CAST OF CHARACTERS

BORING SCHOLAR.....................lectures on Chaucer 11
HARRY BAILEY ..........................host of the Tabard Inn and the narrator of The Canterbury Tales 117
STAGE MANAGER ..........................of the play 4
SIGN CHANGER ..........................changes signs for each scene n/a
GEOFFREY CHAUCER ......................author of The Canterbury Tales; unfocused 59
WRONG PILGRIMS 1-4 ........................Thanksgiving pilgrims in the wrong story 4
MRS. BAILEY ..........................Harry's wife 6
THE KNIGHT ..............................Elvis 10
ADORING FANS OF KNIGHT ..........sit in the audience n/a
THESEUS ..............................southern sheriff 18
ARCITE ..................................good ol' boy 18
PALAMON ...................................another good ol' boy 16
EMELYE ..............................Theseus's sister-in-law 9
HORSES 1-2 ..............................ridden by Arcite and Palamon in jousting match n/a
COCONUT GUYS 1-2 ..........................follow the horses, clicking coconut shells n/a
THE MILLER ..............................crass character 21
BACKUP BROTHERS ........................monks who chant and hit themselves with phone books 2
THE PARSON ..............................lectures on the Seven Deadly Sins 9
LUST ......................................alluring 1
GLUTTONY ..............................ill-mannered 1
GREED ......................................greedy 1
SLOTH ......................................lazy 1
ANGER ......................................angry 2
ENVY ......................................envious 2
PRIDE ......................................CEO of all sins 1

For preview only
THE WIFE OF BATH ....................nagging woman who sells self-help DVDs
NAUGHTY KNIGHT ....................kidnaps a young woman
YOUNG LADY .........................kidnapped by Naughty Knight and made to watch a horror movie
GUARDS 1-2 ..........................work for Queen
QUEEN .................................of England
KAZOO PLAYERS .....................play kazoos
CITIZENS 1-5 .........................of England
UGLY OLD WOMAN .................helps the Naughty Knight
ALEX OF TREBEK ....................game show host
FRANKIE ..............................merchant
BOB ......................................squire
MANDY .................................clerk
THE PARDOONER .....................used car salesman
THIEF 1 .................................steals things
THIEF 2 ................................ditto
THIEF 3 ................................ditto
OLD MAN ..............................Death Itself
THE NUN’S PRIEST ..................priest
CHANTICLEER .......................rooster
PERTELOTE ...........................hen
FOX ......................................sly
FARMER ................................comes to Chanticleer’s rescue; also a victim of the Tax Man
ANIMALS ..............................help the farmer
THE COOK .............................from the food network
THE PHYSICIAN .....................guest on an interview show
THE LAWYER .........................another
THE PRIAR ............................washed-up stand-up comedian
TAX MAN ..............................man who steals from people
DEVIL ....................................Princess of Darkness
OLD WIDOW ...........................victim of Tax Man
SETTING
An easel, DOWN LEFT, will be used as in vaudeville—the name of each scene is on the easel and will be removed by the Sign Changer at the beginning of each scene. A small desk with quill pen, legal pad, tabloid, bell and a chair are CENTER. A podium and small end table are DOWN RIGHT. A pitcher of water and a glass are on the end table. A large poster board with a fake phone number and a piece of tape are on the podium (to be hung in Scene Five). See page 47 for set design.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE
Scene One:  Prologue to the Prologue
Scene Two:  Prologue
Scene Three:  The Knight’s Tale
Scene Four:  The Parson’s Tale
Scene Five:  The Wife of Bath’s Tale
Scene Six:  Medieval Jeopardy
Scene Seven:  The Pardoner’s Tale

ACT TWO
Scene One:  Prologue
Scene Two:  The Nun’s Priest’s Tale
Scene Three:  The Cook’s Tale
Scene Four:  The King Larry Show
Scene Five:  The Friar’s Tale
Scene Six:  The End
THE CANTERBURY TALES
Or… Geoffrey Chaucer's Flying Circus

ACT ONE
Scene One: Prologue to the Prologue of Act One

AT RISE: The sign reads "Prologue to the Prologue." The BORING SCHOLAR ENTERS LEFT with his briefcase and crosses CENTER. With irritating slowness he removes a stack of notes and places them on the podium. He starts to speak, clears the throat, pours a glass of water and takes a sip, then returns to the notes.

BORING SCHOLAR: (Boring, low-key presentation.) Throughout the Medieval period of English history there existed the aristocracy, a relatively small group that obtained its position and status by birth alone, and the commoners, which included everyone else.

During this time we begin to see the emergence of a middle class of citizenry. It was into this middle class that Geoffrey Chaucer was born around the year 1343. In 1386 he began writing a large-scale literary opus, which he called "The Canterbury Tales." I shall read to you the prologue. Unless you are a scholar of the Middle English language you will not be able to understand a single word I'm saying. (Clears his throat. Takes another drink of water. Takes a deep breath.)

"Whan that April with his shoures soote
The droughte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour…"

HARRY: (Crosses to the podium.) Excuse me. What are you doing?

BORING SCHOLAR: (Snooty.) I'm reciting the Prologue of "The Canterbury Tales." What does it look like I'm doing?

HARRY: This is a stage play not a boring old lecture.

BORING SCHOLAR: I happen to be an expert on boring old lectures!

