



RESTING

by Cenarth Fox

A one-person play for an 'older' performer – male or female

verb: *be inactive, refrain from acting*

(Example: "Frankie is resting over the summer.")

**THIS IS A PREVIEW SCRIPT AND CAN ONLY BE USED
FOR PERUSAL PURPOSES. THE FULL SCRIPT IS
AVAILABLE FROM FOX PLAYS**

This is a most delightful one-person play and Louise Whiteman does a superb job. Anybody who saw her in *The Real Sherlock Holmes* will see a different character altogether. Louise is just gorgeous. She'll have you laughing and you'll feel sorry for her. The writing is brilliant. I recommend *Resting* as a wonderful evening of entertainment beautifully directed by Doug Bennett. The performance by Louise is absolutely startling. Go along and enjoy a great night of entertainment.

**Brian Amos, Radio Eastern
September 13, 2005**

Resting, in 'Talking Heads' mode and so well crafted by Cen Fox, is a roller coaster ride that takes the audience through all the heartache, fun times and day to day living of Frankie Raines. This is a stunning tour de force role and Louise Whiteman grabs it by the throat and takes it all the way, never missing a beat in the shifting moods and changes in body language, embracing both the character and audience and leaving us drained but uplifted. Cenarth Fox is a playwright who has an incredible insight into the characters he writes about and his research is obviously so thorough. This is the third work I have seen by Cen Fox – the others being the one woman musical *Moving On* and of course, *The Real Sherlock Holmes* which has played in over 30 venues and will have return seasons again next year. Cenarth Fox is a playwright I can only describe as a bonfire just waiting to be lit.

I raise my hat to the Director, Star, Playwright and Encore Theatre for giving us the opportunity to see this play. I just hope someone has the brains to see it and run with it.

**John Gunn "Curtain Up"
September 16, 2005**

RESTING

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Synopsis

“Actors are cattle.” Alfred Hitchcock

Frankie has been a professional thespian for decades, doesn't want to retire but the phone is just not ringing. Frankie is 'resting'. Without work for many months, with savings dwindling and job-offers non-existent, Frankie's in strife. Apart from no work, Frankie has an ageing body, a lost family and a sick best friend. But Frankie lives on hope – it springs eternal. Old age will not triumph. Something will turn up. Frankie tackles reality TV, diaries, crosswords, chess and Shakespeare with a vengeance. Dame Thora Hird and Tommy Cooper pop in for a chat. Frankie's small flat is cluttered and the cleaner last called in 1965. Will Frankie ever act again? Will that bloody phone ever ring?

First Performance

The world premiere of *Resting* was staged in Melbourne, Australia in September 2005 by Encore Theatre Inc with Louise Whiteman as *Frankie Raines*. The play was directed by Doug Bennett.



Resting 3

Costumes and Movement

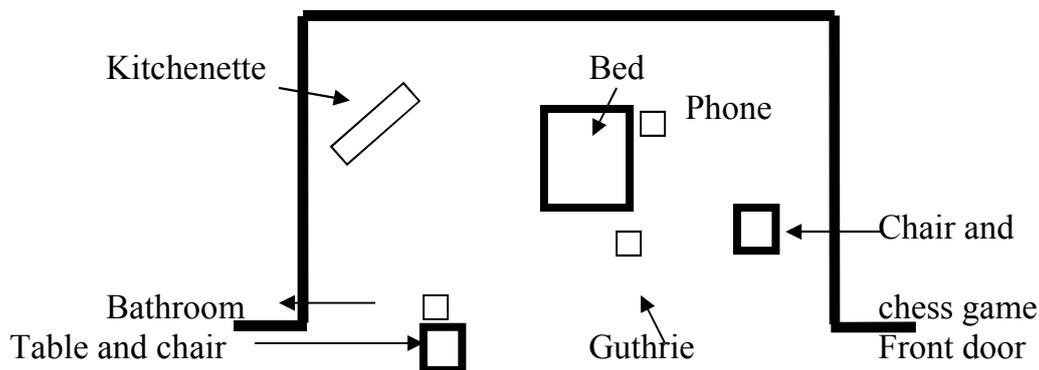
Frankie has abandoned regular attempts at washing, grooming and healthy living. An odd collection of clothes matches the higgledy-piggledy layout and content of the room. Frankie's hair was set as disheveled years ago and the style is easy to maintain, meaning a cameo role in a Dickensian novel would be a shoo-in. During the play, Frankie discovers items of clothing and props worn/used in previous stage roles.

For one living so isolated and unhealthy a lifestyle, Frankie is reasonably agile despite arthritis constantly nipping at hips, hands and heels.

Make-up is exaggerated and wrong [deliberately so] but there is no-one present to comment. Frankie is often on the move and would be overjoyed if that damn phone would start ringing.

Set Design

There is only one set – Frankie's flat/bed-sitting-room. It's darkish even in daylight hours. An unmade bed and large lounge-chair [tatty] are important and upstage is a mini-kitchen of sorts. Guthrie needs a basket. There's a small kitchen table and a small coffee-table.



Character

Frankie is aged somewhere between 59 and death, could look older and is feral in an approachable way. Sadly Frankie is seldom approached. The local council deliver meals on wheels but do so under attack from the recipient. All except one of Frankie's family and friends are dead or distant. Frankie is alone.

Local Language

Frankie studied drama in the 1960s, worked in rep theatre in England and is now in Australia. **Frankie can be male or female** and the play can be set in different countries. Some words in the script refer to local events and places. Definitions are given and directors may wish to insert the equivalent term for their location.

Resting 4

[Just prior to the play beginning, you could play music from stage shows and/or films in which FRANKIE has appeared. A poster/s of Frankie in a show could be on the fridge. Before the audience enters, FRANKIE enters the darkened set and climbs into bed. FRANKIE is asleep as the audience arrives. Play begins on a mild morning. Daylight. The room is dim. Intermittent snoring. An alarm-clock rings]

[From under the bedclothes] Arrrggggh. [Alarm-clock keeps ringing until FRANKIE stops it. FRANKIE appears/surfaces and declaims]

“But, soft! Methinks I scent the morning air.”

[Sitting up, yawning, scratching] I’m alive. [Out of bed, stretches and aches and pains go ping] Owwww. Bloody arthritis. [Sitting on bed sees photo on bedside table. Picks up photo, kisses it. Emotional] Morning, Alice; won’t be long now. [Recovers, replaces photo. Standing, gentle stretch] Anyone seen my youth?

[Moves to dog basket and imaginary dog therein] Morning Guthrie; trust you slept well. [Moving to calendar on wall in kitchenette] Right, Frankie, make the most of every day; this could be your last. [Reading] Today is [Reading] Friday the twenty-second. [You could use the day and date of the performance. The month is not mentioned. FRANKIE could make a cross on the calendar of the day with a pencil hanging on a piece of string or points to the date. As hair is tousled]

Keep brain functioning. My name is Frankie Raines; born Melbourne 1945 [The city and year could be changed to suit the actor and location], my father’s mother’s maiden name was Buchanan and my mother’s mother’s maiden name was ... [Struggles, worries] oh, [Remembers] Campbell. [Pleased] Yes! [Indicating head] Stay with me brain cells.

[The actor could substitute the actor’s real relatives’ names unless such names are decidedly not Scottish]

[Heading offstage] Ritual time, Frankie – ablutions they call. [To bathroom/lavatory offstage. Various sounds are heard during the next speech with the flushing towards the end of speech – running water, gargling, flushing loo, cupboard door, etc. Frankie could change here removing night attire and adding day clothes] Who invented bodily functions? Why can’t we just grow out of them in childhood? [Annoyed when looking in mirror] What is that? That wasn’t there yesterday. [Calling] Guthrie, don’t ever become vain. [Ablutions continue] Now, hair, Frankie - up, down [right, left] or ... oh bugger it. God, it’s so much easier to age disgracefully. [Annoyed with bladder] Will you hurry up! I emptied you at two a.m.! There is such a thing as a bladder transplant, you know! [Finishes peeing. Sarcastic. Flushing loo] Well at last, thank you. I spend half my life peeing.

[Enters adjusting clothes, heading to kitchenette] Hands washed, prepare hearty breakfast.

