIE LAVEAU stabs a voodoo doll, wearing FAUSTUS's tie, in the chest. FAUSTUS screams offstage.)* Perhaps to end his bargain too. The queen was lynched – again – by a city turned against her. *(MARIE LAVEAU disappears.)*

PAPA LEGBA: So ended the nightmare in which promises weren't kept. And far too many promises were.

("Goin' Down to the Valley" begins. During which, FAUSTUS appears.)

Boss Man is ready to collect,
you're goin' down to the valley.
Tired soul you'll never have peace,
now you're goin' down to the valley.

Oh soul, sweet soul,
you're goin' down to the valley.

Woah		FAUSTUS: <i>(To the AUDIENCE?)</i> We haven't talked much.
Woah		But I'm not very keen on one-way conversation. I've broken your laws. Sinned. You hear my prayers, I'm told. You could save me, and you know what? I really think you could. But I hope you understand something about me. I don't believe in you. Not "I don't think you exist" – I do. I don't believe in you. You could save, and you won't. Either you don't exist, or you don't care. I know which is worse.
Woah		
Woah		
Woah		
Woah		

Hounds are a-comin' for to rip ya ta shreds,
they're stirrin' down in the valley.
Blood will char and bones will twist,
yet you'll never know relief in the valley.

Oh soul, sweet soul, tired soul,
you're goin' down...

("The Reaping" plays as shadow puppet hell hounds and Mardi Gras masked sins reap FAUSTUS's body to hell. The stage calms.)

AN EPILOGUE: FAUSTUS, REPRISE

GRETCHEN: New Orleans is known for its above ground cemeteries. The city's below sea-level and it's rather traumatic to keep reburying the deceased after they "float" to the surface. So, cemeteries are above ground. Got a special pass for natural cremation.

WAGNER: The seas of tombs and mausoleums are gorgeous. If you never leave New Orleans, you get to go out in style.

MARIE LAVEAU: Like everything in the city, the cemeteries find a charm that balances decay and beauty. The tombs are worn – not by neglect – but the ravages of intense Louisiana rain, heat, and time. Beautiful. See 'em if you get the chance.

CHRISTOPHER: John, doesn't have a tomb or a mausoleum. He has a monument. There was no body.

PAPA LEGBA: And in the end, despite all the good he'd done, no one gave him a second line.

WAGNER: In the end, I don't know if John had any friends.

GRETCHEN: In the end, I don't know if he *really* had a family anymore. I'd like to think so, but that's for him to say.

MARIE LAVEAU: It seems like all he wanted, all he thought he needed, was himself.

PAPA LEGBA: And honestly, in the end, I think he lost that too.

(A cappella "Faustus, Reprise"...)

GRETCHEN

Doctor Faustus, he was a man.

WAGNER

Tried to design a life around his own plan.

MARIE LAVEAU

But nothing's black and nothing's white.

CHRISTOPHER

We're all shade of gray.

PAPA LEGBA

And I suppose our tale has only that take-away.

ALL (except FAUSTUS)

Doctor Faustus...

PAPA LEGBA: Y'all take care of yourself, now.

("The End" plays. BLACKOUT. END OF SHOW.)

APPENDIX

NOTE: None of the images in this appendix belong to the writer/composer of *Doctor Faustus, A Devilish New Musical*, but to their respective designers, photographers, copyright holders, etc. They are included here in writer's personal edition of the libretto to communicate ideas to friends and collaborators, and are not intended for distribution or monetary gain.



FIG 1. Blacklight Makeup
Promotional image for UV Glow via Amazon.com



FIG 2. Blacklight Makeup
via Pinterest



FIG 3. Blacklight Makeup Concept
*Photography by Christy Desermeaux.
Body paint by Eric Angel
([flickr.com/photos/desermeaux/9662329186](https://www.flickr.com/photos/desermeaux/9662329186))*



FIG 4. Oversized Puppets

Cerebus, the three-headed dog who guards the gates of Hades, in Jasper in Deadland at The 5th Avenue Theatre. Puppets by Kyle Loven | Photography by Matthew Murphy | (facebook.com/5thave/photos)



FIG 5. Shadow Puppets on Cyclorama

Shadow Puppets in The Quiet Erow at The Shadow Theatre of Anaphoria. | (anaphoria.com/shadow.html)