



Wrong Side of the Tracks

THE MUSICAL

Script & Lyrics by

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CAST

BEN

VAL

FREDDY

NESS

ASH

JAY

BUSTER

HUMBOLDT

BEN'S MUM

BEN'S DAD

MABEL/GLORIA

MAC/BERT

PENNY

TIFF

SERGEANT/HEAD GUARD

POLICE OFFICERS/GUARDS (x2)

CONDUCTOR

GANG KIDS

CROWD PEOPLE

Being a teenager is tough. Nothing seems to go right and you often wish you could run away to a better life. Ben Woodley did exactly that, but when he stumbles across a gang of rogue buskers and their flamboyant leader Big Val, he starts to realise the grass isn't always greener.

BEN – the hero, 13/14, lazy, wants life easy, has a good heart and means well but is just frustrated.

ASH – Ben’s friend. She’s also 13/14, a quick thinker, quick wit and will thump the boys and the drop of a hat. She keeps them in order

JAY - 13/14 he’s a like a Labrador. Faithful, clumsy, and often doesn’t understand the obvious. But will surprise you when he gets something we might think is complicated. He has his own spin on life and it will never change.

NESS – 13/14. She will rally for causes, is smart and never gives up for what she believes in. She’s a thorn in Ben’s side but becomes his saviour.

FREDDY – 16. Leader of the pack but more puff than substance. He likes his position of power, having the gang follow him, but underneath when the rug’s pulled, he will curl up like a scared cat.

BUSTER – Freddy’s sidekick,13-15, the yes man, the gopher.

VAL – 50’s. Val is the smiling assassin. She sickly sweet when she wants something; but will shoot you down if you cross her. She’s on a comeback trail and no-one will get in her way...not even family.

HUMBOLDT – 70’s. An old thespian that is the gentle grandfather figure – but look out, he can still do an impressive tap dance when required.

BEN’S MUM – nagging slave driver

BEN’S DAD – nagging slave driver

MABEL – (could be same actor as Ben’s mum), on the surface she’ll whip up the best batch of scones and is lovely, but underneath she’s like Miss Hannigan from Annie – she becomes Gloria, a flamboyant actor

MAC – (could be same actor as Ben’s dad) – on the surface appears stern but generous, underneath he’s like Fagan from Oliver. – he becomes Bert, a camp actor

PENNY & TIFF – Friends of Ness; the more outspoken ones of the gang

GANG – lost kids, street kids, all looking for a home and swept up in Val’s transparent hospitality. They’re talented but tough through survival in the past.

SERGEANT, POLICE OFFICERS, CONDUCTOR and GUARDS – standard caricature

WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS – ACT 1 (55 mins)

SCENE 1 – BEN’S BEDROOM

Ben’s wandering around his bedroom as if sleepwalking

SONG ‘RESPONSIBLE’

BEN: *As I sleep, I dream of a life that’s easy
Without my nagging parents that don’t please me
At least no school, it’s Saturday
I hope it goes it a different way
It’s just not fair the way they treat me
Do this do that, they treat me hard
Clean the house and clean the yard
At least while I’m asleep
The peacefulness is hard to beat
I hope they just forget I’m here
How great to sleep in for a whole year...!*

Ben gets into his bed.

CLOCK STARTS TICKING – ALARM GOES OFF-Ben’s Mum bursts in

BEN’S MUM *wakey wakey sleepy head
The sun is up the moon is dead
It’s time to rise and clean your room
You get the mop I’ll get the broom*

BEN *Arggh!!!*

BEN’S MUM *I can’t believe this pile of clothes
There’s something here that burns my nose
So get up little stinky bum
And listen to your tired old mum*

BEN *Sometimes I wish you weren’t my mum
Coz all you do is drum, drum, drum!
You never leave me well alone
I wish I had a different home!*

MUM *Responsible responsible, your attitude’s incomparable
You think you have a real hard life*

MUM *Then try to be a mum and wife!*

BEN *What?*

MUM *Responsible responsible, your attitude’s incomparable
You think you want a better home*