[Potters. Turns on electric kettle. Looking for tea-bag]

Resting 5

Boil water for cup of tea. *[Searching]* Where is this week's tea-bag? Who's been raiding my larder? *[Finds tea-bag, puts it in mug]* There it is. *[Putting on coat]* Now, whilst waiting for water to boil, exercise dog. *[Calling]* Guthrie! Here boy. *[Goes to dog]* Come on old chap. Walkies.

[Guthrie is mimed throughout the play. Frankie mimes taking dog-lead and attaching same to collar, patting etc] Good boy. Good boy. Yes I know about your arthritis. I've got it too, remember? But regular simple exercise is essential and you need the park to perform your ablutions. *[Goes to kitchen cupboard to collect plastic supermarket bag]* Which is why we mustn't forgot our council-approved utensils. *[Prepares to depart]* Right, off we go.

[The walk in the park occurs with FRANKIE stepping forward DC and being lit in this area. FRANKIE walks on the spot to mime being in the park. FRANKIE chats to the dog and people they meet en route. The dog is elderly]

We're a couple of old crocks, Guthrie. We're getting slower and slower. How about I get one of those motorized wheelchairs and you can sit on my lap? *[Has to stop as Guthrie is abluting]* What, here? It's not your usual spot. All right. *[Pause as animal has a pee]* Why do you have to smell it? You don't see me sticking my head down the pan.

[Journey continues. Tension] There's that horrible little man from number seven. *[Suddenly friendly]* Morning. *[Under breath]* Creep. *[FRANKIE'S hands suddenly in front as Guthrie runs at other dog]* Guthrie! No! Guthrie! *[Yelling at other owner]* Will you please keep your dog under control? *[Is sworn at]* Oh, charming.

[They finish the walk, previous lighting returns and Guthrie's lead/utensils are removed and he is placed in his basket] Good boy. *[FRANKIE removes coat and places bowl near Guthrie]* Here's your breakfast, old chap. Sorry it's that cheap mushy stuff again but your teeth are as bad as mine. *[Pats dog]* I know you're not well, old boy but we can't go the local vet. I haven't paid the last bill. *[Pause. Emotional]* I won't let you suffer, Guthrie. I'll ... do the right thing.

[Heads back to kitchen, washes hands, checks kettle] Water's boiled. *[Places tea-bag in cup/mug and pours water therein]* To achieve perfectly drawn cup of tea, play *[To old tape machine]* two and a bit verses of *Rock of Ages*.

[Hits button on tape player. Music begins. Sings or hums along with music]

“Rock of ages, cleft for me ...”

[Moves to where crossword puzzle is set out on small kitchen table]

Now, to keep dementia at bay, eat fish and tackle crosswords. *[Reading]* Seven down. *A Dutchman firing blanks*. Three words. Twelve letters. *[Thinking]* *A Dutchman firing blanks*. Ah ... *[Back into singing picking it up at the appropriate place]*

Resting 6

“Let me hide myself in thee” or just to “la”.

[Stops to resume crossword] Four across. Vicky’s sparkling stone. Three letters. Vicky’s sparkling stone? Who is Vicky? [Shakes head, is thinking]

[Back to tea in mug as second verse of hymn is heard. Dangles tea-bag] Tea-bags, Guthrie, reveal the economic prosperity of a household. Using one a week places us marginally above the poverty line.

[Removes tea-bag, drains and carefully places it in drawer. Takes milk from fridge and smells it] Just. [Pours milk into mug and returns milk to fridge. Brings tea to table. Hits machine; music stops. Spoons small amount of sugar into mug. Pause then heaps in more sugar – could mime this - and stirs speaking as she goes] Bloody doctors. What would they know? [Thinking] I bet Alice likes honey. I’ll make her tea with crumpets and honey.

[Is about to sip then suddenly panics] Oh, scheisen! [Moves quickly to bed and, facing telephone, prays. Lighting could become ethereal] Forgive me, Thespis. [Praying using theatrical tones] I thank thee for this new day and my continued [Coughs] good health. May it please you to shine good fortune on my best-friend Guthrie, on Alice and on your humble, jobbing actor. I beseech you; relieve me of this resting. [Whispers] Even a sodding voice-over. [Louder, quasi religious] Amen.

[Rising, touches phone. Sotto voce] Ring you bugger, ring. [Heads back to tea but is suddenly inspired] Raj! [Writes answer in crossword. Pleased as punch. The old brain still works] Vicky’s sparkling stone. Queen Victoria. Jewel in the crown. Three letters. Raj! Well done, Frankie.

[Shakes head] But A Dutchman firing blanks. [Can’t guess this answer – yet!] It’ll come.

[Back to mug of tea which is sipped as FRANKIE opens diary]

Now Frankie, planning; do not let your day drift. [Sipping and reading at same time] Alice; exercise; rehearse and SAC. [pron. SACK] SAC? Oh, Seek Alternative Career.

[Up and surveying room] This flat’s a problem, Guthrie. Alice won’t like our clutter. She’ll be little Miss Prim ‘n Proper. [Suddenly distressed about Guthrie] Oh she’ll like you. She loves dogs. I’m sure she does. Just go easy on the passing of wind. [Picking up letter on table with chess set] But first we have to find her and this is not what we want to hear.

[Reading] “We regret to advise we have no record of the present whereabouts of Ms Alice Raines. Your request may be discussed in more detail by contacting a [Upset] human-interface representative.”

Resting 7

A what? *[Dismayed]* Oh Guthrie, the Queen's English is under attack, the government gobbledegook is on the loose. *[More reading]* "We will *facilitate* any further developments." *[Scrunching letter and tossing it aside]* Well facilitate off you useless git!

Not what we wanted to hear, Guthrie; but never say die old chum. *[Definite]* We will find Alice. Our tasks today; find Alice and find work.

[Despair creeps aboard] Oh, Guthrie. I'm nervous. Can you believe I'm in my seventh decade? I'm unemployed, unemployable and even the government tells me to sod off. Could it be the moderately-illustrious acting-career of Frankie Raines is finally at an end? Have I, theatrically speaking, died a death?

[Moving to calendar] I have been resting now for fourteen, *[Counts on Calendar, groans]* sixteen months. My agent has taken a vow of silence, roles for "older" actors are as rare as Toorak *[wealthy suburb]* beggars and my phone has forgotten how to ring.

Forty-six *[Maybe change depending on age of performer]* years of professional acting has hit the wall. I have discovered the great artistic lie. *[Mocks and imitates false-sincerity]* "Don't call us, we'll call you." *[Angry]* Oh yeah?

[Rails against the world] Liar! *[Louder]* Liar!

[Despair has a much greater grip on FRANKIE'S thinking than the actor is prepared to admit. Surveying the room] This is how the world ends, Frankie. Not with any long-achievement award, a gutsy cameo in a brilliant movie, or some sold-out, national tour. No, it ends with a silent telephone and endless days of endless waiting; waiting for you and your pooch to kick the bucket. It's over, Frankie. You are an *ex*, matey, *[missy]* a nobody, a has-been!

[Suddenly frail and staggering. Speech slurred, has tremors] I'm one step from a nursing home for ancient thespians. *[Tumbles to and sits in chair or on bed. FRANKIE the invalid. Dribbling, drooling, trying to get attention]* Errrr. *[Louder]* Errrrr. *[Attendant has arrived. FRANKIE is short and impatient]* Yes, I'm dribbling. No, I don't want the toilet. And it's a lavatory. *[Final outburst of anger]* Just wipe me sodding chin, damn you!

[Drops head on chest. Pause. Has forsaken the nursing home and is back to reality. Looks up and around at room] Who wants a nursing home when I've got the Theatre Royal; my wing of the West End, my bungalow on Broadway? *[Now the truth]* My pokey, rented bed-sit permeated with the smell of despair and unwashed smalls. *[Is sitting/lying on underwear]* Speaking of which, these are due a change. What month is it? *[Looking around. Anger builds]* Where is my char? Where is the woman wot does for me?

Resting 8

[Calling] Thora! Miss Thora Hird. *[Sees imaginary cleaning lady]* Oh there you are. *[Mock apology and bow]* Oh pray forgive me, Dame Thora. *[Thora complains about playing many a char]* I don't care if you've played a million domestics; at least you're working. *[Issues orders]* So look sharpish. Alice is due any day now.