HARRY: (Motions RIGHT. STAGE MANAGER ENTERS RIGHT and crosses to the podium. To STAGE MANAGER.) Get this person out of here. (BORING SCHOLAR grabs his notes and his briefcase. STAGE MANAGER takes the pitcher and glass and escorts BORING SCHOLAR OFF RIGHT.) I apologize, ladies and gentlemen. We will now begin with the Prologue. (SIGN CHANGER ENTERS RIGHT, crosses LEFT in front of HARRY and removes the "Prologue to the Prologue" sign. The new sign reads "Prologue." The SIGN CHANGER slowly crosses RIGHT, annoying HARRY.) I don't suppose it occurred
to you to maybe enter from the other side. (SIGN CHANGER grunts and EXITS RIGHT.)

End of Scene One

ACT ONE

Scene Two: Prologue

HARRY: The year is 1385, and Geoffrey Chaucer is about to begin writing "The Canterbury Tales."

CHAUCER: (ENTERS LEFT and sits at the desk. Takes the quill, then thinks.) Let’s see. I can either write a literary masterpiece that revolutionizes English literature, or I can go down to the tavern and hang out with my friends. Hmm. That’s a tough one. I think I’ll run down to the tavern. I can revolutionize English literature later.

(Stands.)

HARRY: (To CHAUCER.) You’re supposed to write “The Canterbury Tales”!

CHAUCER: But I want to go to the tavern.

HARRY: (Firmly.) Sit down and write, buster!

CHAUCER: (Sits and thinks.) I’m not feeling very revolutionary. How about a courtroom drama? (HARRY shakes his head no.) A spy novel? A horror story?

HARRY: "The Canterbury Tales"!

CHAUCER: Let’s see. Where to begin? Springtime. That’s always nice.

Everybody loves springtime. (Writes.)

When April showers come your way,
They bring the flowers that bloom in May.
The trees get leaves, the little birds sing;
Holy smokes! It must be spring—

Time to take a little vacation.
See some sights in the British nation.
Pull the car out of the garage,
It’s time to go on a pilgrim-age! (Rhyme with garage.)

HARRY: (Annoyed.) That’s how you began "The Canterbury Tales"?

CHAUCER: Actually, I wrote it in Middle English.

HARRY: How about giving the Reader’s Digest version?

CHAUCER: Sure thing. (To AUDIENCE.) I’m going to write a story about a group of pilgrims on their way to visit the shrine of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury. Becket was the Archbishop of Canterbury back in the twelfth century, and he had a little disagreement with King Henry II. Actually, it was a big disagreement, and followers of the king murdered Becket in the cathedral. Everyone felt bad about
it, so then made him a saint and turned his shrine into a tourist spot. Visiting shrines of dead people is a popular activity here in the Middle Ages, since we don’t have much else to do, except avoiding bands of marauding bandits, and trying really hard not to come down with the bubonic plague. My pilgrims meet at the Tabard Inn, in the London suburb of Southwark, and they agree to travel together on a little vacation to Canterbury. It’s about a 65-mile trip, which doesn’t seem that far. The innkeeper... (To HARRY) ... that’s you... decides to go with them. To pass the time, he decides they should each tell two stories—one on the way to Canterbury, and another on the way back. That’s about all I’ve got so far. Now all I need is some pilgrims. (Returns to the desk, picks up the quill and writes. WRONG PILGRIMS 1-4 ENTER LEFT and cross CENTER. They are dressed as Thanksgiving pilgrims. HARRY watches in disbelief.)

WRONG PILGRIM 1: Behold! We have brought forth ourselves to a new land! Thus we are now free to impose upon each other the oppressions and persecutions that were first imposed upon us!

WRONG PILGRIM 2: We have crossed the raging seas and have suffered and died and... uh... all kinds of stuff that wasn’t any fun!

WRONG PILGRIM 3: We shall celebrate almost starving to death with a great feast featuring massive amounts of turkey and dressing and pumpkin pie!

WRONG PILGRIM 4: Followed by an afternoon of parades and football games on TV! We shall give thanks for these gifts of bounty which, though undeserved, are truly appreciated!

HARRY: Stop! Cut! Wrong pilgrims!

WRONG PILGRIMS: Oh. Sorry. (The WRONG PILGRIMS EXIT LEFT.)

HARRY: Let’s try again. (To CHAUCER.) You write. I’ll get the story started. (To AUDIENCE.) A group of pilgrims... from the Middle Ages... meet at the Tabard Inn. The host, a man named Harry Bailey, that’s me, greets his guests.

CHAUCER: If I’m gonna write this thing, I need a bagel and a cup of coffee. (EXITS RIGHT. HARRY sits behind the desk. He takes a tabloid out of the drawer and begins to read. The KNIGHT, PARSON, WIFE OF BATH, PARDONER, NUN’S PRIEST, COOK, PHYSICIAN, LAWYER, PRIAR, MILLER, MERCHANT, CLERK and SQUIRE ENTER RIGHT and cross to the desk. They carry luggage. When HARRY fails to acknowledge them, a PILGRIM rings the bell.)

HARRY: (Jumps to his feet. Speaks rapidly.) Good afternoon. Welcome to the Tabard Inn. I’m your host, Harry Bailey. You must be on the Canterbury tour. Great place. I know you’ll love it. Your rooms are ready. We have a complimentary continental breakfast from six to nine and free in-room movies. I wish I was going with you. I think I...
will. Say, I've got a great idea. Let's entertain each other by telling stories. I'll act as the emcee and judge, and whoever tells the best story will get a free meal at the Tabard Inn on the return trip. And the rest of you can pay for it. How about it? Sound like fun, huh?

Okay. Let's go. Hurry up. Haven't got all day.

MRS. BAILEY: (ENTERS LEFT. Coarse.) Harry! Have you emptied the chamber pots and taken out the garbage?

