

# "THE JOLSON STORY"

Screenplay by  
Stephen Longstreet

Adaptation by  
Harry Chandlee & Andrew Solt

FADE IN:

OPENING TITLES

They roll up, sepia-tinted, as Jolson sings "LET ME SING AND I'M HAPPY."

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. STREET - DAY

A quaint turn-of-the-century street with horse-drawn carriages and the Capitol building in b.g.

SUPER:

"WASHINGTON, D.C.  
at the turn of the century"

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KERNAN'S THEATER - DAY

The marquee reads: "KERNAN'S BURLESQUE." Below it hangs a sign: "GORDON & WHITE'S PARISIAN NIGHTS: 20 BEAUTIFUL GIRLS." We hear the sound of the orchestra inside playing an upbeat number.

TILT DOWN to the busy sidewalk.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KERNAN'S - THE STAGE - HIGH ANGLE FROM THE BALCONY

Six girls sit on the stage, legs outstretched, in golden skirts as a seventh, with one leg raised to her shoulder, dances on one foot in front of them.

CLOSER ANGLE FROM THE BALCONY

The girls behind her do a tumble and a traveler comes down. The audience applauds.

STILL CLOSER - ANGLE OVER THE ORCHESTRA

The orchestra plays a final chord, then the traveler rises again. PAN left to where the spotlight waits.

STEVE (O.S.)  
(calling)  
Hey, over here!

THE STAGE - HIGH ANGLE FROM THE BALCONY

The spotlight swings to the right to illuminate STEVE MARTIN, a crusty Vaudeville veteran in a tuxedo and top hat. He holds a viola and plays a note.

MEDIUM SHOT - STEVE

STEVE  
Steve Martin's the name.

He plays the note again.

REVERSE ANGLE - THE BALCONY

The patrons laugh. Sitting in the second row are ASA YOELSON and ANN MURRAY, each about 13 years old and childhood friends.

THE STAGE

Steve plays and dances to a Russian song, kicking his feet out in front of him and doing tumbles.

WIDER ANGLE - OVER THE ORCHESTRA

He does one last tumble, rises to his feet and throws his arms up. His left hand reaches offstage, then returns holding a cello instead of a viola. He does a double-take and points to it with his bow.

STEVE  
It grew!

The audience laughs again. Steve walks to center-stage. A chair slides out from the wings, stopping right behind him.

STEVE  
Thank you!

MEDIUM SHOT - STEVE

sits in the chair.

STEVE  
Tell ya what I'll do. You call out  
a tune and I'll play it.

He looks around.

WIDER ANGLE ON THE STAGE

A man's voice calls out from the audience:

MAN'S VOICE  
"Stay in Your Own Backyard!"

STEVE  
It's too dirty back there!

The audience laughs. Steve raises his hat, revealing that his bangs are sewn into it. He puts the hat back on.

REVERSE ANGLE - OVER STEVE AT THE AUDIENCE

STEVE  
Any other tunes?

A MAN rises.

MAN  
"Banks of the Wabash!"

Steve begins to point at him with his right hand.

ONSTAGE

Steve points at the man with the forefinger of his left hand, which also holds the bow.

STEVE  
"Banks of the Wabash." All right.  
Now I'll tell ya what I'll do. I'll  
play it if you folks'll sing it.  
Right?  
(gestures to the  
conductor)  
The key of "C," Professor.

He puts his bow to the cello and plays a low "C." Then he starts to play "BANKS OF THE WABASH" with the orchestra, but no one sings.

He looks around disconcerted, taps the bow against the stage, stopping the orchestra, and hangs an arm over his cello.

STEVE  
So you won't sing, heh? Am I asking  
you to do me a favor?  
(points the bow at  
the audience  
I'm doing you a favor! When you  
sing, what happens? Your lungs get  
full of oxygen. It puts roses on  
your cheeks!

REVERSE ANGLE - OVER STEVE AT THE AUDIENCE

STEVE

As a matter of fact, you either sing  
out or you get out!

He points to the exit. The audience laughs.

FRONT ANGLE ON STEVE

STEVE

Now that we understand each other...

(points his bow  
at the conductor)

Let's go, professor.

He starts to play again. The orchestra joins in but, again,  
no one in the audience sings, except...

IN THE BALCONY - ASA AND ANN

Asa starts to hum the song, then he sings it.

ONSTAGE

Steve, amazed at the voice he's hearing, stops playing, rests  
his bow against the side of his cello, and looks up at the  
balcony, just listening.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa finishes the song. The audience applauds exuberantly.

ONSTAGE

Steve applauds with them.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa looks around, impressed at the reaction.

ONSTAGE

STEVE

Fine! Fine! Stand up and let the  
folks see ya!

IN THE BALCONY

Asa shakes his head, too shy for accolades.

STEVE (O.S.)

Ah, don't be bashful! Come on,  
stand right up!

ONSTAGE

Steve waves his hands in the air, goading the audience to make Asa rise.

STEVE

Come on, folks. Let's make him stand up.

The audience applauds loudly.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa rises to his feet.

STEVE (O.S.)

Attaboy!

ANGLE OVER STEVE AT THE AUDIENCE

STEVE

Let's have it again!  
(points his bow at Asa)  
Give that boy a spotlight!

IN THE BALCONY

A spotlight lands on Asa. He squints up at the glare.

STEVE (O.S.)

Professor, let's have the chorus again!

The orchestra plays the intro to "BANKS OF THE WABASH."

ONSTAGE

Steve, sitting in his chair, waves his bow around as if conducting the intro.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa sings the chorus again. Ann looks at him adoringly. He finishes with his arms outstretched. The audience erupts in applause.

ONSTAGE

Steve applauds enthusiastically.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa, almost embarrassed, sits down again. A PATRON behind him pats his shoulder.

INTERCUT - ASA IN BALCONY/STEVE ON STAGE

STEVE

What's your name?

ASA

Asa Yoelson.

STEVE

Are you in show business?

ASA

(looks at Ann and  
smiles shyly)

No, sir, I'm not.

STEVE

Where'd you learn to sing like that?

ASA

Well, I sing with my father at the  
synagogue.

STEVE

Where?

ASA

At the synago--  
(catches himself)  
The synagogue!

He suddenly looks at Ann in a panic.

MEDIUM SHOT - THE BALCONY

Asa grabs Ann's hand and they run up the steps.

WIDER ANGLE - OVER STEVE AT BALCONY

He calls to them helplessly as they keep running...

STEVE

Hey, wait a minute!  
(jumps to his feet)  
Sonny, wait a minute!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - DAY

Asa runs up a sidewalk holding his cap, Ann running behind him.

## ANGLE ON THE SYNAGOGUE

Asa reaches the front door but stops, hearing his father singing inside. He runs to a back door.

## INT. SYNAGOGUE - LONG SHOT - SAME TIME

Asa's father, CANTOR MOSES YOELSON (known as "Papa"), leads a boy chorus in a Hebrew song.

## CLOSER ON THE CHORUS

Asa enters through a back door wearing a prayer shawl and yarmulke and takes his place among the other boys.

## INTERCUT - THE YOELSON FAMILY DURING THE SONG

- MEDIUM CLOSE-UP: Papa looks at Asa sternly.
- ANGLE ON ASA (OVER PAPA'S SHOULDER): Asa starts singing harmony with his father.
- IN THE GALLERY: MRS. YOELSON (known as "Mama") looks on. She looks classically beautiful in a formal dress. She glances down at her prayer book.
- Asa continues singing harmony.
- Papa continues singing, conducting the others.
- Asa continues singing harmony.
- ANGLE OVER ASA AT PAPA: Papa sings the final phrase.
- ANGLE OVER PAPA AT ASA: Asa harmonizes the ending with him.
- CLOSE ON ASA: He sings the final note.

## DISSOLVE TO:

## INT. YOELSON APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Asa sits on the arm of a chair. Papa and Mama look on.

## PAPA

Answer me, Asa. Where were you all that time?

## CLOSER ON PAPA

## PAPA

You came like someone who was running a race. It is not good to run a race with God, Asa.

Asa remains sitting on the arm of the chair as Mama looks at him.

TWO-SHOT - ASA AND MAMA

MAMA

Where were you, Asa?

ASA

I was... singing.

ANGLE ON PAPA

PAN on him as he walks over to Asa and Mama.

PAPA

You mean you stayed home,  
practicing? Is that what you mean?

ASA

No.

PAPA

Then where were you singing? -- Stop  
cracking your knuckles.

MAMA

In the street maybe?

ASA

That's not exactly where I singing.

PAPA

Singing prayers in the street!

ASA

Well, no, not exactly.

PAPA

Exactly? Asa, you must have been  
exactly somewhere, singing exactly  
something, and for some exact  
reason.

ASA

Yes, Papa.

The doorbell rings. They all look over. Mama goes to answer the door.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR

Mama opens the door. Steve enters, holding his hat in his hand.

STEVE  
(to Mama)  
My name is Martin and I...  
(looks over and  
sees Asa)  
... I'd like to talk to you for a  
minute.

Asa looks up at Papa and back at Steve, panicked.

FOUR-SHOT

PAN on Steve as he walks over to Asa. Mama follows him.

STEVE  
Hello, Asa.  
(extends his hand to  
Papa)  
You're Cantor Yoelson. I'm Steve  
Martin.

PAPA  
(shaking his hand)  
How do you do?

STEVE  
I'm glad to know ya. Your son has a  
real voice.

PAPA  
Oh, you were at the synagogue today  
for the service.

STEVE  
Uh, me? Uh, no. I just went by  
there to find out where you live.

PAPA  
Well, then where did you hear my son  
sing?

STEVE  
At Kernan's.

MAMA  
Kernan's?

STEVE  
Yeah, the burlesque house a few  
blocks from here.

PAPA  
The burlesque theater!

STEVE

Don't you ever go there?

PAPA

No, I do not!

They all look at Asa.

STEVE

That boy's got a future in show business. You see, I've been looking for something like him for a long time. I'd like to make him a regular part of the act. You've got nothing to worry about. I'm booked solid for the season and I move on to Baltimore tonight.

ASA

Baltimore!

STEVE

Oh, I know he's pretty young, but when a boy's got a voice like that, he ought to let people hear it.

PAPA

You're right, Mister Martin. Asa will sing, but where his people have always sung.

STEVE

I know how you feel, Mister Yoelson. It's a beautiful thing to sing in church. But there's a lot to say for the theater, too. And if you're worried about my taking good care of him, why, I --

PAPA

Excuse me, Mister Martin. I think I know what's best for my son.

STEVE

(looks to Mama then  
Papa)

I was afraid that's how you would feel about it.

(to Asa)

Sorry Asa.

(to Mama and Papa)

Good night.

PAPA

Good night.

PAN on Steve as he walks to the door and lets himself out.

THREE-SHOT - PAPA, MAMA & ASA

Papa walks up behind Asa.

PAP

Asa...

(he holds Asa's  
arms from behind)

... I want your promise that you'll  
never go to that place again.

Asa cannot, does not, say anything. Mama walks up to him.

MAMA

Asa?

ASA

I can't. I -- I can't promise.

PAPA

Go to your room.

Asa walks off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ASA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He paces the floor. Suddenly he stops and looks back at the door.

He turns to his dresser, takes some items from a drawer and puts them in his pockets. Then he grabs a black cap and goes to the window.

ANGLE OVER ASA'S SHOULDER - ANN'S WINDOW

Asa does a three-note whistle. Ann walks to her window across from him; she wears pajamas and holds a book. She smiles at him.

INTERCUT - ASA AND ANN

ASA

Ann! Go downstairs and get a ladder! Put in here!

ANN

Why?

ASA  
Hurry up! Get the ladder!

Ann, puzzled, turns away, then Asa turns away putting on his cap.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON RAILROAD YARD - NIGHT

Asa, wearing his cap, runs along the tracks. The Capitol building looms in b.g.

Asa runs across some tracks and jumps onto the side of a moving freight train. PAN on the train as it moves off, to reveal a rounded sign that reads "WASHINGTON YARD LIMITS."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BALTIMORE RAILROAD YARD - DAY

Angle on a rectangular sign that says "BALTIMORE YARD LIMITS."

PAN over to the train as it comes to a halt. Asa still clings to the outside of a railroad car.

He jumps down and brushes himself off. DOLLY IN as a RAILROAD GUARD walks up to him from behind. The guard grabs his arm and walks him away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A SIGN - DAY

The sign reads: "ST. MARY'S HOME FOR BOYS."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ST. MARY'S - CORRIDOR - DAY

A priest (JOHN) walks down the hall. Following him are an Irish policeman with a thick accent (REILLY) and Asa, whom Reilly holds by the arm. Asa holds his cap in his hands. PAN on them as they pass a statue of Jesus.

ASA  
What did you bring me here for? Why  
don't you let me find Steve Martin?

REILLY  
(sniffing)  
Shush! What kind of car was that  
you jumped out of?

ASA

A cattle car. What difference does that make?

REILLY

All the difference in the world, my boy.

INT. FATHER McGEE'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME TIME

FATHER McGEE stands waiting for them, hands behind his back. Reilly escorts Asa into the room; John stands by the door.