[Indignant] Who's Alice? *[Louder]* Who's Alice? Why my baby sister is the sweetest and kindest of darling young ladies, from whom I have been tragically estranged these past four decades and with whom I am soon to be gloriously re-united. And for such re-union, ducky, my parlour needs a major makeover, which, unless I'm very much mistaken, is where you come in. So chop, chop old girl – your dusting awaits. *[More indignation]* Who am I? *[Mock shock/surprise]* You don't know your fellow thespian! Well be told.

After my spectacular graduation from NIDA, *[RADA?]* that's here in Oz, *[Blighty]* I journeyed to the Old Dart *[to the provinces]* where repertory theatre took me to its bosom in Bradford, Birmingham and bloody Aberdeen. *[Pained concession]* Yes, I know you've worked everywhere.

I then made a triumphant return to my homeland where I've played in almost every prestigious theatre. *[Less enthusiastic]* And more than a few dives.

I've played leads, juv leads, walk-ons and chorus in comedy, drama, farce, panto and musicals. I've a list of movie credits as long as your Methodist hymn-book and *[It's all beneath me]* I've even stooped to guest spots on soap operas. In short, your Ladyship, I have reached the lowly heights of mediocrity and require a spot of spring cleaning in autumn. *[Indicating mess]* So kindly, get stuck in!

[Dame Thora has an episode of The Last of the Summer Methodist Hymns to record and departs] Hey! Where are you going? Oi! *[Follows to door]* Summer Wine? Look, I'm offering you a good role. I'd take it if I were you. *[She's gone. Calling]* Well I hope the critics give you hell.

[She's gone and FRANKIE can stop pretending. Comes back into the room]

If truth be told, Frankie, you've done the odd runner yourself. *[Shaking head]* Bad notices have that effect. *[Wincing]* Trouble is critics are occasionally right. Rarely mind but occasionally.

I've known critics who, as failed actors or playwrights, vent their spleen on any thing and anyone. I've known critics who are short-sighted, deaf or both, and review what they *haven't* seen or heard. I've known critics terminally ill with ego-itis.

For actors, it's a no-win situation. A good notice is simply telling the truth. I'm good. You know I'm good. The critic is stating the bleeding obvious. But a bad notice. *[Angry]* What would they know?

Resting 9

[Mimics bad review] “And Frankie Raines was far too old for the part.” *[Fumes]* Too old! *[Explodes]* Too old!! *[Calms and goes to pick up a mirror. Studying facial features]* What is this thing called Age? *[Continues looking in mirror]*. Will knows. “Age, I do abhor thee, youth, I do adore thee.”

Age is a sneaky, devious coward. *[Rails against Age]* Age never stands on some hilltop and roars. *[Imitates warrior called Age. On chair?]* “Hey! You down there! I’m the warrior Age and I’m about to invade your brain and body. Get ready. Here I come!”

[As FRANKIE] Oh no. Age tippy-toes towards you in the dead of night to *[Imitating the Age Fairy]* sprinkle a wrinkle or crow’s foot. Age gently delivers a sore back or arthritic twinge *[Touches head]* and regularly assists in removing your once-glorious locks.

But rarely overnight; it’s an oh-so-slow enemy until one day, today, *[Looks in mirror]* in the mirror you see Age. It’s the enemy of models, the vain and women on television; it’s the wealth of cosmetic surgeons and the scourge of thespians.

Of course for me the part of an elderly crim *[tart]* would be a shoo-in. I’m a certainty to play some eccentric Dickensian duffer with warts, blackened molars and halitosis. *[Indicates face and imitates said Dickensian duffer]* Don’t even need make-up.

But Age has a partner, a first-best friend called Death. They’re a double-act meaning roles for older actors are rare. You’re old, you have Death which is why the theatre is brimming with the young and middle-aged.

[Is angry and depressed] Look at me. I have Age and soon Death. I’ve spent half a century honing my skills. And now, when I’ve so much to give, roles are for actors without my disease. Young actors don’t suffer Age.

But for “mature” performers, it’s quintessential cruelty.

Just when I’ve achieved so much, just when I’m ready to share my vast experience and talent, I’m shown the sodding door. *[Imitating youthful director]* Hey you, old actor. *[Pointing]* Exit stage left.

The whole world loses. It never enjoys the magnificent theatrical contribution from my generation and this tragedy is performed *offstage* as seniors are discarded and ignored. *[Warning]* If you suffer from Age, you’re dead.

No, I lie and here’s the salt for our gaping wound. Our hearts beat and our brains buzz but *[Indicating phone]* our phones have rung down the curtain!

Resting 10

We can still act – better than ever. *[Proffers imaginary talent]* Here. My wit, my wisdom; my passion in spades; my artistry, rage, my humour; *[Churchillian?]* never has so much been offered to so few.

[Indicates imaginary sign] “Sixty Equals Scrapheap.” *[To whom can FRANKIE rail against?]* I hate you, Age. You bastard!

[FRANKIE spies make-up case] Here’s a cruel paradox; my stage make-up case - a lifetime of wonderful memories and a constant reminder of my leading role *on the dole. *[*in the theatre of unemployment]*

Fate, Guthrie, can be so unkind. When Alice was born I was over the moon. Aged 11, I finally had a kid sister. But something was wrong with Alice. My mother was distraught, my father morose. I was told nothing and packed off to boarding-school – divorced from my own family. At holidays I was farmed out to friends and relatives.

It tooks me years to learn that Alice was ... not right. But why hide the fact? Why the shame? And why send me away? *[Cry of pain FRANKIE has felt for years]* I can love my own kid sister.

Then came drama school and acting overseas. When I finally returned, my father was dead and my mother and sister were strangers. *[Looking around]* Forty years later, Alice is all I have left and she wouldn’t know me from Adam.

[Opens case to examine contents] I’d love to show this to Alice. *[Pretends Alice is in the room]* And this, Alice, was a present from Aunt Bonnie. You remember Mum’s sister? *[Memories return]* She loved the theatre. Not like our parents. *[Indicating make-up]* Now these are my tools of trade, Alice. With these I can transform my appearance, travel through time and become ... anyone.

[Excited] You could become someone else, Alice. Let me help you. Choose someone - a princess, a mermaid, a beautiful, gorgeous fairy. *[Alice chooses]* A princess? *[Mimes taking make-up and works on the imaginary Alice’s face]* An excellent choice.

[The following business is shortened in time with little time spent on each function] First we apply the cold crème. *[Laughing]* No, I don’t think they have hot crème. And next the foundation. Yes it *is* exciting. And now some rouge; then eye-liner. Give me your glasses. *[Takes them]* Open your eyes big and wide. *[Emotional]* Your eyes are so lovely, Alice. *[Overcome]* I wish we could have done this before.

[Recovering] Now make your lips go like this. *[Puckers]* That’s it. This colour really suits you. *[Stands/sits back to admire Alice’s face]* And here’s a beauty spot. *[Does so then steps/leans back again]* Oh, you look just like a real princess.

Resting 11

[Alice steps forward and hugs FRANKIE who responds] And I love you too, Princess Alice.

[Pause. Deep breath. FRANKIE desperately wants to find Alice. Quietly replaces make-up in case and places case back where it was found. FRANKIE is weighed down with worries of no work and no Alice. Looks around and sees chess board and remembers the game is unfinished. Brightens. This distracts FRANKIE from feelings of doom and gloom. FRANKIE could hurry replacing make-up in case once the chess-set is seen]

Aha, I think I'm winning. *[Sits at chess game and ponders]* Yes. Yes. *[Makes move]* Check, I believe? *[Hops up and moves to become opponent. Thinks then makes move. Smiles. Hops up and returns to original position. Nodding]* Well played. *[Studying board but talking to opponent]* Do you know that chess, crosswords and a never-say-die attitude keep the brain alive. That and fish. *[Smiling makes move]* Checkmate.

[Hops up, becomes opponent, studies board then returns to first position. Pleased] Well thanks for the game. *[Packing up pieces. Suddenly genial]* Same time tomorrow? Bags be black.

[Wanders towards diary but stops at crossword]

A Dutchman firing blanks? Three words; twelve letters. *[No answer]* I need more fish.