HARRY: (Meek.) I was just about to do that, dear.

MRS. BAILEY: Have you cleaned up all the rooms? Have you started cooking the gruel?

HARRY: I'm just about to start, dear.

MRS. BAILEY: Have you fed the chickens and slopped the hogs?

HARRY: I'm on it, dear.

MRS. BAILEY: Nothing ever gets done around here unless I stay on you every second of the day!

HARRY: That's right, dear. I'm a worthless slug.

MRS. BAILEY: As soon as you finish your chores you can trim the shrubs and clean the windows and paint the hotel inside and out.

HARRY: Yes, dear. Don't you worry about a thing.

MRS. BAILEY: My mother was right about you, Harry! (EXITS LEFT.)

HARRY: (To PILGRIMS.) Hurry up. Let's go.

PARSON: She seems to have you scheduled for all kinds of labor.

HARRY: She's not serious. Come on. (Quickly ushers the PILGRIMS OFF LEFT. He crosses CENTER and addresses the AUDIENCE. The desk and chair are moved LEFT.) After my escape from my wife... I mean, we ventured forth to Canterbury, and we began the telling of the tales. (SIGN CHANGER ENTERS RIGHT with a sign, crosses LEFT in front of HARRY. The new sign reads "The Knight's Tale." SIGN CHANGER slowly crosses RIGHT, annoying HARRY.) Think you could move any slower? (SIGN CHANGER grunts and EXITS RIGHT.)

End of Scene Two

ACT ONE
Scene Three: The Knight's Tale
CHAUCER ENTERS RIGHT with a bagel and a coffee cup. He takes a bite of the bagel, sips coffee, sits at the desk and makes notes on a notepad with his quill. (OPTIONAL: ADORING FANS of KNIGHT are planted in the AUDIENCE.)
CHAUCER. (Reads as he writes.)
“A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
That fro the time that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrye...” (Stops and stands, stretches.)

HARRY. What are you doing?

CHAUCER. I don’t feel like writing.

HARRY. What about “The Canterbury Tales”?

CHAUCER. Well... you’re the host. You write it.

HARRY. But I’m fictitious!

CHAUCER. Hmm... So you’re saying you can’t write it?

HARRY. I can only write it if you write that I’m writing it. But you’re writing it anyway, so why don’t you sit down and write it?

CHAUCER. (Takes his quill and pad. Yawns.)
I’m kind of tired. I need a nap. (EXITS RIGHT.)

HARRY. I never realized Chaucer had so much trouble focusing. (To AUDIENCE.) The Knight personified the best qualities of chivalry. He was polite, never saying an offending word against a fellow pilgrim. He was well-educated, well-spoken and a gentleman in every sense of the word. Ladies and gentlemen, all the way from Memphis, Tennessee, the Knight!

KNIGHT. (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses CENTER. ADORING FANS in the AUDIENCE scream. HARRY EXITS RIGHT.)
Thank ya. Thank ya very much. (Crosses to the podium.)
I got a little story we like to tell in Memphis. It’s about this fellow named Theseus, the Duke of Athens.

THESEUS. (ENTERS LEFT and crosses DOWNSTAGE. To AUDIENCE.)
That’s down in Georgia, in case ya didn’t know.

KNIGHT. Theseus gets kind of hacked off at these two fellows named Arcite... (ARCITE ENTERS RIGHT and CROSSES DOWNSTAGE...) and Palamon... (PALAMON ENTERS LEFT and stands near THESEUS...)... and tosses ‘em in jail. (ARCITE and PALAMON cross DOWN CENTER and sit on the floor.)

THESEUS. You boys really hack me off, ya know that? (EXITS LEFT.)

ARCITE. (Distressed.) What are we going to do now?

PALAMON. We could sing a little song. That always brightens things up.

ARCITE. I don’t know any songs.

PALAMON. I know one! I know one! (Jumps to his feet and sings like Elvis.) “The warden threw a party at the county jail, The prison band was there and they began to wail...”
KNIGHT: (Crosses to PALAMON and interrupts him.) Hey! I do the singing around here!

PALAMON: (Sits. To ARCITE.) Sorry.

ARCITE: That’s okay. You aren’t a very good singer.

KNIGHT: Theseus had this really cute sister-in-law named Emelye. (THESEUS ENTERS LEFT with EMELYE. ARCITE and PALAMON turn and watch as they cross the stage.)

EMELYE: I got to find myself a boyfriend! I am the only girl in Athens that don’t have one!

THESEUS: Now don’t you worry your pretty head none about that. We’ll get you a boyfriend one of these days.

EMELYE: But I want a boyfriend now!

THESEUS: These things take time. You don’t wanna end up with some no-good nobody with a broken down pickup truck and drawer full of bills.

EMELYE: If you don’t find me a boyfriend, I’m gonna make you sorry!

THESEUS: I’ll work on it. You just hold your horses. (EXITS RIGHT with EMELYE.)

ARCITE: Wow! Did you see her?

PALAMON: I did! And there’s something that really has me curious.

ARCITE: What’s that?

PALAMON: How come if we’re in jail, we can see a pretty girl walking down the street?

KNIGHT: Don’t worry about it.

ARCITE: I think I’d like to marry that girl.

PALAMON: I wouldn’t mind marrying her myself.

ARCITE: (Stands.) I’m getting out of here.

PALAMON: You mean escape? How are you going to do that?

ARCITE: I’m going to walk over there. (Points LEFT.) Have a nice life. (EXITS LEFT.)

PALAMON: Wow. I wish I could escape.