Ben's Dad enters

BEN'S DAD *But this one is the best you'll know*
BEN *Oh great not you too?!*
BEN'S DAD *Come on Ben it's time to go*
There's no time to be so slow
You have your chores that must be done
The dishes and the bins my son
My firm hand is for your own good
It makes you tough as nails and wood
You may complain you're just a pawn
But do it while you mow the lawn!
BEN *You must be joking its unreal!*
This must be slavery I feel
Its Saturday it's just not fair!
I want to sleep, why don't you care?!
MUM&DAD *Responsible responsible*
Your attitude incomparable
You think you have a real hard life
DAD *I think we're still too soft my wife*
MUM&DAD *Responsible responsible*
Your attitude incomparable
So if you want a change of tone
MUM *Then go and find a better home*

Mum and Dad exit.

BEN *Maybe I will!*
Dad pops his head back in
DAD *You can't...you're grounded. (exits)*
BEN *ARGGGHHH!!*

-END SONG-

Ben flops back on the bed. He struts around madly.

BEN *Who do they think they are?! I...I mean...I'm just a kid! There has to be a law against this. One day you turn thirteen and it's all 'how lovely Benjamin, aren't you growing so quickly; I remember when you were such a cute little...the next day its WHAM! BAM! GET TO WORK MAN! This is crazy! It's ludicrous! It's just not right.*

SONG 'BETTER LIFE'

BEN *There has to be a better life
One that's not so full of pain
I just want to leave the strife
And never come back again
But who am I kidding?*

(chorus off stage) run away run away

BEN *I'm not thinking straight*

(chorus off stage) run away run away

BEN *I'm probably over tired*

(chorus off stage) run away run away

BEN *Yes its getting too late*

[he jumps into bed to sleep but quickly starts to consider it again]

(chorus off stage) run away run away

BEN *I wish there was a better life
I wish there was a way
But all I feel is trapped inside
Perhaps I should...
not sure I would...
wonder if I could...*

(chorus off stage) Run away, run away, there's no life if you stay (repeat)

BEN *Run away? No, no, no, that's impossible. I couldn't just...I mean, I wouldn't...
I wouldn't know where to go
And I'd have no place to stay
I'd have to look after myself
I couldn't just run away*

Chorus *He wouldn't know where to go
And he'd have no place to stay
He'd have to look after himself
Perhaps he should run away
Run away, run away, there's no life if you stay, (repeat)*

BEN *I wouldn't know where to go
And I'd have no place to stay
I'd have to look after myself
I couldn't just run away*

Chorus *He wouldn't know where to go
And he'd have no place to stay*

***He'd have to look after himself
Perhaps he should run away***

Jay & Ash appear in his bedroom window

JAY/ASH Who's going to run away?

BEN Ahhhhh!!!!

-END SONG-

BEN You know I do have a door you could knock on.

JAY Where's the fun in that?!

ASH Jay says, which really means, 'I'm scared of your dad.'

JAY Well he always gives me that funny look. You know...

Jay mimicks Ben's Dad; Ash forehead slaps him back to normal

ASH Serious Ben, what's this talk of running away?

BEN Look Ash, I've had it up to here...

JAY (*cringes*) Urgh! Now you sound like your dad.

BEN I've had enough of them treating me like a slave. Do this do that...I have a life you know!

JAY Where?

BEN I dunno, out there probably!

JAY (*looks out window*) Cool.

ASH No it's not cool.

JAY Actually there is a slight breeze...

Jay avoids another whack from Ash.

ASH Benjamin Aaron Woodley...

JAY Now you're sounding like his mum.

BEN/ASH Will you shut up!?

Jay backs off.

ASH We hear you complain every week, but running away is not the answer.

BEN How do you know? Have you done it?

ASH Well...no. But I mean...

BEN Then how do you know there isn't a better life for me out there?

JAY (*gestures out the window*) Out there?

BEN Yeah.

ASH We don't! But it could be dangerous.

JAY Ashleigh's right, we don't know anything that goes on 'out there'

BEN Exactly! So how do we find out if we don't take that chance?

SONG 'LIFE ON THE ROAD'

Spoken over music intro –

BEN They say that grass isn't greener, but maybe they haven't been stuck in the mud like me

ASH We know you're upset Ben but it doesn't mean you have to go running...

JAY like a cat up a tree.