REILLY

Here's another one, father.

Reilly takes his hat off, still holding Asa's arm, as John closes the door.

ASA

Let me go, will ya?

MCGEE

Yes, let him go, Reilly.

(Reilly obliges)

Don't mind him. He just thinks he has to behave like a policeman.

(to Reilly)

And I don't think he understands boys.

REILLY

Oh, no? I've only got seven of 'em meself.

MCGEE

That's just what I mean.

(touches Asa's elbow)

Now, suppose you tell me about yourself.

Asa sits in a chair.

MCGEE

Where are you from?

Asa looks down, saying nothing.

MCGEE

Where was he picked up at?

REILLY

In the freight yard. He came in on a cattle car. Can't ya tell?

McGee "tisks" at Asa.

MCGEE  
If you knew anything about freight  
trains, you'd never pick a cattle  
car.

ASA  
I had to get here.

MCGEE  
To Baltimore? Why?

REILLY  
He's got a job here.

MCGEE  
What kind of job?

ASA  
Singing.

MCGEE  
Singing! Where?

ASA  
In a show with Steve Martin. He's  
in Baltimore right now!

MCGEE  
What about your family? Do they  
know about this?

Asa looks down again, not answering.

McGee, with John beside him, looks down at Asa.

MCGEE  
I see. You know, before we do  
anything else, I think you'd better  
have a hot bath.  
(turning to John)  
And something to eat, John.

JOHN  
Come on, my boy.

Asa rises and faces McGee.

ASA  
Why don't you find Steve Martin and  
ask him?

MCGEE  
 (taking Asa's elbow)  
 That's just what I'll do.

McGee turns Asa toward John. DOLLY IN on them.

MCGEE  
 (continuing)  
 And since it's singing he's  
 interested in, John, why not let him  
 sing?

Asa turns back in surprise.

ASA  
 Sing?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

CLOSE ANGLE on Asa standing amidst a boy's choir. He wears a pink striped shirt, holds a lyric sheet and looks around uncomfortably, listening to the others sing "AVE MARIA" in Latin.

Finally he joins in. DOLLY BACK to show the entire choir.

INT. MCGEE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

McGee stands lighting a cigar as Steve sits across from him. The boy choir is heard in b.g.

MCGEE  
 Tell me a little more about your  
 work in the theater, Mister Martin.

STEVE  
 I've told you about all there is.  
 (rising)  
 Pardon me, father. I don't get it.  
 Why would you be bringing me here,  
 asking me all these questions? Is  
 there something you want me to do?

MCGEE  
 I'll come to the point in a little  
 while, Mister Martin.

IN THE CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Reilly leads Mama and Papa around a corner and down the hall. Papa wears a black hat. He sees the statue of Jesus. Mama gestures to him. Papa hesitantly removes his hat.

INT. McGEE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

McGee and Steve stand waiting. From outside, Reilly opens the door and Mama and Papa enter.

MCGEE  
(politely)  
Cantor Yoelson? I'm Father McGee.

They shake hands. Reilly exits, closing the door behind him.

PAPA  
How do you do?

McGee turns to Mama and shakes her hand.

MCGEE  
Misses Yoelson.

STEVE  
(looking over McGee's shoulder)  
Hello. Glad to see ya again.

MCGEE  
Oh, you know Mister Martin?

PAPA  
We know him.

MAMA  
Is our boy here?

PAPA  
The description is like Asa.

MCGEE  
I have a very strong feeling that...

The sound of Asa's voice now comes through singing above all the others. He sings in Latin.

PAPA  
So have I!

McGee leads them to the door to the chapel.

CLOSER ANGLE

McGee opens the door. DOLLY IN behind them as they enter the chapel. The choir, in front of them, continues singing.

THEIR POV - THE CHOIR

Asa, in the center of the group, keeps singing.

FOUR-SHOT - MAMA, PAPA, STEVE AND McGEE

Mama steps forward, concerned.

MAMA

Asa!

THEIR POV - THE CHOIR

keeps singing.

TWO-SHOT - MAMA AND PAPA

Mama keeps looking as Papa looks over her shoulder.

PAPA

(shaking his head)

Singing without his cap on!

TWO-SHOT - STEVE AND McGEE

McGee gives Papa a kindly look.

MCGEE

It's not so much what's on the head  
as what's in the heart, is it,  
cantor?

MAMA AND PAPA

Papa gives McGee a kindly look.

CLOSE-UP - ASA

He sings "amen," looking idly around. Suddenly his eyes land  
on something -- his parents.

FOUR-SHOT

Mama, Papa, McGee and Steve look on as Asa and the choir sing  
the penultimate "amen."

ANGLE ON THE CHOIR

The other boys sing the final "amen." The CHOIR DIRECTOR  
looks back. McGee signals to Asa. Asa steps forward.

THE FOURLOME

Asa approaches them.

ASA

Hello, Mama. Hello, Papa.  
Beautiful song, wasn't it?

They all walk into McGee's office. DOLLY IN after them.

INT. McGEE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

DOLLY BACK as Asa stops at McGee's desk and sets the lyric sheet down. McGee closes the door.

PAPA

Get ready, Asa. We're going home.

ASA

(turning to face him)  
I'll do it again, Papa. I'll run  
away. I'll find Mister Martin  
someplace.

Steve holds his hat out.

STEVE

Now wait, Asa...

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT - STEVE

His hat is at his side again.

STEVE

Don't ya understand? I wouldn't  
have you in the act if I didn't have  
your father's consent.

Asa persists.

ASA

Then I'll get in another act. I'll  
keep running away.

MAMA

What are we going to do with him?

PAPA

We'll decide that at home.

MAMA

(facing Papa)  
Maybe we should decide now, Papa.  
(to Steve)  
You said you would take very good  
care of our boy?

Asa looks on in amazement.

PAPA

You would consider this foolishness?

MAMA

I'm only asking, Papa. If Asa is going to keep running away, I have a right to ask.

MCGEE

I made inquiries about Mister Martin, and he's a man who can be trusted.

STEVE

Oh, I'm sorry I started all this trouble, cantor. And I wouldn't have anything more to do with it -- except considering how Asa feels about show business --

PAPA

Show business!

MAMA

(to Steve)

Tell me, Mister Martin. Exactly what would Asa do?

ASA

The same as I did at Kernan's, Mama. Isn't that what you mean, Mister Martin?

STEVE

Yes.

Asa sits in a chair.

ASA

You see, Mister Martin's on the stage...

(mimes bowing a cello)

... and he asks everybody to sing, but nobody does, because everybody waits for somebody else to begin.

Now...

Asa moves into a chair. McGee, Steve, Mama and Papa look on.

ASA

... I'm up in the balcony, and Mister Martin says, "Come on, folks! Join in the chorus!"

Steve sits in the chair opposite him and gestures upwards.

STEVE

Don't be bashful! All together now!

ASA

And then, all of a sudden, I stand up in the balcony and start singing!

STEVE (O.S.)

I'm dumbfounded at the kid's voice and I say...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER BALCONY - NIGHT

Asa stands in a gray suit with a gray hat in his hands. A spotlight moves onto him.

STEVE (O.S.)

... give that boy a spotlight!

Asa sings "WHEN YOU WERE SWEET SIXTEEN."

INTERCUT - STEVE

He sits in a chair onstage, playing his cello while Asa sings, then leans back and folds his arms contentedly.

When Asa finishes, the audience applauds vigorously. Asa smiles back at the people behind him in the balcony.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - MOVING - DAY

Asa, wearing a gray suit and cap, writes on the back of a postcard. Steve sits stoically beside him, arms folded.

CLOSE SHOT - THE POSTCARD

It reads:

"Dear Mama and Papa,  
Got lots of  
applause. Next  
week Philadelphia,  
Then Pittsburgh.  
Feeling fine,  
Your loving son,  
Asa Yoelson."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mama reads the postcard aloud as Papa stands, watching and smoking a cigarette, and Ann lingers in b.g.

MAMA

Next week, Philadelphia, then  
Pittsburgh. Feeling fine. Your  
loving son, Asa Yoelson.  
(looks at Papa)  
He's feeling fine.

Mama turns to a bulletin board. Nothing is posted on it.

DOLLY IN as Papa and Ann follow her. Mama pins the postcard onto the board.

PAPA

Philadelphia, Pittsburgh.  
Washington was too small for Asa.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE BULLETIN BOARD

is now covered with postcards. DOLLY IN on a postcard that says, "VIEW NORTH ON MAIN STREET."

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - ASA'S POSTCARDS

PAN across them as Asa, his face SUPERIMPOSED, sings "AFTER THE BALL." Mama and Papa comment on each card in turn:

- The first postcard is labeled, "Indianapolis."

MAMA (O.S.)  
Indianapolis.

PAPA (O.S.)  
Indians! He'll come home scalped,  
yet!

- The next reads, "Kickabock, Iowa."

MAMA (O.S.)  
Kickabock. Is this in the United  
States, Papa?

PAPA (O.S.)  
Ach! Don't be foolish!

- The next reads, "Dubuque, Iowa."

MAMA (O.S.)  
Doo-boo-kay, Iowa.

PAPA (O.S.)

Oh, no. That's pronounced "DIH-Bik," Mama.

ANN (O.S.)

Dih-BYOOK!

MAMA (O.S.)

Anyway, in Doo-boo-kay, he sang two encores.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - MOVING - DAY

Asa and Steve sit facing each other in train seats. Steve holds a book; Asa holds a pencil and note-pad.

STEVE

Now spell, uh, "tedious."

ASA

T-E-D-O-...

STEVE

Wait a minute. That's wrong. Try again. "Tedious."

ASA

You wouldn't know how to spell it if you didn't have that book in front of you!

STEVE

(glowering back)

I'm not learning, I'm teaching!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - BALCONY - NIGHT

Asa, in a dark gray jacket and tie, sings "BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON," clapping his hands together on the beats. When he gets to the word "moon," he sings it "moo-hoo-hoon."

ONSTAGE - STEVE

is dancing while he holds his cello and twirls his bow on his finger. He suddenly does a double-take. Asa resumes singing normally and Steve regains his composure and starts dancing and twirling his bow again.

## IN THE BALCONY

When Asa gets to the line "We'll be cuddling soon," he adds a jazzy "uh-huh."

## ONSTAGE - STEVE

sitting in his chair now and playing the cello, hits a sour note. He looks up at the balcony nonplussed.

## IN THE BALCONY

Asa finishes the song. The audience applauds. Asa nods back to them happily.

## ONSTAGE

Steve looks at him glowering.

DISSOLVE TO:

## BACKSTAGE - A CORRIDOR

A very grumpy Steve comes down from the wings as dancing girls head onstage.

At the same time, Asa comes down a staircase from the balcony holding a black cap.

As Asa passes Steve, Steve taps his shoulder with the bow.

STEVE

Just a minute!

DOLLY BACK as they walk down some steps and along the corridor.

STEVE

How come, all of a sudden, in the middle of the song you put in a "moo-moo?"

ASA

I thought it would be a little better that way.

STEVE

Oh. You thought it would be a little better. If the guy who wrote the song wanted to say "moo-moo," he'd write it that way.

ASA

I just get tired of singing it the same way every time, Mister Martin,  
so --

They arrive at their dressing room door. Steve gestures with the bow.

STEVE

So you thought up "moo-moo."

ASA

I didn't think it. It just came out.

STEVE

Oh. It just came out.  
(holding his bow  
out angrily)

Well don't let it come out! You sing that song just like it's written and I don't want to hear no more "moo-moos."

Steve goes into the dressing room.

ASA

Yes, sir.

STEVE (O.S.)

Heh! How do you like that!

IN THE DRESSING ROOM - STEVE

sets his cello against a wall.

STEVE

He gets tired singing it the same way, so he puts in...

(makes a face, rolls  
his eyes and snaps  
his fingers)

... "moo, moo." As if that makes any difference!

He crosses past Asa to the door and hangs up his coat.

STEVE

And another thing. You're singing it a little faster every night.

(into Asa's face)

Is that because you're tired, too?

ASA

No, sir. That's because you're  
playing it too slow.

Steve, taking off the hat with fake bangs, suddenly freezes.

STEVE

I'm playing it slow? Excuse me!  
I've only been in this business for  
thirty years -- making a very nice  
living. But maybe an old trooper  
like you oughta come down on the  
stage and have people --

ASA

Oh, I've thought about that. I  
mean, I could sing much better on  
the stage.

STEVE

You don't tell me!

ASA

Yes, because then I could sing right  
to 'em instead of the backs of their  
heads, and I could see how their  
faces looked.

STEVE

Faces?

ASA

Unless you can see the people's  
faces, it's no good at all.

STEVE

You don't say. And tell me, Mister  
Yoelson, with that spotlight shining  
right in your eyes, how ya gonna see  
faces?!

ASA

Well, that's easy. If you turn up  
all the lights in the theater, then  
they can see me and I can see them.

Steve starts to mull it over, then does another double-take  
and glares at Asa again.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mama holds a postcard, looking at it excitedly.

MAMA  
Asa in long pants!