[Shakes head then opens diary to find page and write. Speaks what is being written]

Dear Diary. "Still can't find Alice. Continue daily routine. Roles will come. *[Stops writing. Holds diary as if it's important. Gets idea. Examines diary]* 'Seek Alternative Careers'. Actor cum writer. *[Building]* I can't write plays but *[Pause. Idea dawns, shaking diary]* I can write a diary. *[Excited]* Samuel Pepys ... Kenneth Williams ... Bridget Jones. *[Excitement builds]* Frankie Raines!

[Thinking] Title. Ah ... *Stage Whispers*. *[Dismisses it]* Nah, twee. *Thoughts of a Thespian*. *[Dismisses it]* Bullshit! *[Suddenly transformed]* Bullshit! I'm full of it! I speak it fluently. *[Disappointed]* But they won't publish a crude title. *[Suddenly inspired]* Of course! *[Scribbles title]* *Bovine Droppings!*

[Announcing publicity blurb from publisher] "Veteran thespian, Frankie Raines, reveals all in the funny and fascinating memoir – *Bovine Droppings*."

[Thrilled] We've done it, Guthrie. In one fell swoop I've resurrected my career and brought shekels to the inn. *[Proud]* Elderly Actor One, Age nil. *[Clenches fist]* Yes!

[Is in a tizz. The idea is great but how will it work? Can it work? What to do? Starts thumbing through pages of diary]

Resting 12

What have I got so far? *[Still looking. Finds a page. Reads]* “Took Guthrie for walk. Raining.” *[Thinking]* Not much sex and violence so far. It’ll build. *[Continues reading]* “In park, collected Guthrie’s stools. *[Reading slows]* They look healthy.” *[Pause. Is dumbfounded. Quietly sarcastic]* Dog droppings. Page-turding stuff.

[Now depressed] Out-of-work, unwanted and far, far worse, boring.

[Flicks through more pages. Reads with growing alarm] “Sardines on toast with weak black tea. *[Finds and reads more. Depression mounting]* Lost chess game again - to myself. *[And the killer punch]* Cut toe-nails!”

[In despair, tosses diary aside. Sarcastic] Oh it’s a bestseller, Frankie; a smash hit! *[Gloom]*

I can’t even end my life with a bloody whimper. My tell-all diary is boredom-infused crap. *[Quietly cries. Pause. GUTHRIE whimpers. FRANKIE snaps]* Oh don’t you start complaining. What would you know about unemployment and unrequited love? *I’m* the one suffering here. Me. I’m the one with so much to give and no-one to give it to. A little compassion, please! *[Pause. Deep breathing as FRANKIE feels deep guilt. Moves to Guthrie]*

Sorry old boy. I didn’t mean that. And the truth is, you are the smartest of dogs, you love unconditionally and never complain. *[Patting Guthrie]* Forgive me, darling boy.

It’s just that without work I’m not a whole person. It’s not the money, it’s the rejection. It’s not the loneliness, it’s the nothingness. I’ve got this passion to act. I have to do it but no-one will let me. I’m not ready to quit. I’m too young to quit. *[Pause]* I could explain better if we were in a theatre.

[Rising, FRANKIE is suddenly on stage in a theatre and calls to the lighting operator] Could I have some lights, please? *[Sudden and dramatic lighting change occurs. Build the following speech slowly and as the tempo and pitch rise, the lighting changes move with the words]*

[To lights] I love you, lights, I’ve always loved you; every size and shape of you, every globe and gel - foot lights, front lights, flood lights, cys, colours, lanterns, lamps, borders, mirror balls. *[Beseeches lights]* Shine on me; please. Be dim, bright, blinding; full-colour, half-colour, any colour, I don’t care, just shine on me. I love you, lights. *[Building]* Reveal me in all my histrionic glory. Come now, be my friend. Be good for Frankie. I perform, you illuminate. *[Desperate cry]* Let there be light!

[Bang! Major lighting change; stage suddenly black with solitary spot. FRANKIE instantly re-invigorated. Here’s a chance to impress. Rushing around upstage in darkness, the light doesn’t follow FRANKIE who is preparing for an audition]

Resting 13

Audition, Guthrie. I've got an audition. *[What's it for? Flustered]* Ah, Shakespeare, I think – something classical. Where's my scarf? Where's my lucky scarf? *[Finds it]* It's great news, Guthrie. I'm back in the game. I'm owed this part. Finally, a chance. Wish me *two* broken legs and when I get this role, we'll find Alice and you, my fine friend, will dine on the butcher's best beefy bones. *[But I haven't got any teeth]* All right, I'll get you some new teeth as well.

[Steps into lit performing area. Lighting for a soloist. FRANKIE is now at audition before director]

Good morning, Henry; lovely to see you. Thank you, I'm well and, as you can see, on time; again. *[Weak laugh. "We're looking for classical actors, Frankie."]* You know I love the classics. So, what would you like? *[Another weak laugh. FRANKIE is worried. Rejection equals death. FRANKIE is babbling]*

Romeo and Juliet? I know *both* their parts. *Arms and the Man?* *Pygmalion?* You know my strength in accents. *The Cherry Orchard?* *Uncle Vanya?* *[Pause. "So what have you done lately, Frankie?" Sudden deflation of enthusiasm]* I'm sorry? *["What were her last few roles?"]* Well, you know. Bits and bobs. *[Confesses]* Actually I'm ... resting.

[Now contrite even embarrassed. "Not long, I hope."] Ah, s s sixteen months. *["That long!" Agrees]* Yes, it is a while. *[Perks up]* But I'm keen, Henry. My God, I'm keen; I'll take anything; a minor role; *[Mock joke]* even a damn spear-carrier. *[Weak joke]* I do a wonderful corpse. *[Almost begging. Please give me a role]* I'm always on time and a great team-player. *[Pause. Fidgeting. Nodding. "Well thanks for coming and we'll keep you in mind." Repeating what Henry has said]* You'll keep me in mind? *[Defeated]* Thank you. Much appreciated. *[Grim expression. It's all gone wrong - again]*

[Walks out of spot and lights cross fade. Kill spot. Previous room lighting returns. Moves to dog, removing scarf. It wasn't lucky] Guthrie, remember what I've told you. *[Points to phone]* If this rings, you bark. Guthrie? *[Moves to phone]* Here. *[Imitates phone]* Ring, ring. Ring, ring. Guthrie? *[Annoyed]* Guthrie! *[Makes barking sounds]* Woof, woof. Woof, woof. *[Goes to dog]* Good boy. Good boy. *[Patting dog]* When the phone rings, you bark. Loud as you like as in *tempo di disturb da neighbours*. Understand? *[Makes weak barking sounds. Has FRANKIE given up?]* Woof, woof, woof. *[Patting]* Good boy.

[Near Guthrie] So how was your day? Good? Me? *[Proud]* I went for another audition. *[Sadder]* No, I didn't get the part. But I think they liked me. They always *like* you when they never intend to cast you. *[Agrees with Guthrie]* Yes, it might be time to pack up my make-up. But never say die. *[Looks around. Everything is pathetically sad. Changes subject]*

Resting 14

So how's *your* health? Good? *[Pause]* Look if you ever get something terrible inside or your arthritis is really bad, I won't let you suffer. Understand? *[Thinking]* Actually, we're two of a kind and we could stop suffering together. What do you think?

I know it's a grim subject and we'd miss Alice and our walks and I'd never get to play all those powerful roles I'll soon be offered but ... we don't want some painful, drawn-out death. Agreed? *[GUTHRIE agrees]* Good boy. *[FRANKIE hops up to explore]*

Why don't I investigate? *[Assuring the dog]* It's only a rehearsal. I won't do a thing until we discuss the matter in full and unless you give your total support. *[Looking for medicine]*

I like the idea of going to sleep and just not waking up. No pain, no crazy mind-games. We'll both be out to it then wake up at the Rainbow Bridge. *[Still seeking the right poison]* Not sure what concoction I've got for you. Will you turn your nose up if your favourite mush contains doggy sleeping pills?

Well I can't really ring the vet and ask for painfree pet poisons. *[Finds stuff]* Here's something.

[Reading labels] Irritable bowel. *[Discards]* Lower back pain. *[Discards]* Cholesterol. Ha! *[Discards]* Upset stomach and flatulence. This could work for you, Guthrie, but we're after a more permanent cure.

[Finds pills] Ah, sleeping pills. *[Reading]* "Take only as directed." *[Reading, dismayed]* "Use-by date January '94." *[Use date some ten years before date of performance]* What does that mean? *[At pills]* Have you lost your kick, me darlings?

