

THE QUEEN OF POP

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Anton Dudley

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SYNOPSIS: Be seen, get discovered on *America's Voice!* In order to boost her fame, Calista's manager creates a rumor that she is the lost princess of a small island nation. When that nation is in desperate need of a new ruler, identities are mistaken and things get out of hand. In the end, celebrity just might become synonymous with democracy.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 WOMEN, 2-3 MEN, 3-7 EITHER)

CALISTA COFFEY (f) A teen pop idol. *(124 lines)*
ELEANOR MATRIX (f) Her manager. *(67 lines)*
ROOMEY (f) Calista's best friend. *(91 lines)*
NEWS ANCHOR 1 (m/f) May be double cast. *(7 lines)*
NEWS ANCHOR 2 (m/f) May be double cast. *(6 lines)*
NEWS ANCHOR 3 (m/f) May be double cast. *(6 lines)*
NEWS ANCHOR 4 (m/f) Speaks Spanish. May be double cast.
(6 lines)
RYAN D. LIST (m) A television presenter. May be double
cast. *(10 lines)*
BJORN BAAD (m) A dictator. *(17 lines)*
IVANA VACATION (f) His press secretary. *(17 lines)*
ITCHY (m/f) A spy from an Arctic Nation. *(35 lines)*
TWITCHY (m/f) A spy from an Arctic Nation. *(21 lines)*
FORCE (m/f) A Yeti. *(4 lines)*
LARS (m) A displaced duke from an Arctic Nation.
(36 lines)

SETTING

America and Liceland (a small, unknown, Arctic island nation.). Locations as noted.

TIME: The present.

NOTE ON PRODUCTION

Scenery should be suggested mainly through lights and costumes. Scene transitions should be fluid with characters' entrances signaling a change of location.

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ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

A spotlight on CALISTA COFFEY, a teenage girl dressed to pop; this performance will make her America's idol. She sings a fabulous cover song and is greeted with a tidal wave of applause and cheers. NOTE: If the actress playing Calista can sing, then she should; if not, she can lip-sync. Otherwise, forget this opening song and start the play with the four news anchors.

FOUR NEWS ANCHORS appear. Each in their own chair, as if they are each in a separate television screen.

NEWS ANCHOR 1: Calista Coffey's milky voice is steaming her to stardom!

NEWS ANCHOR 2: Calista Coffey is the do-re-mi-fa-sooo-latte we've been waiting for.

NEWS ANCHOR 3: Better put two sleeves on that paper cup, this Coffey's so hot it'll burn you!

NEWS ANCHOR 4: Calista Coffey es tan caliente! Ai!

Standing in front of the NEWS ANCHORS, with her back to the audience, as if watching a wall of television screens, is CALISTA COFFEY, teen pop star extraordinaire!

NEWS ANCHOR 1: Calista Coffey took first place on last night's *America's Voice* competition with her loving rendition of "That Tart is Popped." (Or whatever spoof of whatever song or title of actual song is a hit right now.)

NEWS ANCHOR 2: Last night's winner of *America's Voice* is newcomer Calista Coffey. But some critics are asking, "How strong is her brew?"

NEWS ANCHOR 3: She charmed the judges and viewers alike on the finale of *America's Voice*. But each new season brings a new star: will Calista Coffey reign as Princess of Pop or only be good to the season's last drop?

NEWS ANCHOR 4: ¿Calista Coffey: Cafe con leche, o arroz sin pollo? ¡Solamente el tiempo dirá!

The television screens go dark, ELEANOR MATRIX enters. She's an agent who can manage it all!

ELEANOR: Calista Coffey. How does it feel to be a drop in the pan?

CALISTA: What?

ELEANOR: The only spark in the dark? The only violence in the silence? How do you like being famous for the next fifteen minutes? (*She checks her watch or phone.*) Correction, thirteen minutes. And...now it's less.

CALISTA: Eleanor? You're my manager...why does every compliment you give come with a backhand to my ego?