KNIGHT: Arcite couldn’t forget how beautiful the sheriff’s sister-in-law was. So he got himself a disguise and snuck back into town. (ARCITE ENTERS LEFT wearing a Halloween mask [NOTE: A half mask works best so as not to muffle the actor’s lines].) That’s a pretty weak disguise.

ARCITE: Sorry.

PALAMON: You know, I should escape. It can’t be that hard. There ain’t any walls or bars or nothing. (Stands and EXITS RIGHT.)

ARCITE: I gotta find that girl. Where is she?
EMELYE: (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses to ARCITE.) You think it's Halloween or something?

ARCITE: (Removes the mask and kneels at her feet.) You are the girl of my dreams. Will you marry me?

EMELYE: Hmm. I like you better with the mask on.

PALAMON: (ENTERS RIGHT, crosses to EMELYE and kneels at her feet.) You are the girl of my dreams. Will you marry me?

EMELYE: What am I? A weirdo magnet or something?

THESEUS: (ENTERS RIGHT.) Hey there, little sister-in-law. I see ya found yourself a couple of boyfriends. Say. You boys look kind of familiar. Do I know you? (PALAMON turns away from THESEUS and ARCITE puts on the mask quickly.)

EMELYE: These boys want to marry me. Which one should I choose?

THESEUS: We are a civilized society struggling to maintain our moral incorruptibility and our high standards for decency. In the case of two suitors seeking the hand of one lady, there's only one proper and genteel course of action.

ARCITE: (Takes a coin from his pocket.) We flip for her?

THESEUS: No. You fight for her until one of you dies.

PALAMON: You call that proper and genteel?

THESEUS: Hey! It's the Middle Ages! Okay? Now, get on your horses.

ARCITE/PALAMON: What horses? (HORSES ENTER RIGHT and LEFT. (Each HORSE is an ACTOR accompanied by a COCONUT GUY who clicks coconut halves for sound effects a la Monty Python. The HORSES hold ARCITE and PALAMON on their backs. The coconuts click as the HORSES move.})

THESEUS: Those horses!

ARCITE: Haven't I seen this somewhere before?

THESEUS: Gentlemen! Mount your horses! (ARCITE and PALAMON cross to a HORSE and pause.) The object is to impale the other fellow with your jousting pole.

PALAMON: What jousting pole?

THESEUS: The jousting pole that you are now holding in your hands.

ARCITE: We aren't holding jousting poles in our hands, in case you've missed that little detail.

THESEUS: The director won't let us use real jousting poles.

PALAMON: How are we supposed to joust without jousting poles?

THESEUS: Just pretend you have real jousting poles.

ARCITE: This is stupid!
Palamon: Invisible jousting poles and coconuts! (They cross their arms and refuse to participate. Harry enters right.)

Harry: What is the problem?

Theseus: They want real jousting poles.

Harry: We can't get real jousting poles on our budget! Not to mention the insurance, the medical liability... and the funeral expenses in case one of you actually impales the other! You'll just have to make do with what you have!

Arcite: But we don't have anything!

Harry: Then you'll have to make do with nothing! (Exits right.)

Theseus: May I please continue?

Arcite/Palamon: (Without enthusiasm.) Sure.

Theseus: Now, when the maiden drops her handkerchief, you are to try to knock your opponent from his horse. Is that clear?

Arcite: It's clear... and kind of strange.

Theseus: Gentlemen, mount your horses. (Arcite and Palamon hop on the backs of their horses. Emelye takes a handkerchief from her pocket, holds it up and drops it. Horses charge toward each other with the coconuts clicking behind them. They make a pass and miss. They turn around and try again. They miss again.) Come on! Somebody needs to hit the ground here! (As they charge this time Palamon is "struck" and falls from his horse. He lies still.)

Arcite: Yeah! I win! I get to marry the pretty girl!

Emelye: (Not all that happy.) Great. It's the guy with the Halloween mask.

Knight: In a rare example of medieval irony, Arcite falls from his horse and is killed. (Arcite falls from his horse and lies still.)

Palamon: (Sits up and rubs his head.) Wow! That really hurt!

Knight: And so, Palamon lost the jousting contest, but won the hand of Emelye. And Arcite won the jousting match, but was killed. How ironic is that?

Emelye: (Palamon stands and offers Emelye his arm. She reluctantly takes it.) I guess a normal boyfriend is asking too much.

Knight: Hope you liked my little story. (Some of the adoring fans in the audience scream. The Knight takes a handkerchief from around his neck and tosses it to his adoring fans.) We're gonna leave the building now and let someone else have the stage. Thank ya. Thank ya very much. (All exit left. Harry enters right.)

Harry: Ladies and Gentlemen, the Knight has left the building... Isn't he great? The King... I mean the Knight. And he told a pretty good tale.
MILLER: (ENTERS RIGHT and runs to HARRY.) Hey, Harry. Can I go next? I got a great story! You’re gonna love it!

HARRY: Oh no, it’s the Miller. (To MILLER.) Your stories are not suitable for a family audience.

MILLER: Come on, Harry. Just this one story. See, there were these two guys …

HARRY: Stop! Do not tell that story!

MILLER: But Harry! It’s funny!

HARRY: NO! (Pushes MILLER OFF RIGHT. To AUDIENCE.) This might be a good time to hear from the Parson.

CHAUCER: (ENTERS RIGHT. Carries a Starbucks cup.) I’m back. I went to Starbucks. Cinnamon dolce latte. Delicious. Now I’m all refreshed and ready to write. What pilgrim are we on?