Papa rises, smoking a cigarette, and looks over her shoulder.

THEIR POV - THE POSTCARD

It pictures Asa wearing a checkered suit and trousers and holding a hat with his arm on a chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - BALCONY - NIGHT

Asa, wearing the same suit, sings "GOODBYE MY BLUE BELL." People behind him look on smiling.

ONSTAGE

Steve dances, twirling his bow.

IN THE BALCONY

Suddenly Asa tries to hit a high note and his voice breaks.

ONSTAGE

Steve stops dancing and looks at him.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa looks back at the spectators, who laugh at him now.

ONSTAGE

Steve beckons anxiously to him to continue.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa tries again to sing but barely croaks the words out. He holds his throat. More laughter from the crowd.

In a panic, he looks behind him, then suddenly he puts his fingers into his mouth and starts to whistle -- a whistle as sharp and true as a musical instrument.

ONSTAGE

Steve looks up in awe, rises smiling and points his bow at Asa.

INTERCUT

Asa continues whistling as Steve dances merrily again.

At the end of the song, both Steve and the audience applaud wildly. Asa runs from the balcony.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM

A dejected Asa sits in a chair with Steve looking on.

STEVE

You don't want to be in the act any more?

ASA

(tears in his eyes)

No, Steve. I'm goin' home.

STEVE

Ah, don't be silly. Your voice is changing, that's all. In a couple of years you'll get it back, better than ever.

(leans over to him)

And listen. The way you pulled that whistle out of the hat, that's showmanship! Didn't you hear them applaud?

ASA

But it isn't the same.

STEVE

What isn't the same? The act's just as good as it was before!

ASA

When you whistle, their faces don't look the same.

STEVE

(throwing his arms up)

Yah, faces again!

(pacing)

This kid'll drive me crazy!

(kneels beside Asa)

Listen. I didn't say you're gonna whistle the rest of your life. Just for a while. Look.

(holds Asa's shoulders)

You know what we're gonna do? We're gonna work up some whistling routines and you're gonna work on the stage with me! What do ya think of that?

Asa looks at him like a ray of sunshine.

STEVE

And do ya know something else? Then  
you're gonna get billing! Yes, sir!  
Meet that scintillating team of  
artists, Steve Martin and Asa  
Yoelson!

(he rises, thinking)  
Asa Yoelson.

He strokes his chin.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM

Mama walks through the room reading another postcard aloud.

MAMA

Now I whistle in the act. Everyone  
seems to like it. Your loving son,  
Ah --

She stops, puzzled, and looks more closely at the card. Then she calls out.

MAMA

Papa! Asa isn't Asa any more!

PAPA

What!?

Hurrying to her side, Papa takes the postcard and looks at it. It is signed "Al Jolson of Martin and Jolson."

PAPA (O.S.)

Al Jolson?!

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - MORE OF ASA'S POSTCARDS

DOLLY IN on the bulletin board, now covered with postcards.  
DISSOLVE TO a PAN across several cards as Asa, superimposed, whistles and Mama and Papa comment as before.

- The first postcard depicts "Reno, Nevada."

MAMA (O.S.)

In Reno, Papa, he's picking up time.

PAPA (O.S.)

Is time something you can pick up?  
This is crazy!

- The next postcard reads: "Walla Walla." As we see it, Asa's image dissolves into an image of the adult Jolson.

PAPA (O.S.)  
Walla-Walla. This town they liked  
so much they named it twice!

- The next postcard reads: "Los Angeles, California."

MAMA (O.S.)  
He says he can't come home this  
summer, Papa. Maybe next spring.

The superimposed Jolson stops whistling and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mama, flanked by Papa and Ann, holds a postcard and smiles at it. Papa shakes his head in admiration.

THE POSTCARD

shows the adult Jolson posing with Steve. DOLLY IN on the image of Jolson.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CLOSE-UP OF JOLSON - NIGHT

He lies on his back in bed, hands behind his head, and hums a few bars of "WHEN YOU WERE SWEET SIXTEEN." The next line he sings:

JOLSON  
... since first I met you on the  
village green...

He stops singing and smiles, impressed with his voice.

WIDER ANGLE

Jolson throws back the covers, jumps up, hurries over to Steve's bed and slaps his bottom.

JOLSON  
Steve! Steve! Listen to this!

Jolson sits on the edge of Steve's bed.

STEVE  
(awakening)  
What's the matter? What's the  
matter?

JOLSON

Listen to this!

(resumes singing)

Come to me, for my dream of love is  
all, I love you as I loved you, when  
you were sweet, when you were sweet  
sixteen.

(speaking)

What do you think?

STEVE

Are we going into this again? In  
the middle of the night?

JOLSON

But it's getting better every time,  
Steve!

STEVE

All right, all right. It's getting  
better. I told you, let it alone.  
Give yourself time. Go away. Go  
sing in the bathroom.

JOLSON

Why not let me try?

STEVE

You mean, all of a sudden, come on  
maybe, in the middle of the act, you  
want to bust out singing?

JOLSON

Why not?

STEVE

You're daffy!

JOLSON

Why?

STEVE

We ain't changin' no act in the  
middle of the season and fall flat  
on our face! We're gonna do like I  
said. We're gonna knock off a month  
next spring!

WIDER ANGLE

Steve snuggles against his pillow.

STEVE

Won't take no! Never stops!

PAN on Jolson as he walks back to his bed.

STEVE (O.S.)  
This guy'll drive me crazy!

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER POSTCARD

It reads "CHURCHILL DOWNS, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY."

MAMA (O.S.)  
He's getting close to home! We'll  
see him soon, Papa!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Jolson and Steve walk in through the back door and turn to an OLD MAN behind a desk.

JOLSON  
Hello, Pop. How's tricks?

OLD MAN  
(standing)  
Letter for you!

He hands Jolson a letter from a cubby-hole. Jolson looks at it.

JOLSON  
Mama. Always on time.

He tears the envelope open and takes out the letter. Meanwhile we hear the stage manager (JONSIE) call out:

JONSIE (O.S.)  
Overture!

STEVE  
(looking up at where  
the voice came from)  
Come on, Al.

WIDER ANGLE

DOLLY BACK as Jolson and Steve walk up some steps and across the stage to the backstage area. Jolson reads the letter to himself.

JOLSON  
Gee, Mama's excited. Three more weeks and we go home, Steve.

STEVE

I could use a nice month's rest.

JOLSON

Ah, not a month! I don't want to stay home that long. Just a few days. Then we have to get right to work on the new act on the stuff I'm gonna sing.

STEVE

I know, I know. There'll be time. Take it easy. Just relax.

TWO-SHOT - TRACKING - JOLSON AND STEVE

DOLLY BACK as they walk off the stage and down a few steps to the corridor where the dressing rooms are. Jolson starts to hum "SWEET SIXTEEN."

STEVE

Stop arguing!

JOLSON

Just humming a little.

STEVE

When you start singing, that means you're getting ideas.

JOLSON

Well, I was thinking of something.

STEVE

Uh-oh.

JOLSON

In Nashville and Charleston, the last two dates we play, why can't I sing just one chorus of "Sweet Sixteen?"

STEVE

No.

JOLSON

Just to see how it sounds. It won't matter if I flop.

TWO GIRLS in pink dresses pass by.

ONE OF THE GIRLS

Hello, Al....

JOLSON  
(off-handedly)

Hello.

(to Steve)

Just in Charleston, then. Let me  
sing it once the last night.

They stop walking. Steve looks at Jolson.

STEVE

That little Carney kid is awful  
sweet on ya. Why don't you give her  
a tumble and get your mind on  
something else for a change? Don't  
you ever think of girls?

JOLSON

Ah, I haven't got time.

(takes Steve's arm)

Steve, all I'm asking is just one  
chance! That's all.

STEVE

Stop arguing!

BARON (O.S.)

(drunk)

Hiya, boys!

DOORWAY TO BARON'S DRESSING ROOM

TOM BARON, a Vaudeville performer, looks out into the hall at Jolson and Steve. Half of Baron's face is "blacked up" and he holds up money in both hands.

BARON

I bet the Kentucky Derby winner! I  
win a snootful!

STEVE

A snootful is right!

IN BARON'S DRESSING ROOM

Steve and Jolson step inside.

STEVE

You'd better get ready, Tom.

BARON

I got ready, boy, and I win!

They seat him in a chair in front of a mirror.

JOLSON

Tom, get yourself together. You're  
on in a little while!

BARON

I'll be there with flying colors!

CLOSER ANGLE

Tom looks down at the cash in his hands and talks to it.

STEVE

He can't go on like that! We'd  
better tell Jonsie to skip the act.  
Come on, we gotta get ready  
ourselves!

JOLSON

You get made up, Steve. I gotta try  
and pull this guy together.

STEVE

All right, but hurry up!

Steve leaves the dressing room, closing the door behind him.

Jolson pulls off his overcoat and tosses it aside. Then he pushes Baron back in the chair.

JOLSON

Tom! There's a big Derby crowd out  
there tonight! The house is packed!  
You gotta go on!

He starts patting burnt cork onto Baron's face.

INT. MARTIN/JOLSON DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

Steve hurries in, shuts the door and takes off his top-coat.

INT. BARON'S DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

BARON

I'm rarin' to g -- go!

He passes out drunk in his chair.

JOLSON

Tom! Tom! Tom!

He slaps Baron's face. Baron is dead to the world.

DOLLY IN on Jolson as he backs away. He looks into the mirror at the burnt cork on his hands, takes a towel and starts to wipe it off.

Suddenly he stops, looking at his hands again. He lifts Baron's head, puts his head against it and looks into the mirror. That settles it.

Jolson grabs Baron under the arms and turns him face-down onto his cot.

Jolson rises and takes off his coat, sits in Baron's chair, takes off his hat and looks in the mirror.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS - SAME TIME

A male acrobatic act finishes performing. The traveler comes down. The two girls in pink, holding hoops, wait in the wings to go on.

FRONT ANGLE ON THE STAGE

The orchestra plays an introduction.

ANGLE FROM BACKSTAGE

The traveler rises again and the two girls move onstage.

ANGLE ON THE STAGE

The two girls start to perform.

INT. BARON'S DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

Jolson, sitting in Baron's chair and looking into the mirror, puts on a wiry black hairpiece. He gets up, walks into b.g., takes a coat from a hook and turns forward again, revealing himself in blackface.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

The two girls keep dancing. Meanwhile, OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN and LEW DOCKSTADER take seats in a box across from them.

BACKSTAGE - SAME TIME

JONSIE, the stage manager, shields his eyes from the footlights and looks at the box. His ASSISTANT stands behind him. Jonsie sees Hammerstein and Dockstader settle into their seats.

JONSIE

Oscar Hammerstein and Lew  
Dockstader! What are they doing  
here?

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
Down for the races.

IN THE BOX

Hammerstein nudges Dockstader.

HAMMERSTEIN

Lew, why do you drag me here when we could have been playing poker?

DOCKSTADER

Anything on a stage, Oscar. I love it. I see 'em all.

INT. BARON'S DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

Jolson, in full costume and blackface, looks into the mirror and starts to put a derby hat on. A knock sounds at the door.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

You're on, Mister Baron!

JOLSON

(in a low register)

Ready!

As Tom lies comatose in f.g., Jolson puts on a hat, straightens his big black tie, looks in the mirror and smiles broadly at himself. Then he walks over to Tom and puts Tom's jacket over his shoulders.

Jolson goes to the dressing room door, unlocks and opens it. The coast is clear. He steps outside.

IN THE CORRIDOR

Jolson closes the door behind him and locks it. A SHOWGIRL in a black dress passes by. Jolson cautiously walks up the corridor and up the steps into the wings.

INT. MARTIN/JOLSON DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

Steve puts his hat on and looks back at the door.

STEVE

(calling)

Al!

BACKSTAGE

DOLLY BACK on Jolson as he walks past the assistant stage manager and Jonsie. He stops in the wings, waiting to go on.

IN THE CORRIDOR

Steve walks to the door to Baron's dressing room. He finds it locked.

STEVE  
(calling)  
Al! Tom!

Hearing no answer, he turns and heads to the wings.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

The girls in pink keep dancing. Jolson, his back to us in the wings, waits to go on.

IN THE HAMMERSTEIN/DOCKSTADER BOX

Hammerstein turns to Dockstader.

HAMMERSTEIN  
Any time you're ready to go, Lew.

IN THE WINGS

Steve rounds the corner, looking around. Jolson looks back. They see each other. Jolson looks forward again. Steve walks up to him as the music for the current act concludes.

STEVE  
Tom, are you all right, eh?

Jolson nods.

STEVE  
Where's Al?

Jolson shakes his head.

STEVE  
He was with you, wasn't he?

Jolson nods.

STEVE  
Where did he go?

Jolson shrugs.

The girls come offstage.

JONSIE (O.S.)  
All right, Tom.

Tom's music begins -- the introduction to "MA BLUSHIN' ROSIE." Steve looks at Jolson. Jolson shoots him a look back and runs onstage.

ONSTAGE

Jolson runs to center stage.

IN THE WINGS

Steve angrily gestures to Jolson to come back.

