

# JOSEPHINE TONIGHT!

*A musical based upon the early life of Josephine Baker*

Book & Lyrics  
By  
Sherman Yellen

Music  
By  
Wally Harper

+

## CHARACTERS (4)

**JOSEPHINE BAKER** a/k/a “JOSIE”/JOSIE. Age 15-20 (alone among the characters she remains herself throughout).

**CARRIE MCDONALD**, her mother, doubling as “BIG BERTHA SMITH” - star performer of the TOBA circuit. Age 40-45

**EDDIE BAKER** – handsome black vaudeville dancer, later Josephine’s husband and her French lover, Paul Colin - Josephine’s white French lover Age 25-30. Also as Miss Cora, Miz Rector, Mother Jones, New York Producer.

**REVEREND LOOMIS** – reappears as Father Jones, Hat Saleswoman, White Southern Sheriff, 2<sup>nd</sup> Producer, Maitre ‘D., Caroline Dudley, white producer of La Revue Negre.

All perform as Dancers in the Cotton Club “Jungle number” and as performers in La Revue Negre and Harlem Strut. They are joined in song from time to time by the orchestra be it a five piece band or a keyboard with the pianist. The events cover six years in the early life of Josephine Baker. The ghetto in East St. Louis, 1919; the TOBA Vaudeville Circuit 1920-23; a shop in small southern town; Harlem, 1923-1925; Dockside in France, 1925; Paul Colin’s Paris studio; dressing room of Paris theatre, 1925. Minimal sets are not just required but desired to make the many changes easy and fluid. A few props set the scene.

*As the overture plays a medley of songs from the show, lights come up on a large woven wicker hamper, row upon row of coiled braid in which Carrie keeps her laundry. The clothes within the hamper contain the costumes for the characters as they change identities in the course of the show. Our four African American actors enter onstage dressed in street clothes and will become all the ancillary characters, both black and white. Later, the hats that Josie buys in the hat shop scene become the straw hat for Colin, elegant hat for Dudley, etc. Nothing will be concealed from the audience. Costume changes whenever possible take place onstage, as each of the four change from their street clothes into their opening number outfits, Josie in her overalls, Carrie in her washday dress, Eddie as Mother Jones, etc. This must be playful. At times Carrie will choose the costume for them if she doesn’t approve of their choice. The large woven, coiled basket woven by Josephine’s grandmother– symbol of the slave past is what we see as the curtain rises and as it falls at the final curtain.*

## SONGS

### ACT ONE

- |                                    |                             |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. LAUNDRY DAY                     | Carrie                      |
| 2. BAD GIRL RAG                    | Carrie, Rev. & Mrs. Loomis, |
| 3. CINDERELLA ME                   | Josie                       |
| 4. HANG EM UP TO DRY               | Carrie                      |
| 5. CHICKEN STRUT                   | Josie & The Jones's         |
| 6. SLAP HAPPY JONESES              | Father and Mother Jones     |
| 7. A BEAUTIFUL FRIEND              | Bertha and Josie            |
| 8. SLAP HAPPY REPRISE              | The Jones's and Josie       |
| 9. BERTHA'S BLUES                  | Bertha Smith and Company    |
| 10. NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU     | Eddie and Josie             |
| 11. GET ON WITH IT                 | Carrie                      |
| 12. TOO YOUNG, TOO BLACK, TOO THIN | White and Black             |
| Producers                          |                             |
| 13. CAN'T TAKE JOSIE TO THE PARTY  | Ensemble and Eddie          |
| 14. ISN'T SHE/ISN'T HE             | Eddie and Josie             |
| 15. SHAKIN' UP THE WORLD           | Eddie and Josie             |
| 16. JOSEPHINE TONIGHT              | Caroline Dudley             |
| 17. REPRISE – CINDERELLA ME        | Josie                       |

### ACT TWO

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 18. HARLEM STRUT                                 | Bertha, Josie & Company |
| 19. MOMMA KNOWS                                  | Carrie                  |
| 20. FRENCH MADE EASY                             | Josie & Paul Colin      |
| 21. REPRISE - NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND HIM         | Josie                   |
| 22. PRETTY IS                                    | Bertha                  |
| 23. GET ON WITH IT                               | Josie                   |
| 24. JOIN ME IN THE DANCE - ME JOINDRE A LA DANSE | Carrie and Josie        |

## ACT ONE

## Scene 1

*We open on the hardscrabble world of the East St. Louis ghetto, 1919. AT RISE CARRIE MCDONALD, a good looking middle aged black woman, leans over a hamper on her front porch with a broken-down glider on it. She is examining laundry and singing as she works, tossing some clothes into tub of soapy water.*

SONG: 'LAUNDRY DAY'

CARRIE

IF THESE CLOTHES COULD TALK  
KNOW WHAT THEY WOULD SAY?  
ALL YER SECRETS OUT  
COME LAUNDRY DAY  
CAN YOUR SHIRT EXPLAIN  
HOW YOU GOT THAT STAIN?  
WILL YOUR UNDIES SWEAR  
THAT YOU WAS NEVER THERE?

NOTHIN' CAN CONFESS  
LIKE SOME LADY'S DRESS  
AS I SCRUBS AND CLEANS  
IT JUST SPILLS THE BEANS  
CARRIE DOESN'T CARE  
HOW YOU GOT THAT TEAR  
BUT I DO DECLARE  
IT WASN'T ON NO CHAIR

'CAUSE YOU KNOWS I KNOWS  
HOW TO READ YOUR CLOTHES  
I KNOW YOU KNOWS  
WHAT THESE CLOTHES EXPOSE  
NOTHIN' CAN CONFESS  
LIKE SOME LADY'S DRESS  
AS I SCRUBS AND CLEANS  
IT JUST SPILLS THE BEANS

I KNOW YOU KNOWS  
WHAT YOU DID LAST NIGHT  
I KNOWS YOU KNOWS  
AIN'T NO DOGGIE BITE  
BUT I DO DECLARE  
WHEN I SEE A HAIR  
CARRIE DOESN'T CARE

WHAT YOU DID DOWN THERE  
 I DON'T NEED NO RUMORS  
 FROM A PAIR OF NASTY BLOOMERS  
 BUT, IF HE'S ACTIN' ROTTEN  
 I'LL SEE IT IN THE COTTON  
 I KNOW THERE'S NO  
 SCRUBBIN' WITHOUT SOAP  
 I KNOW THERE'S NO  
 LIVIN' WITHOUT HOPE

THERE'S A SUNNY SKY  
 HANG 'EM UP TO DRY  
 SASSY LITTLE SHIRT  
 DON'T YOU LOVE TO FLIRT?  
 CLOTHES WILL HAVE THEIR SAY  
 WHEN IT'S LAUNDRY DAY

*(music continues under monologue)*

#### CARRIE

What is this on here? Is it wine or what? And what's that ketchup stain doin' down there. Musta been a hot time in the old town last night.

*(To Audience)*

Clothes! Ya wear 'em, ya soil 'em, ya wash 'em, ya squeeze 'em through a wringer, and hangs 'em up to dry. Story of my life.

*(Music out)*

When I was young, oh Lord, did I love clothes. You should a seen me in my gorgeous red dress. Wore it when this fine lookin' trumpet player eyed me on the dance floor. I was somethin' to look at then. Still am! You just gotta look harder. He looked hard. And my child Josephine was born nine months later. When she was a baby I put my Josie to bed in this old basket. Look close. Woven by my granny back in the day whilst she was a slave in South Carolina. Made it outta sweet grass - all by herself - usin' stitches she learned as a chile in Africa.

*She kneels down and runs her fingers over the basket weave, and with a weaving, sewing gesture demonstrates her grandmother's art.*

Granny made her basket one row at a time, buildin' it up from the ground up row upon row. All she had was her master's name and that old slave basket when she was freed. Told me it was a magic basket. Claimed she sewed some powerful spirits into it. Swore you could stash your dreams in that basket and someday they'd come true. Humph! What a story to tell a poor child. Well, Granny, it sure worked out good for me. I been storing all my dreams in your old basket --- and wonder of wonders...they turned into...

. *(She laughs at the absurdity of it all)*  
 ... other folks dirty laundry.

OS FEMALE voice  
 Visitors!

CARRIE (annoyed)  
 Who?

MISS CORA  
*(shrill and cheerful)*  
 Visitors!

CARRIE  
 Visitors? Only rich folks get visitors. The poor, we only get intruders.

*A black MINISTER, the REVEREND LOOMIS, and MISS CORA, the church organist, enter. Miss Cora raps on the porch glider with her umbrella handle to gain Carrie's attention. The woman adjusts her large sagging bosoms, as she enters.*

MISS CORA  
 Carrie? It's me, Miss Cora and you remember our dear Reverend Loomis? Years since we seen you in church, sister.

CARRIE  
 If the Lord wanted me in church, he wouldn't have made it so that I gotta work on Sunday.

REVEREND  
 Carrie, get a hold of yourself. Terrible news. It pains me to tell you but -  
 --

CARRIE  
 Josie?

MISS CORA  
 Yes, Carrie. Your Josie.

CARRIE  
*(She turns from her laundry for the first time, worried)*  
 Somethin' bad happen to her?

MISS CORA

Not yet. But we're fretful.

REVEREND

We're worried.

CARRIE

Don't worry 'bout my child. That spot of pneumonia she had last winter?  
Gone!

MISS CORA

We ain't worried 'bout her carnal health.

REVEREND

It's her immortal soul.

CARRIE

Don't tell me she lost it again? That careless girl! I got to pin that  
slippery soul to her skirt every time she goes out.

REVEREND

Carrie. This ain't no joke. That child's gone bad.

CARRIE

*(dismissively)*

Bad? Josie? She's made her mistakes. And who hasn't? But she's a  
*good* girl. Trainin' to be a baby nurse someday.

MISS CORA

Carrie, she ain't been goin' to no baby nurse job. She's workin' the  
streets.

CARRIE

What are you sayin'?

REVEREND

She's doin' a wild rag in front of the Piggly Wiggly on Madison Street

MISS CORA

Dancin' for pennies like a beggar child.

*(adjusting bosoms as she speaks)*

Her blouse is so low and her skirt so high, it's a scandal. It's a shame.

REVEREND

It's a sin.

SONG; 'BAD GIRL RAG'

MISS CORA, REV. LOOMIS

*(singing)*

DON'TCHA KNOW THAT GIRL COULD SHAKE  
A SAINT'S SALVATION  
DONTCHA KNOW THAT GIRL'S A SNAKE  
WHO BRINGS TEMPTATION  
DON'TCHA KNOW SHE AIN'T NO CHILD  
DON'TCHA KNOW SHE'S RUNNIN' WILD  
WITH HER BAD GIRL RAG

DON'TCHA KNOW THAT SHE'S AS HOT  
AS HELL'S DAMNATION

DON'TCHA KNOW THAT SHE HAS GOT  
A REPUTATION  
DON'TCHA KNOW A GIRL THAT BOLD  
'S GONNA CATCH MORE THAN A COLD  
WITH HER BAD GIRL RAG

BAD GIRL  
RUNNIN IN THE STREETS  
BAD GIRL  
PASSIN' OUT HER SWEETS  
THAT CAT JUMPED OUTTA THE BAG  
NOW IT'S. DOIN' THAT BAD GIRL RAG  
BAD GIRL  
RUNNIN' WITH THE BOYS  
BAD GIRL  
USIN' EM LIKE TOYS  
THEIR TAILS JES' STAND UP AND WAG  
WHEN SHE'S DOIN'  
THE BAD GIRL RAG

SHAKIN' HER BOTTOM  
TOSSIN' HER TOP  
CARRIE, YOU GOTTA GET HER TO STOP  
DANCIN' FOR PENNIES  
OUT ON THE STREET  
KICKIN SO HIGH



THAT YA SEE MORE'N FEET! (or THAT HER PUSSY'S GOT FEET

CARRIE

AAH! DONTCHA THINK ITS TIME YOUR MOUTH  
GOES ON VACATION  
PACK YOUR BAGS AND HEAD DOWN SOUTH  
TO HELL'S DAMNATION  
DON'T YOU THINK I'VE HAD ENOUGH  
GO TO HELL AND HUFF AND PUFF  
AT HER BAD GIRL RAG

MISS CORA

THERE'S A DEVIL IN HER SOUL  
JOSIE'S STOVE  
DON'T NEED NO COAL

SHOWIN' OFF  
TALKIN' BACK  
THAT CHILD'S TRAIN DONE JUMPED THE TRACK

CARRIE

DONTCHA SEE THAT GIRL IS JUST A CELEBRATION

MISS CORA, REV LOOMIS

DONTCHA KNOW THAT GIRL HAS GOT A REPUTATION  
HOW'D SHE LEARN THAT ZIG 'N ZAG?

CARRIE

HOW'D YOUR TITTIES LEARN TO SAG?

MISS CORA. REV LOOMIS

DON'T GET MAD, GIRL.

CARRIE

SHE'S NO BAD GIRL  
AND SHE SURE CAN RAG

MISS CORA, REV. LOOMIS

BUT IT'S A BAD GIRL RAG.

*JOSIE enters. She's a pretty girl of around fifteen, with an exotic cast to her features, the mix of African American, Creole, Indian and white. Her thin but shapely figure is covered in ill-fitting overalls. She hears a bit of the song and sees the visitors glare at her, disapproving.*

JOSIE

Hello, Momma. Reverend. Miz Cora.

CARRIE

Josie, show me that rag dance these busy bees buzzin' bout.

JOSIE

Momma, I'm too tired. Been haulin' that fat baby around all day.

CORA

She's ashamed to tell ya, Carrie.

CARRIE

*(Accusing the visitors)*

Maybe you're makin' all this up. Maybe she can't do that dance.

JOSIE

*(Bragging)*

Ain't no dance I can't dance. Gonna be another Pavlova.

CORA

Who's that? Some shameless foreign whore?

JOSIE

Greatest dancer in the world. Saw her in the nickel newsreel, flappin' her arms like a swan. If that skinny lady can be a swan, least I can be is a chicken.

CARRIE

These folks confusin' you with some little beggar they saw dancing in the streets.

*(to Reverend)*

Don't come here no more with your stories 'bout my Josie!

REVEREND LOOMIS

Sister, you can cover your ears and shut your eyes, but the Lord knows she's rollin' towards damnation!

CARRIE

*(Carrie takes her broom and sweeps them out)*

Shut that gate-mouth of yours, Reverend. You too, Cora. You ain't gonna 'sult my child in my house. Get goin' ya old dusty butt! Now scat! Go!

*Carrie kicks the visitors out of her shack. Carrie and JOSIE, laughing, turn towards each other and celebrate the retreat of the gossips by dancing the*

*rag together. At the very end of the dance, Carrie slaps JOSIE's smiling face.*

JOSIE

Momma, why'd ya slap me?

CARRIE

Won't have you lyin' to me!

JOSIE

But I don't ever lie. I – I just improve.

CARRIE

You didn't tell me you lost your job? You neglect that poor baby?

JOSIE

No. I love that baby. Looked after him real good.

CARRIE

What happened?

JOSIE

Yesterday, I tripped and fell down on the sofa, so Miz Rector she comes in and tells me to get up, get out and go home. I'll find another job.

CARRIE

Not if folks think you're a lazy girl who can't be trusted! Or a beggar dancin' in the streets.

*The Reverend enters again, goes to the wicker laundry basket, tries on a kerchief, puts an apron on, and picks up a bundle of laundry, transforming himself into an imperious white woman, Miz. Rector.*

MRS. RECTOR

Miz McDonald. I come by with my laundry and Josie's wages. Four dollars for the month. She don't deserve it, but I know you need it.

CARRIE

Thank you. Tell me Miz Rector? What did she do? Neglect your baby? Make him cry?

MRS. RECTOR

Let's say she didn't work out.

CARRIE

I gotta know what she done! Else how can I correct her?

MRS. RECTOR

*Accusing*

She kissed my baby!

CARRIE

What?

MRS. RECTOR

I warned her, "Girl, never kiss my baby!" I won't have her dirty lips on Leroy's rosy cheeks. Who knows where those lips have been? Well, I caught her kissing him again this mornin'. God only knows how many times she kissed him *without my seein'.*

CARRIE

Don't worry, Ma'm. Josie won't be kissin' your baby no more.

MRS. RECTOR

You'll have my husband's shirts for me next Tuesday, right? Only *don't have her deliver them.*

CARRIE

Sorry, Ma'm. I can't do your wash no more.

MRS. RECTOR

Why not? There's a dozen colored women who'd be happy for my trade.

CARRIE

*(Suppressed rage)*

Then take it to one of 'em. Some laundry's just too soiled for me to get clean without my tearin' it. Thanks for comin' by. You keep well, Miz Rector, ya heah? .