HARRY: The Parson. A stern man with no sense of humor.

CHAUCER: Bring him on! (Sits at the desk and writes.)

“A good man was ther of religioun,
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk…” (Pauses to think.)

HARRY: (To CHAUCER.) A little writer’s block?

CHAUCER: This writing is hard work. I need a break. (Stands.)

HARRY: But you only wrote three lines!

CHAUCER: Yes, but they were very good lines. (EXITS RIGHT.)

HARRY: Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Parson! (SIGN CHANGER ENTERS as before. The sign is changed to read “The Parson’s Tale.”)

SIGN CHANGER grunts and slowly EXITS RIGHT. (To AUDIENCE.) Good thing the theater’s not on fire. He’d burn up before he took five steps. (EXITS RIGHT.)

End of Scene Three

ACT ONE

Scene Four: The Parson’s Tale

The BACKUP BROTHERS CHANT OFFSTAGE and then ENTER LEFT. They chant a phrase, stop and hit themselves in the head with phone directories, then continue. The chant is repeated until all have crossed the STAGE and EXITED RIGHT.

BACKUP BROTHERS: Requiem eternally dismayed… (Bang.)

Erie-a-kay have a lovely day… (Bang.)

Credo this vocation’s really boring… (Bang.)

People in the audience are snoring… (Bang.)

PARSON: (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses CENTER. He resembles a televangelist or preacher.) I stand before you not to offer a silly
story! I am here today to make you feel guilty and disgusted with yourselves! Just 500 short years ago, Pope Gregory, the guy who brought us the Gregorian Chant, came up with a list of Seven Deadly Sins, and it’s been the job of parsons like me to remind you about them every chance we get! It’s important that you know these sins! Why, you ask? Because 700 years from now, when your class is studying the literature of the English Middle Ages, it’s going to be on the test! Don’t think it won’t be there! No teacher in the history of high school ever gave a test on Chaucer without asking about the Seven Deadly Sins! I have taken such tests, brothers and sisters, and I always forgot one of ’em! (Calm.) But enough about me. Let’s meet the Seven Deadly Sins! And here they are! (THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS ENTER LEFT and cross CENTER. They wear signs around their necks with the name of each SIN.)

Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Anger, Envy, Pride. (GLUTTONY carries a bag of Doritos.) How are ya’ll doing?

SINS: Fine, thank you.
PARSON: Don’t be misled by their friendly demeanor. They are deadly! And your teacher will take off for spelling! (To SINS.) Introduce yourselves to the audience. Let ‘em get a good look at you. (Each SIN steps forward, introduces him or herself, then steps back.)

LUST: (Alluring.) Hi, there. I’m Lust. (Blows a kiss to the AUDIENCE.)
GLUTTONY: I’m Gluttony. And I love food! (Crams Doritos into his mouth until it’s too full to talk. Continues to talk to the AUDIENCE, but cannot be understood because his mouth is full. GREED pulls him back in place.)
GREED: I’m Greed. (Looks at GLUTTONY.) And I want those Doritos! Gimme! (Tries to wrestle the bag of Doritos away from GLUTTONY. A struggle ensues.)
PARSON: (Intervenes.) Stop it! You’re embarrassing me!
GLUTTONY/GREED: (Humble.) Sorry.
PARSON: Please continue.
SLOTH: (Yawns.) I’m Sloth. And this is $0000 boring. (Yawns, lays down on the floor and goes to sleep.)
ANGER: I’m Anger! And I’m so mad I could chew up steel and spit nails! (Growls à la Incredible Hulk and starts to choke ENVY.) I can’t stand it! And it’s all his fault! (Growls.)
PARSON: (Intervenes and removes ANGER’S hands from ENVY’S neck.) Stop it! What’s wrong with you?
ANGER: (Calm.) I know I need anger management... except then I wouldn’t be angry anymore and I’d be out of a job.
ENVY: (Rubs his neck.) Wow! That hurt! I’m Envy and I wish I could hurt somebody like that. (Indicates SLOTH.) And I wish I could sleep like him. (Indicates GLUTTONY.) And I wish I had those Doritos. (Looks into AUDIENCE.) Nice shirt. I wish I had a shirt like that. Hey! Is that a Rolex? You are so lucky! I wish I had a Rolex. (Sighs.) Man, I don’t have anything.

PRIDE: I’m Pride. I always compare myself to other people instead of being grateful for who I am. I’m proud to say I’m the worst of Seven Deadly Sins. I have no idea why. That’s just the way they worked out. Thanks, Pope Gregory, for making me the CEO of the Seven Deadly Sins!

ENVY: Man, you are so lucky. I wish I was the CEO.

PARSON: So, here they are. Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Anger, Envy and Pride. The Seven Deadly Sins!

HARRY: (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses to PARSON.) Are you going to tell a story?

PARSON: Of course not. Storytelling would be a form of pride, and I might envy somebody else’s story and get mad and go to sleep and eat too much and lust after more stories …

HARRY: You’re supposed to tell a story. Not give a sermon.

PARSON: I don’t know any stories.

HARRY: Well, thanks for trying. (PARSON and the SEVEN DEADLY SINS EXIT LEFT.) Let’s try another pilgrim. Who’s next? (SIGN CHANGER ENTERS RIGHT and crosses RIGHT. The new sign reads “The Wife Of Bath’s Tale.” SIGN CHANGER slowly crosses RIGHT, annoying HARRY.)

End of Scene Four

ACT ONE

Scene Five: The Wife of Bath’s Tale

CHAUCER ENTERS RIGHT, writing on his notepad, and sits at the desk.

