

MR. MORRIS!
MR. MORRIS!

by

Anthony E. Gallo

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Printed in the United States of America, 2019

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Edited by Beatrix Whitehall

ACT 1

SCENE 1 OXFORD, MARYLAND 1747

Robert Morris Sr. embraces his
son, Robert Morris.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

My son!

ROBERT MORRIS

My father!

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Is what I hear true?

ROBERT MORRIS

Yes. Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And therefore you know what I heard.

ROBERT MORRIS

Please tell me, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

You sent a boatload of flour to England?

ROBERT MORRIS

Yes, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And why did you send a boatload of flour to England?

ROBERT MORRIS

When I arrived in Philadelphia last week, I saw that
the price of flour was now a fourth of what it is in
England. I knew we could make a lot of money.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And why did you not wait for Mr. Willig to return to Philadelphia?

ROBERT MORRIS

I was afraid the price would go back up.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

As it surely did shortly after your deal.

ROBERT MORRIS

I know father. I keep track of all prices.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Not bad for a 14 year old lad.

ROBERT MORRIS

I won't be 14 until next week.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And you know that you could have lost it all.

ROBERT MORRIS

But I did not.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

In fact you made the company 1000 pounds.

ROBERT MORRIS

Yes, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

I see you have the Morris traits.

ROBERT MORRIS

What is that Father?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Cunning, manipulation and making money.

ROBERT MORRIS

I like to make money.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And what will you do after you make money?

ROBERT MORRIS

Make more money.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And after that?

ROBERT MORRIS

Even more money.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

What for?

ROBERT MORRIS

To help everybody, my country, my church and my friends.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And yourself?

ROBERT MORRIS

That always comes first.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

My Son! My Son! What can I say! Do you want to remain here or go back to England.

ROBERT MORRIS

I will always stay here. But I want to go to Philadelphia.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Why?

ROBERT MORRIS

I can make more money.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

To Philadelphia you go. The Willigs would like to keep you. They say you are definitely the youngest and definitely the smartest person who has ever worked for them.

ROBERT MORRIS

Thank you father. I am having fun.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

But don't you want more education. You have only had four years of schooling. Three years less than me.

ROBERT MORRIS

No, Father. In fact I have only three years in school.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Do you have no curiosity?

ROBERT MORRIS

I do, but only about business.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Very well then. I will respect your wishes.

ROBERT MORRIS

Thank you, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And, tell me, Son. What would you have done if the price of flour in England had fallen?

ROBERT MORRIS

I don't think about such things, Father.

SCENE 2 TWO YEARS LATER

Robert MORRIS is in bed. Robert Morris, Jr. enters.

MORRIS

Father, I came as quickly as I could.

ROBERT MORRIS Sr.

I am going to be fine.

MORRIS

Father. Father. How did the cannonball hit you?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

In celebration. I was being honored. An accident happened. They shot a cannon to toast me and my contributions to Oxford and the cannonball hit my arm. I am going to be fine.

MORRIS

Are you in pain?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Some.

MORRIS

You seem so pale. What can I get you?.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

This is a joyous day for me.

MORRIS

Why father?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Today you became a brother.

MORRIS

How so father?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

I thought you were smart, my son.

MORRIS

I am not. I only work hard.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

I am a father again.

MORRIS

I did not know you were married.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Who said that I WAS?

MORRIS

Well, who is the mother?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Sarah Wise.

MORRIS

Congratulations. But is the child legitimate?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

No. And neither are you.

MORRIS

Explain.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

I will explain that to you someday. Suffice it to say that there are traits that run in our family line.

MORRIS

What are they?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Illegitimacy and addiction. There is not much we seem to be able to do about either. Some succumb to alcohol, some to risky behavior, some to gambling, and some to worse.

MORRIS

Yes, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

In the meantime, you have a new brother. His name is Thomas. I plan to see him tomorrow.

MORRIS

May I come with you?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

Why of course, my son. You can welcome your brother into the world.

MORRIS

Little Thomas.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

The pain is now hurting me more.

MORRIS

Shall I get the doctor?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

No, I will be fine.

MORRIS

Yes Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And son. You have got to be a big man should anything happen to me.

MORRIS

Yes, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

And if I die, you will be both orphan and father.

MORRIS

Orphan and Father?

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

A father to little Thomas.

MORRIS

You are not going to die, Father.

ROBERT MORRIS SR.

My son!

He drops is head and dies.

MORRIS

Father! Father! Father! Answer me!

SCENE 3 DANCE ASSEMBLY TWENTY YEARS LATER

Robert and Mary White Morris are receiving members of the Dance Assembly at the Annual Ball. We hear lively period dance music and much chatter. Robert Morris addresses the crowd

MORRIS

Again, I say to the assembled men and women in this room, you are to be congratulated. We have raised twenty thousand pounds to help the widows, orphans, and the poor. Truly, you are the elite of American Society.

ENSEMBLE

Yea!

MORRIS

And now let's continue the dancing!

Benjamin Franklin appears.

FRANKLIN

Mr. Morris. Mrs. Morris.

MORRIS

THE Benjamin Franklin!

MARY

Benjamin Franklin! We thought you were still in England.

FRANKLIN

I am back. My son is still there.

MARY

How lovely.

FRANKLIN

Not so lovely.

MARY

Why?

FRANKLIN

My son.

MARY

A charming young man.

FRANKLIN

Indeed. But a traitor,

MORRIS

Are you not being harsh on the young man.

FRANKLIN

No. And you Mr. Morris. Will you aid us in the revolution?

MORRIS

I am a businessman, and nonpolitical.

FRANKLIN

At a time when none of us can afford to be nonpolitical!

MORRIS

Shall we discuss this some other time? You know how I prize your opinion.

FRANKLIN

You will not disappoint me.

MORRIS

What?

FRANKLIN

You deserve to be a first class citizen.

MORRIS

I am.

FRANKLIN

You are not.

MORRIS

I beg your pardon.

FRANKLIN

I can not vote. I can be taxed. You can not vote, and you can be taxed. You are the richest man in North America Your wealth is greater than that of 99.99 percent of the British population.

MORRIS

I know.

FRANKLIN

But there is one difference. They are first class citizens, while you are not.

MORRIS

Let's talk again, shall we?

FRANKLIN

In the meantime I shall enjoy the victuals, drink, and dancing.

MORRIS

Every woman on the floor awaits Dr. Franklin

FRANKLIN

And here comes your brother-in-law.

MORRIS

I also wrote and asked you about my brother Thomas.

FRANKLIN

A jubilant young man.

MORRIS

Jubilant. Not exactly the right word..

FRANKLIN

What do you mean?

MORRIS

I sent him to Paris to negotiate a trade and financial arrangement, and I hear he's doing nothing. He does not even write. So, what's happening?

FRANKLIN

Some other time.

MORRIS

Now! Please.

FRANKLIN

How can I best put this?

MORRIS

Any way you like.

FRANKLIN

He is drunk 22 hours a day, and generally has at least two whores by his side most of those hours.

MORRIS

As I feared. Now have some refreshments.

FRANKLIN

Yes, my friend.

Bishop White appears.

MARY

My dearest brother.

BISHOP WHITE

And when will child 4 be born?

MORRIS

In three weeks, and we expect you to perform the baptism a week later. And where is my dearest sister-in-law?

BISHOP WHITE

She is comforting Polly.

MARY

About what?

BISHOP WHITE

Polly should explain to you. In the meantime, where is Mr. Joseph?

MARY

He has gone to the country and does not want to come back.

BISHOP WHITE

But is he not your slave?

MORRIS

My only slave. But he does not want to come back and we would not think of forcing him.

MARY

He's such a dear.

MORRIS

Besides I prefer white help.

BISHOP WHITE

But are you and Mr. Willig not in the slave trade?

MORRIS

Since 1762.

BISHOP WHITE

So you believe in selling slaves but not owning them?,

MORRIS

You know the Bible better than I do. But by my count, there are 300 references to slavery and all give overt or tacit approval to the institution.

BISHOP WHITE

Right. Except one. And that is the one in which God frees the chosen people from slavery of the Egyptians.

MARY

I can't believe we are having a theological discussion at the Dance Assembly!

MORRIS

Better than talking about strawberries. (Pause) So God has spoken to me, my bishop brother-in-law.