BEN you've seen what I deal with, so things need to change

ASH/JAY Something's got to give, it cannot stay the same

BEN No-one's seen what I've seen, they don't feel what I feel, so it can only mean

ASH/JAY It can only mean?

BEN It can only mean...*Life on the road!*

What do you do when your life gets you down,

People tell you to smile and just hide that frown

But it won't change a thing when it weighs such a load

ASH/JAY So what do you do?

BEN I take...

(Chorus)

BEN *life on the road, life on the road*

It has to better to live life on the road

(repeat chorus)

BEN *There must be a world where it isn't so mean*

That's not about chores and keeping rooms clean

I'm making it simple. I'm not speaking code

ASH/JAY *so that really means?*

BEN *Yeah...*

(repeat chorusx2)

ASH *Maybe the grass is greener*

JAY *He's got no other choice*

ASH *What else can he do*

JAY *I think he's got a point!*

Aside to audience/each other, while Ben starts packing a bag

ASH *but Jay I worry for him*

What if he gets in strife?

He doesn't know the world out there

JAY *Yeah I fear for his life!*

Ash and Jay pacing in thought, watching Ben toss through clothes

ASH *So what if we go?*

JAY *you think we should go?*

ASH *we need to look out for his, life on the road, life on the road
we need to look out for his, life on the road
we can't let him see us*

JAY *we must stay down low*

ASH *we cannot betray him*

JAY *don't fret, he'll never know*

ASH *let's say we'll cover for him
Let's lend him a hand
He'll never see us spying*

JAY *(too loud) Yes the ultimate plan!*

BEN what?

JAY nothing.
(repeat chorusx2)

BEN I gotta go! What other choice do I have? It has to be better than this!

BEN *I'm sure this is right*

ASH *But what if it's wrong?*

BEN *I'll find out my own way*

JAY *By the end of this song?*

BEN No!

BEN *I need to find something
that makes me complete,
if it's not here at home
then it must be the street.*

BEN *Life on the road, life on the road,
has to better, has to be better, to live life on the road*

ALL *has to better, has to be better, to live life on the road!*

-END SONG-

ASH Well Ben, I think you're right.

BEN Really?

ASH Yep. You should go.

BEN By myself?

ASH Sure. How else are you going to feel like a grown up? I think you should just hop on a train, see what's on the other side of the tracks and who knows; maybe the perfect life for you is waiting right there!

BEN/JAY Cool.

ASH And besides, we'll cover for you.

JAY How are we going to do that?

ASH Well...you're mum knows you're both supposed to be coming to my house to watch a movie later, I'll just tell your mum that my mum asked for a sleepover and that its okay with Jay's mum so I know she'll be cool with that, and if she rings to check up I'll say that my mum is with jay's mum who also cover his mum by saying she said its okay and if anything should fail we'll say that either mum's can't talk because they're both on the toilet with a bad case of diarrhea. Cool?

The boys look dumbfounded.

JAY Makes sense to me.

Ben is still dumbfounded.

ASH Now Ben, so your folks don't suspect anything, go and get your chores done first...

BEN What?!

JAY wouldn't they suspect something if he did do them?

ASH Just do it! We'll come and give you a hand in a minute.

JAY Now that doesn't make sense!

Ben leaves and Ash drags Jay aside in secret.

ASH Okay, so we'll follow him, in secret, to make sure he doesn't get into any trouble.

JAY For how long?

ASH As long as it takes. But trust me, I know Ben, the first sight of confrontation and he'll be racing back here before dinner.

JAY And then we watch our movie?

ASH Er...yeah I suppose.

JAY Right...then what about the whole diarrhea thing?

Ash looks out the window.

ASH By the look of that back lawn, Ben's dog must've eaten something he shouldn't have...so that's your job!

Ash leaves through the window. Jay sighs and follows her.

SCENE 2 – STREET (can be combined with scene 3)

(Music under)

SEQUENCE OF IMPROVISED SKITS (x3) BEN WALKING TO THE TRAIN STATION WITH ASH AND JAY FOLLOWING; TRYING TO STAY OUT OF SIGHT BUT NEARLY GETTING CAUGHT.