*MRS. RECTOR exits, puzzled, not sure if she hasn't been insulted. CARRIE turns to JOSIE.*

CARRIE

Why don't *you* tell me what happened? Why'd I have to hear that crap from Little Eva? You kissin' that baby didn't get you fired. The truth, Josie. Now!

JOSIE

That's but the half of it, Momma. Ya wouldn't believe me if I told ya.

CARRIE

Try me.

JOSIE

He came home early, that Mister Rector, he did. Starts smilin' at me 'n sayin, "What a pretty girl you are, JOSIE." Next thing I know he's lippin' my neck with that nasty yellow moustache of his and holdin' tight to my arm. When I try to get away, he pushes me on the sofa and climbs a top of me but I keep fightin' him off. That's when Miz Rector, she come back from her bridge club.

CARRIE

Why?

JOSIE

Guess her game had ended, Momma.

CARRIE

Why'd you fight him off? You never stopped young Benny Barker, and you went off with him for a week.

JOSIE

*I chose Benny! I won't go with some man that wants me for nothin' but his pleasure. But I'd sure go with one I want for mine.*

CARRIE

No nice girl would talk that way.

JOSIE

Don't wanna be nice. "Nice" gets used up 'n tossed away with a baby to raise alone and a life washin' other folks nasty laundry. I love ya Momma, but I ain't never gonna be nice like you.

CARRIE

Where you goin'?

JOSIE

I can earn more dancin' in the streets than I can by helpin' you here. I'm no Cinderella to sit waitin' by the fire. If I'm gonna be Cinderella, it's cause I'm goin' to the dance. Alone. I got plans. I'm gonna be a dancer. And a singer. And a --

CARRIE

Thief! Child, that was my worthless dream you stole. Gonna steal, steal somethin' of value. If your Momma, with all her mojo couldn't make her livin' dancin', why do you think an ugly lookin' street rat like you can? Now take these dirty clothes and scub em hard. I gotta fold my shirts. Get to it Cinderella!

*She goes back to her laundry leaving JOSIE alone*

'CINDERELLA ME

JOSIE

*(Wistfully then defiantly to Carrie as she is caught up in her dream)*

GOT THE CINDERS  
 GOT THE ASHES  
 GOT THE HARD LIFE  
 DON'T KNOW WHERE THE CASH IS  
 SOMEDAY THERE'S GONNA BE ME  
 A PRINCESS IN PINK  
 DRAGGIN A MINK  
 SO WHADDAYA THINK?  
 IT'S CINDERELLA ME

*(determined, with bravura)*

I'LL GET THE PUMPKIN  
 I'LL GET THE HORSES  
 I'LL BE THE HOT MEALS  
 THE FULL TWENTY COURSES

JUST LOOK AND YOU'RE GONNA SEE  
 A SLIPPER THAT FITS  
 LIKE GRAVY AND GRITS  
 I WONT CALL IT QUILTS  
 THAT'S CINDERELLA ME

NO PRINCE CHARMIN'S GONNA BE  
 THE ONE WHO STEALS THE HEARTA ME  
 NO BIG BAD CLOCK IS GONNA STRIKE  
 AND STOP ME DOIN' AS I LIKE

FORGET THE CINDERS  
 FORGET THE ASHES  
 I'LL TELL YA MOMMA  
 I'M WHERE THE FLASH IS  
 AND SOMEDAY  
 THERE'S GONNA BE  
 THAT PRINCESS IN PINK

DRAGGIN HER MINK  
 SO WHADDAYA THINK  
 IT'S CINDERELLA  
 COME WATCH ME FELLA  
 IT'S CINDERELLA ME

*Miss Cora rushes in.*

CARRIE

You again? What now? Forget your bag a gossip?

CORA (excitedly)

Street's on fire. They're burnin' down East St. Louis.

CARRIE

Who?

CORA

Them! World's gone crazy! Screamin'... torchin'... lootin.' Some black chile's bin run down by a white man's motor-car, and that man he don't stop. Black folks angry. White folks angry 'cause black folks angry. Store windows smashed. Them red-necks, they starts shootin' pistols off 'n torchin' black folks houses. Fires start. Crosses burnin' on the lawns like angry demons. Poh-leece. State Troopers. Black folks hosed down and beat, strung up and shot. You better hide. No sayin' when they comin' here.

*(She rushes off)*

CARRIE

Thank you, Cora. Take care.

*(To JOSIE)*

Woman loves nothin' more than spreadin' the good news.

JOSIE

Why, Momma, why they doin this?

CARRIE

Always the same goddamned story. People are skin crazy. Goddamned skin crazy! Child, go hide in the house.

JOSIE

What about you?

CARRIE

Me? I got my wash to finish!

JOSIE

Momma, I'm so scared.

CARRIE

Come out before I say so, and I'll show you what scared is!

*As JOSIE hides in the shack Carrie begins to hang the laundry, as we hear the sirens blaring in the distance.*

HANG EM UP TO DRY

GOTTA HANG THE WASH  
SET IT OUT TO DRY  
GOTTA FOLD THEM SHEETS  
DEVIL OWNS THE SKY

CHILD SHE NEEDS A DRESS  
GOTTA FIX THAT GOWN  
GROWIN' UP SO FAST  
HELL HAS COME TO TOWN

BUTTON'S COMIN' LOOSE  
WHERE'D I LEAVE MY THREAD?  
GOTTA SEW IT ON  
SOME POOR BOY'S GONE DEAD

WHERE'D I PUT THAT SPOOL?  
SWORE I LEFT IT HERE  
THREAD DON'T WALK AWAY  
IT'S DREAMS THAT DISAPPEAR

MUSTA ROLLED AWAY  
NOW I SEE YA THERE  
HIDIN' LIKE A CHILD  
SHE DON'T HAVE A PRAYER

CLOTHES LINE'S GETTING' FRAYED  
GOTTA BUY SOME ROPE  
NEED MORE LYE AND BLEACH  
*(long, low line, stretched out with desperate finality)*  
AND I DONE RUN OUTTA HOPE

CARRIE

Come on out, baby. Your safe now. Fires never got this far.

JOSIE

We're lucky.



CARRIE

Lucky? See that smoke risin' over there, Josie?

JOSIE

Yes, Momma.

CARRIE

That was your future. Years 'till they build another colored school here. Burned to the ground...with all my hopes for you. Gone now. Damn em all to holy Hell!

*Carrie turns away, unwilling to let JOSIE see her cry.*

JOSIE

Momma, now don't *you* cry. You can't stop hopin.'

CARRIE

Yes I can! Hope is the dope of fools. Won't use it no more.

JOSIE

I'll take you outta this!

CARRIE

How you gonna do that? You ain't no Moses.

JOSIE

Course not. I'm gonna be another Joan of Arc.

CARRIE

Figures. You gonna be like some crazy white girl who hears voices in her head and gets herself burned up for it? Honey, better you just dance in front of that Piggly Wiggly. Go! Go! Go where you wants to go. Just bring home yer money. We needs it.

*(To Audience)*

And so my Josie started dancin' in the streets- with her Momma's permission.

*Josie begins to whistle her song as she leans over the basket and picks out a tacky yellow-feathered boa, her chicken costume, and tosses it over her shoulders. Now she stands up, and sings as TWO STRANGERS, passing VAUDVILLIANS come by and stop to watch her, formerly THE REVEREND AND MISS CORA. They reach into the basket. HE takes out a black and white checked jacket. SHE throws on a female version of same b&w jacket as Carrie hands them red cotton gloves from the bottom of the basket.*

*They are now s vividly dressed vaudevillians with straw boaters, MOTHER AND FATHER JONES.*

SONG; 'CHICKEN STRUT'

JOSIE

THERE ONCE WAS A LITTLE BLACK HEN  
 YA SEE  
 AND THAT BLACK HEN LOOKED AS BLACK AS ME  
 WITH MY SHINY BLACK FEATHERS  
 AND MY SKINNY YELLOW LEGS  
 THIS BLACK CHICK  
 GIVES YA MORE THAN EGGS  
 LEMME SHOW YA

*(She begins to strut like a chicken as the STRANGERS watch fascinated, eventually joining in)*

PUT YOUR NECK CLEAR OUT TO HERE  
 THEN YA SHAKE A LITTLE REAR  
 LET 'EM THINK YOU'RE OFF YOUR NUT  
 BUT YOU'LL BE DOIN' THE CHICKEN STRUT

GALS WHO ROOST INSIDE A COOP  
 ALWAYS END UP CHICKEN SOUP  
 GALS WHO SIT THERE IN A ROW  
 NEVER GET THAT COCK TO CROW

SO  
 CROSS YOUR EYES, NOT YOUR THIGHS  
 CUT YOUR STRINGS  
 TRY YOUR WINGS  
 ONCE YOU SET YOUR HOUSE ON FIRE  
 YOU CAN MELT THAT CHICKEN WIRE

STOP THAT SCRATCHIN' IN THE DIRT  
 STOP YOUR HATCHIN'  
 LIFT YOUR SKIRT  
 ONCE YOU LEARN THESE SIMPLE FAX  
 YOU WON'T NEVER GET THE AX

*JONES FAMILY join in, imitating her.*

SO,  
 CROSS YOUR EYES, NOT YOUR THIGHS  
 CUT YOUR STRINGS, TRY YOUR WINGS.

JOSIE

LET MY SWEET FEET BE YOUR GUIDE  
AND YOU WON'T END UP SOUTHERN FRIED

ALL

PUT YOUR NECK CLEAR OUT TO HERE  
THEN YOU SHAKE A LITTLE REAR  
TIME YOU GALS GET OUTTA YOUR RUT  
TIME YOU'RE DOIN'  
TIME YOU'RE DOIN'  
TIME YOU'RE DOIN'  
THE CHICKEN STRUT

JOSIE

*(Crowing)*

Cock-a-doodle-doo!

*She dances Chicken Strut, a perfect comedy chicken impersonation, crossing her eyes and flapping her arms, backed up by the vaudevillians and street people.*

FATHER JONES

Child, you are so good.

MOTHER JONES

Real good. You tickled my funny bone.

JOSIE

A nickel for that tickle? Okay, Henny takes a penny. Can't eat yer kind words.

*SHE holds out her hand for coins, but they don't fill it.*

FATHER JONES

Can ya do other critters?

*HE moves close, walks around her, studies her, takes her arm in his hand, testing her weight. The woman lifts JOSIE's chin to get a better look at her face, and checks out her teeth, as if examining a horse.*

JOSIE

I can scream like a bobcat and bite like a junkyard dog, if nasty folks get too close.

MOTHER JONES

We don't want ta hurt ya.

No? JOSIE

We wants to adopt you. MOTHER JONES

I already got one Momma at home. And she's enough for me! Don't need no more family. JOSIE

We're the world famous Jolly Jones Family. MOTHER JONES

Never heard a ya. JOSIE

That's 'cause you're an ignorant child. We're featured artists in colored vaudeville. FATHER JONES

That so? JOSIE

Why, we're the op'nin' act for Big Bertha Smith. Now ya musta hearda her? MOTHER JONES

No, Ma'm. JOSIE

Child, you are nowhere! Father Jones, that's me. Mother Jones, that's her. And our daughter...our stage daughter, Little Ida, she just got herself grown up, knocked up, and married up. So we need a new Daughter Jones, a young, skinny one for the stage who can dance and sing and smile up a sunrise. FATHER JONES

You askin' me to join your act? JOSIE

Workin' conditions ain't near as good as dancin' in the streets. But the pays better. MOTHER JONES

## FATHER JONES

We travel the South with “Big Bertha’s amazin’ colored vaudeville”, four shows a day playing the sharecropper circuit. Mostly barns, sometimes in a tent out in the fields. We even do it in a theatre, if they got one nasty enough for colored folks to go to. There’s twenty dollars a week if you joins us and you works out.

## JOSIE

Momma won’t ever let me. How you gonna prove you’re who you say you are?

## MOTHER JONES

Hit it!

*They begin their act which Carrie observes as the shack appears.*

SLAP HAPPY JONESES

WE ARE THE SLAP HAPPY JONESES  
 SLAP HAPPY JONES’S  
 MOMMA, POPPA, AND DARLIN’ DAUGHTER  
 SHE’S SUCH A CUTIE, SHE’S SUCH A BEAUTY  
 SHE DOES EVERYTHING WE TAUGHT ‘ER

SHE BRINGS THE SUNSHINE  
 WE BRINGS THE GLADNESS  
 AND DRIVE AWAY YER SADNESS  
 SO LISTEN FOLKS  
 WE GOT THE JOKES...

## FATHER JONES

Momma, whadda you get when you put a cow and two ducks together?

## MOTHER JONES

I dunno, Poppa. Whatda ya get?

## CARRIE (interrupting)

Milk and quackers!

*Undaunted THEY slap their thighs in glee as the piano does a musical guffaw.*

## FATHER AND MOTHER JONES

WE’RE THE SLAP HAPPY JONES’S  
 SLAP HAPPY JONES’S  
 WE KNOW WHERE YOUR FUNNY BONES IS  
 GO BET YOUR MONEY

THAT WE'RE AS FUNNY  
 AS THE KELLYS AND THE COHENS IS  
 IF YOU'RE WAITIN' IN A LUNCH LINE  
 TRY LAUGHIN' AT OUR PUNCHLINE  
 SO GIVE US A SHOUT AND A CHEER  
 FOR THE SLAP HAPPY JONES'S  
 THE SLAP HAPPY JONES'S  
 THE SLAP HAPPY JONE'S  
 ARE HERE

*The Jones Family wait there, arms apart, with big smiles, expecting applause. Carrie merely shakes her head in disbelief at their awfulness.*

CARRIE

You got any funny jokes?

FATHER JONES

Funny? You wants funny? Read these rave notices, Miz McDonald.

CARRIE

*(SHE reads review sounding out words, starts laughing)*

“The Jolly Jones Family’s a great act for folks getting’ settled in their seats. You don’t miss anything if you’re not there when they’re on.” Now that’s funny!

JOSIE

Momma, they’re my big chance!

CARRIE

Them bums?! You two ain’t married, are ya?

FATHER JONES *(indignantly)*

Course we are. Just not to each other!

CARRIE

*(to Josie)*

You on a stage? Child, are you blind? Look at you. Ugly bag a bones. For all I know they’re planning to sell you into white slavery in Argentina.

JOSIE

If I’m so ugly, why would a white slaver want me?

CARRIE

Somebody’s gotta wash them bed sheets in that Buenos Aires whorehouse.

JOSIE

I told you she wouldn't let me go.

FATHER JONES

Ma'm, can't you see that girl's got the start of somethin' pleasin'.

CARRIE

You askin' me to let her give up steady work doin' wash at home for this-- this --- this --- crazy future you offrin' her? Josie, put this dress in that laundry basket with this chemise, and that set of undies,

JOSIE

Where you want me to deliver 'em?

CARRIE

Ya can't deliver em! That's unclaimed laundry. You'll be needin' some clean clothes 'till you can afford to buy some of your own. You two! Take good care of her. She ain't much, but what there is *is mine*. Jolly Jones family? Lord, you sure do move in mysterious ways.

*JOSIE, excited, picks out a few gowns, and rushes to pack her belongings in a pillowcase, then kisses her Mother. Carrie pushes her away, determined not to give in to her deep emotion.*

JOSIE

Momma, first thing I do when I save some money is buy you the prettiest new Easter bonnet. A fine straw one with a red silk rose on it.

CARRIE

*(She holds JOSIE's face, and slaps it gently, only this time with affection)*

I'll miss you and your stories, my darlin.' Go, go, move on now, before I change my mind. And take that damned basket of Granny's with you. Never know when you're gonna need it.

JOSIE

Thank you, Momma. Don't you worry, you're gonna be real proud of me.

*JOSIE hugs Carrie, then runs off with Jones Family, Carrie gives her the bag of clothes she has forgotten as Carrie turns to Audience*

CARRIE

And so my Josie went off to join Big Bertha's Amazin' Colored Vaudeville. That was the start of it all. Big Bertha Smith was a fine wiggy woman.

She was my Josie's boss. Beautiful, smart, and if you look close, why she quite resembles me. Time she put on her star makeup, her star wig, her star dress, her star bottom, her star twinkle, and goes onstage where a star can shine. Hold on, honey. Beauty's comin.'

*THE JONES FAMILY dip into basket and help Carrie into a purple satin robe and orange wig as JOSIE walks right into the most remarkable sight she has ever seen, CARRIE, now playing BIG BERTHA SMITH. BERTHA does a take, stares at JOSIE disapproving. Mother Jones ambles off, exhausted by the transformation of Carrie into Bertha.*

FATHER JONES

Miss Bertha, come meet our new stage daughter, Miss Josie.

BERTHA

Humph! That corn's still on the cob. Got no butter and no salt on her.

FATHER JONES

Jossie, darlin', meet Miss Bertha Smith, star of the show, and your boss.

JOSIE

Pleased ta –

BERTHA

What's a Josie?

JOSIE

French.

BERTHA

You ain't no Frenchie!