[Collects bottle of cheap wine and heads to table. FRANKIE keeps assuring Guthrie that this routine is strictly a rehearsal. But is FRANKIE telling the truth?]

Now if we were serious, we really should leave a note. We don't want Alice barging in to find a couple of stiffs. She might think we've been done in. *[With pen and paper]* So I'll just write a letter. *[To GUTHRIE]* And remember, it's not a real note, we're just rehearsing. *[Writing and reading aloud]* "... And Alice, please, please give Guthrie a nice burial. He really likes the park. Love, Frankie."

[Looking round, folding note] Now where would we put this if it were a real letter? In those old movies, it's always on the mantle-piece but here at Chateau Bed-sit it'll have to be the ... sink. *[Moves to sink, deposits note then returns to table]*

I'll try crushing a few sleeping pills, Guthrie. *[Does so]* And I think you should go first. I mean if I fall asleep and you don't, who's going to take you for a walk tomorrow?

Resting 15

[Going to bowl] So, here are your crushed pills. Don't eat them. Goodness no, we're just rehearsing. *[Returning to table to do the business]* And I'll just pretend how I would do things if we were actually going to do it. *[Pause]* I think the correct procedure is to swallow the pills then consume the vintage vinegar. *[Puts pills in hand]*

[Pause. FRANKIE looks across at Guthrie then decides] I'll just pretend. Okay? *[FRANKIE puts pills in mouth but does not swallow. In a spot of black comedy, FRANKIE speaks with difficulty]*

If this was for real, I'd say, "Goodbye Guthrie. Thanks for being my friend. *[Toasting with bottle]* Bye.

[FRANKIE puts bottle to lips and prepares to tip liquid down throat. Just as liquid goes into FRANKIE'S mouth, the front door is loudly knocked. FRANKIE spews the liquid and pills in a mixture of wanting to live and of fright at the unexpected interruption]

Shite! What was that? *[Voice from outside. Could be FRANKIE on tape]*

VOICE: Frankie! Hello. It's Meals on Wheels!

[FRANKIE furious then quickly/crudely sweeps pills aside. Bottle replaced. FRANKIE tidies]

VOICE: Frankie, I've got your chicken soup.

FRANKIE: *[These are magical words. Mimed/whispered]* Chicken soup?

[FRANKIE grimaces. FRANKIE wants this food, desperately, but it's a matter of pride. This is charity. To accept the food, FRANKIE is admitting failure to find work and not being self-sufficient]

VOICE: And there's roast beef and vegetables with gravy; *[FRANKIE is in hell. The knockout punch]* and your favourite, lemon meringue pie.

FRANKIE: *[Oh no, such bliss. Whispers]* Lemon-meringue pie!

[FRANKIE cracks but doesn't want any face-to-face contact. As a poorly old pensioner]

FRANKIE: *[Husky]* I've not been well. Just leave it by the door. Please.

VOICE: You sound terrible, Frankie. Are you all right?

FRANKIE: I'm fine; just a touch of the flu.

VOICE: What about your dog? He normally barks when I come to the door.

Resting 16

FRANKIE: Guthrie's asleep. No, he's just woken up. *[To the dog]* Are you okay, Guthrie? *[Imitates dog]* Woof, woof. *[To food carrier]* He's fine.

VOICE: Well we're not supposed to do this but just this once I'll leave your meal by the door. Oh and I collected a letter from your box. I've put it with your food. Bye Frankie.

[Suddenly FRANKIE hugely relieved but speaks almost as a well person]

Thank you. *[Grimaces. Corrects good voice to that of flu-ridden patient]* Thank you. Goodbye.

[Pause as FRANKIE listens. To Guthrie] Shhhh. Guthrie, stay. *[Pause until FRANKIE satisfied. Starts towards door then opens it, exits then returns carrying tray. Great joy and anticipation; is FRANKIE skipping? The suicide is off]* Lemon meringue pie and a letter.

[Putting food on sink or in fridge] Now before we do another thing, Guthrie, let's be very clear. Life is precious and we are never going to even think about death or dying until we're dead. We have so much to live for. Got that? Good boy.

Roast beef for you and ... *[Dramatic moment, could drop tray if only to table]* Oh no! *[Brings envelope to Guthrie. Opening envelope]* It's from the government. It must be about Alice. *[Could take big breath and pause. What's in the letter?]*

[Sits and reads letter] "Re Ms Alice Raines ... We advise we have located Alice and ..." *[FRANKIE up and excited, dancing round the room]* Yeeeeeeees! She's alive! Alice is coming home. Oh Guthrie, we're going to be a family. *[Looks at Guthrie and changes instantly. The animal has eaten the sleeping pills. FRANKIE screams and rushes to the dog]* Guthrie! No!

[Kneeling beside Guthrie] Oh you didn't eat those pills. You can't have. *[Guthrie is lifeless. FRANKIE distraught]* You stupid dog! Oh this is not fair. *[Holding Guthrie]* Guthrie! No! *[Angry at life]* I don't want a swap. You can't give me Alice and take Guthrie. It's not fair.

[Crying and cuddling the dog] I never meant to hurt you, Guthrie. You're my reason for living. I'm sorry, my darling boy. I need you. I want you to meet Alice. Guthrie. *[Heartbroken, sobbing. Slowly the sobbing stops and, ever so gradually, FRANKIE stops sobbing and sniffs a little]* Guthrie? *[Louder]* Guthrie? *[Looks at Guthrie and levels accusation]* You just farted!

[Now delirious Guthrie is alive] Oh you beautiful, flea-ridden, arthritic angel. Break wind forever. *[Kissing him. Gentle reprimand]* Just don't ever scare me like that again. *[More kissing, gently places dog in basket. Takes bowl]* Lie there.

Resting 17

And we'll get rid of these ridiculous pills. *[Takes bowl to sink and returns with water bowl]* What *idiot* put them there? Here, have a nice drink of water, Guthrie. There, good boy. *[Returns to letter]* But now, the great news about Alice.

[Sits. resumes reading] "... we have located Alice who is living independently within a supervised house. You should forward a copy of your birth certificate to ... blah, blah, blah." *[To Guthrie]* You okay? Good boy. Yes, it is great news.

[The following speech causes FRANKIE to react as the words sink home. Starts with enthusiasm]

"It is our obligation to advise that in cases such as yours, some family members may not wish to make contact. To this end we have forwarded your letter to Alice and, if interested, she will contact you via our office."

[Stunned] If interested! *[Angry]* If interested? Of course she's interested. She's an orphan; my sister – my family! *[Including Guthrie]* All she's got is Guthrie and me. *[Anger rising]* Of course she's bloody interested.

[Distraught again] Oh Guthrie, we've come so far. We've found Alice and have the chance to live and love as a family. I can put things right. She needs me. I can take care of her. She can take care of me. Of us. Why can't they see the truth?

[Heartbroken] It's the last thing I want to do before I die. I want to give love. What's wrong with that?

[Recovering, realizes, bitter] Oh, of course; it's because I'm an actor; Frankie Raines - typical thespian; out of work, no money, drinks to excess and lives in a tip with a mongrel.

[Sarcastic] But if I'm a teacher or nurse I'm fine. If I'm a lawyer, a vet or work in the local deli, then I'm normal, I'm a human being; suitable to care for my dear, sweet Alice.

[Furious] How dare they? *[Defiant]* Actors are normal! We're not murderers or despots. We're not politicians – we're human! If you criticize us, do we not cry?

[At Guthrie] You think I should have been an accountant. Go on, say it. But I had no choice. I was born an actor. It's part of me; my heart, my soul, my ... life. If I'd rejected the theatre I'd be the most miserable person alive.

And yes, I knew I'd struggle. Every actor knows more than ninety per cent of us are "resting". But I took it on and I kept going; for decades. I was never a star, never rich or famous – just a solid, jobbing actor. Everyone knew me as "Whats-'er [*is*]-name".

Resting 18

[Pause. Guthrie is not convinced] You don't believe me. You think I'm all talk.

[Preparing] Well I'll show you. I'll go back to acting-class. I'll attend every audition in town. I'll find work, make money and *[Defiant]* I will care for Alice. What? Can I still act? Ha!

[To Guthrie] I've even played your cousin.