SCENE 3 – TRAIN STATION

BEN arrives at the train- hesitant. TRAIN CONDUCTOR blows his/her whistle.

CONDUCTOR All aboard! Doors closing!

Ben looks behind him; anxious.

BEN C'mon. You can do it Ben.

CONDUCTOR (blows whistle) All aboard or be left behind!

Ben leaps on. Jay and Ash come out of hiding and go for the carriage behind. Jay's distracted by something and misses the doors; he runs along to catch up as the train moves.

JAY Wait for me!!!!!!

ASH Hurry up!

He jumps on in time.

SCENE 4 – INSIDE TRAIN

BEN sits down whistling/humming/singing 'Life on the road'

TRAIN PEOPLE – come on and off in a time lapse sequence until Ben on his own and sleepy when FREDDY appears next to him. Ben's startled.

FREDDY Hey kid.

BEN Hey.

FREDDY Long way from home?

BEN Er...no

FREDDY Come on munchkin, fess up.

BEN Well, yeah...but I'm not going back! That life's not for me.

FREDDY I see. A little rebel runaway eh?

BEN Er...sure, life on the road; that's where I'm heading.

FREDDY Right. Well don't let me stop ya.

(awkward pause)

FREDDY So where are ya going?

BEN Anywhere.

FREDDY Anywhere?

BEN Anywhere.

FREDDY Mmm. I tell ya what kid; I'm feeling generous today. Normally people pay me for this kind of advice, but today, for you, it's free.

BEN (uncertain) Okay...

FREDDY (evangelistic) you say you want a life that's free from strife

BEN yeah.

FREDDY you want to leave your woes behind and start a clean slate

BEN yeah!

FREDDY you've had enough of people telling you what to do so you simply jumped on a train to find something better!

BEN Amen!

FREDDY Then my advice to you little man is to get off at the next stop, wait for the train heading in the opposite direction and take your little baby butt back where you came.

BEN Huh? But I thought...

FREDDY You're on the wrong side of the tracks my friend. And I suggest you return before you get in... too... deep.

Ben scared as GANG KIDS enter one at a time, clicking fingers.

JAY and ASH hide nearby. Dialogue over gang chanting 'wrong, wrong, wrong etc'

ASH They're surrounding him! What do we do?!

Jay starts clicking his fingers.

JAY I'll carry the beat, you sing the harmony.

ASH What?!

SONG 'WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS'

GANG KIDS *(whisper) wrong, wrong, wrong, side...*

wrong, wrong, wrong, side...

FREDDY *we live a life that's free everyday
no nagging parents to get in our way
we do what we like, we sleep where we lay
but a kid like you, wouldn't last a day*

GANG KIDS *a kid like you wouldn't last a day
you're on the wrong, wrong, wrong, side of the tracks
wrong, wrong, wrong, side of the tracks
wrong, wrong, wrong, side...*

GANG KIDS *So go back home, this life's not for you*

FREDDY *Only the toughest can make it through*

GANG KIDS *We're just here to deliver the facts*

(chorus) *You're on the wrong, wrong, wrong side of the tracks! (wrong side)
You're on the wrong, wrong, wrong side of the tracks! (wrong side)
Wrong, wrong, wrong, side...(wrong side)*

FREDDY *forget about homework, no school in sight
there's nothing to learn, no teachers to fight
no need to be smart, no need to be bright
You can watch TV all through the night*

JAY *(inspired) Watch TV all through the night?! I'm on the wrong*

GANG KIDS *(repeat chorus)*

NESS *But you won't get fed like you will back home*

GANG KIDS (under) *You're on the wrong side*

NESS *Gotta watch your back, gotta play it low*

GANG KIDS (under) *You're on the wrong side*

NESS *And there's a lot more that you don't wanna know*

GANG KIDS (under) *You're on the wrong side*

FREDDY(spoken) will someone shut her up! C'mon, time to go!

Gang starts to leave

BEN But wait! I wanna join you guys.

FREDDY Now come on kid, you look like you come from a nice home. Why don't you run back to mummy and daddy and...

BEN No!!! I've heard what you said, but it doesn't change the way I feel. I'm not going back home, I don't belong there and that's final.

BUSTER He does have spirit boss.

Freddy paces in thought. Buster pulls Freddy aside.