JOSIE

My Momma's half French, half Shawnee Indian, and half black.

BERTHA

No such thing as three halves a somethin'. How old are you?

JOSIE

Fourteen? Fifteen? Sixteen? Seventeen? Whatever you wants me to be.

FATHER JONES

Tell 'er yer real name.



JOSIE

Josephine McDonald. I was baptized Josephine, 'cause she was the Empress wife of Napoleon, and Momma was feelin' fancy that day.

BERTHA

From now on you're Jumpin' Josie Jones. Daughter of the Jolly Jones Family. And you got one job to do.

JOSIE

I know. I know. I gotta be so great that they all cheer me?

FATHER JONES

Hell, no, child! You gotta be so great that *they'll all cheer her*. Woman even gets jealous in church when they start praisin' the Lord.

BERTHA

That's enough blasphemy outta you, Father Jones. Save your old jokes for your act, now let us be while I teach the child the rules of the road.

*He goes off as Bertha places an arm around Josie.*

Understand, I'm a good woman. There's justice in my heart and Jesus in my soul, but I'm the star of this ragtag fleabag shithouse of a show. Forget it, and I'll sit on top a ya. What are you gapin' at girl? Ain't you never seen a gorgeous woman before?

JOSIE

Guess not. Do you always fix yourself up like that?

BERTHA

No! This just my daytime makeup. Gotta look special for my fans. See this bottom?

JOSIE

Yes, M'am. Can't miss it.

BERTHA

Ain't another bottom on this circuit that compares to mine. But it's expensive to keep.

JOSIE

Ya don't say?

BERTHA

*(proudly)*

Child, my skirts take up as much yard goods as a set of fancy parlor curtains. I'm a five bolt woman. You noticed that, I guess?

JOSIE

Yes, M'am. I got a bottom too, but I keep prayin' it don't grow no bigger.

BERTHA

Don't do that child! Nothin' to be ashamed of there. You just got a bottom in trainin.' If you're lucky, it's a smart one. Most gals have rear ends so stupid, so stuck up 'n skinny, so in-sig-nificant, that they're good for nothin' but squattin' on a potty.

JOSIE

That so?

BERTHA

Big is bee-utiful, baby.

A BEAUTIFUL FRIEND

DON'T START OUT BY THINKIN' SMALL  
BABY, YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL  
YOUR GONNA FIND  
THE LORD DESIGNED US  
TO BE AT EASE  
WITH WHAT'S BEHIND US

NO GAL WANTS THEM TINY CHEEKS  
YOU WANTS A MOUNTAIN WITH TWIN PEAKS  
YOU NEED A BOTTOM  
THAT JUST WON'T END  
A BIG BAD BOTTOM IS  
A BEAUTIFUL FRIEND

WHEN THEY KICK YA OUTTA TOWN  
NO HURRICANE CAN KNOCK YA DOWN  
AND IF YOU DON'T LAND ON YOUR FEET  
YOUR BOTTOM MAKES YA SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SEAT  
TIMES GET ROUGH – THE GOIN'S TOUGH  
THE WIND COMES HOWLIN' THROUGH THE DOOR  
THERE'S NO BED TA REST YOUR HEAD  
YOU'RE SLEEPIN ON A HARDWOOD FLOOR

A GAL AS SKINNY AS A RAIL  
 GOT NO PLACE TO PARK HER TAIL  
 BUT IF YOU'RE BOTTOM'S BIG AND ROUND

*She gestures for Josie to complete her thought*

JOSIE  
 IT'S SWEET DREAMS BABY WHEN YOU'RE DOWN ON THE GROUND

BERTHA  
 WINTER DAYS COME MUCH TOO FAST  
 SUMMER IT AIN'T MADE TO LAST  
 BUT BABY, YOU CAN SEE ME SOON

JOSIE  
 BY THE BIG, BRIGHT LIGHT OF YOUR SILVERY MOON

BERTHA  
 You got it child.

GALS WHO FIGHT AS HEAVY WEIGHTS  
 OPEN UP THEM PEARLY GATES  
 PETE SAYS 'HONEY COME RIGHT IN'

JOSIE  
 'CAUSE THE ONLY SIN IS BEIN' TOO THIN

BERTHA  
 TAKE MY CASE – IT AIN'T MY FACE  
 THAT LETS ME WIN THE BIG FIRST PRIZE  
 IF YOU'RE ONE SWEET TON OF FUN  
 THEY ALWAYS PICK THE SUPERSIZE

AIN'T NO NEED FOR FEELIN' SORE  
 WHEN SLEEPIN' ON THAT HARDWOOD FLOOR

JOSIE  
 A GALWHOSE FIGURES MADE FOR FASHION  
 AIN'T THE ONE TO STIR UP PASSION

BERTHA  
 BUT IF YOUR BACKSIDES LIKE A COMMA  
 YOUR CAN BE A RED HOT MOMMA  
 JUST ASK ANY GUY WHAT GOTTUM  
 HE'LL SAY, "BABY, 'T WAS HER BOTTOM"

## JOSIE AND BERTHA

*(arms around each other celebrating their new friendship)*

YA NEED A BOTTOM  
 THAT JUST WON'T END  
 CAUSE A BIG BAD BOTTOM  
 IS A BEAUTIFUL, A BEAUTIFUL FRIEND

*EDDIE BAKER, the former Mother Jones, now a handsome young black man in his late twenties comes into view.*

## BERTHA

Eddie, come meet our Josie, the new Jones daughter. Eddie's our star tap dancer.

## EDDIE

Nice to meet ya. Something wrong, girl?

*She says nothing, just gapes at him. He stares at her, amused.*

## BERTHA

That's a child, so hands off.

## EDDIE

Bertha, what you take me for?

## BERTHA

It's her I'm warnin.' Girl, if you likes him standin' wait till ya see him dancin'.

## JOSIE

He's that good?

## BERTHA

Onstage? Yes. Elsewhere, I don't know. Hard to believe but he's been tourin' with Bertha all season and he still resists my powerful beauty.

*(she waves a finger in front of his eyes and he follows it)*

Well, he ain't blind. You'd think he never saw me from behind.

*She goes off leaving Josie alone with Eddie.*

## JOSIE

You got a partner?

EDDIE

No, I'm a solo act. "Eddie Baker and his magic feet." Never found a partner who could keep up with me.

JOSIE

'Till now. I can dance like a demon. We can --

EDDIE

No, Baby, we can't! I don't need no kid messin' up my act. Watch me real close. It takes years of practice to learn this.

*Eddie does a virtuoso tap routine*

JOSIE

How many years?

*Josie matches him step for step*

EDDIE

*(Amazed and amused)*

Girl, you're stealin' my steps. Who taught you to do a challenge?

JOSIE

You did. Right now.

EDDIE

Those are pretty smart stilts you got there. You're somethin' else.

JOSIE

Glad you can see that now.

*(Seductively)*

It must get awful lonely for a feller on the road.

EDDIE

Josie, once when I was a boy, I got real hungry. So I disobeyed my Momma and I ate some shiny green apples from the tree in our yard. Got the worst stomachache I ever had. Taught me to wait for ripeness.

JOSIE

How do I get ripe? Stick my head inside a paper bag overnight?

EDDIE

What?

JOSIE

Works for peaches and pears, don't it?

EDDIE

There are laws about girls your age and men a mine. Don't you worry, when I see *a woman* I want, I know it, and so does she. Girl, we ain't never gonna dance together. Not now. Not ever.

JOSIE

Never say never. Not to me!

*Eddie starts to go off.*

FATHER JONES

Where the hell is Mother Jones? Have you seen her child?

JOSIE

She went out back to take care of business.

FATHER

That woman leaks more than a rusty bucket. Mother!

*EDDIE returns and slaps a MOTHER JONES expression on his face, a pasted on smile, takes off his jacket, drops it in the wicker basket, and reveals his MOTHER JONES costume, gives Josie red gloves to wear.*

FATHER JONES

So there ya are.

MOTHER JONES

(To Josie)

Can't go on without our signature gloves.

FATHER JONES

Now, sell it, Josie, sell it. We're on.

JOSIE & JONES FAMILY (*reprise*)

WE'RE THE SLAP HAPPY JONESES  
MOMMA, POPPA, AND DARLIN' DAUGHTER  
SHE'S A CUTIE, SHE'S A BEAUTY  
SHE DOES EVERYTHING WE TAUGHT HER

FATHER JONES

Momma, you know what ya get when you mix an elephant with an easy woman?

MOTHER JONES

No Father?

FATHER JONES

Ya gets a ton of fun who'll do it for peanuts.

*JOSIE slaps her thigh and wiggles her shoulders with feigned amusement, but as she does so, the straps of her costume fall from her shoulders and she looks around in bewilderment.*

MOTHER JONES

*(Furtively, to Josie)*

Child, you're losin' your gown. Hold on to it!

JOSIE

How can I? When it sure don't wanna hold on to me.

MOTHER JONES

What are you doin' girl? You can't dance in your scanties!

JOSIE

I sure can't dance in this dress! Listen, they're laughin' and cheerin' me. Me!

JOSIE AND JONES FAMILY

WE'RE THE SLAP HAPPY JONESES  
WE KNOW WHERE YOUR FUNNY BONES IS  
GO BET YOUR MONEY THAT WE'RE AS FUNNY  
AS THE KELLYS AND THE COHENS IS

SO WHY DON'T YOU STAND UP AND CHEER?  
FOR THE SLAP HAPPY JONESES  
THE SLAP HAPPY JONESES  
THE SLAP HAPPY JONESES ARE HERE

*LIGHTS come up on Big Bertha as she chews out Josie, while Eddie, dropping his MOTHER JONES kerchief and gloves in basket stands by.*

BERTHA

I never seen a girl louse up an act the way you did tonight.

JOSIE

But they laughed. And they cheered.

BERTHA

Humph! That was no money laugh. Wasn't what they paid for! Why, they could see any skinny fool fall outta her dress for free in the street.

*Eddie enters, dropping his Mother Jones gear in the basket.*

EDDIE

Not her fault, Bertha. That old costume of Little Ida's was way too big for her.



BERTHA

Stay out of this Eddie! Ain't your act she spoiled.

*(to Josie)*

Child, you could a got us closed down by the Sheriff, showing yerself that way. They're always lookin' for an excuse to kick us outta town. Lucky for you there's still nothin' much to see. Girl, if you go on this way and you ain't never gonna 'mount to nothin.'

JOSIE

Never is a dumb word! I *never* use it. I *never* hear it.

BERTHA

Ya know who you're sassin' child?

JOSIE

Big Bertha Smith!

BERTHA

Your boss!

JOSIE

I thought you were my friend.

BERTHA

As yer friend I'm tellin' you do that same damned trick tomorrow and get the same laughs you did today. And I'll raise your salary a dollar – a month. Time you wised up. Now take my travellin' encyclopedia. You'll start with book one - Aardvark to Azaleas, and before you know it, you'll be educated right through Zanzibar to Zoo. Then you can face the world with enough facts to put up a decent fight. Won't have an ignorant child wastin' her life or mine in this show. Mind you don't crack the binding. It's genuine hand sewn leatherette. Given to me by an old admirer.

JOSIE

Musta loved you a lot to make you so fine a gift!

BERTHA

Love? I'll say he did. Had to bed down with him twenty four times to complete the set a books. And one more time for the index. Nothin' I wouldn't do for a little learnin'. Now I need a drink of my special home brewed lemonade to recover my strength for my big number.

*BERTHA exits leaving JOSIE with EDDIE*

JOSIE

That Bertha is so smart and funny. She knows everything. Wish I could be more like her.

EDDIE

Just watch Bertha and Mother Jones and learn from them. You're a natural fool, child. You could be somethin' someday.

JOSIE

You're wrong.

EDDIE

Don't be so hard on yerself.

JOSIE

*(Defiantly)*

I'm somethin' now!

EDDIE

Hush now! Bertha's on.

*We hear the intro to BERTHA'S BLUES as BERTHA in full stage costume urges the audience to cheer her. She takes deep swigs from the jug she carries, as she sings.*

BERTHA'S BLUES

BERTHA

BERTHA'S HERE,  
AND YOU'RE GONNA HEAR  
ALL OF MY BAD, BAD NEWS  
'CAUSE MY MAN'S LEFT ME  
WITH ALL OF THESE BAD, BAD BLUES

LORD, I MISS HIM  
LORD, I NEED HIM  
HOPE THAT NEW GAL'S  
GONNA FEED HIM  
LORD I'M HURTIN'  
LORD I'M PAININ'  
IN MY LIFE IT'S ALWAYS RAININ'

I JUST LET THAT DEVIL WALK IN

WHEN HE DID HIS OLE SWEET TALKIN'

I GOT MISERY  
I GOT BLUES  
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS  
WHEN YOU LOSE

LORD, I'M CRYIN'  
DON'T YA HEAR ME?  
CAUSE MY MAN  
HE DON'T COME NEAR ME

HE PUT ALL HIS HEART AND SOUL IN  
WHEN HE DID HIS JELLY ROLLIN'  
I GOT MISERY  
I GOT BLUES  
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS  
WHEN YOU LOSE

*(spoken against music)*

So if you meet that lover man  
Tell him – tell him ---tell him  
Bertha wants him, Bertha wants him, Bertha wants him to --

*(Bertha breaks off, takes another swig of her lemonade}*

---stay away!

*(tearfully, but in powerful Gospel style)*

'Cause I found Jesus - and Jesus is savin' me today.

JESUS SAVES ME  
JESUS FOUND ME  
ANGELS PRAYIN'  
ALL AROUND ME  
I DON'T NEED NO RIVER JORDAN  
I JUST PRAYED AND  
LET THE LORD-IN  
NO MORE MIS'RY  
NO MORE BLUES  
JESUS SAVES  
THAT'S MY GOOD NEWS

BERTHA

*(Spoken to audience)*

Come on now folks, come on, follow the bouncing Bertha to Salvation!

BERTHA

JESUS SAVES ME

JESUS FOUND ME

JESUS

ALL

BERTHA

ANGELS PRAYIN'  
ALL AROUND ME  
I'M SO GLAD MY JESUS FOUND ME  
BLESSED TO HAVE HIS ARMS AROUND ME

NO MORE MISERY  
NO MORE BLUES  
JESUS SAVES  
JESUS SAVES  
JESUS SAVES  
THAT'S MY GOOD NEWS

JOSIE

What's that about?

EDDIE

It's about... a pint a gin... two squeezed lemons, and growin' up a preacher's daughter. Every time Bertha fills up her tank, she finds the Lord again. And so do those poor sons 'a bitches that comes for her bawdy blues.

FATHER JONES

Come on Eddie, we better haul her offstage before she starts exorcisin' demons and baptisin' babies. Remember that time in Dallas? She saved a whole honky-tonk full a sinners, *and* the poh-lice who raided it.

*THE MEN go off laughing, taking Bertha with them, but she rips off her robe and returns in an instant as CARRIE.*

CARRIE

So my Josie found herself in fine company. And makin' real money, twenty dollars a week, for the first time in her life. She didn't forget me. That girl sent me half her salary every week. Two years go by without her gettin' into real trouble, and that's a lifetime for a girl like my Josie. She was learnin' plenty from Bertha and the others, findin' her steps, and singin' new songs. So what does my Josie do? Why, she goes out to buy me a new bonnet, in the fanciest shop in town.

*SET changes to a hat shop in a small Southern town. Josie enters and faces a disapproving white FEMALE CLERK, now played by FATHER JONES with a scowl on her face, a mouth full of pins, trimming a hat in hers hand.*

STORE CLERK

Girl, what ya think ya doin' heah?

JOSIE

Want to buy a new hat. Somethin' real pretty. It's for my Momma for Easter?

STORE CLERK

There's the Woolworths down the street. They got bandanas and nickel head scarves. This store's run by white folks for white folks - with real money.

JOSIE

The five 'n dime don't have what I'm lookin' for. Don't you worry, Ma'm, I got real money. See? Two months wages.

*Josie shows her the bills stuffed in her pockets, which makes the woman more amenable.*

STORE CLERK

I ain't seen you 'round heah before, have I, girl? You must be with that cullud vaudeville show that's passin' through.

JOSIE

*(proudly)*

I am! I'm Jumpin' Josie McDonald. That's who I am, M'am.

STORE CLERK

You know these hats'll cost ya?

JOSIE

I got thirty dollars.

CLERK

Well then, take your pick, but be quick about it. You see a white purson comin' through that door, you pick up that broom over there and make like you're sweepin' up the trimmins.

JOSIE

*(Admiring a hat she holds up)*

Ain't that one crazy rim? I like that one, and that one, and that one.  
Can't wait to ttry em on!

STORE CLERK

Don't you dare! If I let you stick your nappy head in one of my  
chapeaux, no white woman would ever buy here again.

JOSIE

I can buy? But I just can't try?

STORE CLERK

That's it. Pick out, pay up 'n get out.