[Lights change as FRANKIE gives a brief rendition of some of the characters performed over the decades. There could be two spots with each new character using a different light. FRANKIE could do the intros when passing between spots]

[As a dog – growling then barking then friendly with panting - on knees in Guthrie's face]
Grrrrr – ruff, ruff – *[Panting]* ha, ha, ha, ha.

[As FRANKIE] I've been stone, cold sober and played a legless, gormless drunk. *[Imitates drunk]* Shertainly oshifer. And may I shay, the police do a madge ... a madge-niff ... a madge-niffen-scentery job.

[As FRANKIE] I could give up acting and would make a fortune selling my body. *[Raises eyebrows, suggestive facial expression. As red-hot lover; seductive. Maybe lounging on be/table]* Hey lover, I do things beyond your wildest dreams. Think of a mind-blowing fantasy. Go on. Now double it. *[Oozes]* That's what I do for openers. *[Seductive gesture]* Die happy.

[FRANKIE] Oh but I can also do breeding. I'm wonderful with old money, in-bred snobs and cucumber sandwiches. *[Imperious]* A handbag. Off with his head! Oh I say, jolly good show.

[Back as FRANKIE] And even at my age, I can be younger than young. *[Childlike]* Mummy? Daddy? *[Howls, stamping foot]* You promised me. You said I could. *[Another howl]*

[As FRANKIE] I've been crippled, horribly deformed and performed for two hours with a twisted body. *[As cripple, obsequious, Dickensian]* This way m'lud. Oh indeed. I am your most 'umble of servants. 'Tis an 'onour to grovel in your presence, sir.

[As FRANKIE] But don't think I'm all smiles and kindness. Mass murder's my middle moniker. *[Evil. Leers. Has victim in helpless position]* Just a little more pain, sweetheart. Can you feel that? Good. Good. I like my customers to taste their own blood. Nice ain't it? Now let's see if *this* hurts. *[Makes evil move. Leers]* Beautiful. *[Kills]* Ahh!

[Sudden blackout lasting only a few seconds. Normal lighting returns and FRANKIE is in the battered chair or on the bed back as FRANKIE. All the recent "performing" is forgotten]

Resting 19

We have to find Alice. She needs us as much as we need her. *[Thinking]* I'm sure I put our telephone number on the letter. If only we had *her* number.

[Hopeful] Maybe she'll give us a ring. *[Suddenly spins round. Concerned, excited]* Was that the phone? Guthrie! I told you to bark when the phone rings. *[Going to phone suddenly nervous]* Oh my arse! Don't tell me! *[Picks up phone. Realises. Panics]* The bloody phone's not working. Alice has been trying to call and my agent can't get through.

[Distressed] Oh God, no! No! *[Replaces phone and runs hands through hair. Highly distressed. Regains a little composure and sees the black comedy]*

The tragedy becomes farce. Frankie Raines died alone, the slowest of deaths because ... *[Despair and anger]* I forgot to pay the phone bill. *[Rushes to pile of papers. Searches]* Phone. Phone. Telephone. Where is it? *[Finds bill in the mess]* Phone bill. *[Reads]* Blah, blah, blah. *[Excited]* Account paid. Yes! *[Dismayed]* That's last year. *[More searching]* They have to warn me before cutting it off. Oh you fool. You moron. *[Finds another account. Scans it]* Here it is. Paid! Paid! Paid! *[Excited]* Yes!

And language is a worry. If some old codger says he's gay, the others'll think he's lighthearted and carefree. And we must edit sex scenes. Not because it's tacky but because arousal will take forever.

Picture the bedrooms at nine pm. No giggling or groping; just an endless wall of snores. *[Excited]* Oh, this'll be riveting.

With young housemates, some bimbo brags about her face-lift and boob-job. The geriatrics can flaunt their colostomy-bags and *[Indicating pot-belly and/or breasts]* gravity.

Viewers'll be hooked. Think of the promos. *[Announcing]* "Who's got the most plastic joints, the weakest bladder or the fastest pacemaker?"

[Now as FRANKIE talking to FRANKIE] You've gotta sell this idea, Frankie. Patent it. Hawk it to the networks. *[Thinking outside the single genre]* But what else? Come on, you're on a roll. *[Gets another idea]* Yes! Up is the new down; make quality the new crap.

A TV show using wit, knowledge and intelligence? *[Realises]* Call it ... *A Contradiction In Terms.* *[Now selling idea to TV network to executives at board meeting]* Ladies and gentlemen, this is daring and different. This will change the viewing habits of the nation. Reality television with a difference.

[This is over-the-top selling with biting anger/satire seeping from every pore]

Resting 20

Participants must have read books none of which require colouring in, be at least 53 years of age, have travelled, been drunk by conscious decision and know the difference between *imply* and *infer*.

[Intimate] Voyeurism is the new morality. So how's this for a title and content? *Up Yourself*.

And because this show holds up a mirror to life, viewers discover if they're up themselves.

It's got sexy language. The pompous are *pricked*, the pretentious *stuffed* and the morally-bankrupt *exposed*.

[Defending the idea] Okay, it uses intelligence and yes, that's a big word but listen, while *everyone* is dumbing-down, you can *dumb up!*

A show making viewers think. How radical is that? You'll be trendsetters with sponsors desperate to throw money at you. *[Big announcement. Final pitch]* Are you *Up Yourself?*

[Pause. The executives are silent. FRANKIE changes tack] No? Well I have a back-up proposal. *[Build this pitch to finish with a big da-dah]* Take a bunch of people off the street then film them making toast, farting and discussing navel fluff in words of half a syllable!

[FRANKIE is frozen in pose with hands aloft having enthused over this latest whiz-bang proposal. Of course it's tongue-in-cheek. Mock disappointment] You've already thought of it? Bugger. *[Breaks out of character. Admission of failure]* I give up.

[FRANKIE slowly drops the pose and depression returns. FRANKIE heads to bed]

[Getting into bed] I think the expression, Guthrie, is "Missing the point". That's what's wrong with the world today. Satire is extinct.

Tommy Cooper copped that. He was a comic genius who wore a fez and told terrible jokes; the point being they were *meant* to be terrible.

[Imitates Tommy perhaps with tea-cosy or cap/beanie as impromptu fez]

I'm on a whiskey diet. I've lost three days already. [Imitates Tommy's hand movements]

I went to the doctor the other day, I said I've broke my leg in three places. He said, 'Don't go to those places.' *[Imitates Tommy's hand movements]*

Resting 21

A policeman stopped me the other night, he taps on the window of the car and says: 'Would you please blow into this bag, Sir' I said: 'What for, Officer?' He says, 'My chips are too hot'

[Imitates Tommy's hand movements]

I slept like a log last night and woke up in the fireplace. [Imitates Tommy's hand movements]

Just like that, just like that.

[Quietly amused at fond memories] And Tommy did magic tricks badly; deliberately so. That was the point. They were *meant* to be bad.

An American producer called Tommy aside and told him the routine was fine but could he *[American]* 'please get the conjuring tricks right'. *[Pause. FRANKIE groans]* Bloody Yanks.

It's like my novelist friend who bumped into a TV executive. "What are you writing?" asked the TV man. "My autobiography," replied my friend. "Sounds interesting," said the executive, "Who's it about?" *[FRANKIE screams and curls up on the bed]* Ahhh! Today's growth industries are dumbing-down, ignorance and voyeurism.

[Pause. FRANKIE has a go at prayer. Tentative at first] Are you there, God? It's me, Frankie Raines; actor; resting. *[Pause]* No, we haven't met. Yes, I know it's fashionable to become religious at my age; to grab a bit of insurance just before the final curtain, but seriously, are you as concerned as I am about the world today, *your* world?

I mean have you heard a politician lately or seen the size of a footballer's pay packet?

Do you care that the number of people dying from starvation is matched only by the number of new cookbooks being published?

Are you aware that melody has been removed from today's pop music?

And as some of us enjoy long winter walks, why do we have to have global warming?

Now I know you're keen on your followers going into all the world to preach the gospel but surely that doesn't include television evangelists. Or with them is it okay to actually "shoot the messenger"?

I'm sure you do requests, God, and if I may, I have a couple. Job offers would be nice; *an* offer, singular; and could you get playwrights to create more roles for the over 60s? Just because we're flirting with dotage doesn't mean we're not ready, willing and able.