ONSTAGE

Jolson straightens his hat and tie and starts to sing the verse.

JOLSON

There's a little bunch of sweetness  
That I long to call my bride,  
And believe me, I'm not happy --  
(talks)  
But -- baby... Huh, funny thing.  
I've s-sung this song a thousand  
times, and I why I forgot it  
tonight, I don't know.

IN THE WINGS

Steve rolls his eyes skyward and covers his face.

IN THE HAMMERSTEIN/DOCKSTADER BOX

Hammerstein looks disappointedly at Dockstader, who looks at the stage with encouragement.

ONSTAGE

Jolson starts humming the melody, then sings again.

JOLSON

You'll hear me call her name.  
(talking)  
I got it now.

Jolson throws a look back at Steve then sings the rest of the song with tremendous power.

IN THE WINGS

Steve looks on as if he's watching God.

IN THE HAMMERSTEIN/DOCKSTADER BOX

Both men watch impressed.

DOCKSTADER  
Baron's developed a very nice style.  
Very nice.

Hammerstein nods happily.

ONSTAGE

Jolson finishes the song, takes off his hat and bows. The audience applauds -- among them a happy Hammerstein and Dockstader.

IN THE WINGS

Jolson runs up to Steve.

STEVE  
Al, are you nuts --

JOLSON  
Did you hear that finish?!

JONSIE  
(to Jolson)  
C'mon, Tom! Get out there!

Jonsie turns away. Jolson looks frantically at Steve.

JOLSON  
But Steve, I don't know any more of  
Tom's songs!

STEVE  
Well, take a bow and collapse! Get  
yourself off! Go on!

ONSTAGE

Jolson comes onstage again, feigns illness, holding his hat in one hand and the other hand to his forehead, and staggers back into the wings.

IN THE WINGS

Steve holds Jolson up and leads him backstage.

JONSIE  
Tom! What's the matter?

STEVE  
He's sick. Can't ya see?

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
Let me help you.

STEVE  
I'll take him back.

Steve and Jolson turn a corner. Meanwhile Jonsie signals to a stage-hand:

JONSIE  
Jimmy, get the adagio team! Hurry up!

A KID runs into frame, nods and runs off.

IN THE CORRIDOR

Steve leads Jolson down the steps into the corridor where the dressing rooms are. Suddenly they separate.

STEVE  
I'll murder you! Gimme the key to Baron's room! He could get thrown out of the business for this!

JOLSON  
But the way I sang that finish,  
Steve!

STEVE  
Gimme that key! We gotta get Tom on his feet!

Jolson hands Steve the key and Steve unlocks the door to Baron's dressing room.

IN BARON'S DRESSING ROOM

Baron sits on the edge of his cot. The door opens and Steve enters followed by Jolson. The hat is again on Jolson's head and he takes it off along with the wig.

STEVE  
(to Jolson)  
Get that make-up off!  
(to Baron)  
And you get yours on!

Baron stands up.

STEVE  
Jonsie, the stage manager, will be here in a minute to see if you died!

BARON  
I gotta go on!

Steve grabs him by the shoulders and makes him lie on the cot.

STEVE  
Get this through your head! You've  
been on! You just came off! You  
got sick and had to quit after the  
first song!

BARON  
(rising)  
I did?!

STEVE  
(pushing him down again)  
Don't you understand?

Jolson looks over from the sink where he is washing his face.

JOLSON  
You weren't on at all! You couldn't  
make it!

STEVE  
(gesturing at Jolson)  
And that idiot went on and sang for  
you!

JOLSON  
You were a big hit, Tom!

STEVE  
Shut up! I'll talk to you later!  
Get that make-up off!

IN THE CORRIDOR

Jonsie walks to Baron's dressing room door with Hammerstein and Dockstader behind him. Jonsie tries to open the door then knocks.

JONSIE  
Tom?!

IN THE DRESSING ROOM

Steve applies burnt cork to Baron's face.

STEVE  
(calling back)  
Oh, he's all right, Jonsie! Nothing  
to worry about!

IN THE CORRIDOR

JONSIE  
Mister Hammerstein and Mister  
Dockstader are here to see him!

IN THE DRESSING ROOM

Jolson turns from the mirror where he's been drying his face.

JOLSON  
Hammerstein! Dockstader!

WIDER ANGLE

Another knock sounds at the door.

JONSIE (O.S.)  
What's the matter? Let me in!

STEVE  
Just a minute!

He sets the make-up container on a table and pulls a blanket over Baron. Meanwhile Jolson reaches for a blue bathrobe and puts it on.

STEVE  
(to Baron)  
Are you all right, Tom? Did you  
hear what I told you?

JOLSON  
(leaning over him)  
See, you were a big hit, Tom!

STEVE  
Keep still!

Steve spits on his hand and wipes some burnt cork on his pant leg. Then he unlocks and opens the door, revealing Jonsie, Hammerstein and Dockstader outside. Jolson finishes tying the bathrobe around him as they enter.

STEVE  
Come in, gentlemen! He's feeling  
much better. Just a little  
indigestion.

JONSIE  
(pointing to Baron)  
Mister Baron gentlemen!... Mister  
Dockstader, Mister Hammerstein.

Hammerstein shakes Baron's hand.

HAMMERSTEIN  
I'm glad to know you, Baron. You  
were great out there tonight. Sorry  
you couldn't do more.

BARON  
Thank you, Mister Hammerstein.

JONSIE  
Oh, this is Steve Martin, gentlemen.

Jonsie leaves the room, closing the door behind him.

STEVE  
How are ya?  
(points to Jolson)  
My partner, Al Jolson.

JOLSON  
How do you do?

STEVE  
(taking his hat off)  
Martin and Jolson.

HAMMERSTEIN  
(to Baron)  
I have an idea you might do very  
well at Hammerstein's Victoria,  
Baron. If you'd consider opening  
in, say, two weeks?

TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND DOCKSTADER

As Baron and Hammerstein talk, Dockstader looks at Jolson.

BARON (O.S.)  
Well, I, uh -- I don't know, Mister  
Hammerstein. I --

JOLSON  
He doesn't know. That's wonderful.  
He gets an offer to play on  
Broadway...

Dockstader looks behind Jolson's ear.

DOCKSTADER'S POV - JOLSON

Burnt cork remains behind Jolson's ear.

JOLSON  
... and he doesn't know!

STEVE (O.S.)  
That's a great break, Tom!

DOCKSTADER

looks back and forth between Jolson and Baron as Hammerstein talks to Baron.

HAMMERSTEIN (O.S.)  
I don't carry a contract around with me, but anything will do.

TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND DOCKSTADER

DOCKSTADER  
(to Jolson)  
I'd like to talk to you.

JOLSON  
Who, me?

DOCKSTADER  
Outside.

Dockstader turns to the door; Jolson follows, bouncing a fist against his palm. Steve watches them go, then starts to follow. Meanwhile:

HAMMERSTEIN (O.S.)  
I'm certain we won't have any trouble about the terms. I say, you're going to enjoy playing my theater.

IN THE CORRIDOR

Dockstader paces to the opposite wall then looks back at Jolson.

DOCKSTADER  
What did you say your name was?

JOLSON  
Al Jolson.

DOCKSTADER  
Did you ever sing in blackface, Jolson?

Steve emerges from the dressing room.

STEVE  
Him? Never! Y'see, he -- he just whistles, Mister Dockstader.

DOCKSTADER  
Blacks up behind the ears to  
whistle, huh!

Jolson feels behind his ear.

DOCKSTADER  
You see, I've seen Baron work  
before. Hammerstein hasn't.

STEVE  
I'll go in and explain to Mister  
Hammerstein.

DOCKSTADER  
I wouldn't. Hammerstein knows what  
he's doing. And I don't tell tales.  
(to Jolson)  
And as for you, Jolson, you can join  
Dockstader's Minstrels in Saint  
Louis next week.

JOLSON  
Ya -- you don't mean it!  
(turns to Steve)  
Steve, you hear that?

STEVE  
That's from heaven, kid!

JOLSON  
(paces back then  
turns around again)  
Saint Louis next week!  
(to Steve)  
Then we have to leave the show on  
Saturday, Steve. We can fix that,  
can't we?  
(to Dockstader)  
Ah, sure we can! And there's a lot  
of new stuff we're planning to put  
in the act! We'll have it ready  
Saturday!

DOCKSTADER  
I can't use an act, Jolson. I only  
have a place for one man.

JOLSON  
Oh -- oh, you mean -- you mean you  
just want me?

STEVE

Well -- well, what did you think?  
What would I be doing with  
minstrels?

JOLSON

(to Dockstader)

Oh, well, Steve and I have been  
together a long time, and -- and  
we're working up a lot of new ideas.

STEVE

Not me. You. But this is what a  
guy like you prays for.  
Dockstader's Minstrels in one jump!

DOCKSTADER

Where you can sing your head off.

JOLSON

Oh, you mean the job calls for a  
singer?

STEVE

What are you talkin' about? What  
did you think?

JOLSON

(to Dockstader)

Oh, then I wouldn't be interested.  
See, I like whistling. Steve and I  
argue about that all the time. He  
-- he keeps wanting me to sing, but  
at heart I'm just a whistler. Only  
thing that makes me happy.

The assistant stage manager passes by.

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Martin and Jolson, five minutes!

JOLSON

Well, that's us.

(shakes Dockstader's hand)

Well, thanks a lot, Mister  
Dockstader. And if you ever need a  
whistler, let me know, will ya?

(pinches Steve's cheek)

Be with you in a minute, Steve.

Jolson walks off. DOLLY IN on Steve and Dockstader.

STEVE

When are you leaving town, Mister  
Dockstader?

DOCKSTADER  
Tomorrow evening.

STEVE  
I might drop around to your hotel in  
the morning.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Bells sound. Jolson walks down an aisle carrying his bags with a topcoat over his arm, Steve behind him. Jolson sits in a seat and Steve sits beside him, looking around.

STEVE  
I wonder what the porter did with my  
bags. They're not here.

JOLSON  
Must be on the train somewhere.

STEVE  
I'll see.

Steve walks back up the aisle, passes Dockstader and taps his shoulder. Dockstader looks at Steve and Steve looks back at him. Dockstader smiles, rises and goes to Jolson.

DOCKSTADER  
Hello, Jolson.

JOLSON  
(looking up, surprised)  
Hello, Mister Dockstader. I thought  
you were going to Saint Louis.

DOCKSTADER  
I am.  
(sits beside Jolson)  
So are you.

Jolson stares at him, thinking.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)  
All aboard!

JOLSON  
(suspicious)  
Where's Steve?

DOCKSTADER  
He's not coming.

JOLSON  
Then I'm on the wrong train!

DOCKSTADER  
(holds his shoulder)  
No, you're not. This is the right  
train. Steve wants you to go with  
me.

JOLSON  
(picks up his baggage)  
I can't do it!

Dockstader tries to block Jolson as he gets up.

DOCKSTADER  
But you're throwing away a great  
chance, Jolson!

JOLSON  
I can't, Mister Dockstader!

AT THE DOOR

A CONDUCTOR shuts the door and turns away. Jolson hurries to the door and looks outside. Steve stands there as the train leaves the platform.

JOLSON  
Steve!

He tries to open the door.

JOLSON'S POV - STEVE

holds his hands together in a gesture of "good luck."

ANGLE ON JOLSON

JOLSON  
(desperately)  
Steve!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - ONSTAGE

A troop of eight blackfaced minstrels dance onstage leaning forward, Jolson in their midst. They sing "I WANT A GIRL JUST LIKE THE GIRL THAT MARRIED DEAR OLD DAD." DOLLY IN on them.

CLOSE-UP - JOLSON

sings enthusiastically with them (but we don't hear his voice).

IN THE WINGS

Dockstader in blackface and wearing a gold top-hat nods his head with them. A stage-hand passes by in b.g.

ONSTAGE

DOLLY BACK from the minstrels as they finish their song and raise their hats in the air.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE WINGS

Dockstader, in blackface and gold top-hat, turns away from the stage. Jolson runs up and touches his elbow. The orchestra is playing "WAY DOWN UPON THE SWANEE RIVER."

JOLSON

Excuse me, Mister Dockstader. You see, it's been almost a year now --

DOCKSTADER

And you're doing fine, Jolson.  
You're making real progress. I have some ideas for you. I'm going to move you into a quartet.

JOLSON

(holds Dockstader's  
elbow again)

Well, thanks a lot, Mister Dockstader. But, you see, I had some ideas myself, and --

DOCKSTADER

(holding his hands  
behind his back)

Steve Martin said you'd break out with a rash now and then. Ideas about what?

JOLSON

Well, I mean, I wanted to talk to you about the kind of song we're singing. Same one all the time, in the same way...

DOCKSTADER

(gesturing toward the audience)

That's what they come to hear! It's a matter of tradition!

JOLSON  
But they might like something  
different.

DOCKSTADER  
My boy, minstrels have been doing  
fine for fifty years, and we take  
pride in doing it like it's always  
been done.

JOLSON  
Oh, I know that, Mister Dockstader.

DOCKSTADER  
But you've got a great point there,  
Jolson. We'll talk it over some  
time. Yes, we'll talk it over.