ELEANOR: It's called reality, sweetheart. Let me tell you something my mother told me: there are moths and there are flames. Sometimes a moth touches a flame and...for that brief moment while it burns, the world watches and says..."Aaaah!" And then the flame burns out and...well...the world doesn't want to watch moth toast. The real question, the question a good manager like myself must ask, is...how do you keep the moth on fire?

CALISTA: So...I'm a moth?

ELEANOR: Bingo. And thanks to *America's Voice*, you're on fire. And, as your manager, I'm asking, how do we *keep* you on fire?

CALISTA: Could we maybe find a new metaphor?

ELEANOR: Let's play a game.

CALISTA: Is it safe?

ELEANOR: Ha. You know what the public likes?

CALISTA: My voice?

ELEANOR: Sure, but you know what it really likes?

CALISTA: My style?

ELEANOR: Yeah, but you know what it really, *really* likes?

CALISTA: The fact that I won *America's Voice*?

ELEANOR: New game: from now on, I answer my questions before asking them, okay?

CALISTA: Okay.

ELEANOR: The public likes a scandal.

CALISTA: Oh. I'm not that kind of girl.

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ELEANOR: Yeah, those scandals are tired anyway. I'm talking about a *new* scandal, an epic scandal, a scandal that will keep you on fire—

CALISTA: Metaphor!—

ELEANOR: Sorry—on *top*...forever!

CALISTA: And what would that be?

ELEANOR: (*Slowly.*) I happen to know a cup of hot *Coffey* that's about to melt the snows of Liceland.

CALISTA: Don't you mean Iceland?

ELEANOR: No, darling, check your atlas. It's a little-known island nation, historically recognized for its high grade of singers and low grade of hygiene. Liceland.

The TV screens pop on, once again.

NEWS ANCHOR 1: Could Pop Tart Calista Coffey be the lost granddaughter of famed Licelandic singer, Omio Bambino?

NEWS ANCHOR 2: Coffey's manager, Eleanor Matrix, drops publicity bomb on the free world. Coffey may be the only living granddaughter of murdered heir to the Licelandic throne.

NEWS ANCHOR 3: Want to know how Calista Coffey got to wear *America's Voice*? Manager Eleanor Matrix says, "It's in the genes!"

NEWS ANCHOR 4: Historia de Calista Coffey al bemade en telenovela! Mirelo pronto en Telemundo!

The lights go out on all the news anchors but one. NEWS ANCHOR interviews ELEANOR MATRIX.

NEWS ANCHOR: This is shocking.

ELEANOR: Well, Marti, it truly is.

NEWS ANCHOR: Why do you think Calista Coffey is related to Omio Bambino?

ELEANOR: You know, when I saw her perform on TV...I was so moved, I mean...I really just choked up, like a peanut allergy? ...I drew up the contract right there in the semi-finals! And as I got to know her, I just had this feeling I'd heard that voice before. And then it hit me. My childhood idol, the reason I got into the business in the first place: Omio Bambino. No one sang like that. Until now.

NEWS ANCHOR: But the proof?

ELEANOR: I have been in contact with authorities at the National Museum of Liceland.

NEWS ANCHOR: Who knew there was such a place?

ELEANOR: Google knew; Google always knows. Anyway, DNA tests are underway. If I'm right, and I'm never wrong, Calista Coffey's voice is a voice of legacy.

NEWS ANCHOR: Of royal legacy! For those of you who don't know, Liceland, a small island north of Russia, broke off from the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It remained a monarchy until mid-century when rebels murdered the royal family, all except Prince Omio Bambino, who was later assassinated while on tour, after announcing he would return to Liceland to take his rightful place on the throne.

ELEANOR: Sure, sure, I mean politics and history and all that but...he could *sing*. That's what we should remember. Bambino's voice: stellar. Sustainable. Successful. And now, steaming from the throat of Calista Coffey!