Resting 22

Oh and please make television programs begin and end as advertised?

[Changes position. This is the big request]

Finally, and this is the big one. Please take care of Alice. I'd love us to be a family again but if that's not possible, just keep her safe and healthy and happy. *[Pause]* I'd love her to visit me and Guthrie. Not for ever. Just an afternoon tea will do. I'll make it a treat - scones with jam and cream, crumpets and honey and bread and butter with hundreds and thousands. Please.

That'll do for now. *[Softer]* Please.

[FRANKIE drifts into sleep. Pause. Don't rush. Suddenly FRANKIE explodes into life. Sits up and screams loudly. This could be frightening and may bring sleepy audience members back on-line]

Yes! Of course! The answer to all my prayers. *[Looking up]* Oh thank you, Your Godship. Brilliant! *[Hops up and is suddenly distressed because Guthrie has been frightened]* Oh I'm sorry, Guthrie. *[Goes to pacify elderly pooch]* It's okay, old chap. It's more than okay. I've just solved our problems. *[Bursting with pride]* I'm going to write my autobiography. *[GUTHRIE silent]* It's not a stupid idea.

[Excited] It's perfect. I'll have something to do and, when it's published, I'll make money and we can move to a nicer place for Alice to visit. *[Realises another benefit]* And the success of the book will remind directors of just who they're missing. I'll be back in work. Win-win-win!

[Goes searching for background material] I've got the source material; tons of it courtesy of Frankie the Hoarder's crappy diaries. *[Drags out box or suitcase from under bed]* And I've kept my theatre programs and reviews. *[Fossicking]* And these photos will stimulate my memory and illustrate the text. *[Taking items to table]* This plan has legs.

[Gets organized setting things out on table] Planning, Frankie. Photos, theatre programs, diaries; newspaper clippings; letters, cards ... what else?

[Finding small props – special underwear]

Who gave me this/these? *[Remembers]* Of course. *[Grabs pen and scribbles]* Old lovers.

[Thinking] Now I must dish the dirt. Publishers and readers demand scandal. So which of my lovers was a Russian spy? Who could only do it wearing a bow-tie *[hat?]*? And what about that leading man who became a leading lady? *[Scribbling]* Trash sells.

Resting 23

[Realises] But can I be sued by a stiff? *[Who cares]* Who cares. Tell all, expose everyone, lie.

[Triumphant] Live your motto, Frankie. Hope and perseverance!

[Uses ancient tape-player and settles. Some of the following scene has been recorded by FRANKIE before the play commences. As the pre-recorded dialogue is heard via the theatre's speakers, FRANKIE acts out the stories being spoken. FRANKIE is acting while FRANKIE is story-telling.]

[This simple device provides a change in the method of storytelling and enables the actor to play a wide age-range of FRANKIE'S character from childhood to the present day. LIVE means FRANKIE is speaking live. TAPE means FRANKIE is speaking from the pre-recorded source]

Chapter One. The autobiography of the theatre-world's greatest nobody – Frankie Raines.

[Hits button on ancient player Lighting changes as FRANKIE becomes herself as a young child]

TAPE My childhood was miserable. My autocratic father kept me and my submissive mother under lock and key. Church and Sunday School were compulsory. We never missed our Sabbath.

LIVE *[As youngster – sings]* “Jesus loves me this I know, for the bible tells me so ...”
[Could keep singing quietly fading away as following speech is heard]

TAPE I was an only child with few friends. I grew to love books and my mother would quietly read to me just before I said my prayers.

LIVE *[As parent]* “Hoot hoot” went the big-eyed owl. “Knee-deep,” said the big-tongued frog. And “Eee-or” went the big-eared donkey.

TAPE My first taste of show-business came when my infant class performed a Nativity play. I was five and played one of the three wise men. Well rehearsed, I approached the baby Jesus.

LIVE *[As five year old wise man. Thinking hard]* ‘appy ‘birfday, Jesus. ‘ere’s sum ... Frankenstein.”

TAPE My teenage years were full of hormones, acne and plays. I fell in love with the glover’s son from Stratford.

LIVE *[As earnest young actor auditioning for secondary-school play]*

Resting 24

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.*

TAPE I was eleven when my sister was born. My father was very angry and my mother wept. I was sent to boarding school and Alice became a stranger. But I never forgot to write.

LIVE *[Birthday card/letter to Alice]* Happy birthday, Alice. Are you really five? Mummy says you're a beautiful young lady. Remember your illness is there to be overcome. I'm so proud to be your sister and I will never stop loving you. Frankie

TAPE The theatre became my passion. I didn't *want* to act, I *had* to. Nothing was more important than my art. Nothing, that is, except sex.

LIVE *[As teenager, romancing perhaps on bed]* Ohhhh. Yes. Yes. Oh you're fantastic. *[In pain from cramp or some such]* Ow! *[Recovering]* No, I'm fine. Really. *[Impatient]* I'm all right. *[As lover]* Can you just move your ... yes! *[Additional snogging]* Ohhhh. Ahhh. *[The ecstasy continues over next speech until reprimand]*

TAPE To the despair of my mother and the chagrin of my father ... *[Stern voice]* Frankie! *[FRANKIE stops smooching and adjusts teenage clothing]* My parents were mortified when I won a place at NIDA. *[RADA]* Improvisation was part of our training. We'd select a card, read it aloud then perform the scene.

LIVE *[Reads imaginary card]* Carry pile of bulging books down rickety stairs. *[FRANKIE mimes routine ending with imaginary books going everywhere]* Sorry Guthrie.

TAPE Another tricky routine involved the lecturer saying a word to which we replied with a word related to the first. If we couldn't justify the connection or if we hesitated, we were out. *[Pause]* Horse.

LIVE Cart.

TAPE Gun.

LIVE Bullet.

TAPE Revolution.

LIVE China.

Resting 25

- TAPE** China.
- LIVE** Crockery.
- TAPE** Rumpelstiltskin.
- LIVE** *[Tiny hesitation]* Red dwarf.
- TAPE** *[Questioning relevance]* Red dwarf?
- LIVE** *[Explaining. Wiseguy]* Yes. Rumpelstiltskin was a little fellah and when he accidentally gave away his name he turned red with rage.
- TAPE** *[Aside]* Clever dick. *[Back into the exercise]* Regal.
- LIVE** Monarch.
- TAPE** Monarch.
- LIVE** Moi.
- TAPE** *[Questioning relevance]* Moi?
- LIVE** *[Explaining. Smug]* A monarch reigns. I'm Frankie Raines. Moi!
- TAPE** Employment. After graduation from drama school, I set sail for the Old Dart *[I left for the provinces]* and joined the wonderfully whacky world of repertory theatre.
- LIVE** I played minor parts - servants, juveniles, messengers and made a wonderful corpse. I was assistant stage-manager, go-fer and general dogs-body. I stayed in the cheapest hovels, worked with some brilliantly-mediocre thespians and was paid a pittance. *[Pause. Passionate]* And I loved it.
[Mimes carrying suitcase and prepares to knock on imaginary door]
- TAPE** Finding accommodation in the early days was never easy.
- LIVE** *[FX Knocking or could be mimed]* Good afternoon. I'd like to stay here.
- TAPE** *[Rude landlord/lady]* Well stay there. *[FX Door slams or not]*
- LIVE** Some boarding houses had signs which read, *No theatricals*. One read *No dogs, no actors*. And we didn't even get top billing. The landlord or lady would open the door and give the usual grilling.

Resting 26

- TAPE** *[Landlord/lady]* And what's your line of business?
- LIVE** I soon knew the correct answer. *[Butter wouldn't melt]* Good morning. I'm the new Sunday School teacher.
- TAPE** Finding a bed was one thing. Swallowing the supper was something else.
- LIVE** *[Imitating bored cook]* Soup tonight. Bean soup. *[As FRANKIE to mime eating]* Yes but what and where has it been? And then came the surreptitiously-purchased horse meat magically described as 'steak and chips'.
- TAPE** Chapter Five. Live theatre. In my chequered career I've seen missed cues, wrong cues and actors madly in love with themselves.
- LIVE** One pretentious leading-man always moved centre to flaunt his modest good looks. *[Acts out the scene]* In one scene he became a corpse on the couch and, making my exit, I "accidentally" dropped a vase of flowers on a certain sensitive area. *[Shows surprise/agonny of victim]* The corpse was suddenly 'alive'.
- TAPE** And audiences, bless their hearts, where would we be without them? They can often be brutally honest.
- LIVE** I remember an old but quite famous actor who appeared naked. His body was well past its use-by date. Starkers, he strode on stage whereupon a woman in the audience stood up and, as she stormed out, snorted, "Jesus Jeffrey! You've gotta be joking!"
- TAPE** I've played to houses with more actors on stage than people in the audience. Some audiences are deathly quiet while others just won't shut up.
- LIVE** Once I had to drag off an actress who was ill. *[Demonstrating]* My rather large colleague made the dragging quite difficult. One night, a voice from the audience rang out. *[Imitating audience member. Scottish?]* "Take what you can and come back for the rest later."
- TAPE** Chapter Six. Backstage Gossip.