DISSOLVE TO:

ONSTAGE

Jolson in a quartet sings "I WANT A GIRL." DOLLY IN on Jolson  
as he sings. (This time we hear his voice.)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE DOCKSTADER'S OFFICE

Jolson stands outside a door that just says "No. 1." He  
almost knocks but turns away. Just then Dockstader emerges  
from the office smoking a cigar. Jolson turns back.

JOLSON  
Excuse me, Mister Dockstader. I've  
been looking for a chance for weeks  
to --

DOCKSTADER  
(taking the cigar from  
his mouth)  
I agree, Jolson. You've worked in  
that quartet long enough. Time you  
moved up. I'm going to give you a  
chance in a duet.

JOLSON  
Well, that would be fine, Mister  
Dockstader. But the point is, if I  
do, I'd like to try a different kind  
of song. I mean, something with a  
style that's better for me -- faster  
tempo, more rhythm. I'd like to  
look for something like that.

DOCKSTADER

Sure, sure. Talk to you about that again, Jolson. Must be some song around you'd be happy with. Must be some song.

Dockstader walks out a stage door past an OLD MAN reading a newspaper.

DISSOLVE TO:

ONSTAGE

Jolson in a duet sings "I WANT A GIRL."

IN THE WINGS

Dockstader watches in blackface and gold top-hat, nodding his head with them. The same stage-hand passes by in b.g.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THEATER BACKDOOR - NIGHT

Jolson's PARTNER walks outside followed by Jolson, both wearing straw hats.

PARTNER

Where are you going to eat?

JOLSON

I think I'll take a look at the town. I've never been in New Orleans before.

PARTNER

Don't get lost -- we've got a show tonight.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREET - NIGHT

Jolson walks down the street past vegetable vendors.

CLOSER SHOT - JOLSON

walks along disinterestedly. Suddenly he hears JAZZ MUSIC playing. He looks ahead, very interested.

ANGLE ON A DOOR

The music comes from behind the door. Jolson steps up to the door.

CLOSER ANGLE

Jolson looks in through a small window in the door.

JOLSON'S POV - THE JAZZ CLUB

BLACK MUSICIANS are playing the jazz.

REVERSE ANGLE

Jolson looks in through the window and smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - IN THE WINGS

Dockstader stands in the wings in blackface and his gold hat. An ASSISTANT walks up to him. "WAY DOWN UPON THE SWANEE RIVER" is being played in b.g.

ASSISTANT

Mister Dockstader, Jolson hasn't showed up yet.

DOCKSTADER

It's too late now, anyway. Cut the duet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

The black musicians continue to play. Jolson sits on a table-top, legs folded, listening and bouncing with the rhythm.

DOLLY IN on a trumpet player playing smoke.

Jolson sits loving it. Suddenly he takes his watch from a coat pocket and looks at it. He gets up, hurries to the door, then waves at everybody. They all wave back. He runs out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE

Dockstader walks down some steps as Jolson enters through the stage door. He runs down the stairs after him.

JOLSON

Mister Dockstader, I'm sorry! I'm late, I know.

DOCKSTADER  
It's intermission. We had to skip  
your number.

Dockstader goes into an office. Jolson follows.

INT. OFFICE - SAME TIME

JOLSON  
I -- I'm very sorry. I just forgot.  
I know that sounds crazy, but I  
heard some music tonight --  
something they call "jazz."

Dockstader goes behind the desk, sits down and looks at some papers.

JOLSON  
Some fellas just make it up as they go along. They -- they pick it out of the air! They tell me they play for weddings and funerals and...

DOCKSTADER  
(looking up, not amused)  
Funerals!

Dockstader gets up, walks to a shelf and takes an accounts book.

JOLSON  
But don't get the wrong idea!  
You've never heard anything like this! I started to sing with them. Nothing with words, because the song doesn't have any.

Dockstader sits behind the desk again.

JOLSON  
In fact, it isn't even a song. But you could make it one and get words to fit it. It just needs to be worked on a little. It's exciting. It'll make the show a hundred times better!

DOCKSTADER  
I'm happy with the show as it is, Jolson. But you aren't, are you? In fact, you never will be. You'll always be chasing something up ahead and keep forgetting your act in a little thing like a minstrel show.  
(MORE)

DOCKSTADER (cont'd)  
So maybe we ought to call it quits.  
(he rises)  
Don't you think so?

JOLSON  
Yeah, I think you're right.

DOCKSTADER  
(holding his hand out)  
Well, good luck, Jolson. I hope you  
find what you're looking for.

Jolson shakes his hand.

JOLSON  
Thanks, Mister Dockstader.

Jolson leaves the office, closing the door behind him.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Papa walks up to the bulletin board and looks at Asa's postcards. Mama looks at him through the dining room archway.

MAMA  
Papa, you're not going to start  
again tonight?

PAPA  
Can't a man ask himself questions?  
In six months, three cards. I would  
only like to understand. He leaves  
Dockstader and then no cards. Why?  
Because he did not leave Dockstader  
for a better position -- because for  
a long time he isn't working!

The doorbell rings. Papa walks the few paces to the door and opens it. There stands Jolson.

JOLSON  
Excuse me. Do you happen to be the  
Yoelsons who have a talented young  
son in show business?

PAPA  
Asa!

JOLSON  
Ah, ha-ha!

Papa kisses Jolson on both cheeks, then Mama runs up, excited.

MAMA

Oh, Asa!

She gives him hugs and kisses.

JOLSON

Yup, it's the right Yoelsons!

(he looks at her at  
arm's length)

Mama, you got younger!

MAMA

Oh, no!

PAPA

(slapping his back)

Why didn't you say you were coming?

JOLSON

Well, isn't this better? This way  
Mama's having a good cry!

MAMA

Asa, how are you?! Look at him, a  
man!

PAPA

(grabbing his hand)

Did you eat, Asa?

JOLSON

Eat? What's that?

PAPA

Well, Mama, he didn't eat!

MAMA

Didn't eat? Come on! Sit down!

Mama takes Jolson by the arm and leads him into the dining room.

MAMA

Papa and I just finished, but  
there's plenty! I've got  
everything!

She runs toward the kitchen, then turns back.

MAMA

Ooh, I've got to tell Ann! Sit  
down! Make him sit down, Papa!

Mama runs off, calling:

MAMA  
Ann Murray! Ann!

DOLLY IN as Papa unbuttons Jolson's overcoat.

PAPA  
(nervously)  
Well, why -- why is she so excited?  
(taking off the overcoat)  
What's there to be so excited about?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jolson sits eating at mid-table with Papa on one side of him and Ann on the other.

JOLSON  
Mama takes all the medals. Still  
the best cook in the United States.

Mama walks to the table holding a plate of gefilte fish.

MAMA  
After what you've been eating, by  
comparison I'm wonderful.

She slips Jolson a yarmulke as she sets the plate in front of Papa.

MAMA  
(continuing)  
Look at him. Shows you what you can  
tell from pictures. He's skin and  
bones.

Jolson smiles at the yarmulke and puts it on. Ann looks at him and grins.

PAPA  
(turning to Jolson)  
You see, Asa --  
(he stops, noticing  
the yarmulke)  
Well, that's nice, to put a cap on  
when you eat. But Asa, did you wear  
one all the time you were away?

JOLSON  
As a matter of fact, I didn't.

PAPA  
Well, for me it's not necessary.

Papa takes the yarmulke from his head.

Mama walks in with another two plates -- one large and one small -- and sets them in front of Jolson.

MAMA  
Here, gefilte fish I made this morning.

PAPA  
(folding the yarmulke)  
And horse radish, fresh grated an hour ago.

He hands Mama the yarmulke. She looks back at him.

ANN  
Look out for it, Asa. It's very strong.

JOLSON  
(looking at her)  
Who's that again? Not Ann Murray!

PAPA  
Well, of course! She grew up! And look how pretty!

JOLSON  
That's what I mean! It can't be.  
She was just a funny little girl  
with funny ribbons in her hair.

Jolson cuts the fish with his fork and dips a piece in horse radish.

PAPA  
Oh, and listen to that, Mama. And you were such a prize I suppose, huh?

MAMA  
Asa was a beautiful boy!

JOLSON  
Ah, you see?

MAMA  
Let him eat. Asa, the fish.

JOLSON  
(holding his fork up)  
Ah, I can taste this already.

He puts a red-coated bite into his mouth.

ANN  
Not too much horse radish!

JOLSON  
I don't have to worry about ---

He suddenly gags. Mama pats his back, then Ann does.

JOLSON  
Magnificent!

MAMA  
See, I knew he would like it!

Jolson wipes his eyes with his napkin.

JOLSON  
Oh, wonderful, Mama. Wonderful.  
Really the best you ever made.  
Mama, you're terrific!... Tell me,  
Papa. How's everybody been?

PAPA  
Oh, Mama and I have been well. By  
the way, do you know who came to see  
us a few weeks ago? Steve Martin.

JOLSON  
Steve? How is he?

PAPA  
I don't know. He didn't look so  
well. He said he was "picking up  
time." Is that good, Asa?

JOLSON  
If you haven't got regular booking,  
that means you're picking up  
whatever work you can get.

PAPA  
Uh-huh, uh-huh. And you? You...?

MAMA  
Eh, Papa, please. He's eating. You  
can talk business later.

PAPA  
I'm sorry.

JOLSON

It's all right, Mama. It's true,  
I've been picking up a little time  
now and then. That's all.

PAPA

(to Mama)

Uh-huh. You see?

JOLSON

Now, but wait. I could have had  
regular booking if I wanted it.

MAMA

(to Papa)

See?

JOLSON

But I've had other ideas. They  
sound a little crazy to anyone but  
me.

ANN

Like what, Asa?

JOLSON

Well, like spending most of my time  
in hotel rooms with song-writers  
whenever I met up with one. Trying  
to make songs out of music I picked  
up. Music nobody ever heard of  
before but the only kind I want to  
sing.

PAPA

Is this music so peculiar?

JOLSON

You sing it all the time, Papa.

PAPA

You want to sing prayers on the  
stage?

JOLSON

No-no-no, just the feeling in  
prayers. That's what's in the  
people I got it from and that's  
what's in their music, even when  
it's fast and happy. But they tell  
me it won't go, Papa. It's never  
been done. In fact I'll tell you a  
secret. They say your son's a  
little crazy.

PAPA

Well, Mama, our son is a little crazy. But what can we do? He is our boy. We have got to love him. But about crazy people, Asa, it's -- it's very funny. You see, once they prove they are right, they are suddenly great people.

Ann smiles.

The phone rings.

MAMA

I'll go. Eat, Asa.

DOLLY BACK as Mama walks into the living room.

MAMA

(answering the phone)

Hello?... Yes?... New York...?  
Hello, hello. Yes?... Who?...  
Al?... Oh, Asa! Asa is right here!  
Yes. And who is this, please?...  
Baron...?

JOLSON

(walking up to her)

Baron?

MAMA

(handing him the phone)

A mister Tom Baron.

JOLSON

(into the phone)

Hello, Tom? How are ya? Where'd you drop from? How'd you know I was here?

INT. BARON'S OFFICE (WINTER GARDEN) - SAME TIME

BARON

Got your home address from an agency. It's about this, Al. You remember that contract with Hammerstein? Huh? Well, I was so bad that he paid me off if I'd stop singing. That's how it happens I'm managing the new Winter Garden Theater. I've got you to thank for the whole thing. And look, my friend, we open in three weeks, and there's a spot in the show for you if you want it!

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

JOLSON

If I want it?!  
(sitting, dazzled)  
Winter Garden...

Mama and Papa look on.

JOLSON

Yeah... Yes, I heard you, Tom. It's just a spot, but -- but Broadway! Except, tell me, Tom. What do I do? I mean, exactly what do I sing?

BARON

Well, I don't know. Any one of the songs that's been written for the show.

JOLSON

Why can't I pick my own, Tom?... Well, not exactly my own. I mean, it's stuff I picked up. Terrific songs. They just need to be polished up by somebody good in New York. Wouldn't take more than a week.

IN BARON'S OFFICE

BARON

(on the phone)  
They're terrific but not written yet?!

IN THE YOELSON LIVING ROOM

JOLSON

But what's the good, Tom, if it doesn't help the show and if I can't do what I can do. I don't care if it's the biggest show in the world! I'd rather pass it up!

Mama and Papa look at him, concerned.

JOLSON

Let me bring the stuff on and help me get it into shape... Ya, you will? Ah, you're marvelous!... Yeah. Why, I can leave right away. I'll be on that train in an hour!

PAPA  
He just came home!

JOLSON  
Right, Tom. The minute I get there!

Jolson hangs up and picks Mama up by the waist.

JOLSON  
Ah, ha ha!

PAPA  
Asa, you're leaving?

JOLSON  
Just right next door, Papa. New York! I'll be back!

He picks Ann up by the waist.

JOLSON  
Ah, honey! What a break this is!  
New York! Broadway! Winter Garden,  
here I come!

IN BARON'S OFFICE

BARON  
(putting a cigar  
into his mouth)  
How do you like that! It's gotta be  
his own song, and his own way of  
singing it!