BUSTER And remember you-know-who, told us to pick up a replacement for you-know-what.

BEN Anyway it doesn't sound that tough to live out here.

FREDDY Fine. But there is one little catch

GANG KIDS *We're telling you straight, before you get into strife*

FREDDY *There's just one rule to livin' this life*

GANG KIDS *You gotta keep your nose clean, you gotta stay on your toes*

FREDDY *(spoken) I'm the boss kid...what I say goes!*

GANG KIDS *(spoken adlib) you tell 'em Freddy, head honcho, on ya Fredster! etc*

GANG KIDS *There's only one vision*

no intermission

It's all his decision

GANG KID *And you can't change key without his permission*

-DANCE BREAK-

GANG KIDS *There's only one vision*

no intermission

It's all his decision

GANG KIDS *And you can't even pee without his permission*

GANG KID *you can't even pee without his permission*

FREDDY STOP!!!...you can on Sundays.

Gang put hands in prayer position and give an angelic/choral but relieving 'AHHHHHH'

GANG KIDS *So come with us, this could be for you*

FREDDY *Perhaps you might just make it through*

GANG KIDS *But we're still here to deliver the facts*

You're on the wrong, wrong, side
(repeat chorus)

FREDDY welcome to the family kid!
-END SONG-

GANG EXIT; Jay's busy singing the song trying to be gangster like while Ash paces in thought.

ASH What we need is the perfect disguise. We have to stay close; but not too close. We have to blend in but...

Ash notices Jay has adjusted his clothes to look like one of the gang members, and bounces around.

JAY (singing) 'don't have to be smart, don't have to be bright...'

ASH Jay...you're a genius!

JAY Huh?

Ash drags him away.

SCENE 5 – RAILYARD - GANG'S HOME

Ben given tour by Buster.

BUSTER That one's the catering carriage.

BEN sound's good.

Ben runs over to have a look

BUSTER Er...sure...(aside) if you like mashed up slop five times a week.

BEN huh?

BUSTER you get burgers, chips and chops at least five times a week!

BEN cool!

BUSTER and those trains are the sleeping quarters.

BEN you actually sleep in trains?

BUSTER sure. It's amazing how many you can actually fit in one carriage (aside) when you share a flea ridden mattress with someone who always snores...

BEN what was that?

BUSTER you can sleep in late because we don't have any chores!

BEN now that's what I'm talking about!

Ness enters with Penny & Tiff whispering. Ness instructing one of them.

BUSTER Yep life is sure sweet around here...

PENNY Buster! Emergency with Freddy!

BUSTER What is it?! Tell me! Quick!

TIFF Something about not being able to reach the remote control.

BUSTER Doh! I knew I put it too far away from his bed. Hurry! We don't have much time!
Gang Friends escort Buster; signaling the thumbs up to Ness.

BEN What was that all about?

NESS You don't want to know. So you're the new kid eh?

BEN Yep. Ben Woodley.
Ben goes for a high five. Ness just offers her hand to shake

NESS Ness.
Ben waits for more.

NESS Just... Ness.

BEN Okay just Ness; tell me, how did you land in a place like this? *(admiring the railyard)*
I mean, talk about luck.

NESS That depends on how you look at it.

BEN Huh?

NESS You first. Tell me, what's it like to have a normal family?

BEN Well I could tell ya, but I dunno, I don't have one!

NESS Let's see, you have parents that give you everything you need.

BEN yeah, like a headache. 'Ben, pick up your dirty washing'

NESS they give you clothes

BEN 'Ben, do the dishes'

NESS Food.

BEN 'wake up son no time for sleep!'

NESS A bed to sleep in...that's probably surrounded by a house...sounds pretty normal to me

BEN Well...it's not. Especially compared to life with no curfew. Hanging around on trains.

NESS Sounds like you got it good Ben.

BEN What would you know? You said it yourself; you've never lived like I have!

NESS *(indignant)* No...I haven't.
Awkward pause. Ben recoils.

NESS Look Ben, you don't belong here. Why don't you go? I can cover for you.
Buster enters; exhausted.

BUSTER Man that was close. If Freddy misses an episode of Hannah Monta...I mean CSI Miami,
then it's *(cut throat)*. So ya ready?