BISHOP WHITE

How?

MORRIS

He's told me the slave trade is unprofitable and that is providence way of saying I should abandon this work.

BISHOP WHITE

What?

MORRIS

I have decided to close the slave trading business.

.

BISHOP WHITE

How is that?

MORRIS

Through the profit message. Not the prophet stuff like Isaiah and so on. But profit with an "F" in it.

BISHOP WHITE

Well blessed be the lord. Here comes Polly.

MORRIS

Before you go. I have a bit of news for you.

BISHOP WHITE

Yes?

MORRIS

Senator Franklin and I are sponsoring a bill in the Pennsylvania Senate to abolish slavery throughout the commonwealth.

BISHOP WHITE

Hallelujah!

Polly rushes up

Mary

Dearest Polly!

POLLY

Dearest Mary.

MORRIS

You are upset about something.

POLLY

Oh Mr. Morris my upset will ruin your enjoyment of
the Dance Assembly

MORRIS

Why my daughter? Your happiness is what is most
important to me. Please share.

POLLY

Mrs. Driscoll?

MORRIS

Ah yes. What about the dear lady?

POLLY

She said I was.....I was.... (Begins crying)

MORRIS

Was what?

POLLY

Illegitimate..

MORRIS

Well, you know it's true.

POLLY

But...

MORRIS

Did she confront you with it?.

POLLY

No. I overheard her.

MORRIS

That's what you get for being snoopy.

POLLY

Father!

MORRIS

Remember one thing, daughter.

POLLY

Yes, Father.

MORRIS

Illegitimate. Yes, it is an unpleasant word. We do not use it. But remember something: it runs in our family.

POLLY

What, father!

MORRIS

You were born to me eighteen years ago because of a youthful indiscretion. But you are disturbed by that word, as am I, as was your grandfather. Yes we are illegitimate. And stand proudly behind it. Look at the lovely lady I married.

MARY

Yes, Polly.

Polly

But how can I hold my head up to my betrothed's family?

MARY

They know the story.

MORRIS

And they have already accepted you.

MARY

Yes, my dear Polly.

MORRIS

And they are damned fortunate to have you.

POLLY

But Mr. Morris. I am the only one of my friends who is illegitimate.

MORRIS

And has it encumbered your standing with any of them?

POLLY

No Father....

MORRIS

There is your story. But remember what we know that counts more than family background.

POLLY

What father?

MORRIS

MONEY! Money talks and loudly. Now enjoy the Dance Assembly, And your wedding will be the most lavish in Philadelphia this year.

POLLY

Oh thank you, Mr. Morris. Will the Driscolls be invited to next years dance assembly? And the Hamiltons were standing next to her.

MORRIS

Of course!.

POLLY

What!

MORRIS

We are not a vengeful people. Not in our blood.

POLLY

But Father.

MORRIS

Do not give them a second thought. They are not significant. Drink and be merry. You are young only once. And remember, Alexander Hamilton is also illegitimate.

MARY

And I see your fiancée searching for you.

MORRIS

Daughter, enjoy the night.

She goes off. Morris takes
Mary's arm

MORRIS

And now my beloved Mary, Shall we do the quadrille?

MARY

My beloved husband! I gladly accept.

MORRIS

The Queen of the Ball!

MARY

The King of the Ball!

SCENE 4 THE NEXT DAY

Morris is seated. Willig
enters.

WILLIG

How are we doing today, Partner?

MORRIS

Endless mourning will not solve the problem.

WILLIG

We can meet another day.

MORRIS

No. Today will do. Mourning must end.

WILLIG

He was your brother.

MORRIS

Half-brother.

WILLIG

Whom you raised as a parent.

MORRIS

In keeping with my fathers command.

WILLIG

You could do no more.

MORRIS

His wayward way were was what killed him.

WILLIG

His drink.

MORRIS

A terrible addiction.

WILLIG

And his losses to our company.

MORRIS

I will absorb that total loss entirely.

WILLIG

You will do no such thing.

MORRIS

The decision is mine.

WILLIG

We will negotiate. This year has been especially profitable!

MORRIS

Well, not bad.

WILLIG

Last year we showed a profit of 2 million pounds. This year 5 million.

MORRIS

Bishop White would say God has been good to us.

WILLIG

Let me tell you why we do so well.

MORRIS

Why?

WILLIG

I have a very smart partner.

MORRIS

And mine is even smarter.

WILLIG

Have we ever disagreed in our sixteen years together!

MORRIS

Never. And we will always keep it that way.

WILLIG

So let us review the year. One unprofitable enterprise.

MORRIS

Our slave operations are finished.

WILLIG

And flour?

MORRIS

Over a million pounds.

WILLIG

Arbitrage?

MORRIS

You pulled in over 500 thousand pounds.

WILLIG

Loans?

MORRIS

Two million.

WILLIG

And the real estate?

MORRIS

Over one million.

WILLIG

We also had expenses.

MORRIS

But still, our most profitable year in ten years.

A knock is heard at the door

WILLIG

Who could that be?

MORRIS

That must be Haym Salomon. I have been expecting him.

WILLIG

Who is he?

MORRIS

The Polish arbitrage fellow. A good man to do business with. He may be useful to us.

WILLIG

Ah yes.

MORRIS

Come in.

WILLIG

I have to go.

The door Opens. Haym Salomon enters.

Haym

Sir. I am Haym Salomon.

MORRIS

Welcome to our fair city, Mr. Haym Salomon.

HAYM

My name is actually Chaim.. But in the new world, my world, now, I anglicized it to Haym.

MORRIS

Both names will do. I hope we can share insights on finance and commerce.

HAYM

YES! You know more about both than I will ever know.

MORRIS

HA! I think we can work well together. I understand you have been a generous lender to a dozen of the Signers.

HAYM

Actually 15.

MORRIS

Which ones?

HAYM

My lips are sealed.

MORRIS

So be it.

HAYM

The world admires Robert Morris.

MORRIS

Some do not. I am not known all over the world.

HAYM

I have lived in Brussels, London, Warsaw cities.
They all know this upstart colonist name MORRIS.

MORRIS

Well then what am I known for?

HAYM

Being the richest man in North America. Being the
most knowledgeable man in buying and selling foreign
exchange, a great merchant and...

MORRIS

How I wish any of it were true.

HAYM

And you know, they even accused you of being one of
my boys.

MORRIS

What is that?

HAYM

Jewish.

MORRIS

An alluring thought.

HAYM

Feel free to join anytime

MORRIS

Your services. We will someday need them.

HAYM

Which services?

MORRIS

Arbitrage. Buying and selling securities. You know the whole thing.

HAYM

My specialty.

MORRIS

And you are the best.

HAYM

Second best!

MORRIS

Who is the best?

HAYM

You.

MORRIS

But there are only so many hours in the day, even for me.

HAYM

I will help. AMERICA IS MINE. And will give my life for this revolution.

MORRIS

We have so much in common, you and I

HAYM

I will help! But my British is not very good.

MORRIS

I assure you, your British is better than my Yiddish.

HAYM

I am not so sure about that.

MORRIS

Why not?

HAYM

I never really learned to speak Yiddish.

MORRIS

Interesting.

HAYM

You see, my family moved often. From Poland, to Germany, then to England, and so on, so that I have not learned any language well. I speak 6 languages. All of them with a foreign accent.

MORRIS

But you speak one language better than anyone else I know.

HAYM

What is that?

MORRIS

The language of commerce and finance.

HAYM

Thank you! Coming from the old master himself. I am not a learned man. Not like so many of my fellow Jews.

MORRIS

Nor am I, I have little formal education. Unlike Mr. Hamilton, or Mr. Franklin, or Mr. Arthur Lee and all those Virginians.

HAYM

But trust me, when they need things financial, they will come to the older uneducated master. Mr. Robert Morris. And that day is coming.

MORRIS

What day?

HAYM

The Revolution is on its way. And I will support that Revolution with my whole heart and soul. And I understand that you are going in that direction too

MORRIS

Well, I have signed the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation.

HAYM

You will also sign the Constitution. Anyone can sign a document. I sign them all the time.

MORRIS

But these are quite important.

HAYM

Yes they are but there is something even more important.

MORRIS

What is that?