CHAUCER: (Writes as he reads.) “Experience, though noon auctoritee Were in this world, is right ynough for me…” (Stops.)

HARRY: (To CHAUCER.) Not again.

CHAUCER: I’m not really enjoying this.

HARRY: You’re never going to finish!

CHAUCER: I’ll finish! I just need inspiration. You introduce the Wife of Bath. I think I’ll go see a movie. (EXITS RIGHT.)

HARRY: And now, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls… cats and dogs… it gives me great pleasure—well, it gives me moderate
pleasure... actually not even moderate pleasure. Hmm. I'm neither pleased nor proud to introduce... (SOUND EFFECT: DRAGNET RIFF.)

The Wife of Bath! (EXITS RIGHT.)

WIFE OF BATH: (ENTERS LEFT carrying a DVD, a stack of paper and an instruction manual. Crosses to the podium.) Before I begin my tale, I shall speak at length on the subject of marriage. (Holds up the stack of paper.) This should only take about 45 minutes. I am an expert on the subject of marriage. I have gone through five husbands—three of my husbands were good, and two were not so good. I learned the best thing to do with a husband is to rein him in and get him under control. You must do this early in the marriage, or else the window of opportunity will be past and you will be stuck with an unruly brute who burps out loud and leaves his dirty socks on the sofa. I have developed a 12-step program to help women to take control of their husbands and their lives. It's called “The Wife of Bath’s Guide to Successful Husband Training.” Each step is presented in an easy to understand and entertaining 120-minute DVD. Now, I will send you the first DVD absolutely free. If you are not at least 50% satisfied, then you may return the DVD at no obligation. If you are at least halfway satisfied, then you will receive a new DVD every week for the next 12 weeks for the low price of $19.95 per disk. In my first lesson you'll learn all about whining and nagging and making his food so spicy he can't eat it. And if you order today, you'll receive (Holds up manual.) my “Wife of Bath Teach Yourself Karate in Three Weeks” manual absolutely free. Not only will you be able to nag your husband into a quivering mound of jello, you'll make him afraid to leave the basement. And now, I'd like to spend some time telling you about each of my marriages.

HARRY: (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses to podium.) Excuse me. You're running out of time.

WIFE OF BATH: What are you talking about? I haven't even started yet.

HARRY: We have other pilgrims to hear from.

WIFE OF BATH: It's my turn!

HARRY: But you're selling DVDs. This isn't the Home Shopping Network.

WIFE OF BATH: Very well. I shall tell my story. And then I will be in the lobby if anyone wants to purchase one of my outstanding DVDs—“The Wife of Bath’s Guide to Successful Husband Training.” Don’t
forget the special introductory offer, plus the “Wife of Bath Teach Yourself Karate in Three Weeks” manual absolutely free.

HARRY: Ma’am, if you don’t tell the story I’m going to have to ask you to make way for the next pilgrim.

WIFE OF BATH: (Insulted.) Okay. (HARRY EXITS RIGHT.) My tale is called “The Naughty Knight.” Back in the days of King Arthur, there was a very naughty Knight who one day just carried off a young lady against her will.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (ENTERS LEFT, dragging YOUNG LADY.) Come on, Beverly! It’s “The Oklahoma Table Saw Massacre, Part 10!” It’s a great movie!

YOUNG LADY: I told you I don’t like those kinds of movies! They gross me out!

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: We’re talking quality entertainment here! The Toronto Film Festival! Sundance! The Academy Awards!

YOUNG LADY: That movie did not appear at any of those places!

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: But other movies did. Come on, Beverly! I really want to see it!

YOUNG LADY: I don’t like horror movies!

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: You’re just saying that! (Drags YOUNG LADY RIGHT.)

YOUNG LADY: If you drag me in that theater I’ll never speak to you again! (He drags her OFF.)

WIFE OF BATH: Now, it just so happened that, in Arthur’s court, dragging a young lady off to see a horror movie against her will was a crime punishable by death.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (ENTERS RIGHT, worried.) That’s silly! It’s just a movie!

YOUNG LADY’S VOICE: (From OFF RIGHT.) This is gross! (NAUGHTY KNIGHT EXITS RIGHT.)

WIFE OF BATH: The Naughty Knight was caught and taken before the queen. (NAUGHTY KNIGHT and TWO GUARDS ENTER RIGHT; QUEEN ENTERS LEFT with KAZOO PLAYERS, who function as her COURT. They play “Rule Britannia” on their kazoos. GUARDS grab and bring NAUGHTY KNIGHT to the QUEEN.)

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (To GUARDS.) All that stuff’s fake. You’re not going to chop off my head over a little horror movie… are you?

GUARD 1: (With GUARD 2, makes NAUGHTY KNIGHT kneel in front of the QUEEN.) He took a young lady to a horror movie against her will, Your Highness.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: I didn’t know it was a crime.
GUARD 2: Oh, it’s a crime all right. We can’t have people watching horror movies against their will.

QUEEN: (To NAUGHTY KNIGHT.) You know that you deserve to die for your crime.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Please don’t kill me! I’ll never force someone to see another horror movie as long as I live!

QUEEN: I will grant you your life if you can answer a very important question.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (Grovels.) Anything, Your Worshipship! Anything at all! All you have to do is ask. I’ll come up with the answer. (Cautious.) This won’t be a math question will it?

QUEEN: I shall grant you a year to find the answer to my question.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: I’m sure I can find the answer in less time than that. I’m very smart, and I’ll work really hard to find the answer.

QUEEN: Very well. Here’s the question. What is it that women most desire?