BEN For what?

BUSTER Your initiation into the gang.

Ben looks at Ness; she pleads with her eyes.

BEN *Sure thing Buster.*

Ben leaves. Ness left alone.

SONG 'PHANTOM FAMILY'

NESS *I wonder what it's like
I see what they get up to
Picnics in the park on sunny days
Days out at the zoo
Trips to the museum
Families living life in their own ways
I know it's possible, I see it all the time, but to have for just one day,
surely couldn't be such a crime*

(chorus) *My phantom family is there
hiding in the shadows
I know its bare, but I hope one day its real
You can't compare you can't convince me to ignore it
life just isn't fair so what's the deal?*

NESS *I see a mum and dad
Watching their kids playing
Push them on the swings a bit too high
Ice cream on the beach
Watching sunsets fading
Cuddling them when they start to cry
I know it's possible, I see it all the time, but to have for just one day,
surely couldn't be such a crime*

(repeat chorus)

NESS *But who am I kidding?!
It'll never happen!
No-one cares a damn of what I need!
No matter how it hurts me
no matter what I say
Why can't I have just one day?
Why can't it be for real?
Why can't I leave those shadows far behind?
I don't think I'm asking*

*too much to want a chance
to have a moment that I feel is mine!
For just one time!
But my life isn't like that
I watch it from a distance
Its something I can't touch or feel or see
We all have different lives, and that
elusive phantom family,
it isn't meant for me.*

SCENE 6 RAILYARD

Gang Kids playing cards; hanging around. Jay and Ash sneak up on them.

ASH (quietly to Jay) Now we have to blend in okay?

JAY Got it.

ASH You better get it; Ben's life may depend on us!

JAY Will you just chill out muffin cakes. I know exactly how to roll with it. This dog has your back, Jeaves.

ASH Have your parents had you tested?

Gang Kids get in argument

GANG KID 1 I don't care! I did it last time! It's Stacey's turn.

GANG KID 2 Nah-uh! There's no way I'm doing it...er...I have asthma (*start wheezing*)

Gang all start making excuses, sick, etc

GANG KID 3 Well if we don't have anyone to volunteer, we'll have to draw straws again.

Gang all groan.

GANG KID 3 Buster promised Val we'd get someone to do it for the big event tonight.

GANG KID 1 And you know what Val wants...

ALL GANG Val gets.

Ash and Jay stride up to them. Jay trips over his exaggerated walk. Gang surround them.

JAY Yo whattup doggy doo; slammin and bouncing, dats how we roll in de crib, I got your back you got my front, so time for de crazy shizzle to get wit de rhymes y'all, peace!

Jay sticks his two fingers up the rude way. Ash leaps in and turns them around for 'peace'.

ASH Don't mind him; he's just been in the sun too long. I'm...er...Cindy and this is my brother

JAY P-dog.

ASH yeah...we're just looking for a place to crash.

GANG KID 4 You guys homeless?

JAY Home? What home? De street be where we hang it sista.

GANG KID 5 How do you turn him off?

ASH Trust me, I've tried. Just one night ought to do it.

Gang kids gesture an idea to each other.

GANG KID 6 You can stay as long as you like if you do us one favour.

GANG Aha/ Yeah etc

ASH Sure.

GANG KID 1 Good. Ya see, we happen to need two kids just like you with your... obvious talent.

Gang play along, some snigger as they escort a nervous Ash and Jay away.

SCENE 7 – TRAIN

Freddy, Buster and (some) Gang Members escort BEN. An Old Lady (Val in disguise) sits nearby.

FREDDY Now to officially be a part of our...

BUSTER (interrupts) Elusive tribe!

FREDDY You must perform

BUSTER (interrupts) A task!

FREDDY Set out by....

BUSTER Freddy!

FREDDY Do you mind?!

BUSTER Sorry.

FREDDY Set out by me...fail, and you will stay on the train, cappice?

BEN Okay, what do I have to do?

FREDDY *(pretends to improvise)* Mmm...aha! See that wrinkly old lady over there?

BEN Yeah.

FREDDY You... have to steal her purse.