JOSIE

*(Pointing to various hats, one is a straw boater)*

I'll take that one for Momma, and those for me

STORE CLERK

That'll be fifty dollars. Five hats at ten apiece.

JOSIE

Tags say five dollars each?

*She tries on a hat and reaches for another*

STORE CLERK

Sale's over. Prices just went up. And you own 'em.

JOSIE

*(Bitterly angry)*

Oh my, I touched my money. But I bet you'll take it, won'tcha?

*Josie tries on one of the hats, takes it off quickly, then tries on  
another, determined to provoke the shopkeeper.*

STORE CLERK

What do you think you're doin'? Don't you dare put on all those hats! I  
told ya to stop tryin' em on. Now, you're gonna pay for every hat you  
touched.

JOSIE

I'll pay for what I'm buyin and nothin' more! Just like anyone else. Here!

*(She hands woman the crumpled up bills)*

## STORE CLERK

You'll pay for the rest. With more than money. Po-lice! Sheriff!

*Josie is suddenly aware of danger. A frightened Josie tosses her money to the woman and runs back to the vaudeville holding on to the hats she bought. Eddie embraces her as Bertha looks on, examining the hats, and tossing them into the wicker basket.*

## JOSIE.

No, Bertha, I didn't steal 'em. I paid good money for them. But that white store lady, *she* tried to steal *my pride*. I won't be humbled down by anyone. She treated me like dirt so I tried on every hat in that store. And she wanted me to pay for 'em all. Soon as they find me they're gonna *string me up*. Lynch me with some fancy satin noose.

## BERTHA

Not if you do as I say. Sheriff's comin' now. Eddie, stall him long as you can. Josie, get inside that basket with them hats. Now! And cover yourself with the costumes. And don't you dare make a sound or you're dead!

*Josie gets into the basket. We see the former Hat Shop Clerk, now the SHERIFF enter, pick up a Sheriff's cap from the basket, put it on his head, and look around. Eddie stands there as the Sheriff looks him over carefully, and with hostility.*

## SHERIFF

Boy, I'm looking for a colored girl calls herself Jumpin' Josie? Know where I can find her?

## EDDIE

No, Sir. Haven't seen her around all day.

## SHERIFF

What you do heah?

## EDDIE

I'm a dancer.

## SHERIFF

Lie to me boy and you'll be dancin' from that tree.

## EDDIE

*(Unable to conceal his anger)*

I told ya I don't know where she is and she ain't here now. Mister.

SHERIFF

*(Looking at him, correcting)*

Sir.

EDDIE

No need. Just call me Eddie.

*BERTHA waddles in wearing a long skirt and cape and goes directly to Eddie and the angry Sheriff.*

BERTHA

Someone lookin' for me?

SHERIFF

Who the hell are you?

BERTHA

Big Bertha Smith, star performer and proprietor of this show! Eddie, you go! Bertha's here, now. Go, Eddie. Go! You want some passes to the show, Sheriff?

*Eddie goes off reluctantly.*

SHERIFF

No Mammy, I'm lookin' for a thievin' black girl name a Jumpin' Josie. Said she works for you. Got a warrant here for her arrest for petit larceny and distubin the peace.

BERTHA

What that wicked child do now?

SHERIFF

Broke into a fancy hat shop in town, took some bonnets and wrecked the place. Now give her over!

BERTHA

Wish I could. But she be gone right after I fires her for sassin' me this mornin'. Crazy chile. Says she gonna buy a new hat for her Momma, then catch the next train back home to Kansas. She comes from Kansas. Maybeline Kansas? Garlic capitol of that great American state.

SHERIFF

Well, I gotta take a look around a bit to see she ain't still hanging 'bout here. You can sit down on that sturdy old basket, Mammy, this might be awhile.



BERTHA

Thank you Sheriff....maybe I will rest my...

*(Josie lifts the lid a bit, fearful that Bertha will sit on top of the wicker lid and crush her)*

...no, that wouldn't be respectful to the law. I'll stand. And while I'm at it – I'll unburden myself of some of this heavy cash that's been weighin' me down today.

*(She pulls some bills out of top, between her cleavage)*

Would you help a weary woman by takin' some of it off my hands, Sheriff?

SHERIFF

*(He takes the cash and looks around the room)*

Always glad to help those who needs help. Well, she ain't here now. If you see her, call me. 'Cause if I find her hangin' round here later, you'll be a 'complice to her crime. That's prison for you too, Mammy. You better be movin' on, tonight! Have a nice day,

*He exits. Josie cautiously emerges from the basket.*

BERTHA

Girl, you just closed this show.

JOSIE

Bertha, I never meant to cause you trouble. I am so --

BERTHA

Don't give me your sorry! 'Cause you ain't. You enjoyed every bit of the trouble you stirred up.

JOSIE

You shouldn't have to close the show because of me.

BERTHA

Hell no, I was plannin' to shut it down in a few weeks. Got a telegram from New York City. Ethel Waters is leavin' that cullud revue, "Mandy's Dandies" next month and they wants me to replace her for the rest of the run. -

JOSIE

Take me with you., I could be your dresser. I could be your understudy. I could ---

BERTHA

You could but you can't. I'm buyin' you a bus ticket home to your Momma, and if you're smart you stay there. Child, you can't help it but wherever you go you draw lightnin.' And I need my piece of quiet. I'm gonna drop you at the Greyhound twenty miles north in Dexter. You can catch a bus to East St. Louis from there. Alone.

JOSIE

What do you mean, alone?

BERTHA

Child, you blind *and* dumb? Eddie's bin fallin' in love with you. He'd go off with you if you let him. Sheriff sees you two together, you're a goner, and that boy's dead meat. Pack your clothes in that hamper of yours and take it away with you. Don't want any part of you left behind.

*(Eddie enters, looks at Josie packing. He's confused, troubled.)*

EDDIE

Where you goin'?

JOSIE

Away.

EDDIE

I'll take you there. Away's a fine place.

JOSIE

No you can't. I'm in trouble.

EDDIE

So am I.

JOSIE

Sherriff lookin for *you too*?

EDDIE

No. It's worse than any Sherriff. I – I think I care about you. What am I doin' fallin' for a selfish little scamp like you? A girl who does whatever she likes whenever she likes without a thought for what can happen! I seen you readin' all the time, books that fill your head with crazy notions no girl should have. You're just a bundle of trouble that's landed in my life, and the sooner you're gone – the better off I'll be. But you need me now. And I won't --

JOSIE

*(Loving Eddie but determined not to endanger him)*

Don't need you. Don't want you! I'm going on alone.

EDDIE

Don't need ya. Don't want ya. Won't lose ya.

JOSIE

Eddie, I'm not yours to lose.

NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YA

EDDIE

NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YA  
 WASN'T EVEN LOOKIN'  
 YOU AIN'T WHAT I WANTED  
 YOU AIN'T DOWN HOME COOKIN'  
 NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU

JOSIE

EDDIE, STOP YOUR FAKIN

EDDIE

WHO THOUGHT I'D STOP CRAVIN'  
 COLLARD GREENS AND BACON

SOMETHING WILD ABOUT YOU  
 BABY I DON'T GET YOU  
 SOMETHIN' IN MY HEAD SAYS  
 BETTER TO FORGET YOU

JOSIE

*(spoken)*

You do that!

EDDIE

JOSIE, YOU'RE A DARLIN'

JOSIE

DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYIN'  
 EDDIE IF YOU KNEW ME  
 YOU WOULD START A PRAYIN'

EDDIE

NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU  
YOU CAN'T GO AWAY  
BABY NOW I'VE FOUND YOU IT'S MY LUCKY DAY

JOSIE

EDDIE GOTTA WARN YA  
I'M NOT WHAT YOU SAY  
I DON'T WANT TO SCORN YA  
BUT I'LL NEVER STAY

EDDIE

KNOW I CAN'T ESCAPE YA  
NO THERE'S NO USE TRYIN'

JOSIE

EDDIE I'M NOT SELLIN'

EDDIE

BUT BABY EDDIE'S BUYIN'  
WON'T BE SO CONFUSIN'  
IF YOU LET EDDIE LEAD YA

JOSIE

JOSIE DOES THE CHOOSIN'  
AND JOSIE DOESN'T NEED YA

EDDIE

NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YA  
GIRL YOU'RE SO ALONE

JOSIE

I CAN'T BE YOUR DOGGIE  
I CAN'T BE YOUR BONE

EDDIE

You can be my Princess!

JOSIE

EDDIE DON'T TALK CRAZY  
THERE'S NO TIME TO PLAY

EDDIE

NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU  
AND YOU'D GO AWAY  
NEVER THOUGHT I'D LOSE YOU

GIRL, YOU MAKE MY DAY  
NEVER THOUGHT I'D NEED YOU  
BUT I DO CONFESS

JOSIE

EDDIE, I'M NOT READY  
NEVER WILL BE READY

EDDIE

Crazy child. Better go now.

(Sung)

GOD BLESS.

BLACKOUT

*Carrie's shack. Night. Josie appears at Carrie's door. She is worn out dragging Granny MacDonald's large reed basket behind her. It is pasted with the railway tags of the vaudeville tour. She smiles uncertainly, as Carrie looks her up and down.*

CARRIE

So my Josie comes home. And I give her the warm welcome she needs.  
*(brusquely to Josie)*

What the hell happened to you? Hope you didn't waste no money on bus fare. You so skinny ya coulda slapped a penny stamp on your forehead and mailed yourself home. Got some ham in the larder and an egg that won't get nasty – if you don't sniff at it and ask its age.

JOSIE

Thanks, Momma. Haven't had a decent meal in days.

CARRIE

Drag the damned basket inside and wash up. Don't just stand there, Josie.

JOSIE

*(interrupting)*

Momma, I don't call myself Josie anymore. I'm Josephine. Josie has no dignity. It sounds like a pickanniny name. Josie's gone.

CARRIE

My but you faded.

JOSIE

No, Momma. I'm still me. Only I bin thinkin'.

*(She stops to correct herself)*

No *I've been* thinking. Maybe I should finish school and teach English to children. I love children almost as much as dancing. I bought a grammar book on the road with the vaudeville and I learned all the rules and –

CARRIE

Don't have no money for you goin' back to no school and livin' off my sweat.

JOSIE

You mean *you* don't want me here? Bertha doesn't want me either.

CARRIE

If that smart woman don't want you, why should I?

JOSIE

Because you're my mother!

CARRIE

Ain't kind of you to remind me of my bad luck.

*Josie rushes into her mothers arms and sobs for the first time.*

Eat now, baby. Cry later.

JOSIE

Soon as I've eaten I'll help you with the wash.

CARRIE

No, you won't. I hates ya when you're rotten, but *I can't stand ya nice*. You useta be tough as a ten cent steak. What's happened to you?

JOSIE

Look at me, Momma. Two years with the vaudeville and I'm still nobody, goin' nowhere.

CARRIE

Maybe so. But you won't know if you give up now. If you're gonna fail, you gotta fail big time in the best place there is. Harlem. Everyone's trying to get up there, Josie. And so should you.

JOSIE

I don't have the price of a ticket to New York.

CARRIE

I still got that money you sent me. Enough for train fare north, should last you two weeks before you find work.

JOSIE

But it's for *your* old age.

CARRIE

With *you* for a daughter, I'll never see my old age. Take it, Josie. Yes, you! I ain't givin' it to no Josephine. Ya got one night here – after that you're a boarder – and this is one boardin' house no star would ever stay in. You and *your* troubles! Ya'd think you're the only one.

GET ON WITH IT (with additional lyrics)

LIFE IS FULLA TROUBLE  
 ASK ME - DON'T I KNOW?  
 I GOT YOU FOR TROUBLE  
 AND YOU MAKE TROUBLE GROW  
 YOU COMES HERE AND TELLS ME  
 THAT YOU AIN'T GOIN' ON  
 THAT YOU GIVES IN  
 THAT YOU CAN'T WIN  
 AND ALL YOUR SPIRIT'S GONE

OH, BABY  
 GET OVER IT  
 BABY GET ON WITH IT  
 YOU AIN'T DEAD  
 LOOK AHEAD  
 AND TROUBLE WILL BE GONE WITH IT

BABY  
 STEP OVER IT  
 BABY DON'T FIGHT WITH IT  
 YOU'RE ALIVE  
 YOU'LL SURVIVE  
 YOU'RE GONNA BE ALRIGHT WITH IT

BABY  
 GET ON WITH IT  
 BABY  
 DON'T FOOL WITH IT  
 YOU'RE STILL HERE  
 HIDE YOUR FEAR

'N MAKE 'EM THINK YOU'RE COOL WITH IT

BABY  
 GET OVER IT  
 BABY GET DOWN WITH IT  
 DRY THOSE EYES  
 LOSE THEM SIGHS  
 'N START TO CLOWN AROUN' WITH IT  
 (OPTIONAL LYRIC)

BABY  
 DON'T LOSE ON IT  
 BABY, GO WIN ON IT  
 TIME YA DO  
 SOMETHIN' NEW  
 AND PASTE A GODDAMNED GRIN ON IT  
 BE DONE WITH IT  
 HAVE FUN WITH IT  
 THOUGH TIMES ARE TOUGH  
 YOU GOT THE STUFF

BABY  
 GET OVER IT  
 BABY  
 GET ON WITH IT  
 BABY, GO!  
 GET ON WITH IT NOW

*Carrie helps Josie off with her coat, and we see that Josie is wearing her tap dance costume underneath it, as Josie is auditioning for a show, doing a lively Charleston, a pair of producers, in striped shirts and red suspenders watch her. They are played by Eddie and the Rev/Father Jones/former Sheriff.*

FIRST PRODUCER

Next!

JOSIE  
 (Protesting)

I can go faster and cross my eyes and cross my legs and –

SECOND PRODUCER

Get goin!

JOSIE

You don't mean that. Poor man, you're just sufferin' from gas.



FIRST PRODUCER

Weren't you here last week? And didn't we tell ya to get lost then?

JOSIE

Yes. You told me. So I got lost.

SECOND PRODUCER

Well then? Watcha doin' back here?

JOSIE

I found myself again. Mister, there's nothing I can do but dance. You don't want me to starve?

FIRST PRODUCER

Girl, you can scrub floors; you can wash dishes, why ya can clean toilets in the subway.

JOSIE

Done that. Not for me.

SECOND PRODUCER

There's a world of work out there for a girl like you. Waitress! You could do that.

JOSIE

What do you think I've been doin' to stay alive? Trouble was, last week some nasty guy snuck his hand under my apron and ordered me for the blue plate special.

FIRST PRODUCER

*(Amused)*

So whaddya do?

JOSIE

I threw a plate of mashed potatoes at him. So they took the price of the plate and the potatoes out of my wages and fired me. I been sleepin' on the subway and I got nowhere to go...but up.

FIRST PRODUCER

Honey, spare us the hard luck story. They're a dime a dozen in Harlem. A girl with legs like yours can always make a decent livin' on the streets.

JOSIE

Not me. Never! The only thing I've gotta sell is my dancing.

FIRST PRODUCER

Girl, get it through that head of yours - you're too young.

SECOND PRODUCER

You're too dark.

FIRST PRODUCER

And way too skinny.

JOSIE

Who's gonna notice that when they watch my feet in motion?

*SHE demonstrates an intricate tap step, ends with a brave smile, arms outstretched. The producers are unimpressed.*

BOTH PRODUCERS:

“TOO YOUNG, TOO BLACK, TOO THIN”

YOU'RE FEET'S OKAY

BUT THERE AIN'T ENOUGH MEAT ON YOU

WHAT MEAT YA GOT

IT DON'T LOOK SO SWEET ON YOU

SKINS TOO DARK

MOS' FOLKS LIKE HIGH YALLER GIRLS

BUST'S TOO FLAT

GET RID OF THOSE NAPPY CURLS

COME BACK IN A YEAR WHEN YOU LEARN THE ROPES

YOU'RE NOTHIN' BABY BUT A BAG FULLA HOPES

JOSE

I can do more than Charleston. My tap dancin' is way up there with Bojangles.

SECOND PRODUCER

Nobody comes here to see a girl tappin away anymore.

FIRST PRODUCER

FOLKS COME HERE TO SEE ALL THE JUNGLE QUEENS

SECOND PRODUCER

THAT'S AN ACT WITH A DRUM IN IT

FIRST PRODUCER

AND PLENTY OF RUM IN IT

SECOND PRODUCER

AN AFRICAN BEAT IN IT

FIRST PRODUCER

A SHORT GRASS SKIRT AND SOME WILD NATIVE FEET IN IT

SECOND PRODUCER

SOMETHING THAT'S SAVAGE

FIRST PRODUCER

SOMETHIN' WITH SEX IN IT

SECOND PRODUCER

SOMETHIN' WITH SIN IN IT

FIRST PRODUCER

A COCONUT DRINK WITH A JIGGER OF GIN IN IT

JOSIE

I got ya!