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE:

The Military Palace of Liceland. The militant dictator BJORN BAAD fumes as he reads an American gossip magazine.

BJORN: This is a disaster! Liceland has only one true ruler, and it is I! Militant dictator, Bjorn Baad. I thought my father did away with the royal bloodline when he shot Omio Bambino in the nose. Ivana Vacation!

Enter his press secretary, IVANA VACATION.

IVANA: You called?

BJORN: Ah, my trusted press secretary, Ivana Vacation, there you are. Have you read the latest news from abroad?

IVANA: What does it matter? You are a great and powerful dictator, she is only a teenage girl.

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BJORN: Not just any teenage girl, a teenage American girl! They have confidence, courage, and determination. It comes from all their empowered female characters on TV and their progressive parenting and their...Seventeen Magazine!

IVANA: Yah, but, she does not want to come to Liceland.

BJORN: Why wouldn't she want to come to Liceland?

IVANA: Bjorn. Have you looked out the window?

BJORN: Really, Ivana, you work for Liceland, you shouldn't be so down on it.

IVANA: I have dreams, Bjorn. Dreams that cannot be achieved in Liceland.

BJORN: What dreams are these?

IVANA: Ivana Vacation wants to be...a pop star.

BJORN: Why would you want to be a pop star when you are my press secretary?

IVANA: Look around, nothing ever happens here to put in a press release.

BJORN: Yah, well, Bjorn Baad likes to keep a low profile. But now that Little Miss Red White and P-U has shown up, believe you me, Ivana, there will be lots of press to release! Because I, Bjorn Baad, am going to see to it she never becomes a threat to Liceland.

IVANA: How will you do that?

BJORN: Ivana, you should know by now that secret plans are never revealed this early in the story.

IVANA: Oh. A Café.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE:

CALISTA has coffee with her friend, ROOMEY.

ROOMEY: Wow, Calista. We've been friends for years. I can't believe you never told me you were like...a Princess Diary.

CALISTA: Roomey, I'm not. I don't know where Eleanor got that from, she just made it up.

ROOMEY: Yeah, but I thought I was your best friend. I mean, if you can't tell me things that *aren't* true about yourself, then...what are we?

CALISTA: What?!

ROOMEY: I mean, I didn't even know you drank coffee, Calista. It's like you're a cannibal or something.

CALISTA: Roomey!

ROOMEY: Calista Coffey drinking coffee? ...that's like you're drinking like...yourself.

CALISTA: They aren't spelled the same way!

ROOMEY: It's just that...we used to pretend we were princesses and lip-sync to our favorite songs and drink tea and *pretend* it was coffee...now it's like you're actually doing all those things for real and...I'm just a liar.

CALISTA: Roomey, my life is just as much of a lie as yours is.

ROOMEY: You're just saying that.

CALISTA: No, I'm serious...well, except for the record deal, but I promised if I became famous first, we would sing a duet together, and I meant it. I want you to come on tour with me.

ROOMEY: I don't want to go on tour, Calista.

CALISTA: But I thought—

ROOMEY: I want to be in politics. I came up with an amazing slogan and everything: "Let Roomey Make Room for You." I want to represent the disenfranchised and speak loudly for people with small voices.

CALISTA: Okay, but that doesn't mean you can't come on tour with me, right? I mean, what's the point of being famous if I have to be it alone?

ROOMEY: Sure, I could swing a tour, but what happens when you go back to Liceland? They're going to make you queen. They won't even let me stay in the country more than thirty days. I'm not a citizen.

CALISTA: Neither am I, I keep telling you that. It's just something my manager made up.

ROOMEY: That doesn't make any sense! Why would she do that?

CALISTA: Because we're not the only people who want to believe in things that are just pretend.

ROOMEY: Ew. I wonder what else about us isn't original?

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Two spies in dark glasses appear. They are ITCHY and TWITCHY. They will scratch their heads intermittently throughout the rest of the play. Perhaps they speak in strange Nordic accents, but perhaps they don't.