DOLLY BACK to reveal Steve sitting in a chair across from Baron's desk.

STEVE  
Hasn't changed a day.  
(rising)  
Thanks a lot, Tom. Don't tell him I  
had anything to do with it.

BARON  
This could turn out to be a pack of  
trouble!

STEVE  
(heading for the door)  
Al? Trouble? Can't imagine what  
you mean!

Baron plugs the cigar into his mouth then does a double-take at Steve.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN THEATER - MARQUEE - NIGHT

DOLLY IN on a lighted sign that reads:

"WINTER GARDEN  
OPENING TONIGHT  
GABY DESLYS  
IN  
VERA VIOLETTA"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - BACKSTAGE - SAME TIME

Jolson stands waiting in the wings to go on. He is in blackface and wears a dark suit and over-sized bow tie. Dancing girls in red, white and blue are onstage.

THE AUDIENCE

looks on nonchalantly.

BACKSTAGE

STAGE MANAGER  
Show's running too long.  
(looks at his watch)  
It's almost eleven now. Who's on next?

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
(pointing)  
Jolson.

STAGE MANAGER  
Well, cut Jolson out and jump to the finish.

JOLSON  
Hey, wait a minute!

STAGE MANAGER  
Phone the orchestra leader. Tell him we're cutting the Jolson number.

JOLSON  
Look, I wanna go on!

STAGE MANAGER  
Finale.

JOLSON  
Where's Baron? Ask Tom Baron!

STAGE MANAGER  
Baron isn't running this end of it,  
I am!

The assistant stage manager gets on the phone. Jolson runs onstage.

ASSISTANT TO THE ASSISTANT  
(grabbing Jolson's arm)  
Hold it! You're not on!

JOLSON  
(breaking free)  
That's what you think!

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
(on phone)  
We're cutting the Jolson number.

THE CURTAINS

part and Jolson sticks his head out.

JOLSON  
I'm next, folks! Ha-ha! You lucky people!

CONDUCTOR  
(on phone)  
But he's here, right in front of me!

BACKSTAGE

The assistant stage manager does a double-take.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
(to the conductor)  
Oscar, what are you doin' with that phone? This is no time to call up women!

The audience laughs. Meanwhile:

CONDUCTOR  
(on the phone)  
I can't get up there and pull him off!

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
Close the curtains on him!

JOLSON

Oscar, if you insist on phonin', get  
one for me, huh?

The curtains close. Steve, sitting in the balcony, looks on puzzled.

ONSTAGE

Jolson parts the curtains and steps onstage again.

JOLSON

Hello, Oscar. Remember me? Jolson.  
(gestures to the wings)  
Now, boys, take it easy!

The stage manager and his assistant glower back at Jolson.

JOLSON

Next thing you know, they'll turn  
out the lights on me, but I wouldn't  
mind that! Professor, my song, if  
ya please!

The orchestra plays the intro to "MY MAMMY."

JOLSON

Settle back, folks. You ain't heard  
nothin' yet!

IN THE AUDIENCE

Steve alone claps his hands. The people around him look at him like he's crazy and he quickly stops.

ONSTAGE

Jolson sings "MY MAMMY." As he wins over the audience, the stage managers look at him in awe.

Mid-song, Jolson gets down on one knee and fully emotes.

He ends the song standing and flinging his hands into the air. The audience gives him a standing ovation. Steve looks around overjoyed for him. Jolson waves to the audience.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A NEWSPAPER RACK - DAY

Jolson pulls a "VARIETY" off the rack. DOLLY IN as he circles the sub-headline: "Al Jolson, Mammy Singer, Surprise Smash."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON DINING ROOM - DAY

Mama looks over Papa's shoulder at the sub-headline.

MAMA  
Asa smashed something?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BILLBOARD

DOLLY IN. It reads: "GABY DESLYS WITH AL JOLSON."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT

It reads: "GABY DESLYS WITH AL JOLSON IN VERA VIOLETTA."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BILLBOARD

DOLLY IN. It reads: "AL JOLSON WITH GABY DESLYS."

CUT TO:

A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE

It reads: "ALL RECORDS. SHOW CONTINUES TO PACK THEM IN. JOLSON STILL SETS PACE, PLAYING TO STANDEES AT EVERY PERFORMANCE." TILT DOWN to the bottom corner of the page. There, a box reads: "STEVE MARTIN AND HIS CELLO AT LIBERTY."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Jolson pats his face with a towel. Baron enters, reflected in Jolson's mirror.

BARON  
That actor you wanted to interview  
for the new show. Wanna see him  
now?

JOLSON  
(dourly)  
Send him in.

Jolson winks to Baron in the mirror. Baron opens the door further. Steve enters the dressing room, holding his hat in his hand.

Jolson gets up and shakes his hand.

JOLSON

Hello, Steve. Haven't seen you in a long time. How have you been?

STEVE

Fine. Glad to see you, Al.

JOLSON

Sit down. Just cleaning up.

Jolson sits again. Steve walks up behind him as Baron watches.

STEVE

Look, about this part, Al. It's nice of you to think of me. But it might not be right. You see, I'm considering a few other things...

JOLSON

Sure, sure. I realize that. But you see, it's like this, Steve. I've sort of clicked on Broadway, and things are kinda piling up on me. Music contracts, record making, sheet music.

BARON

And now we're putting together a new show -- starring Al.

JOLSON

It's a great show, Steve. You should hear the songs. We go into rehearsal next week.

STEVE

Yeah, but, what's this got to do with the part?

JOLSON

I'm telling you the part. I need a man who knows show business. I need a man to move in and help me run this career of mine. I need a manager. What do you say?

Steve rises petulantly.

STEVE

That's a nice part, Mister Jolson, but not in my line.

JOLSON

(rising)

Ha-ha! Steve, you old dog! You  
got to do it! I need ya! Been  
lookin' all over for ya!

STEVE

Quit kidding. You've got Tom.

BARON

I got all I can do to run the show!  
Somebody's gotta run Al!

JOLSON

Come on! Say you'll ride along with  
me, Steve!

STEVE

At my age, ride on a comet?

JOLSON

Tom, meet my new manager. Mister  
Steve Martin!

BARON

(shaking Steve's hand)  
Great pleasure, Mister Martin!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BILLBOARD - NIGHT

DOLLY IN. It reads: "HONEYMOON EXPRESS - OPENING TONIGHT -  
STARRING AL JOLSON."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

Jolson, in blackface, sings "I'M SITTIN' ON TOP OF THE WORLD." He wears his standard costume of black suit and oversized black ribbon bow-tie. The second half of the song is presented in a single close-up without editing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Papa paces, looking at his watch. Mama and Ann look on.

PAPA

Twenty minutes to twelve. Why  
doesn't he phone?

ANN

The show isn't over yet, that's all.

MAMA

So what are you worried about?

PAPA

Mama, when will you learn about show business?

(he picks up a Variety  
and slaps it)

Running time is everything. You can have a smash show, but if it's too long, it can take a nose-dive.

(shrugs)

Happens all the time.

He looks at his watch again. Mama looks at Ann.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

Jolson talks to a Southern damsel (SALLY) who sits on a chair weeping. A traveler behind them shows a Southern plantation.

JOLSON

What's the matter, Miss Sally? Just tell your old Uncle Gus everything. It can't be as bad as all that.

IN THE WINGS (STAGE RIGHT)

Steve, Baron and the assistant stage manager signal urgently to Jolson to look at his watch.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

revealing Jolson and Sally center-stage and, in the stage-left wings, the leading man, HENRY -- a Southern gentleman in a frock coat and top-hat.

SALLY

Henry will never believe I love him and not Lester.

IN THE WINGS (STAGE RIGHT)

Steve, Baron and the assistant keep signaling to Jolson.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

Jolson sees them and takes a pocket watch from his coat pocket as he continues the scene.

JOLSON

Look. Well, why don't you just  
explain it to Henry?

SALLY

He won't even listen to me.

JOLSON

(looking at the watch)  
He won't, huh

SALLY

No.

Jolson looks at the audience, smiles and points to the watch.

JOLSON

Well, honey, Henry had better listen  
pretty soon, or this show is going  
to run till one o'clock!

The audience laughs.

IN THE WINGS (STAGE RIGHT)

Steve, Baron and the assistant look on dumbfounded as Jolson continues:

JOLSON (O.S.)

A lot of these folks live in  
Brooklyn. They gotta catch a train.

The audience laughs again.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON

Y'see, he really loves her, and she  
really loves him, and it comes out  
all right, anyway. So --

(calling into the wings)

Well, Henry, will you please come  
out here and tell her you love her  
so we can get to the finale?!

The audience applauds.

JOLSON

C'mon, Henry. C'mon out.

Jolson takes Henry's hand, leads him onstage and stops him just  
in front of Sally. Henry takes off his hat.

JOLSON  
(to the audience)  
You remember Henry!  
(to the actors)  
Well, go ahead, kids. Do your  
stuff.

Henry and Sally start to kiss. Jolson pushes between them, sending them apart.

JOLSON  
That's enough. Besides, you're  
gettin' paid.

Jolson moves toward stage-right rubbing his gloved hands together.

JOLSON  
Well, now that we got that set...  
(gestures backstage)  
Take this curtain up!

IN THE WINGS (STAGE-RIGHT)

Steve looks on mutely as Baron reacts.

BARON  
Has he lost his mind?

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
Go ahead, take it up!

The traveler rises. Jolson passes under it to the main stage where actors scatter in panic.

JOLSON  
Hello, kids. How are ya? -- Whoa,  
wait! Wait a minute! Hold it!  
Don't go!

The audience laughs and applauds.

Jolson gestures to the company to sit on a set of steps.

JOLSON  
Don't mind the customers. Do like I  
tell ya. Everybody, come back and  
sit down.

IN THE WINGS (STAGE-RIGHT)

Baron gives Steve an odd look.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

JOLSON

Anyway, kids. You're tired and this  
may go for a long time.

ANGLE OVER JOLSON AT THE AUDIENCE

A panoramic shot of the audience. Jolson steps to the footlights.

JOLSON

Because I think I've got another  
dozen songs in me and I'm rarin' to  
go!

The audience applauds. Only the first few rows are illuminated by stage light; the rest of the house is dark.

MEDIUM SHOT - JOLSON

The entire chorus sits behind him now. He holds his hands up for quiet.

JOLSON

Wait a minute! I've made up my mind. If I'm gonna sing to ya, I wanna see ya!

(calling backstage)

Steve, tell the electrician to turn up the lights!

IN THE WINGS

The startled ELECTRICIAN doesn't react. Steve looks at him.

STEVE

Well, go ahead!

MEDIUM SHOT - JOLSON

JOLSON

(still calling backstage)

All the house lights -- every one of them!

IN THE WINGS

BARON

Houselights? Why?

STEVE  
How else ya gonna see faces?

Baron does a double-take at him.

ANGLE OVER JOLSON AT THE AUDIENCE

The houselights come on, illuminating the entire audience, including the balcony.

JOLSON  
Well, now. That's more like it.

MEDIUM-SHOT - JOLSON

JOLSON  
I've been waitin' for this a long time! Professor, "You Made Me Love You." And if that ain't a song cue, I never heard one.

SERIES OF SHOTS - INTRO

- As the orchestra plays the intro, the audience looks on and laughs at Jolson's most recent line.

- In the wings, Steve and Baron look on smiling.

CLOSE-UP - JOLSON

He sings "YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU" all in a single close-up without cutting.

As he sings, DOLLY IN slightly on his face and FADE IN a SUPERIMPOSITION of a PAN across the audience. Each patron looks on happily. Then FADE OUT the super and DOLLY BACK slightly from Jolson's face as he finishes.

At the end of the song he throws his head back, smiling.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

VARIETY

DOLLY IN on a headline: "HONEYMOON EXPRESS STILL SOCKO IN 40th WEEK." Below it is a sub-headline: "JOLSON'S WINTER GARDEN SHOW CONTINUES TO BE LEADER DESPITE NEW ARRIVALS."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM

Papa holds a Variety, reading enthusiastically.

PAPA  
 Beginning of the second year and  
 still socko, Mama!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - BACK OF THE HOUSE - DAY

Jolson stands with Steve and Baron looking across the auditorium. Jolson gestures.

JOLSON  
 I want to get way past those  
 footlights and a lot closer to the  
 audience! I want a runway from the  
 stage running right down the center  
 of the house! Then I can sing right  
 at him!

BARON  
 Al! You put a thing like that up,  
 you'll lose a hundred seats every  
 performance!

JOLSON  
 And your show has twice as long a  
 run at sheer profit! Now, look,  
 right down here...

He motions to the placement of the runway as we hear the intro to "SWANEE."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - NIGHT

Jolson performs "SWANEE" on the runway. (The real Al Jolson is in this three-shot sequence.)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Papa reads aloud from Variety.

PAPA  
 "'Robinson Crusoe,' after two years,  
 still sockeroo!"

MAMA  
 What is sockeroo, Papa?

PAPA  
 Sockeroo, Mama? It's double socko.