HAYM

Winning the War.

MORRIS

That is Mr. Washington's business. I am too old to go to war.

HAYM

But you have an even greater role.

MORRIS

What?

HAYM

We face the greatest power in the world.

MORRIS

Right.

HAYM

And we need a financial father as badly as we need a great general.

MORRIS

Well, don't look at me. I am a businessman. I must look after my personal assets. You can imagine what a fuss they would make about my business interests. I can hear them now.

Benjamin Franklin enters

FRANKLIN

Gentlemen,

MORRIS

Mr. Franklin! THE Mr. Franklin.

HAYM

Mr. Benjamin Franklin!

FRANKLIN

And who do we have here?

HAYM

I am Haym Salomon.

FRANKLIN

I know of you.

HAYM

I am honored.

FRANKLIN

I understand you love America.

HAYM

The colonies must be no more. America must be a nation.

FRANKLIN

And Mr. Morris agrees.

HAYM

I believe so.

MORRIS

I'm convinced of it.

FRANKLIN

You have signed the Declaration.

MORRIS

And now what?

FRANKLIN

You will have to aid the Revolution as only Robert Morris can.

MORRIS

Did we not discuss this at the Assembly dance?

FRANKLIN

We face the greatest power in the world.

MORRIS

Indeed.

FRANKLIN

And only Robert Morris can combat that giant.

HAYM

Yes indeed.

MORRIS

But I am a man of commerce! I must look after my family's interests.

HAYM

That is the reason you must help in the revolution. You can look after your own interest and heed the calf.

MORRIS

I am only one of many businessmen.

HAYM

Not an acceptable answer.

MORRIS

I can not abandon my business affairs.

FRANKLIN

Right.

MORRIS

And I can not handle both at the same time.

FRANKLIN

Says who?

MORRIS

You are well aware that my enemies abound among the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation.

FRANKLIN

Who?

MORRIS

Arthur Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Silas..

FRANKLIN

Mr. Arthur Lee is not capable of handling anything financial. And, Thomas Jefferson, the author of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" can not balance his own accounts.

Haym

And I understand he must depend on his own slaves for his wealth.

MORRIS

And that pamphleteer Thomas Payne. A major pain, dare I say!

FRANKLIN

Remember one thing about pamphleteers.

MORRIS

Yes, Mr. Franklin?

FRANKLIN

They can nearly always be bribed.

HAYM

Not always but usually.

FRANKLIN

It is hard to pamphleteer on an empty stomach,

MORRIS

There are still thousands of others who will subject my family to their criticism.

FRANKLIN

We have no one else!

MORRIS

I can hear the criticism now. " Mr. MORRIS did not finance the Revolutionary war. The Revolutionary war financed Mr. Morris!"

FRANKLIN

So be it.

MORRIS

Easier said than done. And one more consideration.

FRANKLIN

Yes.

MORRIS

The income I must give up.

FRANKLIN

What income?

MORRIS

I can not abandon my business affairs.

FRANKLIN

You will be able to do both. We'll support you.

MORRIS

Well....

FRANKLIN

You are already financing the war.

MORRIS

What do you mean?

FRANKLIN

Have you ever heard of a man named "Anonymous"?

MORRIS

Of course.

HAYM

Do not deny the obvious. Everyone knows how much you have done anonymously! The critics are the critics. Thomas Jefferson knows how to blah, blah, blah. And has moved the Nation to move forward with the revolution. Mr. Payne is Blah Blah Extraordinaire. And so on.

FRANKLIN

To win a war we need the blah, blah, blah. This arouses the people. As Mr. Salomon says. But to win a revolutionary war we need a great general and a great financier.

MORRIS

I will mull it over.

FRANKLIN

Remember one thing, Morris.

MORRIS

Yes?

FRANKLIN

If you do not take charge, the critics will not be saying that we won the Revolutionary War .

MORRIS

Exactly.

FRANKLIN

Instead they will be saying. We lost the war. And Morris would not lift a finger.

Haym

Amen.

FRANKLIN

And in the case of that contingency, remember one other thing.

MORRIS

Yes?

FRANKLIN

The Red Coats will want reparations from the defeated revolutionaries. And they have few places to get it other than the wealth of one Robert Morris.

MORRIS

I am aware of that.

Salomon and Franklin glance at one another.

SCENE 5 FRANKLIN'S OFFICE

Franklin is seated. George Washington enters. We hear the crowd outside.

ENSEMBLE (O.S.)

We want to be paid. We want to be paid.

FRANKLIN

They are justified!

ENSEMBLE (O.S.)

We want to be paid.

WASHINGTON

We are down to bare bones.

FRANKLIN

Don't we know it.

WASHINGTON

Where is Morris?

FRANKLIN

On his way.

ELIZA (O.S.)

We have not been paid. I can not supply any more clothing.

EDDY (O.S.)

I must feed my family. My brother is off fighting. I am growing our own corn. You owe me for a thousand bushels. WHERE IS MY MONEY

ELIZA (O.S.)

I have not been paid for my 40 sheep.! I want paid now

ENSEMBLE (O.S.)

WE WANT TO BE PAID!

EDDY (O.S.)

We demand payment!

ENSEMBLE (O.S.)

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

ELIZA (O.S.)

MY CHILDREN ARE STARVING.

EDDY (O.S.)

NO MORE BARTER.

ELIZA (O.S.)

WE WANT IN!

EDDY (O.S.)

WE WANT IN!

ENSEMBLE (O.S.)

WE WANT IN! WE WANT IN! WE WANT IN!

FRANKLIN

Morris will have to come in.

WASHINGTON
I will speak.

FRANKLIN
Have you no fear!

WASHINGTON
None.

FRANKLIN
Be my guest.

WASHINGTON
Hello, fellow patriots

ENSEMBLE
BOO! BOO! BOO!

WASHINGTON
I am George Washington.

ENSEMBLE
WE KNOW!

Washington
And you will be paid.

ENSEMBLE
When!

HAMILTON
Soon.

ELIZA
We want a day and time!

HAMILTON
I can not deliver a day and time. But just say soon.

ELIZA
Why and how are you getting the money.

HAMILTON

We are appointing a Superintendent of Finance who
will solve our payment problems

ELIZA

Who is it?

FRANKLIN

Robert Morris!

Crowd applauds.

ELIZA

Not a bad choice.

ENSEMBLE

Richest man in America!

EDDY

He'll fill his own pockets first!

ENSEMBLE

Right!

Eliza

But we want to be paid.

ENSEMBLE

Right!

ELIZA

Now!

ENSEMBLE

RAH! RAH! RAH!

SCENE 6 CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

George Washington addresses the
Continental Congress

WASHINGTON

Fellow members. We are in dire financial straits.

ENSEMBLE

Yeah. Yeah.

WASHINGTON

We are having a revolution within a revolution.
Soldiers, farmers, manufacturers, coal and lumber
suppliers all want to be paid

ENSEMBLE

Yes!

WASHINGTON

Above all our soldiers are underfed, have no shoes,
no equipment, and no pay to feed their families. They
are rebelling.

ENSEMBLE

Oh no!

FRANKLIN

Currency of each of the colonies is worthless, the
result of overprinting. The currency is not worth
the paper it is printed on.

ENSEMBLE

Sad!

WASHINGTON

THEREFORE WE MUST TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES.

ENSEMBLE

YES!

FRANKLIN

Therefor, we must create a the Office of
Superintendent of Finance.

A man who can take care of all finance the war, take charge of all procurement for the military, and purchase foods to feed clothe. And and arm our fighting men.

ENSEMBLE

Yes. Yes.

FRANKLIN

We have discussed this Many days now. And we know that this is a temporary office until we have won the war.

ENSEMBLE

Aye! Aye!

WASHINGTON

All those in favor say Aye.

ENSEMBLE

Aye!

WASHINGTON

Anyone opposed?

ENSEMBLE

No!

WASHINGTON

The Internal Committee has met and unanimously endorsed Mr. Robert Morris to be the Superintendent of Finance, with Gouverneur Morris as the Assistant Superintendent of Finance.

ENSEMBLE

Is that our only choice?

WASHINGTON

Can you think of any other?

ARTHUR LEE

Robert Morris as Superintendent of Finance?