*(Grabbing his bowler hat, treating it like a drum and  
doing a short, humorous, improvised Jungle dance)*

When do I start?

FIRST PRODUCER

AIN'T NO SUGAR IN YOUR CAKE

SECOND PRODUCER

AIN'T NO SHIMMY IN YOUR SHAKE

FIRST PRODUCER

AIN'T NO PEPPER IN YOUR POT

SECOND PRODUCER

WHATEVER YOU THINK YA GOT, IT'S NOT.

PRODUCERS TOGETHER

HONEY, AIN'T NO WAY THAT YOU CAN WIN

WHEN YOU'RE MUCH TOO YOUNG, TOO BLACK, AND TOO THIN

"NEVER SAY NEVER"

JOSIE (resolute, angry)

SO YOU DON'T LIKE MY HAIR  
 MY SKIN AND MY TITS?  
 AND THE TWO OF YOU THINK  
 THAT YOU'VE TORN ME TO BITS?  
 I'M TELLIN' YA FELLAS  
 I DON'T FALL APART  
 THERE'S ONLY ONE QUESTION

PRODUCER

Yes?

JOSIE

WHEN DO I START?

PRODUCER

Never!

JOSIE

*(fiercely)*

NEVER SAY NEVER TO JOSIE  
 NO, NEVER SAY NEVER TO ME  
 I DON'T BEND OVER  
 FOR ANYONE'S KICKS  
 I CAN SHED INSULTS  
 THAT'S ONE OF MY TRICKS  
 I DON'T FALL APART  
 AND YOU CAN'T BREAK MY HEART  
 SO NEVER SAY NEVER TO ME

I CAN DANCE UP A TWISTER  
 AND BRING DOWN THE HOUSE  
 TRUST ME THIS SISTER  
 IS NO LITTLE MOUSE  
 NOTHING YOU SAY CAN SCARE ME AWAY  
 SO NEVER SAY NEVER TO ME

PRODUCER

Josie –you're a nice girl. But nice isn't enough here –

JOSIE

You're wrong! I'm not a nice. I'm dazzling.

I CAN BE FUNNY  
 AND I CAN BE-GUILE  
 THIS LITTLE HONEY  
 HAS HER OWN STYLE  
 SO OPEN YOUR EYES  
 AND YOU'LL START TO SEE  
 THE MAGICAL WONDER  
 WHO HAPPENS TO BE  
 THIS MARVELOUS CREATURE  
 WHO LOOKS JUST LIKE ME

SO  
 NEVER SAY NEVER  
 NO NEVER, NO NEVER  
 NO NEVER  
 NO NEVER  
 FORGET YOUR FOREVER  
 AND NEVER SAY NEVER  
 NO NEVER SAY NEVER  
 TO ME

FIRST PRODUCER

Where's you learn to swagger like that?

JOSIE

Why, I was a star in Big Bertha Smith's Amazing Colored Vaudeville.  
 You ask her!

SECOND PRODUCER

You know Bertha?

JOSIE

Know her? She's my best friend. Why, she's been like a mother to  
 me.

FIRST PRODUCER

Bertha's gonna star in our new revue. Maybe you wouldn't mind bein'  
 her dresser for the show?

JOSIE

Mind? It's easy work.

SECOND PRODUCER

You sure you know Bertha? Dressin' hers like pitchin' a circus tent  
 around an angry elephant. We better ask her about you first

JOSIE

*(Worried)*

No, don't trouble her. That woman hates a question. Besides, I want to surprise her. Not only will I dress her, but for the same money I'll be her understudy.

FIRST PRODUCER

Maybe you could understudy her left arm?

SECOND PRODUCER

Stand by for her right leg! Okay, you want the job? It's yours if she says it's okay. She's in her dressing room now.

JOSIE

Thank you! Thank you! Bertha, I'm back.

*JOSIE runs into BERTHA as the PRODUCERS take off*

BERTHA

*(Entering onstage, shocked)*

No! It isn't? Tell me it's not you. Lord, I'm seein' things again. Pinch me. No. Better I pinch you! How'd you get past my producers?

JOSIE

I shot 'em lightly and they died politely.

BERTHA

You could! How are you child?

JOSIE

Just fine. I got well beyond Paraguay in your book – read all a Paris - and I can tell ya everything you need to know about Patagonia while I'm dressing you. They got the prettiest birds there and ---

BERTHA

*(Shocked)*

What?

JOSIE

They just hired me as your wardrobe keeper and dresser.

BERTHA

Are they crazy?

JOSIE

That's just what I think. You sure don't want me messing with your precious wigs and beautiful gowns?

BERTHA

I don't and you won't!

JOSIE

Better tell 'em you want me in the chorus, backing up your beautiful songs.

BERTHA

Okay girl, ya got me. But isn't it time you changed your ways?

JOSIE

No, Bertha. It's time I changed my costume.

*(Joyfully to the world)*

Momma, I'm dancing onstage - in Harlem- at last.

*Josie reaches into the wicker basket and takes out a scanty short leopard skin skirt, and matching leopard bra; the conventional jungle bunny outfit of a young black dancer at the Cotton Club, which she gets into before the audience, as we hear a steady drumbeat from offstage.*

FATHER JONES

Five minutes, Josephine.

BERTHA

She don't need no "five minutes." That girl's been ready to go on from birth. Don't you ever forget that I'm the star here!

JOSIE

How could I? You never stop reminding me. Stop listening to those nasty girls. They're jealous 'cause I get the big laughs without trying. Eddie once called me a born fool. Guess I am.

BERTHA

Child, you know Eddie's in town?

JOSIE

So I hear.

BERTHA

Gonna be workin' with us at the Cotton Club.

JOSIE

Is he? Still look so good?

BERTHA

Better! You hungry? I got a smoked turkey sandwich and some real beer in my dressin' room icebox.

JOSIE

Thanks Bertha. Never eat before I go on.

BERTHA

Well, if you want somethin' after the show ---

*BERTHA gestures towards Eddie who appears onstage with a drum roll for the Cotton Club number.*

There's your dinner waitin' for ya!

*On stage at the Cotton Club. It jumps with the beat of the Charleston. JOSIE appears as the ultimate Jungle Queen while the others are dressed in exaggerated Harlem costumes of the twenties. This is Eddie's big number, he carries the dance with his spectacular and intricate steps, encircling Josephine like a charming predator.*

SONG: 'CAN'T TAKE JOSIE TO THE PARTY' A Charleston

EDDIE

THERE'S A PARTY GOIN' ON IN HARLEM  
AND THE FOLKS THERE THEY DON'T HAVE A CENT

BERTHA

THERE'S A PARTY GOIN ON IN HARLEM  
AND THE FOLKS THERE GOTTA PAY THE RENT

EDDIE

THE BRASS BAND'S HOTTER THAN CHICAGO

BERTHA

IT SIZZLES MORE THAN NEW ORLEANS

BERTHA AND EDDIE

FORGET YOUR KANSAS CITY  
HERE'S THE NITTY GRITTY  
HERE THEY SERVES YA JUNGLE QUEENS

*(Josie appears behind Bertha and Male dancer, growls suggestively)*



EDDIE, JOSIE, BERTHA, FATHER JONES  
 YA CAN'T TAKE JOSIE TO THE PARTY  
 YA CAN'T LET JOSIE THROUGH THE DOOR

JOSIE  
 THIS GAL FROM EAST SAINT LOUIS

ALL  
 IS THE GAL WHO WILL UNDO US  
 AS SHE STARTS TEARIN' UP THE FLOOR  
 YA CAN'T TAKE JOSIE TO THE PARTY  
 YA CAN'T LET JOSIE THROUGH THAT DOOR

JOSIE  
 THIS SCANDAL OF THE NATION  
 PUT SIN IN SYNCOPATION

FATHER JONES  
 JOSIE JUST DON'T STOP  
 SHE SHOUTS FOR MORE

JOSIE  
 ....Mo, mo, mo, mo, more ---

*(Eddie signals to the orchestra to keep going faster as he dances a wild Charleston, exhausting all the other dancers onstage who drop off one by one as he continues to dance on, finishing atop a drum which he plays with his feet.)*

YA CAN'T TAKE JOSIE TO THE PARTY  
 YA CAN'T LET JOSIE THROUGH THE DOOR

JOSIE AND BERTHA  
 JOSIE WON'T BE STOPPIN'  
 TILL ALL YOU GUYS ARE POPPIN  
 AND ALL YOUR FEET ARE OFF THE FLOOR

*Dance interlude for Eddie, a spectacular tap dance, joined by Josie.*

ENSEMBLE  
 SO DON'T BRING JOSIE  
 BRING BACK ROSIE  
 DON'T BRING JOSIE TO THE PARTY  
 CAUSE JOSIE IS THE GAL THE GUYS ADORE

*Bertha and Mr. Jones back away as Eddie and Josie remain alone onstage. He reaches into the wings and Mr. Jones comes out with a*

*bouquet of red roses, Eddie holds out red roses for her. We are now backstage. They sit together on the straw basket as he presents her with the roses.*

JOSIE

Roses?

EDDIE

I was thinkin'... ripe ripe red apples. But roses won.

JOSIE

You sure took your time finding me.

EDDIE

I was on the road with the new Eubie Blake show. It closed in Detroit. So they got me a bookin' at the Cotton Club – and who do I see listed on the show card? You.

JOSIE

Always enjoy meetin' a friend from the past.

EDDIE

Josie, is that all I am to you?

JOSIE

It's been years.

EDDIE

Three years, seven months, twenty-six days...three hours....

JOSIE

Fifty-two minutes and twelve seconds? Oh, Eddie. Good looks and a bad line will only get you so far in Harlem.

EDDIE

How far?

JOSIE

We'll see.

EDDIE

We could get a drink, and talk for awhile. Lotsa catchin' up to do.

JOSEPHINE

Or...we could go back to my room and spend the night together.

EDDIE

Now, that's an idea. We'll let things take their course.

## JOSEPHINE

Take what course? Funny you say that. Ever read Langston Hughes? No? A great poet. Found a book of his in the library and it kept me warm for days. I'll read him to you tonight.

*(She quotes)*

"I tire so of hearing people say, let things take their course. I do not need my freedom when I'm dead. I cannot live on tomorrow's bread." Good stuff, eh?

## EDDIE

Lighten up, baby. Where's the girl who only wanted to play?

## JOSEPHINE

I packed her away in Granny's sweet-grass basket. But don't worry. She pops out from time to time in Harlem. Let me get out of this dumb costume and put on my new smart dress – for you!

*As Josie reaches into the basket she changes into her street clothes while Eddie watches her. At first she sprays on some perfume, then gets into a fashionable dress, and hat, fixing herself before an imaginary mirror.*

SONG; 'ISN'T SHE? / ISN'T HE?'

## EDDIE

ISN'T SHE SOMETHIN?

ISN'T SHE SWELL?

IT'S NOT THAT SHE'S ALL THAT BEAUTIFUL.

BUT ISN'T SHE ALL THAT BEAUTIFUL?

ISN'T SHE?

IF YOU THINK THAT SHE ISN'T, YOU GOTTA BE BLIND!

YOU BETTER MOVE FAST OR SHE'LL LEAVE YA BEHIND

SHE'LL SLIP THROUGH YOUR FINGERS AND MESS WITH YOUR MIND

BUT ISN'T SHE?

ISN'T SHE?

SHE'S GOT SOME STRANGE FEVER

THAT YOU'LL NEVER CURE

SHE'S DON'T NEED NO PERFUME WITH ALL THAT ALLURE

THAT'S ONE FOREIGN COUNTRY I'M DYIN' TO TOUR

WELL ISN'T SHE?

ISN'T SHE?

JOSIE

ISN'T HE MARVELOUS?  
 ISN'T HE GRAND?  
 IT'S NOT THAT HE'S ALL THAT WONDERFUL  
 BUT ISN'T HE ALL THAT WONDERFUL? ISN'T HE?  
 IF YOU THINK THAT HE ISN'T YOU GOTTA BE NUTS  
 ISN'T HE GORGEOUS  
 NO IFS ANDS OR BUTS  
 WITH TWO MATCHING EARS  
 AND A JAW THAT JUST JUTS!  
 WELL ISN'T HE? ISN'T HE?  
 HE'S MAGIC TO LOOK AT  
 A FEAST FOR THE EYE  
 HE'S SELLIN' HIMSELF, AND I'M READY TO BUY  
 SO EASY TO LOVE HIM  
 SO WHY SHOULDN'T I?

*They sing in their separate worlds looking straight into the future, not at each other. She is dressed now, and they are ready to go off with him.*

JOSIE

OKAY, SO HE'S PERFECT

EDDIE

OKAY, SO SHE'S PERFECT

JOSIE

ONE LOOK AND YOU SEE

EDDIE

WHY COULDN'T IT BE

JOSIE AND EDDIE

THAT HE/SHE COULD BE PERFECTLY PERFECT FOR ME

JOSIE

WELL, ISN'T HE?

EDDIE

ISN'T SHE?

JOSIE/EDDIE

ISN'T HE?/ISN'T SHE?

ISN'T HE?/ISN'T SHE?

*They finally link arms and walk off, as LIGHTS go down on Josie and Eddie, up on Carrie.*

CARRIE

Okay. So they didn't spend the night reading the poetry of the New Negro. A man like Eddie Baker wasn't something she'd toss away without first tryin' him on to see how he fit and how he looked on her. And he was fine. Father Jones gave the bride away. Mother Jones wept, and Bertha brewed that lovely lemonade of hers. They had some great times together, Mr. Eddie and Miz Josephine Baker. They were together for one happy year. Don't know about them, but it sure was for me. She said, "Momma, move to New York!" And I did. I opened Madam Carrie's French Laundry and Dry Cleaning that year. Took out the fanciest stains in the city. But some stains in that city – I couldn't take out. It was their first anniversary and Josie made a reservation at the fanciest supper club in New York City. And they took me along to help 'em celebrate.

*We see the former Reverend Loomis/Shopkeeper/Father Jones, grab a dinner jacket from the basket to become the snotty, white, arrogant, Maitre'D.*

MAITRE'D

Yes, can I help you?

EDDIE

Reservation for three for Mr. Eddie Baker.

MAITRE'D

*(looking in book)*

Sorry, sir. We don't have your name down here and we're fully booked this evening.

JOSIE

You're mistaken. I called and made that reservation myself. I see lots of empty tables and I mean to sit at one. That one should do fine. Come, Eddy, Momma.

*(She seats herself but they stand there)*

MAITRE'D

It's one thing to be seated Madam. Quite another to be served.

JOSIE

We're in no hurry. We'll just wait until our table is ready. A good lookin' couple like us should be good for business.

MAITRE'D

Madam, if you do not leave quietly I'll call the police.

JOSIE

And I'll call the newspapers and tell them you wouldn't serve New York's greatest dancer.

EDDIE

Honey, I wouldn't call me that.

JOSIE

I'm talkin' about me, Eddie.

EDDIE

*(Firm)*

Josie, honey, let's go.

JOSIE

*(resolute)*

No, Eddie. I'm here and I'm hungry. And I'm not leaving until I'm served.

EDDIE

Josie, it's our anniversary. Don't spoil it. Let's go.

JOSIE

Okay, Eddie. That's what you want? I'll go. Just as soon as I use the lady's room.

MAITRE'D

Madam, our powder-rooms are reserved for the exclusive use of our diners.

JOSIE

Pity, then I suppose I'll just have to pee in my chair.

EDDIE

*(firm, angry)*

Josie, we're goin! Now.

*(He grabs her arm and takes her out. She turns to Maitre'd)*

JOSIE

Better count the silver. I've a wicked way with spoons.

EDDIE

Let this be a lesson to you, Josie. Don't go where you ain't wanted.

JOSIE

I got a right to go wherever I want to go.

EDDIE

You and your damned rights. Someday they'll do you in. Wasn't enough you nearly got yourself killed down South? Now you're startin' in again here!

SHAKIN' UP THE WORLD

*( Note: Music of finale"Join me in the Dance")*

EDDIE, CARRIE AND JOSIE

EDDIE

*(disgusted)*

SHAKIN' UP THE WORLD

CARRIE

BREAKIN' ALL THE RULES

EDDIE

FIGHTIN' FOR A RIGHT  
TO STAND UP TO THEM FOOLS

CARRIE

More like sittin down to me!

JOSIE

Sittin' down? That can be standin' up, Momma!

I CAN'T FEEL ALIVE  
UNLESS I TAKE A CHANCE  
STANDIN' UP CAN BE

AS THRILLING AS A DANCE

CARRIE

ONE THING YOU SURE KNOW  
IS HOW TO PICK A FIGHT

EDDIE

WHY'D YOU GO AND SPOIL  
THE NIGHT WE PLANNED TONIGHT?

JOSIE

NOTHING'S GONNA CHANGE  
IF WE JUST SCRAPE AND BOW

EDDIE

TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER

JOSIE

I WANT *TOMORROW* NOW!