MAMA

Ooh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Steve sits writing at a paper-filled desk as Baron paces nearby.

BARON

Take a big Broadway show like this  
on tour? Drag it all over the  
country? Into tank towns? Al's out  
of his mind! It's never been done!

STEVE

Neither was lighting up the  
audience, or runways.

BARON

But why this Steve?

STEVE

Because it's a brand new audience,  
he says. Millions of 'em -- people  
who never saw a Broadway show and  
never heard him sing.

Baron throws him an irritated arm wave.

MEDIUM SHOT - STEVE

STEVE

But you go ahead, Tom. Talk him out  
of it!

BARON (O.S.)

I will!

Steve looks off as we hear a door close.

DISSOLVE TO:

VARIETY

DOLLY IN on the headline: "JOLSON WILL TOUR U.S." Below it, a sub-headline reads: "Singing Star Blazes New Trail in Show Business."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

It races along as we hear Jolson sing "TOOT TOOT Tootsie GOOD BYE." As the song continues, DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - MAMA'S SCRAP BOOK

In an angle over Mama's shoulder, she sits at the dining room table turning pages in a scrapbook, looking at a series of newspaper clippings about Jolson. (There are also clippings on the backs of pages but these are not clearly shown.) DOLLY IN on the scrapbook. The headlines:

- In Variety: "JOLSON PHENOMENAL AS HE TOURS STICKS," with a picture of Jolson singing in blackface.
- In the Philadelphia Gazette Journal: "JOLSON STARTS NATION WIDE TOUR TONIGHT AT BIJOU THEATER," with a picture of Jolson singing without make-up. A sidebar story adds: "BROADWAY SHOW GREAT SUCCESS."
- In the Chicago Record: "WINDY CITY ROARS WELCOME TO JOLSON," with a portrait of Jolson without make-up. A side-bar story adds: "JOLSON SHOW SLATED TONIGHT."
- In the Kansas City Times: "K.C. OPERA HOUSE A SELL-OUT FOR AL JOLSON", with two pictures of him performing -- one in blackface, the other not. A side-bar story adds: "JOLSON ON TOUR GREAT SUCCESS."
- In The Des Moines Dispatch: "JOLSON IN TOWN," with two pictures of Jolson performing in blackface.
- In the Lincoln Gazette: "TOWN TURNS OUT FOR JOLSON," with two pictures of him performing -- one in blackface, the other not.
- In the Cheyenne Globe Times: "JOLSON DAY IN CHEYENNE," with two pictures of him performing -- one in blackface, the other not.
- In the Spokane Sentinel: "FIRST BROADWAY SHOW VISITS NORTHWEST," with two pictures of Jolson performing in blackface.
- In the Seattle Transcript Journal: "AL'S HERE! THEATER GOERS GET TREAT," with two pictures of Jolson performing, one in blackface, the other not. A side-bar story adds: "INNOVATION IN ENTERTAINMENT."

DISSOLVE TO:

- In the Denver Examiner: "AL JOLSON'S SHOW A SELLOUT," with a picture of him performing in blackface.

- In the Fort Worth Blade: "TEXANS PUT ON SHOW TO WELCOME AL JOLSON," with a picture of him performing without make-up. Two side-bar headlines read: "AL JOLSON AMAZES" and "SINGER CAPTIVATES THE SOUTH."

- In the New Orleans Recorder: "JOLSON AND EXTRAVAGANZA IN TOWN," with a portrait of Jolson and a picture of him performing in blackface. A side-bar story adds: "TONIGHT JOLSON."

- In the Memphis Star: "MAMMY SINGER CAPTIVATES THE SOUTH," with a picture of Jolson performing in blackface. A side-bar headline adds: "WELCOME AL JOLSON."

The song ends.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

PAN on it at it races by, then hold on the side of a passing car.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING CAR - DAY - SAME TIME

A WAITER walks away from their table. Jolson has his legs up, reading a script. Steve is reading a letter.

STEVE

Here's a laugh, Al. Some boys at the club were saying, why don't you give Sunday night concerts so actors and people in show business will get a chance to see you perform. How d'ya like that?

Jolson looks up enthralled.

JOLSON

Why, it's the most exciting audience in the world! That's a great idea! Make a note of it, Steve. Tell Tom to arrange it!

STEVE

Wait! The minute we get back to New York, you wanna start right to work on the new show. Without even a day's rest!

JOLSON

So what?

STEVE

So pretty soon you're doin' eight performances a week again -- like you've done steady for five years. And now you want to add an extra show on Sunday.

(pointing at him)

That's a short-cut to the morgue.

JOLSON

Sweetheart, what you like doing keeps you healthy.

STEVE

Oh, I know you'd rather sing to a live face than eat. But I call this winding up with nothing for yourself. I'm talking about some life outside of a theater.

JOLSON

(looking up)

Like what?

STEVE

Like slowing down a little and having some other kind of fun -- like a family. Like some girl.

JOLSON

Don't worry, pal. There's always been a girl. Look, when do we play Washington?

STEVE

Two weeks.

JOLSON

The night we open there, let's make it a real celebration. Get a box for Mama and Papa, and Ann Murray and her folks, and tell Papa to bring the president.

STEVE

Of the United States?

JOLSON

No, the synagogue.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - BOX SEATS - NIGHT

Mama and Papa sit together in the box. Beside them sit Ann and an unknown, well-dressed male (ROY ANDERSON). Behind them sit MR. SAMUELS, the president of the synagogue, and MR. AND MRS. MURRAY. (Papa doesn't wear his yarmulke.)

DOLLY BACK as the intro plays to "THE SPANIARD THE BLIGHTED MY LIFE."

WIDE SHOT - THE STAGE

Jolson makes a grand entrance dressed as a Spaniard riding on a flower cart pulled by a donkey, and surrounded by dancing girls.

JOLSON  
(singing out)  
Hamburgers! Hamburgers!  
Hamburgers!

The chorus lifts Jolson atop the cart and he sings "THE SPANIARD THAT BLIGHTED MY LIFE."

In the middle of the song he does a comedy bit with a FLUTE PLAYER, who keeps trying to make him sing higher. Finally Jolson sings some nonsense words with him then adds:

JOLSON  
One of us should have stayed home!

In the meantime, Steve, standing in the wings, looks up at the balcony and sees Roy sitting with Ann. A look of concern crosses Steve's face.

When the song ends, two male dancers raise Jolson aloft as everyone sings "Ole!" The audience applauds.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Jolson greets Mama and Papa in the entryway. Behind them are Ann's parents. Jolson shakes everyone's hands.

PAPA  
A Spaniard all of a sudden!

JOLSON  
Mister and Misses Murray, glad  
you're here.

MR. MURRAY  
You were great. I enjoyed you very  
much.

Jolson turns to Mr. Samuels and shakes his hand.

JOLSON  
Mr. Samuels, how are you?

DOLLY IN as Jolson talks to Mama and Papa.

JOLSON  
Well, how'd you like it?

PAPA  
When I sing in the synagogue, I  
never get applause like that.

JOLSON  
(patting Papa's shoulder)  
Papa, if you want to get ahead  
singing, you've got to have Steve  
manage your affairs.

They all laugh.

MAMA  
Asa, you look thin. You need a  
rest.

Steve looks back from a tray of hors d'oeuvres.

STEVE  
Rest? There's a new show coming up,  
and now a performance every Sunday  
night.

MAMA  
Sunday nights, too?

JOLSON  
By popular request, Mama. Don't  
worry about it, honey.  
(looks up)  
Ann!

Jolson walks over to greet Anne and Roy coming in through the doorway.

ANN  
Al, it was marvelous.

JOLSON  
Gee, I'm glad to see you, Ann.  
(notices the other man)  
Say, I know him.

ANN

That's Roy Anderson, Al. He was in school with us.

JOLSON

(shaking his hand)

Sure. Hello, Roy.

ROY

How are ya, Al?

ANN

We're going to be married next month, Al.

CLOSE-UP - JOLSON

He tries not to let his anguish show.

CLOSE-UP - STEVE

looks up, knowing Jolson hurts.

JOLSON (O.S.)

You and Roy?

ANN (O.S.)

Uh-huh.

CLOSE-UP - JOLSON

as it sinks in:

JOLSON

Well, what d'ya know.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT

It reads:

"WINTER GARDEN  
AL JOLSON  
IN SINBAD"

Below that (not lit up) are the words, "SUNDAY NIGHT CONCERT." And below that hangs a banner that reads, "OPENING TONIGHT."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

DOLLY IN on the poster which reads, "SINBAD - 28th WEEK - AL JOLSON."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POSTER - NIGHT

DOLLY IN on the same poster but it now reads: "94th Week."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT

DOLLY OUT from a banner that says "OPENING TONIGHT" to reveal the marquee above it:

"WINTER GARDEN  
AL JOLSON  
IN  
BOMBO"

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

Jolson and his name are pictured and the poster bears the words "97th WEEK."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT

The marquee reads:

"WINTER GARDEN  
AL JOLSON  
IN  
BIG BOY  
OPENING TONIGHT"

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SAME MARQUEE - NIGHT

but now it says "75th WEEK."

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SAME MARQUEE - NIGHT

Now it says "102nd WEEK."

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SAME MARQUEE - NIGHT

Now it says "3rd YEAR."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Steve leans against a wall puffing a cigar as DICK GLENN, a Hollywood producer, pitches a movie to him.

GLENN

We've been experimenting with talking picture for years. We know it'll work. But we want a star in our first sound picture.

STEVE

But why Al?

GLENN

Well, that's logical. He's the biggest singing star in the country and he's led the way in show business ever since he began.

STEVE

So Al should risk his career on a newfangled invention like this. What if this thing is a flop?

GLENN

With Jolson, we don't think it will be.

Jolson enters through an archway with a VALET.

STEVE

Even so, before Al goes into anything like this, he's gonna knock off for a year and rest.

JOLSON

Ha-hah! How many people do you figure see a good movie, Mr. Glenn?

GLENN

Fifty million in this country alone.

JOLSON

And the rest of the world besides, huh? Never was an audience like that in history, Steve.

The valet helps Jolson into his jacket and brushes it off.

STEVE

That may be true, Al, but --

JOLSON

It's an audience that never saw a live show. People in small towns who can afford a movie where they can't afford anything else. An audience of millions. And I'd be singing to every one of them at the same time.

From O.S., music starts to play.

JOLSON

That's really something!

STAGE HAND (O.S.)

Ready for the finale, Mister Jolson!

JOLSON

(heading out the door)

Stick around, Mister Glenn. We'll talk about it later.

PAN on Jolson as he leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

VARIETY

DOLLY IN on a headline: "RUMOR AL JOLSON WILL MAKE THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE." Below that, a sub-headline reads: "BROADWAY STAR TO GAMBLE ON NEW INVENTION."

CUT TO:

INT. YOELSON DINING ROOM - DAY

Papa reads Variety as Mama sips tea.

MAMA

Pictures that talk? Is that possible, Papa?

PAPA

Well, certainly. It's just... a new invention.

MAMA

But tell me, exactly, how does this work?

PAPA

Well, uh...

He motions with his hands as if forming a shape, then gives up.

PAPA

Well, it's very complicated, Mama.  
You wouldn't understand it.

He looks at the paper then glances up at her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

It reads:

"TONIGHT  
SUNDAY CONCERT  
WITH  
AL JOLSON"

DOLLY IN on the poster.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATER - NIGHT

The orchestra plays "MAMMY."

IN THE BACK OF THE HOUSE

Jolson shakes hands with Glenn as Steve and Baron look on, both of them in tuxedos. Jolson wears a suit.

GLENN

Well, Al, "The Jazz Singer" is all set. All that's left to do is to make the announcement.

STEVE

Al, there's your music!

JOLSON

Announcement? There's only one place to make the announcement!

He pulls off his overcoat and hat, slings the coat over his arm and strides onto the runway.

IN THE AUDITORIUM

PAN on Jolson as he walks down the runway and greets people.

JOLSON

Hi, folks. Hello, Jerry!

WIDER ANGLE

showing the entire house. Jolson continues down the runway.

JOLSON

Show people are crazy. You work in  
the theater all week long, and on  
Sundays you come here. Well, I'm  
crazy, too.

ONSTAGE

Jolson arrives on the stage.

JOLSON

Tonight, folks, I'm only gonna sing  
two thousand songs -- one to a  
customer. I should live so long!

He tosses his coat and hat to someone in the orchestra.

JOLSON

Hold this, will you, Henry?... Sorry  
I'm late tonight, folks, but we were  
discussing a little business deal in  
the back of the house. As a matter  
of fact, I'm gonna tell ya about it  
right now. Y'see, tomorrow I leave  
for Hollywood. I'm going into what  
they call "talking pictures."  
Don't know what's gonna happen to me  
-- but if I want to come back,  
you'll let me, won't you?

The audience applauds.

JOLSON

Thanks, I'll remember that. So this  
is a kind of a farewell. If you  
don't mind, I'll -- I'll sing till  
you ask me to stop! You ain't heard  
nothin' yet!

More applause. Jolson notices someone in the audience.

JOLSON

Well, I see a rival producer sitting  
down front.