BEN What?! But I...I mean... it's just

FREDDY Consider it a measure of courage, obedience and...I'm short a couple of bucks so I need the cash.

Gang giggle.

BEN *(pacing)* I'm not sure...I mean...*(aside to himself)*...a life of crime?

The gang start giggling quietly. Buster shuts them up.

BEN *(aside to himself)* I'm not sure it's worth it...

FREDDY Make up your mind Benjy. Or go back home to your cot. Three...two...one...

BEN Okay I'll do it!

Gang high five each other.

MUSIC STING – *builds as Ben (a few times) nervously tries to steal purse. They egg him on. He's clumsy and Old Lady freaks out at him; whacking him with her handbag.*

BEN Ow!

VAL (OLD LADY) What do you think you're doing?! You little brat!

Gang giggle more. Old lady has Ben firmly by the wrist.

BEN I'm sorry! I was just...

VAL (OLD LADY) Just what?! Huh?!!

Ben gapes his mouth but nothing comes out.

VAL (OLD LADY) Just as I thought! I should call the police on you. They'll send you to prison!

BEN But...but

VAL (OLD LADY) Don't butt me! I ought to...

Gang laugh louder. Ben confused. Val straightens up and her voice is normal.

VAL I ought to... thank dear Frederick for the opportunity for a good ol' fashion sting.

Val removes her wig. Gang still chuckling.

FREDDY Always a pleasure.

BEN Huh? What's going on?

FREDDY Sorry B-man, but it had to be done...to see if you had some backbone. Meet Val. I may be the brains of the operation...

Gang scoff until Freddy gives them a stern look.

FREDDY But she is like our manager.

BEN So you're not a gang of thieves?

VAL How dare you. Robbery is so...last millennium. No my dear boy, we do much better business than common little thieves.

SONG 'WE GOTTA BUSK'

VAL: (sweetly) *We may look like criminals*

That roam through the street

We're good with our hands

And light on our feet

But when you have our talent

You cannot let it hide

so what is wrong with making a little money on the side?

GANG *We're all so good at heart*

We choose the honest way

*We need not live a life of crime...when we
b-b-b-b-u-s-kayyyyyy!*

GANG *We gotta busk, We gotta busk, We gotta b-b-b-b-u-s-k! (repeat)*

VAL *If you wanna come and live the secret life with us
You gotta earn your keep, You gotta make a fuss*

(busker shows a talent over 2 bars of music)

VAL *it can be a simple act*

(1 bar for gang to perform)

VAL *or a Shakespeare play*

(1 bar for gang to perform)

VAL *As long as they applaud*

(1 bar for gang to act as clapping audience)

VAL *As long as they pay*

(1 bar for actors to do something)

-DANCE BREAK-

VAL *you gotta know your clients, Pick the generous ones
The little old ladies*

(gang member throws on a shawl acting like old lady)

GANG KID *'you remind me of my son'*

VAL *And then you'll get the type, that's really hard
So when in doubt, play the sympathy card*

(gang member pretends to cry& adlib like Oliver 'I'm so hungry')

VAL *You can sing or dance, play a kazoo
juggle or rap, or didgereedoo*

GANG *You can sing or dance, play a kazoo
juggle or rap, or didgereedoo do do do doooooooo!*

VAL *So If you got a talent kid
Then come and let it shine
Just don't forget the rules my boy
What's yours will soon be mine*

GANG *What's yours will soon be.....(sadly)hers.*

(Val gives them a dark look and they resume the happy façade)

GANG *We gotta busk, We gotta busk, We gotta b-b-b-b-u-s-k! (repeat to end)*

VAL *And if that doesn't work, then you can pickpocket.*

-END SONG-

ALL EXIT.

SCENE 8 – RAILYARD

Buster enters with Ben.

BUSTER So that's how it works. We earn the money...

BEN And Val keeps it all?

BUSTER Well kinda...but in return we get this cool place to live in, a bed, food...and on top of that, she's been working on getting us this audition for a great...

Val enters with Freddy.

VAL Gather round everyone!

FREDDY *(clap clap)*

The whole gang enter. Ness enters separately with Penny & Tiff

VAL Now my little darlings, I have good news. I've just confirmed with our special guests that they will be arriving here later this evening.