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: What kind of question is that?

QUEEN: The kind of question that will determine whether you live or die. You have one year. (EXITS LEFT with KAZOO PLAYERS and GUARDS. KAZOO PLAYERS play their kazoos.)

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: How am I supposed to find the answer to something like that? I guess I could take a poll. (Yells.) Hey! I need some help out here! (CITIZENS 1-5 ENTER RIGHT and stand in a line.) I need a little polling data. What is it that women most desire?

CITIZEN 1: Money!
CITIZEN 2: Honor!
CITIZEN 3: Beauty!
CITIZEN 4: Nice clothes!
CITIZEN 5: To be flattered and waited upon!

CITIZEN 1: Never to be criticized!
CITIZEN 2: To be trusted!
CITIZEN 3: To be loved!
CITIZEN 4: To be happy!
CITIZEN 5: To have a really great retirement plan at work!

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Hmm. None of those sound like the right answer. I guess I’ll wander around the world for a year and then go get my head chopped off. (To CITIZENS.) Thanks for your help.

CITIZENS: You’re welcome. (They EXIT RIGHT.)

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (Paces back and forth.) Why is this such a difficult question? And why am I losing my head over a horror movie? I
thought it was the people IN the horror movies who lost their heads.

WIFE OF BATH: The Naughty Knight paced back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. This went on for almost a year. Then one day, as he was pacing, he came upon an ugly old woman.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (UGLY OLD WOMAN ENTERS LEFT. NAUGHTY KNIGHT doesn't see her until he bumps into her.) Excuse me. (Looks at OLD WOMAN and gasps.) Geez! You look like something from a horror movie!

OLD WOMAN: Sir Knight, tell me what you are seeking.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: I've got to find the answer to a question by Tuesday, or the queen is going to have my head removed from the rest of me. I'd do anything if I could find out the answer.

OLD WOMAN: And what is this question?

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: The queen wants me to find out what it is that women most desire?

OLD WOMAN: I can give you the answer to that question.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (Excited.) You can? That's great! I'm not going to lose my head!

OLD WOMAN: You must promise to honor whatever I request of you.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: You got it! Anything at all?

OLD WOMAN: S-w-a-r-e by your honor.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: I swear by my honor. (OLD WOMAN whispers in NAUGHTY KNIGHT'S ear.) That's it?

OLD WOMAN: Now you know the answer to the question. Let's go to the queen and tell her.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: You're going, too?

OLD WOMAN: I haven't been to London in years. (QUEEN ENTERS LEFT with KAZOO PLAYERS. OLD WOMAN and the NAUGHTY KNIGHT approach her.)

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (Excited.) I got it!

QUEEN: Very well. Tell us, what is it that women most desire?

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Women wish to have control of their husbands! Did I get it right?

QUEEN: That is correct. (NAUGHTY KNIGHT jumps around in delight.)

OLD WOMAN: If it please the court. I gave the answer to this man. In return, he promised to honor my request. In the presence of this court, my request is that he make me his wife.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: (Gasps and chokes.) Uh... uh... uh...

OLD WOMAN: I saved your life.
NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Uh... yeah... but... well... Isn't there something else you'd like?

OLD WOMAN: I want only to be married to you.

QUEEN: Very well. By the powers invested in me as the queen of England, I pronounce you man and wife. (KAZOO PLAYERS play a few bars of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March.") Have a great life. (QUEEN and PLAYERS EXIT LEFT as PLAYERS play "Rule Britannia.")

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Well... that was kind of sudden.

OLD WOMAN: I take it you don't find me attractive.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Well... no. Not at all. You're old and ugly. Sorry.

OLD WOMAN: I am old and ugly, but this could be an advantage. I will always be true and faithful.

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: But you look like... well... like someone hit you with the ugly stick.

OLD WOMAN: I will give you a choice. You can have me as I am, old and ugly, but true and faithful until the day I die, or you can have me young and beautiful, but untruthful and unfaithful.

YOUNG LADY: (ENTERS RIGHT and stands beside OLD WOMAN.) Which will you choose?

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: That's a tough one. If I choose you... (Indicates OLD WOMAN.) you'll be true and faithful, but you're ugly enough to stop traffic. And you... (Indicates YOUNG LADY.) are truly beautiful, but you're going to make my life miserable. Hmm. I don't know. I'd really like to have a pretty wife. But I don't want to be miserable. Is bachelorhood an option?

YOUNG LADY/OLD WOMAN: NO!

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Well, I can't decide. (To OLD WOMAN.) I'll leave it up to you. You decide.

OLD WOMAN: So I may choose and do exactly as I wish?

NAUGHTY KNIGHT: Either way, I lose.

OLD WOMAN: Don't be so sure.

YOUNG LADY: (Takes NAUGHTY KNIGHT'S arm.) I choose to be your wife. And because you let me choose, I choose to be true and faithful... and not make you miserable.

OLD WOMAN: You have a wife who is beautiful both inside and outside. (Steps away and EXITS LEFT.)

YOUNG LADY: We shall have a long and happy marriage. But no horror movies! (EXITS LEFT with NAUGHTY KNIGHT.)

WIFE OF BATH: And so, my story is over. The lesson—in marriage, the wife shall rule over the husband, and all shall be well. But if...
you get in a bind, call this number. (Indicates the phone number on the podium.)

HARRY: (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses CENTER.) Thank you for a very enlightening, though slightly creepy, tale. Tell me, what happened to your five husbands?

WIFE OF BATH: They died.

HARRY: Shocking. (Ushers her OFF RIGHT.) Well, off you go.