WASHINGTON

Yes!

ARTHUR LEE

You realize that the way this office is set up, he becomes a virtual economic dictator?

HAMILTON

Of course.

WASHINGTON

We can have it no other way!

ARTHUR LEE

But isn't that like letting the fox into the chicken coop? Morris has long arms and long slippery hands.

WASHINGTON

Mr. Morris is not only the wealthiest man in America, but has an understanding of finance and commerce unparalleled by any other American.

ARTHUR LEE

Half the colonists think he's a criminal. Others say he is just a thief!

WASHINGTON

His dealings have been honorable.

ARTHUR LEE

He has enriched himself.

WASHINGTON

Which means he is a great businessman who know how to procure, finance and sell.

ARTHUR LEE

For his own pockets.

WASHINGTON

And now our impoverished colonies are facing their greatest power in the world. We, need him to enrich us procure supplies, and find funds.

ARTHUR LEE

With commissions, I assure you.

WASHINGTON

A pot of gold with a commission is much better than no omission and no pot of gold.

ARTHUR LEE

I suppose.

WASHINGTON

He can enrich the colonies and he has already financed the war. He has purchased every single bullet shot by our American soldiers.

ENSEMBLE

Indeed.

WASHINGTON

A call for the vote. All in favor of Mr. Robert Morris as Superintendent of finance and Gouverneur Morris as Assistant Superintendent of Finance , say Aye.

ENSEMBLE

Aye!

WASHINGTON

All opposed?

Assembly is silent.

WASHINGTON

Hearing no opposition. Mr. Robert Morris is the Superintendent of Finance and his assistant will be Mr. Gouverneur Morris.

ALL

God save America.

SCENE 7 MORRIS OFFICE A MONTH LATER

Morris is seated. Gouverneur
enters

MORRIS

And Rhode Island?

GOUVERNEUR

Voted no. All hope is gone.

MORRIS

All hope is never gone!

GOUVERNEUR

We have five ways of financing this war.

MORRIS

Actually six .

GOUVERNEUR

Have I forgotten something?

MORRIS

We tax, we borrow, we beg, we gamble, and a fifth we
manipulate.

GOUVERNEUR

And what is the sixth?

MORRIS

Stealing.

GOUVERNEUR

Stealing!

MORRIS

Confiscation.

GOUVERNEUR

What! Washington would be appalled.

MORRIS

It's what General Washington, not I, has suggested in desperation.

GOUVERNEUR

The bastards are at it.

MORRIS

There are so Many of them.

GOUVERNEUR

I mean, The Pennsylvania legislature. Of which you are a member.

MORRIS

Surprised?

GOUVERNEUR

The strongest economy in America, and they print currency as if it were going out of style.

MORRIS

That's the least of our problems.

GOUVERNEUR

Why?

MORRIS

Better not to ask.

GOUVERNEUR

Is an anonymous entity building up the currency?

MORRIS

Better not to ask.

GOUVERNEUR

Was this Salomon man supposed to be here today?

Salomon enters

HAYM

I hear my name.

MORRIS

And you will hear it more and more.

HAYM

I like that!

MORRIS

Have you been at the coffee house all morning?

HAYM

Yes and it was very profitable.

GOUVERNEUR

You just set up an office at Fourth street.

HAYM

My real office is at the coffee house. I am there 6 hours each day.

GOUVERNEUR

And rumor has it that you charge the lowest commissions.

HAYM

Right.

MORRIS

And earn the highest profits

HAYM

Because I charge the lowest commission.

MORRIS

And how much are we making today?

HAYM

There is what I make for myself and what I make for the Superintendent.

MORRIS

And?

HAYM

Today we have brought in 1 thousand pounds.

MORRIS

Magnificent!

HAYM

I pulled in over 12 thousand yesterday in the bills of exchange market.

MORRIS

We need every last shilling to feed the troops.

HAYM

Indeed.

MORRIS

Military rule number one: You cannot fight a war on an empty stomach.

GOUVERNEUR

No disagreement.

MORRIS

Rule number two: You can not fight a war without ammunition.

GOUVERNEUR

We know that.

MORRIS

Hush!

Franklin enters.

FRANKLIN

Gentlemen. General Washington is desperate. They are out of food

MORRIS

We are acting as quickly as we can.

FRANKLIN

He is ready to confiscate.

GOUVERNEUR

Seize!

MORRIS

No!

GOUVERNEUR

No!

HAYM

No!

FRANKLIN

King David resorted to seizure and confiscation to feed his troops. You should know that, Mr. Salomon.

HAYM

This is America.

MORRIS

Confiscation! No! NO! NO! It's a mistake. He will go from being George Washington the Liberator to George Washington the Thief.

HAYM

He needs the money now.

MORRIS

I will supply the funds.

FRANKLIN

Well that settles it.

ALL

MR. MORRIS!

SCENE 8 2 MONTHS LATER OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Morris and Gouverneur are seated. We hear the crowd in the background.

ENSEMBLE (O.S.)

We want to be paid.

MORRIS

Today, I meet with 14 merchants.

ENSEMBLE

We want to be paid!

GOUVERNEUR

What for?

MORRIS

I am contracting with merchants and business firms to obtain needed war material and I'm purchasing commodities for export to pay for it

GOUVERNEUR

But how do we pay?

ENSEMBLE

We want to be paid.

MORRIS

We have enough in our budget.

GOUVERNEUR

Morris paper money?

MORRIS

And delayed claims.

GOUVERNEUR

Creditors are coming. After suppliers.

MORRIS

They will be paid.

GOUVERNEUR

How?

MORRIS

I have taken out a new loan from the Spanish. And privateering.

GOUVERNEUR

Ah yes privateering. But is this not like Washington confiscating.

MORRIS

It is all right to confiscate British ships when authorized by no less than General Washington.

GOUVERNEUR

But would not let Washington confiscate food supplies.

MORRIS

That was against the Americans.

GOUVERNEUR

Ha.

MORRIS

And now the greatest blow.

GOUVERNEUR

Yes?

MORRIS

Thomas Jefferson has killed another source of revenue.

GOUVERNEUR

What is that?

MORRIS

Tobacco!

GOUVERNEUR

WHAT!

MORRIS

We signed contracts essentially guaranteeing us a monopoly. France would have a plentiful supply of tobacco, and we would have a nice profit to finance the war. After these contracts were signed, Ambassador Jefferson took it upon himself to interfere with these arrangements and that brought about the collapse of the tobacco market.

GOUVERNEUR

Unfair!

MORRIS

Jefferson is also accusing me of commingling Revolutionary Funds with my own.

GOUVERNEUR

That charge will forever be around.

MORRIS

And there are still other complaints about me. Largely from the Virginia crowd.

GOUVERNEUR

They are willing to fight the war but not pay for it.

MONROE

A pecuniary dictator is what they call me.

GOUVERNEUR

Ignore them.

MORRIS

We do have some good news.

GOUVERNEUR

What!

MORRIS

Salomon came in with 300 thousand pound.

Franklin enters hurriedly.

FRANKLIN

The British are entering the city.

MORRIS

We have to flee.

FRANKLIN

They will be here before long. We will fight them the whole way.

Scene 9 MORRIS OFFICE

Morris is working on his accounts. Willig jumps into the office.

Willig

THE WAR IS OVER! THE WAR IS OVER!

MORRIS

WHAT!

WILLIG

We have won the War. The British Gave up. Cornwall surrendered!

MORRIS

Oh my God!

WILLIG

Is that all you can say!

MORRIS

Thank God!

WILLIG

The bastards will be gone!

MORRIS

Amen.

WILLIG

For four years we have begged, borrowed, stole, kited, and these days are over.

Gouverneur enters. He has a sad look on his face.

MORRIS

Have you heard?

WILLIG

Some champagne?

GOUVERNEUR

Yes I have heard.

WILLIG

You seem so sad!

GOUVERNEUR

We also have some not so good news.

MORRIS

What is that?

GOUVERNEUR

Mr. Salomon has died!

MORRIS

What!

WILLIG

He was but 45.

GOUVERNEUR

Right. Dead from tuberculosis. Leaving four small boys and a grieving widow.

WILLIG

And a mountain of debt. Unless his estate can collect from the states.

MORRIS

Good luck on that.