Mumble excitement.

VAL So the rest of the day will be what?

GANG *(groaning)* Practice, practice, practice

VAL Exactly. And before dinner we'll hit the streets for a dress rehearsal. Remember, everything has to be perfect. This couple is like royalty. So if you do a superb audition AND if they like you, they will take you on tour! You'll get to perform for kings and queens! You'll have the finest clothes, tables full of food and the softest beds to sleep in...

Gang react dreamy.

VAL *(accidentally reminiscent)* ...ahhh, a life I once knew...*(snaps back to reality)*...but if any one of you mess this up...

Val is in Ness's face by now. Staring each other down.

FREDDY Then it's back to the streets, working for loose change and a mouldy sandwich.

VAL But where are my manners? As Ness here has unexpectedly come down with a sudden illness...

Ness fakes cough defiantly to Val.

VAL Freddy has found us a new addition to the family to take her place...Bobby.

BEN It's Be....

VAL Who is about to show us what he can do.

BEN What...now?

FREDDY No...we can wait a week if you like.

Freddy clips the back of Ben's head.

BEN Well...okay...what should I do?

VAL Try... a dance.

MUSIC STING as Ben does a lame hip hop. Everyone cringes.

VAL Stop! Perhaps you might like to try a song.

MUSIC STING as Ben sings something badly. 'oops I did it again!' They all cover their ears.

FREDDY Perhaps he's an actor!

VAL ah yes of course! A pure thespian dedicated to a single craft. Let's see...a soliloquy from Hamlet...no...a scene from Antony and Cleopatra...

Buster smugly approaches Ben.

BUSTER Romeo and Juliet's always a nice one.

VAL Perfect! Buster, you play Juliet!

BUSTER What?!

The gang drag Buster away to throw a feather bower and lipstick on him.

VAL Freddy, feed Barry the lines.

BEN It's Ben...

VAL Quiet everyone! And...go!

BUSTER (as Juliet) Romeo, Romeo...where...art, for thouest Romeo!

Freddy whispers to Ben.

BEN (badly) She reeks...

FREDDY (loud whisper) Speaks!

BEN Speaks!

Freddy whisper

BEN Just relax...

FREDDY No! I'm telling you to relax.

BEN Oh.

Val cringes. Freddy whispers as Ben recites.

BEN Speak-a-gain-bright-an-gel-for-thou-art-as-glor-i-ous-to-this-night-hand-gesture.

Ben awkwardly raises his hand. Everyone groans and giggles.

VAL Can you juggle?

BEN Nope.

VAL Do a handstand?

BEN Nah-ah.

VAL Play a kazoo?!

BEN A what?

Val starts hyperventilating.

FREDDY (to Buster) Get everyone out of here.

BUSTER Okay folks time to go, nothing to see here. Go! Skedaddle!

Everyone starts leaving.

VAL (grabs Freddy) I thought you said he had talent?!

FREDDY I said he had spunk. I didn't exactly get time to test him out, did I?

VAL Frederick...you know how important this audition is to my...er...gift for everyone?! If I deliver that kind of trash to these clients then it's kittens for all of us!

FREDDY (softens with enthusiasm) Oh really? That'd be so cute.

Val glares at him and he snaps back into tough mode.

FREDDY You know there is someone who could help.

VAL Oh do we have to?!

FREDDY He's the only one who has a chance of making something out of him.

Val reluctant.

VAL Oh alright!

Freddy whistles. Buster re-enters.

BUSTER Yes boss?

FREDDY Take our little...prodigy...to Humboldt. See if he can work a miracle.

BUSTER Consider it done. Oh and Val, the mimes are ready for your approval.

Buster leaves stage left with Ben

VAL Finally! Send them over. Let's hope this works out or I'll...I'll...

Freddy rubs Val's shoulders.

FREDDY You need to relax.

Jay and Ash dressed as mimes (face masks) creep on stage (unseen by Freddy and Val). They pose frozen, listening.

VAL But what if it doesn't work? What if...?

FREDDY Listen! Before you know it the whole lot of them will be out of your hair, on a ship headed to outer Mongolia, working their fingers to the bone in some shoe making factory. You'll have your big cheque and finally get your chance to...