Resting 27

LIVE Drinking, gambling, blaspheming, drugs, fraud and fornication. And that was just in *my* dressing-room. I mean, what sort of a life is acting? No job security; ridiculous hours; ordinary pay; criticism; colossal egos; always pretending; calling even the creeps ‘darling’ and constantly sucking up to morons.

TAPE Chapter Seven. My life in the world of moving pictures.

LIVE The money’s fantastic but my godfather, the boredom. You’re filming outdoors and it starts to rain or the sun disappears. You wait. You wait some more. Then it’s all systems go and in perfect conditions, [*Despair*] you forget your friggin’ line!

TAPE [*Director*] Cut! We’ll go again!

LIVE The film is set in ancient Greece. Your lines are perfect. You’re over the moon until the director notices your wrist-watch. Or your film is set in 423 BC and a Boeing jet roars overhead!

TAPE The international fame of the great Frankie Raines.

LIVE Of course I wasn’t a star. At best I had bit-parts, I was a warm prop and my so-called starring roles were more like walking wallpaper. But hey, in this world you blow your own trumpet.

[*Defensive*] Besides, what’s wrong with a minor cameo? All right, a sodding extra? But they need us. Imagine *Ben Hur* without the chariots.

[*The following titles may need to be altered to suit the age of the performer and time of the play*]

I came home to catch a wave in the booming local film industry. I was groped in *Don’s Party* and turned feral in *Mad Max*. I was edited out of *Newsfront* and stood on the platform when the train left for *Gallipoli*.

Blink and you missed me. [*Lights fade*] Now all of us, have faded away.

[*Lights dim and the story-telling is over. FRANKIE is exhausted and sits in the silence. PAUSE*]

Will you buy my book, Guthrie? There’ll be a chapter on you. [*Chapter title*] *My best friend*.

Resting 28

[Resigned to failure] It's called optimism; the lifeblood of every actor. Something will turn up. Hope springs eternal.

Ha! There's only one thing worse than not being wanted and that's being *old* and not being wanted. But wouldn't it be great to go out with a bang? You know, burn out not rust out.

[Being realistic. It was never going to happen] And of course my autobiography is being pulped as we speak. *[To Guthrie]* Sorry, old man.

If only I could find Alice. The misery of not working would fade. I'd tell her my life story – the shows, the travel, the stars, everything. She'd be so proud.

And she could tell me her life story - her schooling, friends, our parents. We could argue about politics and books and favourite pets. I think she likes cats.

[To Guthrie] Would you mind if we got a cat for Alice? You wouldn't? That's fantastic. There'll be me and you and Alice and her cat. *[Sad moment with the dog]* Alice and I can prove that blood is thicker than water and you can talk to the cat.

[Despair] Oh bloody hell, God, why can't Alice be here? She's ill. You made her ill the day she was born. Okay, I've stopped asking why. But now she needs looking after. I can do that. Let me help my sister!

[Pause. Looks around] Sorry about that suicide business, Guthrie. Coward's way out. And sorry for being so miserable. *[Brightens]* We have good things to look forward to - lemon-meringue pie for me and roast beef and veggies for you. I'll cut it very small.

[Thinking] I've got to avoid ending my life with a whimper. I must find work or Alice or both. *[To phone, calling]* You are allowed to ring, you know. *[Silence]* Go on. I dare you.

[Despondent] No-one will offer me work. No-one. *[Plea for mercy]* Will anyone take pity on this desperate thespian? I thought mercy was not supposed to pass through a bloody sieve! Anyone? *[Pause]* No-one. *[Pause. Gets idea]* Unless. Un-le-ss. Why can't I be the giver? *[Gets excited]* Me! *[Brimming with anticipation]* I could get a job offer from ... myself.

[Slow-burning enthusiasm] Guthrie. This is it. Of course!

I'll create the work, *I'll* call auditions, *I'll* audition and, as director, *I'll* give the role to Da-dah ... Frankie Raines!!

Resting 29

[So excited then back to reality] I can do it. I've done everything else. I'll find a play and perform all over the world. We'll open in Sydney *[London]* then onto Broadway and the West End *[Far East]*. *[Excitement builds]* And all with Alice!

She can carry my make-up case and *[at Guthrie]* look after you, and be my critic. Oh this is stupendous. I'm no longer resting, Alice is back with her family and I'll go out with the biggest bang the theatre world has ever seen.

[Worried again] But what's the play? *[Thinking]* I need a work for one actor; something I love, something I know, something ...

[Thinking. Eureka] Will!

[Looks to heaven] You star, Will, you brightest of stars. *[Blows Will a big kiss. Thinking again]* Keep it short. Brevity's the soul of wit. Entertaining and revealing. Hold up a mirror to life. Of course. *[Announcing title]* *Shakespeare in Seconds!*

[Steps forward. This is FRANKIE'S travelling show. For the first time, perhaps, FRANKIE could directly address the audience. This audience is the first group of people to watch FRANKIE'S one-person creation. FRANKIE gives it everything. This has to work. It's the last roll of the dice for FRANKIE. Not only will skill and passion be involved, FRANKIE'S existence is on the line. Tension builds during FRANKIE'S special performance.]

[Lighting changes to previously unseen plot. This is the climax but not the denouement of the entire play. This is a play within the play. This scene needs to start softish and with minimum movement then build. There could much to-ing and fro-ing. The whole routine is a drawn-out crescendo with perhaps a mini-crescendo within the overall crescendo. FRANKIE is sincere. FRANKIE loves the Bard and believes every word of this self-made script. The delivery is lively with a gradual accelerando. A proud and beaming FRANKIE addresses the audience]

Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce my dear friend, about whom it's said
"He was not of an age but for all time."

William Shakespeare, of lowly birth
Without university education
A poet who eclipsed all others.

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.*

[Suddenly FRANKIE confronts the audience]

Resting 30

[Spruiking] Ever been *lonely, tranquil, generous* or *accused*? Ever felt *gloomy, jaded, worthless* or *majestic*? Ever known *excitement, radiance, savagery* and *assassination*? Well Will Shakespeare it was who invented, coined or promoted those very words.

And many more like *hobnob, moonbeam, monumental* and *skim milk*.

Will gave us almost two thousand new words, words alive and well this very day. And then sayings. Why, have you not *stood on ceremony, been a laughing stock, bloody-minded* or *stony-hearted*?

Ever been *tongue-tied*? or *disappeared into thin air*? Ever been *more sinned against than sinning*? endured *green-eyed jealousy* or been *eaten out of house and home*?

The sayings of Shakespeare are today, *today* throbbing with life!

All's well that ends well.

I wear my heart upon my sleeve.

There's method in my madness.

In the twinkling of an eye.

Will's words help us understand ourselves with wisdom and truth as relevant now as when they first were penned.

The course of true love never did run smooth.

Tis better to be brief than tedious.

The fool thinks he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.

The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers.

If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

Could not Will's words of long-ago be spoken in France in 1915?

*We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.*

Will knows about life. *Grief makes one hour ten.*

No legacy is so rich as honesty.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,

Resting 31

The valiant never taste of death but once.

*I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you.*

This above all: to thine own self be true.

But love dominates. With Will love is everywhere. Will loves his family, friends and fellow actors. Will is in love with love.

PREVIEW ENDS



Resting 32

Notes

One suggestion is to stage two separate productions of *Resting*. Use a female actor with Director A in one production and a male actor with Director B in the second production. Because the role can equally be played by a man or a woman it would be interesting to see different productions a week or so apart.

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