ITCHY: Calista Coffey?

CALISTA: Yes?

ITCHY: I am Itchy. And this is Twitchy.

CALISTA: Okay. Get some lotion and cut down on the caffeine?

TWITCHY: No. Our names are Itchy and Twitchy.

CALISTA: Oh. So...go to City Hall and apply for better ones?

ITCHY: No. I am Itchy. And this is Twitchy. And you must come with us.

ROOMEY: Um, no. She's famous, and if you want to see her, you have to buy a ticket like everyone else.

CALISTA: Thanks, Roomey.

ROOMEY: Look, you're going through a lot of changes that you weren't prepared for, I get that, but as long as you keep me up to date, you'll always be my best friend.

CALISTA: Always?

ROOMEY: Always.

Secret soul sister handshake.

ITCHY: Hello! We are still here!

TWITCHY: You will come with us peacefully or force us to use Force.

CALISTA: Force?!

ROOMEY: Oh my Gmail, Calista, what do we do!?

CALISTA: Get my manager on the phone!

ROOMEY: You want these guys to tour with us?!

ITCHY: You leave us no choice—

ITCHY/TWITCHY: Force!

FORCE, a yeti, appears.

CALISTA: What is that?

ITCHY: This is Force.

FORCE: *(Says something completely unintelligible. FORCE scratches itself.)*

ITCHY: Take her away!

TWITCHY restrains ROOMEY as FORCE takes CALISTA away. ITCHY follows.

CALISTA: Roomey!

ROOMEY: Calista!

CALISTA: Call my manager!

They are gone. TWITCHY and ROOMEY remain.

TWITCHY: *(To ROOMEY.)* Tell no one what you saw. Or else.

ROOMEY: Or else what?

TWITCHY: What does it matter? No one will believe you.

TWITCHY leaves stealthily.

ROOMEY: This is terrible! Why does all the awesome stuff always happen to her?

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT RISE:

The TV screens pop on once again.

NEWS ANCHOR 1: Calista Coffey gone missing!

NEWS ANCHOR 2: Mystery surrounding Coffey goes from tall to venti!

NEWS ANCHOR 3: She stole our hearts but now someone has stolen her. Rumors spread about the disappearance of Calista Coffey; manager says, "Not to worry, her new single will drop on schedule!"

NEWS ANCHOR 4: Ai, dios mio! ¿Calista ha ido de caliente al frío?

ELEANOR'S office. ROOMEY stands in front of ELEANOR'S desk.

ELEANOR: This is better than I ever dreamed! I just thought that rumors of some connection to stardom would boost that girl's standing with the public, but now she's gone and got herself kidnapped! I released her single this morning on iCroons, and it's already bumped Bieber and atrophied Adele. (*Or whatever alliteration on whoever is popular at the moment.*) Calista Coffey is hotter than ever! And I've got the beach house to prove it.

ROOMEY: Aren't you worried about her?

ELEANOR: No.

ROOMEY: Really?

ELEANOR: Can't say that I am.

ROOMEY: Not even a little?

ELEANOR: Nope.

ROOMEY: Maybe just a smidge?

ELEANOR: Who are you?

ROOMEY: I'm Calista's best friend. And her last words to me were, "Call my manager!"

ELEANOR: And you've done that, pat yourself on the back and take yourself out for ice cream.

ROOMEY: What are you going to do to find her?

ELEANOR: I don't know what Pretty Little Liars Club you belong to, but this is the best PR that money *didn't* buy, and I'm not messing with it 'til it's run its course. Calista's not in trouble. She took my advice and now she's amping up the scandal to forward her career.

ROOMEY: Scandal?

ELEANOR: Yeah, the whole Liceland thing. She's probably camping out in a Hampton Inn somewhere watching *Real Housewives* and snacking on Pirate's Booty.

ROOMEY: So it was a lie?