MILLER: (ENTERS RIGHT and crosses to HARRY.) Hey, Harry. Let me tell you this tale. There were these two guys …

HARRY: (Looks at his watch.) Gosh, Miller. I'd love to hear your story, but I'm afraid it's time for the next pilgrim. You know, the Wife of Bath might like to hear your story.

MILLER: Good idea! (EXITS RIGHT.)

HARRY: (SIGN CHANGER ENTERS RIGHT and crosses LEFT with a new sign. The new sign reads "Medieval Jeopardy." SIGN CHANGER grunts and EXITS RIGHT.)

I'll take "Boring" for $200, Alex! (To AUDIENCE.)

And now for something completely different. (EXITS RIGHT.)

End of Scene Five

ACT ONE

Scene Six: Medieval Jeopardy

KAZOO PLAYERS ENTER LEFT and play the "Jeopardy" theme. ALEX and the CONTESTANTS—BOB (the SQUIRE), MANDY (the CLERK) and FRANKIE (the MERCHANT)—ENTER RIGHT. Each CONTESTANT brings a podium. ALEX moves the STAGE LEFT podium to CENTER. The three CONTESTANTS stand side by side à la Jeopardy. Each podium has the name of the contestant on the front. KAZOO PLAYERS move RIGHT and stand waiting.

ALEX: I am Alex of Trebek, and this is the game where we give the answers and our players try to guess the questions. Let’s meet our players. First, Frankie. I understand you're a merchant.

FRANKIE: That's right, Alex. I buy stuff, I sell stuff. Kind of a boring job.

ALEX: I bet it is. Next is Bob. I understand you're a squire.

BOB: That's right, Alex. I'm youthful, handsome and I love dancing and romantic evenings by the fire.

ALEX: Well, Bob, that's almost interesting. Now, let's meet our returning champion, Mandy. I believe you told us you work at a convenience store.

MANDY: (Spaced out.) Yeah. I'm, like, a clerk.

ALEX: You must have a lot of insight into human behavior.
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE: Easel, 13 signs with a scene name on each one, small desk, quill pen, legal pad, tabloid, bell, chair, podium, end table, pitcher of water, glass, bag of gold in desk.

BROUGHT ON:
ACT ONE, Scene One:
Briefcase, notes (BORING SCHOLAR)
ACT ONE, Scene Two:
Luggage (PILGRIMS)
Bagel, coffee cup (CHAUCER)
ACT ONE, Scene Three:
Halloween half mask, coin (ARCITE)
Coconut halves (COCONUT GUYS)
Handkerchief (EMELYE, KNIGHT)
Starbucks cup (CHAUCER)
ACT ONE, Scene Four:
Signs, each naming the character wearing it (SINS)
Bag of Doritos (GLUTTONY)
Watch (HARRY)
ACT ONE, Scene Five:
Legal pad and quill (CHAUCER)
DVD, instruction manual, stack of papers (WIFE OF BATH)
Kazoos (KAZOO PLAYERS)
ACT ONE, Scene Six:
Three podiums with names on them (MANDY, BOB, FRANKIE)
Kazoos (KAZOO PLAYERS)
Sack of coins (STAGE MANAGER)
Sack containing a coin (THIEF 2)
Sack containing a coin and a bottle (THIEF 1)
Sack containing a coin pouch and a cell phone, spork (THIEF 3)
Two bottles and a bag of Doritos (STAGE MANAGER)
ACT ONE, Scene Seven:
Phone directories (BACKUP BROTHERS)
ACT TWO, Scene One:
Pizza box, soft drink (CHAUCER)
ACT TWO, Scene Two:
Phone directories (BACKUP BROTHERS)
Cell phone (PERTELOTE)
ACT TWO, Scene Three:
Headphones (STAGE MANAGER)
 Mixing bowl, bag of cornmeal, pitcher of water, bundle of weeds, bottle of soda, small bundle of straw, package of meat, whistle, serving spoon (STAGEHANDS)

For preview only
ACT TWO, Scene Four:
Three chairs (HARRY, CHAUCER)
Summons (FARMER)
Cell phone (TAXMAN)
Dictionary (STAGE MANAGER)

ACT TWO, Scene Six:
Luggage (PILGRIMS)

SOUND EFFECTS
Dragnet riff

COSTUMES
Costumes should be over the top. BORING SCHOLAR should wear a stuffy suit, maybe with dust or chalk on it. HARRY should look like an innkeeper with an apron. STAGE MANAGER should have a headset and wear dark clothing. SIGN CHANGER should have work clothes. CHAUCER should look like a typical, privileged writer of the Middle Ages. PILGRIMS should dress according to the time period and their profession with the following exceptions—the KNIGHT should be dressed like ELVIS, THESEUS like a southern sheriff, and EMELYE, ARCITE and PALAMON like present-day Southerners. All other characters can dress appropriately for their part (ANIMALS, QUEEN, etc.). The DEVIL should be dressed as a professional woman with horns.
For preview only
We hope you’ve enjoyed this script sample.

We encourage you to read the entire script before making your final decision.

You may order a paper preview copy or gain instant access to the complete script online through our E-view program. We invite you to learn more and create an account at www.pioneerdrama.com/E-view.

Thank you for your interest in our plays and musicals. If you’d like advice on other plays or musicals to read, our customer service representatives are happy to assist you when you call 800.333.7262 during normal business hours.

www.pioneerdrama.com
800.333.7262
Outside of North America 303.779.4035
Fax 303.779.4315
PO Box 4267
Englewood, CO  80155-4267

We’re here to help!