WILLIG

We leave that to Mr. Hamilton.

MORRIS

Yes indeed.

SCENE 10 OUTSIDE CITY HALL

We hear the crowd singing
Yankee Doodle Dandy

Ensemble

We Won! We Won! We Won!

EDDY

The Redcoats are gone! The Redcoats are gone.

ENSEMBLE

God bless America!

ELIZA

Each of the thirteen States stands proudly.

ENSEMBLE

America! America! America!

ELIZA

GEORGE WASHINGTON!

ENSEMBLE

WASHINGTON! WASHINGTON! WASHINGTON!

ELIZA

The Tories have all left.

ENSEMBLE

Not all!

EDDY

Some remain!

ENSEMBLE

Not long.

EDDY

And Robert Morris?

ENSEMBLE

MORRIS! MORRIS!

EDDY

They say he saved the country financially.

ENSEMBLE

He saved his pockets even more.

ELIZA

I got something from good authority.

ENSEMBLE

What's that!

ELIZA

After four years as Superintendent His wealth has doubled. HE FILLED HIS POCKETS!

ENSEMBLE

Boo! Boo! Boo!

EDDY

We all know.

ENSEMBLE

Graft!

ELIZA

Got it from a reliable source. First he filled his pockets with proceeds from the revolution. Now he wants to buy all of America. And he has the funds to buy it. Sixteen million acres!

EDDY

Our war has made him the richest man in the world

ELIZA

And his servants say that he intends to build a mansion greater than Buckingham Palace. Designed by that Frenchman.

ENSEMBLE!

Pierre L'Enfant!

EDDY

England has King George who owns that country. We have Robert Morris who owns this country.

ELIZA

Mad King George versus Mad King Morris.

ENSEMBLE

Ha! Ha! Ha!

EDDY

WE GOT SCREWED!

ENSEMBLE

SCREWED!

EDDY

SCREWED!

ENSEMBLE

How!

EDDY

We won the war. Only the rich got the benefits. The poor are poorer. The rich are richer. Look at them! Morris, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Hancock. The list is endless. The richest men in America.

ENSEMBLE

Boo!

ELIZA

But the rich gave up so much.

EDDY

They will get it back double now. You watch.

ELIZA

Awful.

EDDY

And they now feel royal, too. The Cincinnati. The Dance Assembly. Ha!

ELIZA

At least the other thief has died.

ENSEMBLE

Who?

ELIZA

The Polish Guy!

ENSEMBLE

Too bad.

EDDY

And now we have to go after those treasonous Tories!

ENSEMBLE

Yes!

Eliza

I have nine names: Smith, Jones, Phillips, Simmons, Walker, Root, Bruce, Holden, and Miller.

ENSEMBLE

And we know where they live.

ELIZA

Off they go or face the consequences!

ENSEMBLE

They will leave! Off to Canada they go.

ELIZA

Traitors all!

ENSEMBLE

Traitors all!

END OF ACT ONE.

Act 2

Scene 1 MORRIS DINING ROOM

George Washington ,Robert and
Mary Morris, Thomas Willig,
Polly, Pierre L'Enfant and
Gouverneur Morris are seated
around an ornate dinner table.

WASHINGTON

Happy 56th Birthday, Mr. Morris!

MARY

Now blow out all the candles. If you have enough
strength.

MORRIS

Here I go.

He extinguishes all 56 candles
with one blow. Applause
follows

HAMILTON

Becoming the North America's wealthiest man has not
sapped your strength.

WASHINGTON

And now a toast to our Honoree. Let us raise our
glasses to the Nations founding Capitalist Father.
The financial Father of the United States.

ALL

Cheers!

WASHINGTON

My one regret is that Robert Morris' staunchest
admirer is not here.

WILLIG

Who is that?

WASHINGTON

Why Benjamin Franklin of course. Now three months gone. He is in the heavens somewhere, wishing Robert Morris a happy birthday.

WILLIG

We are all aware that without Mr. Morris we would all be British today.

POLLY

More likely we would be dead.

MORRIS

My contribution was so little.

WILLIG

You stand proudly next to General Washington here without whose military genius we would not be the United States of America today.

L'ENFANT

How did you do it, Mr. Morris? I stand in awe.

WILLIG

He begged, he borrowed, and he assured his name to every note.

L'ENFANT

He delayed payments, bartered, arbitrated, delayed.

WILLIG

And he pirateered. Ha.

MORRIS

Privateering British ships. I never considered that stealing, not against the British.

L' ENFANT

You are admired throughout France. And all of Europe for that matter.

MORRIS

Why?

L' ENFANT

Your success at commerce for one. But more important, throughout France I hear nothing but compliments about your furniture, china, silverware, artwork and horticulture at your homes. The aristocracy of France is awed by you.

MORRIS

Thank you. Monsieur L' Enfant. And of course, Monsieur Pierre L'Enfant we would not have survived without massive loans from the people of France. . Paise be to the Lord.

L' ENFANT

I was there helping every inch of the way.

WASHINGTON

Why of course, Pierre.

MORRIS

A toast to France!

ALL

A toast to France..

WASHINGTON

Have I heard right?

MORRIS

About what?

WASHINGTON

That Mr. Morris now intends to purchase the United States of America?

MORRIS

No, Mr. President. I am simply buying acreage mainly in the southern states to resell to all the French settlers who will be coming here.

HAMILTON

Ten million acres, I hear,

MORRIS

Something like that.

L'ENFANT

Are you sure they will come?

MORRIS

Beyond any reasonable doubt.

BISHOP WHITE

You realize that if you succeed we no longer will be an English speaking country?

MORRIS

They will learn English.

L'ENFANT

Don't bet on it!

MARY

Did you ever think of writing the Declaration of Independence in French?

All laugh.

SCENE 2 MORRIS OFFICE

MORRIS is seated. Pierre L'Enfant enters with architectural drawings.

L' ENFANT

Mr. Morris!

MORRIS

Monsieur L'Enfant.

L' ENFANT

The plans are ready.

MORRIS

At last!

L' ENFANT

This is the largest project I have ever worked on. Your home will be half as large as the Palace of Versailles, nine times larger than Monpelier and Mount Vernon combined. And a little larger than the Pennsylvania State Capitol

MORRIS

And I can use all the space.

L' ENFANT

As well it should be. The world knows, and President Washington says that you are America's Founding Financial Father. Without Robert Morris, there would be no United States of America.

MORRIS

Mary and I need a large home. We usually have dinner parties for 60 or 80 guests. Also we have thirty servants. And six children. If each of them has six children, we will have fifty family members alone. Let alone their personal servant. And we have a steady stream of guests visiting. Actually, we need at least eighty bedrooms. As a child I was raised in a tiny home in England. And father's home in Oxford, Maryland was a small cottage.

L' ENFANT

You will manage somehow with thirty five bedrooms.

MORRIS

I suppose---with some sharing by guests and family.

L' ENFANT

And I believe you are the richest man in North and South America.

MORRIS

Some say I am. Well, are we ready now?

L' ENFANT

After you have made your modifications.

MORRIS

Of course.

L' ENFANT

But I must share with you what that jealous scoundrel Benjamin Latrobe said about our plan when I asked his opinion. He publicly responded with: "It is impossible to decide which of the two is the maddest, the architect, or his employer. Both will be ruined by it."

MORRIS

The green eye of envy. I am honored to have the Architect of our Capitol City as my personal architect.

L' ENFANT

I am sad to report that I was not given the assignment for designing the White House. James Hoban, whoever he is, got it.

MORRIS

Now let us proceed.

L' ENFANT

What is your opinion?

MORRIS

I love it. One modification.

L' ENFANT

What is that?

MORRIS

I repeat. I think the house should be slightly larger. I really would like a few more dining rooms.

L' ENFANT

Mr. MORRIS! Mr. MORRIS! The house already takes up two large Philadelphia blocks. Any larger and you will need a horse and carriage to take you from one part of the house to the other.

MORRIS

I hear what you are saying. Let us proceed then, but remember. We are only to use the finest craftsmen, stone, and all imported materials.

L' ENFANT

Of course.

MORRIS

Import the stone masons from Italy.

L' ENFANT

Formidably expensive. Five times more expensive than using American masons.

MORRIS

Then I guess we'll have to use some local masons.