ELEANOR: No, it wasn't a lie...it was advertising! Anyway, no one's ever going to find out the truth. Liceland is a hideous little dictatorship that has so many international embargoes against it, I doubt anyone's even allowed to call the museum to verify I ever spoke with them. So unless you have a bankable talent I can leech off, you better take your gossip girl somewhere else before I have you removed by force!

ROOMEY: It's here, too?!

ELEANOR: What?

ROOMEY: Oh my Gmail, it's everywhere!

ROOMEY runs offstage.

ELEANOR: Wow. I'm more intimidating than I thought.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT RISE:

A secret location in Liceland. CALISTA is tied to a chair. ITCHY and TWITCHY stand on either side of her. LARS enters. Though he is dressed like nobility, he will scratch his head from time to time. Perhaps he, too, speaks in a strange Nordic accent, then again...

LARS: Calista Coffey?

CALISTA: Who? What? Where am I?

LARS: Liceland.

CALISTA: Wait, she wasn't kidding: Liceland is for real?

LARS: Not two, not three, but yes: *four* real.

CALISTA: How do you know me?

LARS: I watch *America's Voice*. I voted for you up through the finals, but then the internet went down. Lucky for you, I am not your only fan.

CALISTA: Well, thank you, but—if you're my fan, why did you use...Force?

LARS: Force is a Yeti. Since the militant dictator killed your grandfather and took over our country, Force is the only real weapon the Resistance has.

CALISTA: The Resistance?

LARS: Well, me, Itchy and Twitchy. We've been looking for a way to reinstate the monarchy and bring peace to Liceland. Who knew this whole time Omio Bambino had a granddaughter in America?

ITCHY/TWITCHY: America! Yay!

CALISTA: I don't think I am who you think I am.

LARS: Of course you are. Calista Coffey: the rightful heir to the throne of Liceland.

CALISTA: You want me to be your queen?

LARS: And rid our country of the evil militant dictator who has imprisoned our people. Calista, please, life here is cold and broken and...really unhygienic; the lice, you would not believe the lice. You are our only hope and...

CALISTA: And?

LARS: The most beautiful girl I have ever met.

ITCHY/TWITCHY: Awww.

LARS: And...

CALISTA: And?

LARS: My only living family.

ITCHY/TWITCHY: Ewww.

CALISTA: I...don't understand.

LARS: Your grandfather was my great uncle.

CALISTA: You're my...cousin?

LARS: Twice removed, but Liceland is a small country, nothing here is ever that far removed...please, Cousin Calista, if the people hear you have come back to save them, they will surely overthrow the dictator and Liceland will once more be at peace.

CALISTA: Wait a minute, why would you want to get rid of a militant dictator only to replace him with a monarch, haven't you guys ever heard of democracy?

ITCHY/TWITCHY: *(Each says a sentence, overlapping the other.)*
Sure, eh, sort of. Yeah, maybe.

LARS: Well, sure we've *heard* of it, everyone's *heard* of it, we just don't understand how it works, exactly. Right, guys?

ITCHY/TWITCHY: *(Each says a sentence, overlapping the other.)*
No, not really, nuh-huh. I don't get progress.

CALISTA: But you watch *America's Voice*, right?

LARS: All the time!

ITCHY: Every week!

TWITCHY: Wouldn't miss it!

CALISTA: Well, democracy is like a reality show. You have a lot of poor-to-acceptable choices and hopefully one or two really good ones, and the public votes for the one it likes best. Freedom means being able to make choices. If you let the people decide who they want their leader to be, then in theory, they'll always be free.

ITCHY: Huh, it sounded much more complicated in school.

CALISTA: Things usually do.

LARS: You are truly an enlightened leader. But how can we let the public know they have a choice when all our media is controlled by the dictator?

CALISTA: You get *America's Voice* though, right?

LARS: All the time!

ITCHY: Every week!

TWITCHY: Wouldn't miss it!

CALISTA: If you get me back to America, I promise I'll bring democracy to your country.