CARRIE

*(spoken)*

You want too much, child. You got the best.

CARRIE

EDDIE IS AS GOOD  
AS ANY MAN ALIVE

EDDIE

*(spoken, half in jest, half meaning it)*

Even better in my new car.

JOSIE

FORGET YOUR CAR, MY DARLIN'  
IT'S *YOUR LIFE* YOU GOTTA DRIVE

NOTHING'S GONNA HAPPEN  
ACTIN' MILD AND MEEK  
NO ONE'S GONNA LISTEN  
UNTIL WE DARE TO SPEAK

CARRIE

YOU GOTTA SPEAK YOUR MIND?  
YOU GOTTA SAY IT ALL?  
ALL THEY'RE GONNA DO



IS MAKE YA FEEL SO SMALL

JOSIE

YOU GOTTA BREAK THE MOLD  
IT'S EASY FOLLOW ME  
JUST MAKE BELIEVE YOU'RE BOLD  
AND YOU'LL BE BOLD AND FREE

EDDIE

YA HADDA SPOIL THE NIGHT

JOSIE

I HAD TO TAKE THE CHANCE

EDDIE

HON, IT'S GETTIN' LATE

JOSIE

WE'RE BORN TO STAND UP STRAIGHT

EDDIE

JOSIE, LET'S CELEBRATE

JOSIE

HERE'S TO YOU MY DARLIN'  
MY KNIGHT WITHOUT A LANCE

EDDIE

CHEER UP BABE WE STILL GOT TIME TO DANCE!

JOSIE

*(Deeply disappointed in him)*

Happy anniversary, Eddie.

*(SHE walks off ahead of him as he races to catch up with her and they exit the stage as lights go up on a troubled CARRIE, who goes into the basket and takes out an elegant French hat, finds a stole for her shoulders, gloves, speaking as she dresses Father Jones as Caroline Dudley)*

CARRIE

Wasn't another man who came between 'em. It was a rich white lady crazy for colored entertainers. Miss Caroline Dudley of the Baltimore Maryland Dudleys.

*(to Audience)*

Why, that lady, she came to my Josie's dressing room one night, and just poured her syrup over my poor naked pancake.

*(Josephine is in the process of changing from her Jungle costume into a robe. She drops the costume, standing naked, completely unembarrassed before this stranger as she reaches for a dressing gown, sits down and removes her stage makeup)*

DUDLEY

*(Very elegant accent)*

Miss Baker, you're very special. You know that, don't you?

JOSIE

How special is special?

DUDLEY

Other girls sing better. And I'm sure there are dancers who dance better.

JOSIE

That special, huh?

DUDLEY

But nobody does it all as you do, and with such élan, such elegance, such chic.

JOSIE

Chic?

DUDLEY

The way your costumes fit you. The way you move in your clothes. And out of them. Your marvelous comic spirit. You charm an audience just being yourself. So comfortable in your own skin. Such insouciance.

JOSIE

Chic and marvelous? And whatever that in-sue-sense thing is?

DUDLEY

You shine in that Broadway revue, but you could dazzle the world if you wanted.

JOSIE

You making a pass at me, lady? Tried that once. Okay - twice. Not offended. Not attracted. Sorry lady, the bank is closed.

DUDLEY

I'm offering you a featured role in La Revue Negre. The all black revue I'm producing in Paris.

JOSIE

Never heard of it.

DUDLEY

You will. I'm an American who lives in Paris. Lately, I've been scouting Negro talent here in the states. I've already signed your friend, Bertha Smith to star in the revue and now I'd like to sign you for the soubrette.

JOSIE

I can't be in your show, Miss Dudley.

DUDLEY

But you haven't heard my offer.

JOSIE

You haven't seen my husband. I don't want to leave him to go off and ---.

DUDLEY

With what I'll pay you, he could visit you in Paris. Even stay with you, if you like.

JOSIE

Paris? That's awful far. I'm a home body. Never like going anywhere new. Don't like strange places. Have to think hard about that.

DUDLEY

Just look at these costume sketches. And this French satin we plan to use for your gown. I'm going to show Paris what style really means. Your great Negro artists, dancing, singing, wearing the most beautiful costumes by the greatest Paris designers, and with the finest musical arrangements. This revue will change the way the world looks at your people. A little scent of magnolias on the Bayou, yes, but no blackface Minstrel jokes. No jungle numbers in leopard scanties.

*(She picks up a piece of Josephine's scanty jungle costume, regarding it contemptuously, and reaches inside her large handbag for a sample fabric)*

DUDLEY

You could trade that for this. Elegance in pink satin.

*(Dudley hands her the pink satin)*

Take it. Study it. You can help me show Paris that beauty and grace come in different shades of brown and black. You owe it to yourself, and you owe it to your people. Why, you can be a credit to your race.

JOSIE

Are you a credit to yours?

DUDLEY

I - I never think about that.

JOSIE

Strange, isn't it? Every time a colored person's told to be a credit to their race it's by some white person who can't see past their race. Credit to my race? That means behave myself; do as you're told. And don't forget to take out the trash before I go.

DUDLEY

That's not what I meant! Like it or not, Miss Baker, I was admiring your talents. They go well beyond your color. Imagine yourself standing on a raised stage platform, in a warm spotlight, wearing a glorious silk gown, with all of Paris looking at you. You could do more than seduce a man, or a woman, you could seduce a city with a song. Do you read music?

JOSIE

No. I only read people. In big print - of course.

DUDLEY

This could be yours to sing...and to live.

*(She hands her a piece of sheet music, holding it seductively, as she sings from it and Josephine studies the song)*

JOSEPHINE TONIGHT

CAROLINE DUDLEY

MADAM, MADAM, MADAM  
 GIVE ME YOUR LOVE TONIGHT  
 CAN LOVE BE WRONG  
 WHEN IT'S YOURS FOR A SONG?  
 AND MY SONG SAYS ALL LOVE IS RIGHT  
 MONSIEUR, MADAM, MONSIEUR  
 LOVE COMES IN BLACK AND WHITE

LOVE CAN'T BE WRONG  
 WHEN IT MAKES YOU FEEL STRONG  
 AND IT FILLS YOUR WHOLE WORLD WITH LIGHT

MADAM, MONSIEUR, MADAM  
 GIVE ME YOUR LOVE TONIGHT  
 LOVE CAN'T BE WRONG  
 WHEN IT'S YOURS FOR A SONG  
 IT'S JOSEPHINE  
 LA JOSEPHINE  
 C'EST JOSEPHINE - IT'S JOSEPHINE  
 TONIGHT!

JOSIE

What do you take me for? Someone to be had for the price of a pretty tune?

DUDLEY

I haven't come here to insult you. Or buy you. I simply want to offer you the chance to shine in my Paris revue.

JOSIE

But how can I perform in Paris? I don't speak French.

DUDLEY

With your body, in these costumes, the French will understand you.

*(She holds up the satin sample, turns the pages of costume sketches)*

Pure pink satin cut on the bias, designed by the great Paul Poiret for Cinderella's ballroom number. For you.

JOSIE

That's me? Cinderella?

*(Desperately trying to hide her interest)*

I wouldn't consider going to France unless you signed the Jolly Jones Family too.

DUDLEY

But they're terrible!

JOSIE

They gave me my first break. I won't leave 'em behind to starve in the streets of Harlem.

DUDLEY

If you insist, we'll find something for them in the ensemble. You're loyal to a fault, aren't you Josephine?

JOSIE

*(Anxious to conceal her own innate kindness, fearing it will be seen as weakness)*

Loyal? Me? I just wanted to see how much you wanted me for the show. If you'd take the Joneses, you'd do anything to get me.

DUDLEY

You're very smart, aren't you, Josephine?

JOSIE

Glad you noticed that, Miss Dudley. Now we're such good friends, please call me Miss Baker. I'll have my husband look over the contract, and if it's okay, I'll return it to you signed with the costume sketches. Goodbye, Miss Dudley.

*Josephine begins to hum the tune of Josephine Tonight as Caroline Dudley leaves, astonished, but amused. Josephine looks up at Eddie and Carrie, now having dropped the Dudley stole and hat into the upstage basket, enters.*

EDDIE

Honey, how can ya think of leavin' for Paris without me?

JOSIE

Eddie, you'll visit me as soon as I settle in there. Just look at these dresses, and you'll understand. They speak for themselves. Satin, chiffon, silk --

EDDIE

I don't understand satin or speak chiffon. You know I can't take off from my new show to go to Paris with you.

JOSIE

But I've already signed a contract to go.

CARRIE

That contract don't mean a thing. You ain't twenty one! It's not legal. So tear it up.

JOSIE

I'm going, Momma. So stay out of this.

EDDIE

Baby, we got somethin' fine here. We don't wanna lose it.

JOSIE

If it's that fine, how can we? Don't you trust me in Paris?

EDDIE

No, honey, I don't.

CARRIE

Not just handsome but real smart.

JOSIE

Eddie, I'm never gonna make it here.

EDDIE

But they just gave you a new specialty number.

JOSIE

The cute little pickaninny in blackface who's too dumb to know she's been had? The Jungle Bunny who dances on a drum in time with her bouncin' titties? I'm more than that! I got something special. I got chic!

CARRIE

What's this chic? Somethin' you pick up on the toilet of these old dressin' rooms?

EDDIE

Josie this is Harlem! Ain't no better place to live. It's heaven, honey, heaven.

JOSIE

For you, Eddie, but it's not *my* heaven! A colored person can't even get seated at the Cotton Club, right here in *your* heaven. Eddie, if this is heaven, then heaven's just another place with a sign on the door saying "No Colored Allowed."

EDDIE

Ain't you happy with me now?

JOSIE

Happy isn't heaven Eddie, it's just...just happy.

EDDIE

You want this a lot, don't ya? Then you go. We'll come over for the opening.

CARRIE

Which is gonna be her closing. You never learn, girl. You got everything you ever needed now. But you have to spoil it by bein' so greedy! You wants the whole world to love ya, don't ya? But the world, it don't want you, no matter what that lady tells ya. Trust Momma on that. You'll always be a poor black child, lookin' inside from the outside. Ya can't wash off your color with no fancy French soap.

JOSIE

Momma, go to hell! You're just jealous 'cause you never could ---

*Carrie goes to slap her. Josie grabs her wrist. Carrie looks at her stunned as Josie's hand clings to Carrie's wrist.*

JOSIE

Momma, I'm so sorry.

CARRIE

No you ain't! I know why you're sendin' me to hell! 'Cause you needs your Momma there for company!

*She exits angrily. Eddie stays on.*

JOSIE

*(Distressed)*

Why? Why does she always hurt me? And make me feel wrong. Eddie, help me.

EDDIE

I'll tell her you didn't mean it.

JOSIE

*(Defiantly)*

But I did. And she knows it. Tell Momma her Josie's dead and gone. And Josephine Baker's here to stay. Eddie, go find her. And make it up to her if you can.

EDDIE

Okay, Josie. But who's gonna make it up to me? I'm missin' you so much, and you ain't even gone yet.

*HE exits. She rises for a moment, places the yard of pink satin against herself.*



## JOSIE

MADAM, MADAM, MADAM  
GIVE ME YOUR LOVE TONIGHT  
CAN LOVE BE WRONG  
WHEN IT'S YOURS FOR A SONG?  
AND MY SONG SAYS ALL LOVE IS RIGHT  
MONSIEUR, MADAM, MONSIEUR  
LOVE COMES IN BLACK AND WHITE

(She breaks off- returns to her childhood song but with a  
fierce determination)

FORGET THE CINDERS  
FORGET THE ASHES  
I TELL YA MOMMA  
I'M WHERE THE FLASH IS  
SOMEDAY  
THERE'S GONNA BE ME  
THAT PRINCESS IN PINK  
DRAGGIN' HER MINK  
SO WHADDAYA THINK  
IT'S CINDERELLA  
COME WATCH ME FELLA  
IT'S CINDERELLA

*(A howl of defiance)*

YES CINDERELLA ME!

*Curtain falls on ACT ONE.*

ACT TWO  
Scene One

*We open on a strut with a stride piano accompaniment. We see our cast of four in the striking silhouettes of a Jazz ensemble. Lights come up on Josie with trumpet, Bertha with trombone, Eddie (as clarinetist) and Second Man, a bass player, our four-piece company at the French Line pier in Le Havre. Amongst the baggage is the large wicker sweet grass basket with a colorful Isle De France sticker pasted over it. As the group of four finish one full chorus, the men turn around and they wear masks on the back of their head that represent another group of players, comprising an imaginary company of eight as they turn and dance, turn and dance.*

SONG; 'HARLEM STRUT *A faster, jazzy, Charleston version of Chicken Strut*

BERTHA

THAT'S NOT MOZART THAT YOU HEAR  
TIME YOU EDUCATE YOUR EAR  
TIME YOU FRENCHIE'S LEARN TO JIVE  
HELL, ITS NINETEEN TWENTY FIVE

MEN

*(pointing to WOMEN)*

CHOCOLATE CHICKS WHO BOOP DE BOOP  
HARLEM HONEYS LOOP DE LOOP

WOMEN

DARKTOWN DANDIES – WATCH THEIR FEET  
PUTTIN' HEAT INTO THAT BEAT

ALL

SO  
PUT YOUR NECK OUT TO HERE  
SHAKE YOUR HANDS  
SHAKE YOUR REAR  
LET YOURSELF GO OFF YOUR NUT

JOSIE

STOP PARLEZ VOUS-IN  
AND YOU'LL BE DOIN'

ALL

YOU'LL BE DOIN'  
THE HARLEM STRUT -

*(Dance break)*

*The ensemble, Bertha and Josie dance around the pier, presenting the Charleston to France, as Eddie the male trumpeter puts on a straw hat and assumes the role of PAUL COLIN, French artist and producer. Father Jones puts on his CAROLINE DUDLEY stole and bonnet and is greeted by a handsome young white Frenchman, PAUL COLIN, now played by Eddie, who wears the straw Chevalier style boater, one of the hats that Josie bought years before in the shop. Offstage we hear the whistle of the boats, the gulls, the unseen crowds.*

DUDLEY

Here they are, Paul. Well, what do you think?

COLIN

Tres beau. Caroline, qu'est-ce que vous voyez sur cette affiche-la?

DUDLEY

Bertha Smith's the star. She should be featured on the poster. That's Bertha fighting with the Custom's inspector about her baggage.

*(She gestures offstage where the unseen Bertha is standing)*

COLIN

Bertha is wonderful! But – but --

DUDLEY

Too much but but?

COLIN

*(He laughs)*

We want someone young and exciting. Comme cette petite soubrette.

*He indicates Josie, who sits seated on the wicker basket, her beautiful legs crossed and on display.*

DUDLEY

Are we still talking about the poster?

COLIN

Introduce me.

DUDLEY

Josie, I'd like you to meet, Paul Colin, my French partner. He's a wonderful artist who will be creating les affiches - the posters for us. Josephine Baker – Paul Colin.

COLIN

A pleasure, Mademoiselle Baker.

JOSEPHINE

So they tell me.

DUDLEY

Paul would like to make some sketches of you as soon as you're settled into your hotel.

JOSIE

Where are you putting us up?

DUDLEY

The Hotel Meurice. It's where I stay in Paris.

JOSIE

*(surprised)*

And they're letting *us* stay there?

DUDLEY

This is Paris, my dear. If you have the money you can do anything.

COLIN

Miss Baker, I would like you to pose for les affiches - the posters we are planning.

JOSIE

What about Bertha? She's your star. And my friend. She's not gonna like that.

COLIN

Like it or not, we can't use her for publicity. If you prefer not to pose, we can find someone else who --- who's that charming girl?

JOSIE

Stop looking. I'm posing. What shall I wear?

COLIN

We'll choose something at my atelier.

JOSIE

Atelier?

COLIN

My studio. Here's my card. Tomorrow at ten?

JOSIE

What are you payin'?

COLIN

Rein. Nothing. You will get publicity and ---

JOSIE

No. I'll only pose in exchange for some French lessons. I've been studying hard on the boat, but my accent needs a lot of help. And I mean to speak French like I was born here.

COLIN

Pourquoi?

JOSIE

Got to have one language I can dream in.

COLIN

I'm a very impatient teacher.

JOSIE

I'm real quick.

COLIN

Demain matin.

JOSIE

Mon plaisir.

*COLIN exchanges a glance with Josie as he goes off. CARRIE drops her DUDLEY stole into the basket and picks up the Bertha hat.*

JOSIE

He wants to sketch me for the show poster. You angry?

BERTHA

Hell no! Ain't enough paper in Patee to capture all a my beauty,

JOSIE

You don't mind then?

BERTHA

'Course I mind. But it wouldn't stop ya if I did, would it?

JOSIE

No.

*They both laugh*

Bertha, that train's gonna take us straight to freedom.