L' ENFANT

We will need all of them.

MORRIS

How long will the project take?

L' ENFANT

At least three years.

MORRIS

O, that's too long.

L' ENFANT

We will do our best. It took twenty years to build the Palace of Versailles.

MORRIS

Yes, but this is a new world.

L' ENFANT

Yes, Sir.

MORRIS

Will you remain for dinner?

L' ENFANT

I cannot.

MORRIS

Why?

L' ENFANT

I must meet with James Greenleaf, who also wants me to design his home. And I met with Mr. Hamilton yesterday.

MORRIS

I hope our homes will be distinctly different.

L' ENFANT

Of course. Yours is much, much larger.

MORRIS

Good.

L' ENFANT

I must be off.

MORRIS

Have a good day.

SCENE 3 TWO YEARS LATER MORRIS OFFICE

Gouverneur and Robert MORRIS
are drinking wine.

Gouverneur

My dear friend Robert!

MORRIS

My lawyer, friend, advisor, soul mate Gouverneur
Morris! Friend above all. Brother actually. I think
Providence gave us both the same name in hopes that
we would sometime find a way to become blood related.

GOUVERNEUR

No greater friendship than ours.

MORRIS

I confide in and love you.

GOUVERNEUR

I feel the same.

MORRIS

You have helped me in so many ways.

GOUVERNEUR

And you have made me a wealthy man.

MORRIS

Oh, come now. You were born into millions.

GOUVERNEUR

Thousands. You have made me millions.

MORRIS

As I have for a lot of other people.

GOUVERNEUR

But you have given me much concern lately.

MORRIS

How so, brother?

GOUVERNEUR

Is it true that you have purchased one million acres of land in western New York.

MORRIS

I have! Actually 2 million.

GOUVERNEUR

And then millions more acres in Pennsylvania.

MORRIS

No. Only thousands.

GOUVERNEUR

Are you overdoing it?

MORRIS

Through the promotional activities of investors and land companies, uncultivated lands will become settled and improved, and the wealth of the country will be increased.

GOUVERNEUR

Maybe.

MORRIS

Don't be a pessimist.

GOUVERNEUR

And the rental homes?

MORRIS

My country estate, The Hills, and my Sixth Street residence for my personal use Of course.

There is the President's house which I rent to him for a dollar a year.

GOUVERNEUR

And the speculative homes in Maryland, Philadelphia, Washington and New York?

MORRIS

There are only six of those.

GOUVERNEUR

All mansions I understand.

MORRIS

Well, let's say they are not small.

GOUVERNEUR

And how many rural estates?

MORRIS

I don't keep count.

GOUVERNEUR

How many!

MORRIS

Fourteen.

GOUVERNEUR

Counting the ones near Trenton and Wilmington. How about Harford County, Maryland and Goochland, Virginia?

MORRIS

Ah yes, there are several others. One can't keep track of everything, you know.

GOUVERNEUR

And iron ore mines?

MORRIS

I do not own any iron ore mines.

GOUVERNEUR

Are you sure?

MORRIS

Yes I am sure. What makes you think I own an iron ore mine?

GOUVERNEUR

Seems as if I drove past a sign that said ROBERT MORRIS IRON ORE COMPANY.

MORRIS

There are many Robert Morrises in the United States.

GOUVERNEUR

A stone quarry?

MORRIS

Yes.

GOUVERNEUR

A candle factory?

MORRIS

Yes. Very small.

GOUVERNEUR

A brewery?

MORRIS

Just a hobby.

GOUVERNEUR

And the LEHIGH COAL MINE COMPANY?

MORRIS

I'm only a part owner.

GOUVERNEUR

The FRENCH and SPORAD LEAD MINE in the Ohio Valley?

MORRIS

An even smaller investment.

GOUVERNEUR

And copper mines in Maryland?.

MORRIS

Less than a thousand dollars in my own money.

GOUVERNEUR

Any others?

MORRIS

What are all these angry questions about?

GOUVERNEUR

Just checking inventory.

MORRIS

Why?

GOUVERNEUR

I want you to remain wealthy.

MORRIS

I will.

GOUVERNEUR

Now have you accounted for all your investments?
Anything else?

MORRIS

Well a couple of banks. The Bank of North America,
the Bank of Pennsylvania, the Bank of the United
States. And the Insurance Company of North America.

GOUVERNEUR

There are a few others you may have forgotten.

MORRIS

No, that is all of them.

GOUVERNEUR

Rumors about a silk room, a bakery, a quarry?

MORRIS

Yes, as I vaguely recall.

GOUVERNEUR

Some canals?

MORRIS

Of course.

GOUVERNEUR

Have you forgotten anything?

MORRIS

Oh yes. I forgot some import companies: a winery, a tea company and a molasses factory. And I have a small company to export wheat, flour, and tobacco.

GOUVERNEUR

Well I am sure we could find at least thirty more if I had the time to list them.

MORRIS

They are all doing well.

GOUVERNEUR

And if the economy sours?

MORRIS

It won't. I have great confidence in the United States of America.

GOUVERNEUR

I commend your optimism

MORRIS

Thank you. And it will work.

GOUVERNEUR

You are the eternal optimist.

MORRIS

Right!

GOUVERNEUR

But you need not own the whole country.

MORRIS

I have optimism that is hard to keep down.

GOUVERNEUR

True, indeed. And one more Thing.

MORRIS

Yes?

GOUVERNEUR

You forgot the six companies you and I own together.

Scene 4 FRONT OF THE MORRIS HOME

Morris is sitting. The
sheriff appears.

Sheriff

Hello. Mr. Robert Morris?

MORRIS

What can I do for you?

SHERIFF

Lovely garden.

MORRIS

What can I do for you?

SHERIFF

The Honorable Robert Morris.

MORRIS

You need not all me Honorable.

SHERIFF

Of course, Senator Morris.

MORRIS

Do I know you?

SHERIFF

Yes. I am one of the neighbors so to speak.

MORRIS

Ah, yes.

SHERIFF

You must come with me. I am Sheriff Arbuckle

MORRIS

Why?

SHERIFF

You are under arrest.

MORRIS

Ah, at last. I have been expecting you.

SHERIFF

And as you know, we do not have far to go. I am required to handcuff you.

MORRIS

I have nowhere to go. Take me.

SHERIFF

I do so reluctantly. .

MORRIS

We will walk hand in hand.

SHERIFF

It's only two blocks to the Prune Street Prison.

MORRIS

You must do your duty.

Mary appears.

MARY

I will walk with you. May I come also?

SHERIFF

The prisoner comes with me alone.

MARY

Make this one exception.

SHERIFF

I make no exceptions, neither for the richest man the world nor the poorest.

MORRIS

Now let us continue on our journey. You can visit me later, beloved Mary.

SHERIFF

And now I must remind you of one thing.

MORRIS

Yes, Sheriff.

SHERIFF

You realize that you are required to pay for your room and board?

MORRIS

No, I do not.

SHERIFF

When you live here, you must eat, drink and sleep and, all have a cost attached to them.

MORRIS

I did not ask to reside there.

SHERIFF

No one does, but you will be residing there. You still have to eat and drink and sleep whether you are in prison or out of prison.

MORRIS

And what happens if I don't pay?

SHERIFF

Then you go with the destitute bankruptees. And you will have to earn your room and board. I don't think you want to do that.

MORRIS

I don't have the money I am destitute.

SHERIFF

I hear the same old story from everyone.

MORRIS

I will pay nothing!

SHERIFF

I think you will be sorry. Your bankrupt comrades Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Greenleaf pay up each month. You on the other hand may end up cleaning their rooms and the latrines. And they have personal latrines.

MARY

So, how much do you charge?

SHERIFF

We have 3 dollar suites, 4 dollar suites and 6 six dollar suites. Monthly.

MARY

What do you get for six dollars?

SHERIFF

Two rooms and a toilet closet.

MARY

That sounds fine. I will pay.

MORRIS

Mary! We do not have the money.

MARY

Hush! (facing the Sheriff) So six dollars is the most luxurious?

Sheriff

You can get a third room for a dollar.

MARY

We will take it.

SHERIFF

And if you pay another fifty cents you can have tea every day.

MARY

Include it all.

MORRIS

Where did you get the money?