ITCHY/TWITCHY: *(Each says a sentence, overlapping the other.)*

Wow, amazing! Brains as well as beauty!

LARS: Cousin Calista, you are the best cousin ever.

ITCHY/TWITCHY: Awww.

LARS: And the most beautiful girl I have ever seen.

ITCHY/TWITCHY: Ewww.

LARS: There is only one problem.

CALISTA: What's that?

LARS: An informant told us that the dictator wants to make sure you are never a threat to his position. It's why Itchy and Twitchy kidnapped you first.

CALISTA: I guess I'll need a bodyguard or something. I'll ask Eleanor for one. But how are you going to get me home without the dictator seeing?

ITCHY/TWITCHY: With Force!

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

AT RISE:

ELEANOR'S office. CALISTA has returned. FORCE is on a leash at her side.

ELEANOR: No! Absolutely not! And what the heck is that?

CALISTA: My...dog?

ELEANOR: I don't know what kind of steroids they're putting in pet food these days—but anyway, I forbid it.

CALISTA: But Eleanor, I have to!

ELEANOR sneezes.

ELEANOR: Calista. Your first single is through the roof! And it ain't because of the chorus, let me tell you. If I let you tell the world you *aren't* actually related to Omio Bambino, they'll call Fraud. Get me? It'll sound like this: "Fraud!" only six billion times louder. I don't know, something like: "Fraud!!" or "FRAUD!!"

CALISTA: But Eleanor, these people are frightened and powerless and living under a militant dictator.

ELEANOR: Yeah? So is my client list. (*ELEANOR sneezes.*) Is that thing house-trained?

CALISTA: Isn't the reason we're in the entertainment industry to bring joy to people?

ELEANOR: Yeah, so?

CALISTA: So get me an appearance on *America's Voice* and let me do that. I can inspire the people of Liceland to demand democracy.

ELEANOR: By hurting yourself? By hurting me? By hurting your...album sales?! You're under contract, missy, and you cannot break it! (*ELEANOR sneezes.*) Are you sure that's a dog?

CALISTA: Um...maybe.

ELEANOR: But I'm not allergic to dogs. The only thing I'm allergic to is...Yeti.

CALISTA: Yeti?

ELEANOR sneezes.

ELEANOR: Have you been in contact with a Yeti?

CALISTA: Maybe. It *is* the national animal of Liceland.

ELEANOR: You've *been* to Liceland?

CALISTA: How do you think I know all of this?

ELEANOR: Hello, Google! What was it like?

CALISTA: It has potential. But it needs help. A leader who's kind. A leader who cares. A leader who's—

ELEANOR: (*A new idea!*) A pop star?

CALISTA: What?

ELEANOR: It's brilliant! (*ELEANOR sneezes.*) Why didn't I think of it before? This just might be the biggest PR stunt I've ever pulled. I can see it now! "Queen Frees Imprisoned People, Then Tours World With New Album." Genius!

CALISTA: But I don't know anything about ruling a country.

ELEANOR: Who cares? People don't want to be told what to do. They want to be entertained. If they're happy and inspired, everything else will take care of itself.

CALISTA: I'm not sure about that.

ELEANOR: This is brilliant. You could change the name of the country to Pop and then actually reign as the Queen of Pop! (*ELEANOR sneezes.*)

CALISTA: Eleanor—

ELEANOR: Remember your contract. This is the only way you can have your cake and eat it too. Come on, Calista, who do you think those people want in charge, a militant dictator, some opportunistic elected official, or Queen Calista Coffey?

CALISTA: Well...it sounds good.

ELEANOR: Yeah, yeah? People shouldn't be allowed to choose their leaders. I mean, honestly, have you seen how most people dress themselves? And you think you can trust them to make important decisions? Right? So, what do you say, *Queen Calista Coffey*?

CALISTA: ...Okay. I'll do it.

ELEANOR: Better get a crown, you're going on *America's Voice* tonight! (*ELEANOR sneezes.*)

BLACKOUT.

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