BERTHA

Josie, there's such a thing as bein' too free. Watch yourself, girl.

JOSIE

Don't have to. Seems everyone else is.

BERTHA

Josie, be warned. Play with fire and –

JOSIE

Sometime you get warm.

FATHER JONES

Hurry up and get on board. Trains leavin' and it's First Class all the way.

*The women run for the train as the Jazz piano accompanies them. Carrie steps out of the smoke. We hear Josie's voice as Carrie reads the letter she has received from her.*

JOSIE

“Ma chere Mamma. Paris is marvelous, only here it's mervellieux. I'm stayin' in a fine room in a grand hotel, and I don't share a bath with anyone. They got a goose down comforter on this big bed, and you feel like you're sleepin' under a soft white cloud. Tomorrow we begin rehearsals for the show. And today, I start my French lessons. Wait till you see me in my Cinderella ball gown – you'll be so proud. They're gonna put me on the poster! First thing I'm gonna do is buy you a Paris bonnet, oh, Momma, I'm so happy I'm scared. I hardly speak the language, I don't know my way around, but the minute I arrived, I knew I'd come home.

CARRIE

*(shaking her head ruefully, then a beat as she turns to audience)*

Not a word about Eddie. And who the hell is givin' her comfort in that bed? Never met a white cloud I trusted, even on a bed. Always has some rain hidden inside it. Oh Josie, be careful child. Sleep well. And alone, if ya can.

SONG; MOMMA KNOWS

CARRIE

BEDS ARE BIG  
 AND GIRLS GET LONELY  
 MOMMA KNOWS  
 GIRL, I KNOW YOU THINK  
 I'M ONLY  
 HERE TO SCOLD  
 BUT MOMMA KNOWS,  
 CAUSE MOMMA'S NOT THAT OLD  
 NIGHT DRAWS ON  
 THE AIR GETS CHILLY  
 MOMMA KNOWS  
 THEN YOUR NERVES START  
 ACTIN' SILLY  
 GRAB A HOLD  
 BUT MOMMA KNOWS  
 CAUSE MOMMA HATES THE COLD

LOVIN' ARMS ARE MADE TO EMBRACE YOU  
 LOVIN WORDS  
 THEY'LL NEVER DISGRACE YOU  
 NO ONE'S BORN TO  
 SLEEP ALONE  
 UNLESS YOU'RE MADE OF STICKS AND STONE

THERE'S NO WAY THAT I CAN CHANGE YOU  
 MOMMA KNOWS  
 AIN'T THE ONE TO REARRANGE YOU  
 MOMMA KNOWS  
 BORN ALONE  
 DIE ALONE  
 WE AIN'T MEANT  
 TO LIE ALONE  
 HE NEEDS YOURS  
 YOU NEED HIS  
 THAT'S HOW IT WAS  
 THAT'S HOW IT IS  
 SO, JOSIE, THAT'S HOW IT GOES  
 AND BABY, YOUR MOMMA KNOWS!

*Lights go down on Carrie and up on Josie as she enters Colin's Paris studio. An easel with a sketch on it, a bed covered by an exotic wild animal skin, a few African masks on wall, as well as some of his posters,*

*modernist trains and ships. Josephine looks around, curious. Colin wears an open shirt covered by a velvet smoking jacket.*

JOSIE

So this is your atelier?

COLIN

We don't sound the "r" in atelier

JOSIE

So this is your studio? No "r" in studio, ce'st vrai?. Can you believe it, I hailed a taxi and he stopped for me. And the fare was so cheap. Everythin' costs next to nothin' here.

COLIN

Paris is cheap for Americans. The dollar is strong. The franc is weak franc. The war you know? Inflation is so bad here that ---doesn't interest you, does it?

JOSIE

It's your world. I just rent.

COLIN

It could be your world, if you studied it.

JOSIE

Lots I don't know. Lots I do. And what I don't, I mean to know. Like French.

COLIN

I know the easiest way to learn it. If you spoke French while you made love, it would do wonders for your accent.

JOSIE

Good for my accent, bad for my marriage.

COLIN

You're married?

JOSIE

Eddie. Want to see his picture?

COLIN

No. Not really.

*She points to a photograph of an attractive young woman on wall*



JOSIE  
That your wife?

COLIN  
I never married.

JOSIE  
Haven't met the right girl?

COLIN  
No. I meet her constantly. Now let's start our lesson with l'affaire.  
L'affaire means business.

JOSIE  
I got that.

COLIN  
You're sitting in a café; a charming stranger approaches. He offers to show you around Paris. Not the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre, but the wonderful city of secret places.

JOSIE  
Ashamed to be seen with me, a black girl, right?

COLIN  
No, he doesn't want to share you with the world. At the end of a marvelous evening, he takes you to his apartment. Later, he takes your hand, finds your lips, finds your neck, finds your breasts

JOSIE  
And to think I never knew they were lost? What do *I find*?

COLIN  
A tender lover...a true friend. Un tendre amour. Un vrai ami.

JOSIE  
Un tendre amour. Un vrai ami? And later, when I'm back in my hotel room – alone. Does he call? Or as we say back in St. Louis, was I humped and dumped? What's the French for nobody called?

COLIN  
Personne n'a telephone.

JOSIE

And when I ask the concierge, “Did a man come to see me while I was out?” How do you say, “Nobody came, Madame.” Wait, wait, I know that.

*(Very American in her pronunciation)*

Personne n’est venu, Madame?

COLIN

You know more than you think you do.

JOSIE

I get the words easy enough, but my accent’s all wrong. Guess I’m just a dancer who thinks with her legs.

COLIN

When did you begin to study dance?

JOSIE

Never studied it. Always danced. Had to.

COLIN

The spirit moved you?

JOSIE

Hell, no, the winter did. Growing up freezing in that rickety shack in East St. Louis, it was too cold to keep still. So I danced.

COLIN

Ce’est tres piquante.

JOSIE

Piquant? That’s good?

COLIN

That’s charming. But it’s pronounced pee-*kahn*. No final “t.” Say the English syllable  
*ahn* as in *want* loudly.

JOSIE

I want pecan?

COLIN

No. That’s a nut. Open your mouth wide.

*She obeys. He approaches her with a small flat stick, taken from his art supplies and puts it in her mouth.*

COLIN

I'm going to hold the tongue down with this stick so that your tongue cannot rise for the "n." Now try to say *ahn*.

JOSIE

Ahn.

COLIN

Excellent. Piquant.

JOSIE

Pee-kahn.

COLIN

You're very quick

JOSIE

The trick is in the stick.

SONG; 'FRENCH MADE EASY'

COLIN AND JOSIE

COLIN

FRENCH MADE EASY -- PAREE AT A GLANCE

JOSIE

MY ACCENT'S CHEESY.

COLIN

SO WHAT? I CAN'T DANCE.

BOTH

FRENCH MADE EASY  
JUST USE YOUR EARS

COLIN

FRENCH MADE EASY  
PAREE WITHOUT TEARS

Je ne pleura pas. JOSIE

FRENCH MADE EASY COLIN  
 YOU'LL SPEAK IT IN A WEEK  
 I'D LOVE TO TEACH YOU

VOUS ETES SYMPATIQUE JOSIE

COLIN  
*(correcting her)*

Sampatique.  
 FRENCH MADE EASY  
 IT'S SIMPLER THAN IT LOOKS  
 FRENCH MADE EASY  
 SO THROW AWAY THOSE BOOKS

Jetez les livres. JOSIE

COLIN  
*(making his moves on her)*  
 Ah, ah, ah...LA JOIE DE TOUCHER, LES PETITES OREILLES, TON NEZ,  
 ET TON COU ET PROCEDANT AU DERRIERE, OH, QUELLE EXTASE

FRENCH MADE EASY  
 WHEN IT'S A LOVE AFFAIR

JOSIE  
 IF I SURVIVE IT  
 I'LL GET THE CROIX DE GUERRE

COLIN  
 FRENCH MADE EASY  
 JUST CLEAR YOUR HEAD  
 NO RULES, NO GRAMMAR  
 WHEN YOU'RE IN BED

FRENCH MADE EASY  
 WITH A LITTLE TRUST  
 FRENCH MADE EASY

JOSIE  
 WHAT'S THE WORD FOR LUST?

COLIN  
 PLAISIR MEANS PLEASURE  
 NOT A WORD FOR SIN

JOSIE  
 LOVE MEANS PLEASURE

BOTH  
 LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

BLACKOUT

CARRIE  
*(to Audience in limbo)*  
 A few days before the opening, we arrive in Paris. Eddie and me.  
 A pair of early birds. That's how we caught them worms

*Lights come up on CARRIE and EDDIE who stand by door to Colin's studio. Josephine answers it in a robe. She's stunned. Colin is represented by a velvet dressing robe on a valet stand.*

JOSIE  
 Momma? Eddie? I thought you're boat train was comin' in at ten tonight?

CARRIE  
 No. It was ten this morning. You're hotel people said we could find you here.

JOSIE  
 Hello Eddie. You're lookin' fine. Have a good crossing?

EDDIE  
 Nice robe.

JOSIE  
 It's a Coco Chanel. Tres cher.

EDDIE  
 Is it now? And what's that?

*He points to Colin's velvet smoking jacket hanging on a wooden valet stand.*

JOSIE  
 That's a Paul Colin. Paul's been sketching me.

EDDIE

Sketchin'? Has he now?

JOSIE

You got to see the poster for the show. You'll love it.

*She shows him the poster of herself, half naked.*

EDDIE

That all you're wearin' in the show?

JOSIE

Of course not. It's just like vaudeville. You gotta tease the folks to get them inside the tent. This ball gown is what I'm wearing. I spent a whole life waitin' to put on a gown like this. I'm the Sleeping Beauty, and I wake up and sing my ballad and ---

CARRIE

When we gonna meet Prince Charmin'?

JOSIE

Why bother? Paul hardly speaks English.

EDDIE

Then how does he understand you when you say no?

JOSIE

*(a beat)*

I don't.

EDDIE

So that's how it is?

JOSIE

I'm sorry Eddie, Paul and I - we're more than friends.

EDDIE

*(furious)*

What does that make us? Less than married?

JOSIE

Eddie, I'll always love you, but I never said I'd settle down forever.

EDDIE

Josie, you leave this show right now, and come back home with me, and I'll try to forgive you and forget this.

JOSIE

*You, forgive me?* I don't want to be forgiven for the happiest time in my life. You want me to forget they treat me like a Princess here? Paul taught me more than French! How to carry myself like a star. How to stand straight with dignity and pride.

EDDIE

Pride? Is that what you call tippin out with a man who don't want nothin' more'n what you're givin' him?

JOSEPHINE

Paul and I have an understanding.

EDDIE

He wants to marry you, does he?

JOSEPHINE

He doesn't believe in marriage.

EDDIE

And I don't believe in *understanding*. I'd like to beat the shit out of him but how the hell can I blame him for loving you? You comin' home, Josie? Yes or no?

JOSIE

No.

CARRIE

Josie, you leave with Eddie now, or you'll regret it for the rest of your life.

JOSIE

I'm sorry, Eddie. They treat me like a human being here. They..they..they let me try on hats.

CARRIE

What?

JOSIE

Momma, I can live anywhere, speak with anyone, eat any place, I won't go back home to be treated like dirt. I'm at home here. I'm alive here.

EDDIE

Goodbye Jumpin' Josie, you stay alive. I guess you always moved faster than I did. Just don't wear yourself out. Good luck to you.

JOSIE

Goodbye, Eddie. I'll always –

EDDIE

No, *you* won't. But *I* sure will.

*He begins to tap, tapping the challenge they did years ago. She looks at him, regretful, but she does not join him and he exits dancing.*

CARRIE

You just said goodbye to the best thing ever happened to you. And for what? That fancy French bathrobe who just wants to bump a black girl?

JOSIE

Momma, aren't you going home with Eddie?

CARRIE

No way. I ain't no coward. I've lived through four race riots, five floods, three husbands, two miscarriages, *and raisin' you*. Wouldn't miss the next big time disaster.

JOSIE

What's that?

CARRIE

Your openin' night. Kiss that frog all you want and he ain't never gonna turn into no Prince.

JOSIE

Mamma, I love him. He thinks I can help change the world. Oh, Momma, be happy for me.

REPRISE; 'NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND YOU'

NEVER THOUGHT I'D FIND HIM  
ALMOST NEARLY MISSED HIM  
NEVER CARED ABOUT HIM  
SUDDENLY I KISSED HIM

TREATS ME LIKE A PRINCESS  
DOESN'T TRY TO HIDE ME  
THINKS I'M SOMETHIN' SPECIAL  
PROUD TO STAND BESIDE ME



SO MUCH THAT HE'S TAUGHT ME  
NEVER WILL FORGET IT  
I CAN'T CAN CALL IT WICKED  
NEVER WILL REGRET IT

MOMMA I'M NO LONGER  
LIVIN' TO SURVIVE  
MOMMA WHEN HE'S WITH ME  
I FEEL SO - ALIVE

*As Josie sings, alone in a spotlight, Carrie puts on her Bertha Robe, she is fretful, angry, almost tearful. We see Josephine dressing into her gorgeous costume with the help of Mother and Father Jones. BERTHA storms into the dressing room.*

BERTHA

Josie, I want a word with you.

JOSIE

Later, Bertha, I got a costume fitting, and a rehearsal and a –

BERTHA

Now!

JOSIE

*(impatiently)*

Okay, what's wrong this time? The fancy French food doesn't agree with you? The concierge was rude to you? Your costume doesn't fit right? You hate the lighting, you hate the arrangements, you hate the ---

BERTHA

*(accusing)*

You stole my spot!

JOSIE

Are you hitting the lemonade again, Bertha?

BERTHA

Miz Dudley just told me that you're takin' my place in the big number.

JOSIE

I'm sorry, Bertha. C'est la vie.

BERTHA

(angrily)  
No, honey. *Say la vous!*

JOSIE  
I never stole your spot. You lost it.

BERTHA  
And I took you for a friend.

JOSIE  
*I am* your friend. For weeks I've been telling you to learn some French and use it in your songs. They don't want your broken down blues in a language they don't understand. They've got their own *chanteuse* for that. They want joy and charm from us. They want chic and style. And that makeup of yours, *c'est ridicule*. You look like – like --

BERTHA  
An old clown?

JOSIE  
I didn't say that.

BERTHA  
Didn't have to. Wasn't no clown saved your ass time and again. You recall back home when that Sherrif was after you and you hid in that basket while I paid him off? Did you forget that?

JOSIE  
Of course I remember.

BERTHA  
I should have sat on you then. Squashed you like the little black bug you are.

JOSIE  
Bertha, you're still a star. Even without that number.

BERTHA  
Don't you start shinin' me on! I'm just scenery, backin' you up now. A bitta local color. Honey, trust me, it don't last forever. All you got over me is your fine figure and your smooth young face. Forget all they says about a girl bein' good – all they wants from a girl is pretty. And "pretty" honey, it don't keep.

SONG; 'PRETTY IS' -BERTHA

PRETTY ME IS HARD TO SEE  
 BUT I THOUGHT I HAD IT ALL  
 PRETTY ME, YES, LOVELY ME  
 QUEEN A HEARTS COULD NEVER FALL

PRETTY ME SO FULLA PRIDE  
 TEN FEET TALL AND TEN FEET WIDE  
 THEN PRETTY COMES TO STEAL MY SPOT  
 TELLIN' ME I'VE HAD MY SHOT  
 PRETTY YOU SO YOUNG AND SMART  
 PRETTY YOU JUST BROKE MY HEART  
 PRETTY ME GIVES THIS ADVICE  
 PRETTY – NEVER TRUST THE DICE

SUDDENLY, THE BIG SURPRISE  
 YOU'VE GROWN OLD IN SOMEONE'S EYES  
 YOU COVERS UP YOUR FEARS, YOUR PAIN  
 YA WIPES AWAY THE TEARS THAT STAIN  
 PRETTY, TIME IS NOT YOUR FRIEND  
 EVERY PRETTY HAS AN END  
 FIRST THE BOOZE AND THEN THE PILLS  
 YOUR MIRROR GIVES A LOOK THAT KILLS  
 TOUCHIN' UP YOUR GRAYIN' HAIRS  
 WITH HALF FORGOTTEN LOVE AFFAIRS

PRETTY IS AS PRETTY DOES  
 SO THEY TELLS YOU EVERY DAY  
 BUT PRETTY GOES  
 AND PRETTY KNOWS  
 THAT PRETTY SLOWLY SLIPS AWAY

*LIGHTS go down on BERTHA. They come up on JOSEPHINE rehearsing her French song.*

JOSEPHINE TONIGHT!