MARY

(To Sheriff) We will pay for the year.

SHERIFF

Then you get a discount.

MORRIS

Where did this money come from!

SHERIFF

Nosey, aren't you, Morris!

MORRIS

I object to paying.

SHERIFF

Pay up and shut up, Morris. That's my advice to you. Or you can clean out the rooms of your former partners. And competitors.

MARY

And I can visit daily?

SHERIFF

Of course. Twice a day if you want.

MARY

And dinner guests?

SHERIFF

As many as you want. You must pay however.

MARY

A deal.

SHERIFF

A deal. A very good deal. Now I will let you two say goodbye for today. You need some privacy. (Exits)

MORRIS

Am I being ignored in all of this.

MARY

Robert Morris!

MORRIS

Mary White!

MARY

My name is Mary Morris!

MORRIS

Very well! Mary Morris!

MARY

I prefer to be called Mrs. Robert Morris.

MORRIS

So you love jailbirds?

MARY

I love HIM. As I did thirty years ago when I married HIM.

MORRIS

I ask again. Where did the money come from?

MARY

Another Morris.

MORRIS

Our children?

MARY

No.

MORRIS

Who? We have no money. Where did you get the funds?

MARY

Gouverneur.

MORRIS

Bless his soul.

MARY

He did so quietly. And we are assured of a home for the rest of our lives.

MORRIS

I thought it was he.

MARY

And he has allotted us \$1500 a year to take care of our basic needs.

MORRIS

And you tell me now. He told me nothing.

MARY

You have enough on your mind.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

Let us go, Mr. MORRIS.

MARY

(Shouting out) If I pay you a dollar can I walk with him to the Prune Street Prison.

SHERIFF (O.S.)

No problem. I aim to please ma'am. And all payment up front before we go. In cash.

Scene 5 PRUNE STREET PRISON 1797

Morris is seated at a dinner table set for two. The sheriff enters.

SHERIFF

Mr. Morris! You make history today!

MORRIS

Really?

SHERIFF

Being coy, Mr. Morris?

MORRIS

How do I make history today?

SHERIFF

Not every prisoner gets a visit from the President of the United States.

MORRIS

Mr. Washington is an old friend. He honors me.

SHERIFF

He, in fact, lived in your home.

MORRIS

That is right.

SHERIFF

He comes now.

George Washington enters.

MORRIS

Mr. President, I am honored.

WASHINGTON

Mr. Superintendent of Finance. I am honored to be here.

MORRIS

The Prune Street Prison?

WASHINGTON

Wherever you are! I owe you much. The Nation owes you much.

MORRIS

Mr. President, you thank me beyond the call of duty.

WASHINGTON

I hope you are well.

MORRIS

Please Be seated.

SHERIFF

And I have supplied you with the finest wines (on me), to accompany your dinner. President Washington, on this very special occasion, I am honored.

WASHINGTON

Do not go out of your way. We do not live in a monarchy.

SHERIFF

I must be off so that you two can spend some time alone. I respect privacy.

WASHINGTON

Thank you, Mr. Sheriff

The Sheriff exits

WASHINGTON

And how have you transformed this prison cell in into a lavish suite!

MORRIS

Oh we make do with a few pieces of old furniture lying around.

WASHINGTON

The taste is exquisite!

MORRIS

Thank you, Mr. President.

WASHINGTON

You do not deserve to be here.

MORRIS

Mr. President. I am here because I deserve to be here. I did not know when to stop!

WASHINGTON

You are at Prune Prison because our laws are unjust. Debtors, those in bankruptcy, have not committed a crime like murder or robbery. Usually, it is due to investments gone bad.

MORRIS

True.

WASHINGTON

I do not know of a single debtor who has been able to make payment while in debtors prison.

MORRIS

Of course.

WASHINGTON

There is only one solution.

MORRIS

What is that?

WASHINGTON

We must close all debtors' prisons.

MORRIS

How could I disagree!

WASHINGTON

But it may take a while.

MORRIS

Why?

WASHINGTON

Because creditors only recite the Lord's Prayer on Sunday.

MORRIS

What?

WASHINGTON

Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.

MORRIS

Now apropos.

WASHINGTON

I now raise a toast.

MORRIS

I should be the one to toast our First President. The Father of Our Nation.

WASHINGTON

And to the Financial Father of America.

MORRIS

And now in prison.

WASHINGTON

Perhaps not much longer. Our nation is in gratitude to you.

MORRIS

I did so little, Mr. President?

WASHINGTON

You financed this war against Great Britain, the world's most sophisticated and powerful economy!

MORRIS

It was a challenge,

WASHINGTON

You used your own largesse (for which you were never compensated), borrowed (mainly from France), gambled (mostly arbitrage), stole (privateering), and taxed the almost impoverished thirteen colonies,

MORRIS

It was minor.

WASHINGTON

Above all, you stood solidly behind the weak currencies of the Continental Congress and the thirteen colonies with the Robert Morris' assurance of payment. Whereas the creditors had no faith in the currency of the Continental Congress or the thirteen colonies, Robert Morris' bills of assurance were accepted worldwide.

MORRIS

That was then, not now.

WASHINGTON

Do not interrupt me. As Superintendent of Finance for the new republic, you also procured supplies, ammunition, and provisions for the Colonial army and navy.

MORRIS

And?

WASHINGTON

In short, the Revolutionary War would not have been won without you.

MORRIS

It was minor.

WASHINGTON

And you took charge of financing and procurement for the American Revolution.

MORRIS

Enough praise. I'm unworthy.

WASHINGTON

You are not in the right place now. There is no one in a better position to free you than I.

MORRIS

But?

WASHINGTON

My hands are tied.

MORRIS

How?

WASHINGTON

You know now. The creditors and your creditors especially have not been convinced. They want blood. But there is a growing sentiment in your favor.

MORRIS

I shall serve my time as need be.

WASHINGTON

Even Mr. Arthur Lee is now convinced that debtors prisons must be freed.

MORRIS

He never really approved of me.

WASHINGTON

He knew you were needed. And Secretary Hamilton still asks about you.

MORRIS

I am ashamed.

WASHINGTON

Of what?

MORRIS

Mr. Hamilton.

WASHINGTON

What?

MORRIS

I mean of myself and Mr. Hamilton

WASHINGTON

What about him?

MORRIS

He came to see me before I was put in prison.

WASHINGTON

As he should.

MORRIS

And I did not answer the door.

WASHINGTON

Why not?

MORRIS

Because I owed him 10 thousand dollars, and I knew that is why he came, and I did not have it.

WASHINGTON

Sad. But rest assured: A mere ten thousand dollars is not anything that Secretary Hamilton would lose any sleep over. In fact, both he and Elizabeth send their deepest regards to you.

MORRIS

You have come to visit me in prison. He has not.

WASHINGTON

He might have thought you would be embarrassed.

MORRIS

I never cease to be amazed by the support of my colleagues.

WASHINGTON

We all owe you!

MORRIS

Yes Sir.

WASHINGTON

I owe you personally. You gave me the first President's home at one dollar per year. We dined at your home at least 50 times with best of victuals and wine. These are only a few of the things you did for me.

MORRIS

I did so with honor because of my love for you and Mrs. Washington. And I did it for the love of America.

WASHINGTON

I know you did.

MORRIS

But now all laugh at MORRIS Folly. Tourists come to see the home I tried to build. Unfortunately I can see it from this cell.

WASHINGTON

It now holds at least 59 rowhouses.

MORRIS

My grandeur.

WASHINGTON

And mine.

MORRIS

Yours!

WASHINGTON

We all want grandeur.

MORRIS

You were offered a kingship.

WASHINGTON

I was. And had the wisdom to reject.

MORRIS

Why?

WASHINGTON

Power destroys.

MORRIS

I learned that the hard way.

WASHINGTON

As it should be.

MORRIS

And I admit my foolishness.

WASHINGTON

Now let us dine.

MORRIS

With relish, Mr. President.

SCENE 6 TWO YEARS LATER

Mary and Morris are packing.

MORRIS

Free at last.

MARY

A free man at last!

MORRIS

Three and one half years is a long wait.

MARY

Better than a lifetime.

MORRIS

We start anew.

MARY

And it is exciting.

MORRIS

When will that damned sheriff get here? Congress' bill closing debtors prison was signed two weeks ago, and I am still here.

MARY

We have been here three and one half years. A few hours more should not make any difference.

Sheriff enters.

SHERIFF

Your day has come.

MORRIS

I've been waiting.

SHERIFF

I am sure you are anxious.

MORRIS

I am packed and ready to go.

SHERIFF

Just one thing.

MORRIS

Yes?

SHERIFF

You have not paid your bill.

MORRIS

What!

SHERIFF

There is an egress fee.

MORRIS

For what?

SHERIFF

Your egress. Obviously.

MORRIS

Why?

SHERIFF

There are fees and a lot of work involved in preparing your release.

MORRIS

We do not have the money.

SHERIFF

What you said three years ago. You have paid faithfully.

MORRIS

How much is the fee?

SHERIFF

\$10.

MORRIS

It is highway robbery!

SHERIFF

You have the money.

MORRIS

Where?

SHERIFF

You rich folks always find the money.

MORRIS

I am bankrupt.

SHERIFF

You always manage to stash some money somewhere.

MORRIS

You're a thief!

SHERIFF

Don't bicker about pennies, Senator.

MARY

Stop! Here is the money.

SHERIFF

I knew you would all come through.

MARY

Can we go now?

SHERIFF

Yes. And good luck to both of you.

MORRIS

Spend our money well, you rat.

SCENE 7 MORRIS HOME 1804

Mary enters the room

MARY

Well I am here.

MORRIS

This is an important day.

MAR

Why?

MORRIS

I told you five times.

MARY

I do not recall

MORRIS

I just told you this morning.

MARY

Well, I forgot.

MORRIS

Oh come now.

MARY

I am not as young as I used to be.

MORRIS

You are fifteen years younger than I am.

MARY

You have my ear, husband.

MORRIS

This is an important day.

MARY

Oh Good. Now tell me why.

MORRIS

There comes that point in life when action must be taken.

MARY

I am dying to know what this is.

MORRIS

My last will and testament.

MARY

Well, that might be a challenge.

MORRIS

What do you mean?

MARY

We don't have anything.

MORRIS

How dare you!

MARY

Robert Morris. I have never seen you so grouchy before.

MORRIS

This is a serious matter.

MARY

How can it be serious!

MORRIS

A last will and testament is always serious

MARY

One problem with that.

MORRIS

Yes?

MARY

We don't have anything.

MORRIS

What do you mean?

MARY

We no longer have any assets.

MORRIS

Of course we do.

MARY

Well let us begin then.

MORRIS

If you disagree with any part of the distribution, say so.

MARY

Why of course, My Love.

MORRIS

First, to my oldest living son Robert, I leave my gold watch, which belonged to my father, Robert Morris, Sr.

MARY

What a lovely thought.

MORRIS

To my son Thomas, I bequeath my gold-headed walking stick. It was given to me by none other than the late John Hancock when he was President of Congress.

MARY

What a fitting bequest.

MORRIS

And to our son James, who is just starting out in business, I leave a printing press.

MARY

Oh, what a thoughtful present.

MORRIS

It was a gift from some of my London traders.

MARY

And our daughters?

MORRIS

I would never forget them. We have ten pieces of family silver.

MARY

But we no longer own them.

MORRIS

Why?

MARY

The bankruptcy court took them.

MORRIS

And I repurchased them.

MARY

Where did you get the money?

MORRIS

My lips are sealed.

MARY

I think you have been very fair.

MORRIS

And I could not forget Gouverneur Morris,

MARY

Of course not.

MORRIS

His annuity is what will allow you to live comfortably after I am gone.

MARY

He is a kind man indeed.

MORRIS

To my friend Gouverneur Morris, I leave my telescope, which I purchased from a French refugee during the war.

MARY

How lovely. I know how much it means to you.

MORRIS

Thank you.

MARY

It is only your love that I want.

MORRIS

But I must include another paragraph in my will.

MARY

Yes?

MORRIS

It is an admission.

MARY

Yes?

MORRIS

(Crying)

I have to express my regret at having lost a very large fortune acquired by honest industry, which I had long hoped and expected to enjoy with my family during my own life and then to distribute amongst those of them that should outlive me. Fate has determined otherwise and we must submit to the decree, which I have done with patience and fortitude!

MARY

My love!

MORRIS

Above all, I apologize to all the people and institutions that placed their faith in me and lost all of their investments because of my errors of my judgment.

Mary

Robert Morris, my love now and always.

SCENE 8 A YEAR LATER THE MORRIS RESIDENCE

Mary MORRIS and Gouverneur Morris are seated at the dining room table, exquisitely set up with a tea set.

Gouverneur

This tea is so delicious.

MARY

It should be. Sent from Mt. Vernon.

GOUVERNEUR

Ten years ago.

MARY

And it is still good.

GOUVERNEUR

This must be a very difficult day for you. One year ago today.

MARY

St. Peters Episcopal Church had a very lovely memorial service for Mr. Morris.

GOUVERNEUR

I was unable to attend his funeral because I was in Europe. And I saw no notice in the newspapers. I only learned about it when you wrote me.

MARY

Only the American News here in Philadelphia had an obituary.

GOUVERNEUR

I searched that newspaper and found nothing.

MARY

It would be hard to find.

GOUVERNEUR

Oh.

MARY

It was only one sentence.

GOUVERNEUR

What!

MARY

I remember all of it. "Robert Morris, former Senator from Pennsylvania, died at age 72."

GOUVERNEUR

They should have written volumes.

MARY

Unfortunately, too Many people lost their entire fortunes investing in MORRIS enterprises.

A knock at the door.

MARY

Come in.

Rachel Salomon, widow of Haym Salomon, enters.

Rachel

So sorry to intrude, I am....

MARY

Rachel Salomon.

RACHEL

You remember me!

MARY

Of course. Has it been 21 years since we last saw one another!

RACHEL

At my husband Haym's funeral. That is the reason I am here today. I live in the Netherlands, and am in Philadelphia for a visit. I pay my respects.

MARY

Thank you so much.

RACHEL

And I believe you are Gouverneur Morris?.

GOUVERNEUR

I am he. And Yes I remember you Mrs. Salomon. Welcome back to the United States

RACHEL

I have been Mrs. Frell now for over twenty years, the name of my Dutch husband.

MARY

Please have some tea.

RACHEL

Gladly. The last time I visited you had two butlers. I prefer what you now simply say: Come In.

MARY

Different circumstances.

RACHEL

And always carry yourself with the dignity you have.
And you cope so well.

MARY

We must do what we must do.

RACHEL

And so sorry about the death of your son the day
before his father died.

MARY

Life is difficult.

GOUVERNEUR

And both of your husbands made the American Republic
possible.

MARY

And both died penniless.

GOUVERNEUR

You are not penniless, Mrs. Morris.

MARY

Only because of the generosity of an anonymous man.

RACHEL

I visited Mrs. Hamilton in Albany, and of course she
too is now a widow. Where have all our men gone!

MARY

We live on.

RACHEL

Both your husband and mine took out of their own
pockets to finance the war.

MARY

Mine did it gladly!

RACHEL

So did Haym!

GOUVERNEUR

Today we have a great America.

RACHEL

A great new nation.

White enters

RACHEL

So today is your birthday.

MARY

Actually last week..

BISHOP WHITE

We also have a new song about our country

ALL

A toast to America.

All raise their glasses.

BISHOP WHITE

God bless America.

ALL

God bless America.

End of play

CHARACTERS 16

Arthur Lee

Eddy

Bishop White

Benjamin Franklin

Eliza

Gouverneur Morris
 Haym Salomon
 Pierre L'Enfant
 Robert Morris
 Robert Morris, Sr.
 Polly Morris
 Sheriff
 Rachel Salomon
 Thomas Willig

.
 Ensemble,
 Choir
 All

MALE ROLES (11)

Arthur Lee
 Bishop White
 Benjamin Franklin
 Gouverneur Morris
 Haym Salomon
 Pierre L'Enfant
 Robert Morris
 Robert Morris, Sr
 Sheriff
 Thomas Willig
 Eddy

FEMALE ROLES (5)

Mary White Morris
 Polly Morris
 Rachel Salomon
 Eliza