MONSIEUR, MONSIEUR, MONSIEUR  
 DONNE D'AMOUR TONIGHT  
 CAN LOVE BE WRONG  
 WHEN IT'S YOURS FOR A SONG  
 AND MY SONG SAYS ALL LOVE IS RIGHT

MADAM, MADAM, MADAM  
 LOVE COMES IN BLACK AND WHITE  
 IT CAN'T BE WRONG  
 WHEN THE FEELING'S SO STRONG

AND ---

DUDLEY

Josephine, we'd like a word with you.

COLIN

Ma cherie, we're in trouble

JOSIE

I know. I know. I'm sounding the "ns" and "ms" but I'll get it right for the opening.

COLIN

That's not the trouble.

JOSIE

What's wrong?

COLIN

Ticket sales are slow.

DUDLEY

Slow? Dead. The word of mouth for the previews is bad.

COLIN

We'll close soon after we open tomorrow. The show looks timid...tame.

JOSIE

Not so piquant, eh?

COLIN

It's all too safe...too pretty. Paris wants the wild, untamed African soul hidden deep in old New Orleans.

JOSIE

Do they now?

DUDLEY

We're all magnolias and sweetness, with a little blues thrown in for spice. That costume has to go.

JOSIE

What's wrong with it?

DUDLEY

It's a lovely costume, but it looks so...so wrong on you. My mistake.

JOSIE  
*(deeply hurt)*

Was it now?

DUDLEY

They won't come to see you in a fancy ball gown singing in tourist French. They want to see you moving to a primitive rhythm, drums not strings, barefoot and wild.

*Josephine is stricken as she hears this.*

JOSIE

And you agree with her, Paul?

COLIN

Je suis en accord. If we gave you an African number---

JOSIE

A what?

COLIN

You know; a Jungle Queen, lots of erotic movement, naked but nothing tasteless, charged with sexuality. Something arousing that France has never seen!

JOSIE  
*(with growing anger)*

Josie, Queen of the Jungle?

DUDLEY

Well, a queen is more than a princess. Right, Paul?

COLIN

Exactement. Qua's tu pense? What do you think?

JOSIE

*Liar! Menteur!* I got that right, now didn't I?

GET ON WITH IT (JOSIE VERSION)  
*(with great bravura, panache)*

LIFE IS FULL OF LIARS  
ASK ME, DON'T I KNOW  
BUT NO SWEET TALKIN' LIAR  
IS GONNA SPOIL MY SHOW

YOU COME HERE AND HAND ME  
YOUR CONTINENTAL CON

“THERE’S NO REAL SIN IN YOUR SWEET SKIN”  
VOILA – YOUR COSTUMES GONE

JOSIE  
GET OVER IT  
JOSIE,  
GET ON WITH IT  
YOU’RE NOT DEAD  
LOOK AHEAD  
AND TROUBLE  
WILL BE GONE WITH IT

*(spoken, dismissing her anger)*

Finis! Termine!  
JOSIE  
STEP OVER IT  
JOSIE  
DON’T FIGHT WITH IT  
YOU’RE ALIVE  
YOU’RE GONNA THRIVE  
AND CHILD YOU’LL BE ALRIGHT WITH IT

BE DONE WITH IT  
HAVE FUN WITH IT  
THOUGH TIMES ARE TOUGH  
YOU GOT THE STUFF  
JOSIE GET ON WITH IT  
BABY, GET ON WITH IT NOW

*JOSIE removes her breakaway costume and begins to dance without inhibition as the lights go down on Josie and up on Carrie. Music continues under as Carrie stands there, at the wild naked jungle dance goes on behind the scrim in silhouette. All done to a drumbeat.*

CARRIE

*(She demonstrates with a few jungle steps)*

She went somethin’ like this, and something; like that...only much more of this and a lot more of that...only naked as a newborn babe...

*(She gets caught up in her dance)*

... and the world went wild. They called her the Hottentot Venus, the Jazz Cleopatra, the livin’ spirit of the Jazz Age. She was the hottest piece of movin’ flesh since the cancan. And those newspapers? Couldn’t get enough of her, or she of them. Don’t matter where you were. She was the big story. New York, Paris, Berlin, Chattanooga, everyone went Josephine Baker crazy. She walked the Champs Elysee draped in sable with a panther on a leash. She polished her act and she put it up there onstage for the whole world to see with nothin’ but a grass skirt or a

girdle of ripe bananas. She wasn't just a dancer. Hell no, she was the dance.

*Josephine, wearing an elegant silk robe, gives an interview as we hear the offstage voice of a REPORTER. Carrie stands by, watching, astonished.*

FATHER JONES as REPORTER

Miss Baker, I'm Logan from The UP. Is it true that your mother was an American Indian Princess?

JOSIE

*(indicating Carrie who now wears a turban with feathers in it)*  
*Je voudrais ce'st ma mere* could tell you herself. But she only speaks her tribal language. Any of you fellas know a little Shawnee? Some Ojibwa? A smattering of Dakota Sioux? Too bad. Momma was raised as an Indian, but of course, she's part African and proud of it. Now my father, he was a Portugese Prince who ---

CARRIE

Josie spun her tales, re-inventin' herself and me, and the wonder of it was, she never got caught in her own stories. She figured that people wanted her to be special, so she made herself special. Nice thing about bein' black, nobody knows you're alive till you're famous, so you can say what you will about the past, and there ain't nothin' to say it ain't true. I stayed on in Paris, to bring her back to earth, when she started flyin' too high.

*Josephine is seated in her bathrobe in her dressing room as Carrie enters. Josephine points to a large box stuffed with magazines, household items.*

JOSIE

Momma, look! My pictures on the cover of every magazine in Europe, my face is on teapots, I'm on match-covers, dolls, post cards, cigarette lighters, fancy dishes, why, I'm so famous I'm --- I'm a lamp.

CARRIE

Thank you Jesus! Now I can turn you off.

*Carrie starts to walk away.*

JOSIE

Don't go. Miss Dudley asked me for an appointment. And I mean to give it to her, good. This is gonna be fun.

*Carrie stands by and does the DUDLEY transformation pulling the stole and the hat from the basket– waves goodbye to her unseen self as she reemerges as Dudley, who turns to speak to the unseen Carrie.*

DUDLEY

Miss MacDonald. You're looking well. Paris agrees with you. Miss Baker, thank you for seeing me now.

JOSIE

Pourquoi "Miss Baker"? I'm still Josie to my friends.

DUDLEY

Thank you, Josie. I'll get to the point. I've heard that you've been asked to dance at the new Folies Bergere, and that you've agreed to do so.

JOSIE

You heard right.

DUDLEY

You know you can't do that? We have a contract with you for the run of the show. We're selling out for months to come. And we plan to stay here through the summer and tour Europe in the fall. They really want to see you in Berlin. So you can't appear in the Folies this year.

JOSIE

Can't I, now?

DUDLEY

Read your contract.

*She holds up the signed contract between them, Josie squints at it.*

JOSIE

Yep, that's my handwriting. Nice big loopin' *childish* letters. Trouble is, I was too young to sign a paper that would stand up in a court of law here in France. I'm joining the Follies in two weeks.

DUDLEY

Don't you have any gratitude for what I've done for you?

JOSIE

Just what did you do? Flatter me? Lie to me? Rip off my fancy costume and throw me out on a stage naked? Lucky I knew what to do, and how to do it.



DUDLEY

Admit it! You enjoyed every moment of it.

JOSIE

You bet I did! I wasn't gonna let your insult spoil my life. I don't need your fancy costume to be chic! Remember? I have my own fine black skin for that. Je suis insouciant! Je suis elegante. Je suis La Baker!

DUDLEY

If you leave the revue, we'll be forced to close.

JOSIE

Tant pis!

DUDLEY

Your friends will be out of work. Think of them, Josie.

JOSIE

I'll be leaving in two weeks, so you can plan accordingly. I just love your hat, Caroline, it makes you look years younger.

DUDLEY

Then keep it as a parting gift.

*(Dudley places the hat on the vanity, and begins to leave, bewildered and hurt)*

JOSIE

Goodbye, Caroline.

*Josie follows with her eyes and a dismissive good riddance gesture with her hand towards the departing woman, who whips around angrily and stands there as CARRIE who removes her hat and tosses it away, making her transformation back into Carrie by her angry expression alone.*

CARRIE

What did that good woman do to you that you talked to her that way?

JOSIE

She's no better than any of 'em.

CARRIE

Them? Who you talkin' 'bout?

JOSEPHINE

*(bitterly)*

The ones who treated me worse'n dirt back in St. Louis. The ones who forced me to wash their dishes in scalding water. The ones who wouldn't let me kiss their babies or buy a bonnet in their shops, the ones who barred me from their bathrooms unless it was to scrub their piss off the floors, the ones who refused me a lousy drink from a water fountain on the road. I can recall every one of them, just like yesterday!

CARRIE

But *she* didn't do that. *She* gave you a hand up. I'm tellin' you in plain English, not French, Pawnee or Ojibwa, what you're doin' is wrong, Josie. Treating that good woman bad cause she reminds you of those who hurt you. You made a lot of mistakes but I never been ashamed of you before. And I am now.

JOSIE

What for? Me speaking the truth? Momma, Caroline Dudley would have fired me, if I didn't deliver the goods! And that goes double for Bertha in that pigsty vaudeville of hers.

CARRIE

Bertha only helped you. And Miz Dudley, she made you a star.

JOSIE

She did not! *I made me a star!* I hear them whisper that I got to headline this revue on my back. Wrong! Nobody gets to be a star who can't stand up. I didn't scheme to take Bertha's place in the show. And I didn't ask for the newspapers to love me. It happened and I won't apologize for it. 'Cause I'm not sorry.

*COLIN enters.*

JOSIE

Paul, what are you doing here? Je suis presse!

COLIN

You've mastered the accent.

JOSIE

And I don't need *your* stick to do it. Are you here to talk me out of leaving the show?

COLIN

No, I only want us to stay friends.

JOSIE

Fine, we're friends. Now please go, mon ami. I've got to go over to the Folies to start my costume fittings.

COLIN

Au revoir, Josephine. Bonne chance. Je'tadore.

JOSIE

Yeah. Shut the door.

CARRIE

Lucky you ditched that bon shit artist. You don't need no fancy French husband sittin' in your dressin' room countin' your money, and pocketin' most of it.

JOSIE

That's never gonna happen.

CARRIE

You ain't got my crystal ball.

JOSIE

Momma, you missed your calling. Should a been a Preacher.

CARRIE

I don't always know what's good, but I sure know wicked when I sees it. Only thing *you* ever learned from some white folks is how to treat culled folks bad.

JOSIE

That's not fair. If one poor black girl can stand up for herself, and make it big in this world, other poor black girls are gonna follow her path. I'm gonna help my people to a better life – just by dancin' my dance and speakin' my mind.

CARRIE

Help your people? You? Why, you won't even help your people to a few months work. It's easy to talk of helpin' the people, but it's a damned sight harder to help one person. You're no better than that skinny street rat dancin' in front of the Piggly Wiggly, beggin' for praise and pennies, and not carin' how she got 'em. You would leave the Jones family behind her to starve in Paris with their awful jokes, and what's to become of Bertha? I'm gonna take these feathers back to wardbrobe and I'll be

back in a few minutes – to start packin for home. I’ll be leavin’ tomorrow.

JOSIE

Momma, you can’t leave me here now. I need you.

CARRIE

Josie, I been angry with you before but I never been ashamed of you as I am now. You dancin’ naked before the world means nothin’ to me – I taught you to be bold – but desertin’ friends is somehin’ you learned all by yourself. And I won’t stand by and watch that.

JOSIE (frightened)

You can’t go.

CARRIE

Honey, I don’t much care for livin’ among strangers.

JOSIE

There are so many black Americans in Paris, you could ---

CARRIE

Josie, you’re the stranger. I don’t know who you are. But I know who I am. So I can’t stay.

*Carrie exits carrying the costume to wardrobe. We see the Jones Family in a spectral dance version of Slap Happy Joneses upstage – a series of stylized poses rather than movements - as Josephine tries to avoid the sight of them – to get them out of her mind – but they stay there swaying in time to the minor key version of their signature song SLAP HAPPY JONESES until Carrie returns with her luggage in hand.*

JOSIE

Okay. Okay. Je suis une grande folle, Je suis idiot! Imbecile!

CARRIE

Girl, cut that shit and speak with the mouth you was born with.

JOSIE

I’m sayin’ I’m a damned fool. I’ll stay for the tour. I’m not leavin’ the show until I can get those three home safely and back on the Chitlin circuit.

CARRIE

What about you and the Follies?

JOSIE

*(relishing the prospect)*

They'll just have to wait for me. And trust me, they will! In fact, next year I'm gonna triple my fee at the Follies, and they are gonna pay for it. Momma, you're brilliant. I never would have thought of holding out on them myself but you figured it all out.

CARRIE

I sure did.

*(a beat as the women look at each other)*

JOSIE

Momma, you just got the best of me, didn't ya?

CARRIE

Honey, you are the best of you. And I'm real proud.

JOSIE

Are you, Momma? I waited all my life to hear that. Why'd ya always speak so mean to me? Was it 'cause my daddy left you and you had to raise me alone? Was it so hard for you washin' other folks nasty clothes?

CARRIE

No, no, no, hon, it's so simple. When you're weary and low, speaking mean to someone you love is so much goddamned fun. All I gave ya was the legs to dance with. Musta been Granny's old basket that done the rest. Why, she musta kept that African dance of yours stored in it, waitin' for the day.

JOSIE

I do love you, you know?

CARRIE

Course ya do. Why the hell do ya sound so surprised? Now I know a star when I see one and ...you...you ain't that.

JOSIE

Momma, if I'm not a star, what am I?

CARRIE

A whole beautiful constellation.

JOSIE

Momma, you're improving.

FATHER JONES

They're waitin' on ya Josie.

## CARRIE

Okay little blackbird, fly.

*CARRIE removes Josie's robe, and reveals the JOSEPHINE BAKER of legend.*

And my little bird flew so high she traveled the world– singing her song, dancing her dance, and fightin' for anyone – black or white - who needed someone to stand up for them. So brave and so beautiful. That sweet baby child of mine.

*Their finale is an anthem of freedom between a mother and a daughter. They are joined by the other members of the cast for this finale.*

**Track 15: “JOIN ME IN THE DANCE - ME JOINDRE A LA DANSE“**

## CARRIE

SHAKIN' UP THE WORLD  
BREAKIN' ALL THE RULES  
DANCIN' THRU THE NIGHT  
LET 'EM CALL US FOOLS

## MOTHER AND FATHER JONES

EVERYONE ALIVE HAS GOTTA HAVE A CHANCE  
EVERYONE ALIVE HAS GOTTA DANCE THEIR DANCE

## JOSIE

ALL THAT YOU REQUIRE  
IS ACTING LIKE YOU'RE FREE  
YOU CAN FIGHT THE FIRE  
AND FREE IS WHAT YOU'LL BE

## CARRIE

YOU GOTTA SIEZE THE DAY

## EDDIE

YOU GOTTA TAKE THE CHANCE

## TOGETHER

YOU GOTTA LEAD THE WAY  
OR YOU CAN'T DANCE YOUR DANCE

## CARRIE

YOU GOTTA SPEAK YOUR MIND

YOU GOTTA GAMBLE ALL	JOSIE
WHAT YOUR GONNA LOSE IS FEELIN' WEAK AND SMALL	EDDIE
YOU GOTTA BREAK THE MOLD IT'S EASY, FOLLOW ME	JOSIE
JUST MAKE BELIEVE YOU'RE BOLD	CARRIE
VOILA! YOU'RE BOLD AND FREE YOU GOTTA SIEZE THE DAY	JOSIE
GOTTA SIEZE THE DAY	CARRIE and ALL
YOU GOTTA TAKE THE CHANCE	JOSIE
GOTTA TAKE THE CHANCE	CARRIE and ALL
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS FATE	JOSIE
NO SUCH THING AS FATE	CARRIE and ALL
WE'RE BORN TO STAND UP STRAIGHT	JOSIE
STAND UP STRAIGHT	CARRIE and ALL
CHERI, LET'S CELEBRATE	JOSIE
LET'S CELEBRATE	CARRIE and ALL

JOSIE

HERE'S TO A **NEW** AMERICA  
A VOTRE SANTE LA FRANCE  
ME JOINDRE A LA DANSE

CARRIE and ALL

We'll JOIN YOU IN THE DANCE

JOSIE AND COMPANY

COME JOIN US IN THE DANCE

ALL

NOUS JONDRE DANS LA DANSE - COME JOIN US IN THE DANCE

*The lights come down on Josephine, leaving a spotlight on the slave basket, while we hear the music of the song Josephine Tonight.*

*Curtain Calls for all but Josephine. The two men lift the lid of the basket and JOSEPHINE emerges for her curtain call from inside the basket, rising like Venus from the sea with arms outstretched towards the world as she is joined by CARRIE in their final triumph. Here we see the Josephine Baker of legend with a feathered headdress and glamorous gown. Music: Josephine Tonight. Bows.*

CURTAIN