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE

FLORENCE ZIEGFELD sits in the second row with a pretty redhead  
-- JULIE BENSON.

JOLSON (O.S.)  
Mr. Ziegfeld. Ziggy, will you stand  
up and take a bow?

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
Try and stop him!

IN THE AUDIENCE

Ziegfeld rises and turns to the audience. They applaud.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
Not too much, folks. Not too much.

He suddenly catches himself, looking into the audience again.

CLOSE SHOT - JULIE

She looks up smiling at him.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
Say, Ziggy, who's that pretty gal  
with you?

IN THE AUDIENCE

Julie glances down diffidently. Ziegfeld rises again.

ZIEGFELD  
This is Julie Benson, the star of my  
next production, "Show Girl."

He points to her and the audience applauds.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
(leading forward)  
Mr. Ziegfeld, you will please not  
advertise on my time.

IN THE AUDIENCE

The audience laughs. Ziegfeld smiles and sits again.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON  
Glad to know you, Miss Benson.

She nods courteously to him.

JOLSON

Look, I'm giving a little farewell party up at my place tonight, Miss Benson. I don't live very far from here. You can bring Mister Ziegfeld along.

Julie and Ziegfeld laugh.

JOLSON

(to the audience)

Well, what'll it be?

MAN CALLING OUT

"Swanee!"

ANOTHER MAN CALLING OUT

"Rock-a-Bye!"

JOLSON

(holding his hands up)

Wait a second! Hold it! I don't care what you mugs want! I want to know what Miss Benson would like to hear.

Julie sits thinking and glances at Ziegfeld. Jolson steps onto the runway.

JOLSON

Miss Benson, what is your pleasure?

JULIE

(after a moment)

"April Showers."

The audience applauds.

JOLSON

"April Showers."

(to the conductor)

Let's not keep the lady waiting,  
Henry.

The orchestra plays the intro to "APRIL SHOWERS."

ON THE RUNWAY

Jolson sits across from Julie on the runway, singing right to her. After the first line ("Though April showers may come your way") he adds, "Just for you. Just for you." She is amused at first, but then looks at him curiously.

## ONSTAGE

After the first chorus, Jolson winks to her, returns to the stage and sings the chorus again with full embellishment.

Julie watches with a smile. When he finishes, the audience applauds and Julie mimes the words to him, "Thank you."

Jolson waves to the audience, gestures goodwill to Julie then holds his hands up for quiet.

JOLSON

Folks, I'm callin' the next one. I  
want to sing about that big,  
beautiful state I'm going to -- and  
I don't mean Florida!

MEDIUM-SHOT - JOLSON

DOLLY BACK as the orchestra plays the intro to "CALIFORNIA HERE I COME." Jolson sings it.

Julie watches with increasing interest, almost studying him.

Again, Jolson does a big finish with full embellishment.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S APARTMENT - IN THE LIVING ROOM

Julie parodies Jolson in a full song-and-dance rendition of "CALIFORNIA HERE I COME" to a piano accompaniment.

As she sings, Jolson, Steve and Baron (all in tuxedos) walk into the entryway and watch her. At the end of the song she gets down on one knee and outstretches her arms.

Jolson walks over, takes her wrist and lifts her up.

JOLSON

I'm afraid I'll have to talk to you,  
my friend.

PAN on them as they pass other guests and exit onto a balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT - SAME TIME

They step outside and Jolson closes the door.

JULIE

Please, Mister Jolson. I'll never  
do it again.

JOLSON

You sure?

JULIE

(walking to the railing)  
A million imitators of Al Jolson,  
but none of them touch the original.

JOLSON

(walking up behind her)  
Uh-hmm. That's a cute speech. You  
know, I'd sort of like to touch you.  
I -- I don't know. It's funny. I  
can't seem to make it.

JULIE

That's good.

JOLSON

You know, you get prettier every  
time I see you.

JULIE

Well, the first time was just a few  
hours ago.

JOLSON

Yeah? Well, then, you got prettier  
since then.

JULIE

Thank you.

JOLSON

Look, will you do me a big favor?

JULIE

What?

JOLSON

Will you marry me, Miss Benson?

JULIE

I'll do you a bigger favor, Mister  
Jolson. I won't marry you.

JOLSON

I didn't suppose you would, but you  
could think about it, huh? Of  
course, you'd have to decide  
tonight. Y'see, I'm going to  
California tomorrow.

JULIE

Well, then, this last weekend  
belongs to your friends.

JOLSON

Wait! You mean in there? Tell ya a  
secret. Don't even know most of  
'em.

JULIE

How'd they get there?

JOLSON

Well, it always seems to happen.  
Y'see, I ask a few people up, and  
then they ask some people I never  
heard of, and those strangers ask  
some other strangers, and before you  
know it...

JULIE

... you're singing for them.

JOLSON

Yeah -- just for three or four  
hours.

JULIE

(astonished)

You mean you work till midnight and  
then you come home and work three or  
four hours more?

JOLSON

I don't mind.

JULIE

You mean you love it.

JOLSON

Yeah, I guess I do. It's more than  
just singing. I -- I don't know how  
to tell you. It's...

JULIE

Well, you don't really have to,  
Mister Jolson.

JOLSON

Oh, yes -- yes I do. I gotta tell  
you everything!

He hears Steve's voice calling:

STEVE (O.S.)

Al!

THREE-SHOT - AL, JULIE AND STEVE

Steve has just opened the balcony door.

STEVE

It's getting late and the gang  
wants --

JOLSON

Go away, Steve, I'm busy! Caught a  
cold! Can't sing a note! Go away!

Steve looks sourly at him then returns to the living room.

TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND JULIE

She turns toward the door.

JULIE

You really ought to go in, Mister  
Jolson.

JOLSON

(holds her arms,  
stopping her)

No. I've got to tell you how I  
feel. And it's gonna take me hours.  
Of course, I shouldn't be rushing  
you like this. You'll think I'm  
kidding. But look. Y'see, I've  
been waiting for something for a  
long time. I didn't know what it  
was. Steve's been trying to tell  
me, it was about -- well, about  
getting everything and nothing out  
of life. I didn't know what he was  
talking about, and then I saw you.  
Yes sir, then I saw you! -- Look,  
got a great idea. Suppose you and I  
got married and went to California  
together? How about it?

JULIE

Well, of course, I'm rehearsing  
"Show Girl" and we open in two  
weeks.

JOLSON

Ah, yeah. That's too bad. If it  
just wasn't for that, huh?

JULIE

And a few other things.

JOLSON

Go ahead, tell me. That's what I want to know. Like what?

JULIE

Well...

(gestures ahead)  
That street down there.

JOLSON

Broadway? Heh, what a street!

THEIR POV - BROADWAY

a long shot showing lights blazing at night.

BACK TO SCENE

JOLSON

Y'know something, baby? It belongs to me. And y'know something else? If you want it, I'll give it to you!

JULIE

Well, that's the point, and -- It's yours, all right. It's your whole life, too. But I don't think it'll ever be mine.

JOLSON

Why, it's gonna say "Julie Benson" down there in great big lights. Do you mean to say you don't want that?

JULIE

Oh, yes, I want that. I'm just normal enough to want that.

JOLSON

Sure. You're just a little scared now. Wait'll you get some confidence! You'll begin to love it, begin to feel it in your blood!

JULIE

That's the big difference.

JOLSON

What's the big difference?

JULIE

It was in your blood when you were born. But I'm just a pretty good hoofer, and I got a lucky break. All I know is, I -- I want a lot besides this.

JOLSON

Like what, Julie? Gotta know.

JULIE

Well, in the first place, like -- like a real home.

JOLSON

Sure, everybody wants a home.

JULIE

Nah, you wouldn't care for the kind I'm thinking of.

JOLSON

Why not? Why wouldn't I?

JULIE

It would have to be far enough away -- maybe way out in the country -- so that by the time you got there, and closed the door, you'd have forgotten all about show business.

JOLSON

It's funny. All of a sudden that's what I've always wanted, to close a door. I'll tell ya something, Julie. I know just the spot. It's up in Westchester. Acres of pretty land, trees all around.

Steve's voice interrupts them again:

STEVE (O.S.)

Al!

THREE SHOT - JOLSON, JULIE AND STEVE

JOLSON

Go away, Steve. Feeling worse all the time. Go away.

Steve starts to turn away.

JOLSON  
Tell Ziggy I'll see Miss Benson home.

JULIE  
It's really getting pretty late,  
Mister Jolson.

Steve goes inside again and closes the door.

TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND JULIE

JOLSON  
Late? But, baby, I'm going away tomorrow, and we're just getting places.

(motions with his head)  
Come here, sit down. Oh, look, can you cut out that "Mister Jolson?"  
Why don't you just call me by my southern name: honey.

He winks to her and walks her off.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROADWAY - NIGHT

A panorama of the entire area with lights blazing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY

The same view but now bathed in daylight. Morning has come.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Steve, still in his tuxedo, lies asleep on the couch. The sound of a door opening awakens him.

Jolson and Julie walk in from the balcony.

JOLSON  
I know what's the trouble, baby.  
You just don't believe me. You  
don't believe I want anything  
different. And I'm tryin' to tell  
you, honey, I was barging through  
this great, big, beautiful world  
like a fool!

JULIE

Oh, I do believe you, honey. But I always thought I'd like to fall in love with the man I was going to marry.

JOLSON

(walking off with her)

Oh, you're absolutely right, and I'm not gonna rush you, baby.

Steve looks up from the couch incredulous at what he's hearing.

JOLSON (O.S.)

In fact, y'know something? We won't get married till I get back from California. How's that?

Steve looks off at them in disbelief.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

The train races along the tracks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

DOLLY IN as Jolson alights from the train and a STUDIO ASSISTANT shakes his hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

DOLLY IN on a convertible car, with Jolson in the back seat, stopping at a studio gate. The gate says simply: "STUDIO." Jolson shakes hands with the GUARD.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GLENN'S OFFICE - DAY

Jolson and Glenn shake hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

DOLLY BACK on a script that says "THE JAZZ SINGER - FINAL SCRIPT." A pair of hands is passing it to Jolson.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

DOLLY IN as hair and make-up men work on Jolson's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE - SCREEN TEST - SERIES OF SHOTS

- LONG SHOT: Jolson sits on a chair in a darkened set as TECHNICIAN #1 points upward.
- MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT: TECHNICIAN #2 turns on a klieg light.
- MEDIUM SHOT: Jolson winces at the bright light. Technician #1 gestures to the other to aim the light lower.
- MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT: TECHNICIAN #3 turns on another klieg light.
- MEDIUM SHOT: Jolson winces again.
- MEDIUM LONG SHOT: TECHNICIAN #4 turns on another klieg light.
- CLOSE-UP: Jolson winces again.
- MEDIUM SHOT: TECHNICIAN #5 turns on another klieg light.
- CLOSE-UP: Jolson winces again.
- MEDIUM SHOT: DOLLY IN on a camera with two CINEMATOGRAPHERS working it.
- MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT: A TECHNICIAN holds a slate in front of Jolson's face. Jolson's eyes glance down at it:

"WARDROBE MAKE-UP TEST  
NAME: AL JOLSON  
PROD. JAZZ SINGER"

- DOLLY IN CLOSE on the camera.
- DOLLY IN CLOSE on Jolson's face. He smiles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S HOTEL SUITE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jolson, wearing a shirt, tie and bathrobe, is talking on the phone.

JOLSON

Julie? Hello, darling. How are you? How'd the dress rehearsal go?

INT. JULIE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Julie is on the phone.

JULIE

Fine, Al... Oh yes, honest. But opening tomorrow night will be something else again. I'm scared to death.

IN JOLSON'S LIVING ROOM

JOLSON

Ah, you got nothing to be scared about, honey. You're gonna be wonderful... Yeah, I'm still at the studio, working hard. We shoot pretty soon... Oh, it's gonna be all right, I think, when I find out which end of the camera's which... Listen, baby, get a good night's sleep and don't worry, you hear? You're gonna knock 'em dead!

WIDER ANGLE - JOLSON'S LIVING ROOM

A WIDER ANGLE reveals Jolson sitting on a couch and Steve sitting across from him in a chair, reading a script.

JOLSON

(into phone)

Yeah, I'll call you again tomorrow night. Goodbye, angel.

Jolson hangs up.

STEVE

She all right?

JOLSON

She says she's scared. She sounds it. -- Steve, if I got a plane -- a special plane to fly right through -- I could be in New York for that opening tomorrow night.

STEVE

What can you do in New York?

JOLSON

I don't know, but I wanna be there.  
Get on that phone, Steve! Get the  
plane!

DOLLY IN as they walk into Jolson's dressing room.

STEVE

You can't walk out on the studio  
like this!

JOLSON

Be back in two days and work twice  
as hard.

STEVE

But Al...!

JOLSON

(taking his robe off)  
Oh, and phone Ziegfeld. Tell him to  
hold me a seat and not to tell Julie  
I'm coming.

Jolson walks around a corner. Steve paces back into the living room, picks up a phone and starts to dial.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A SPINNING PROGRAM COVER

It comes to a stop and reads:

"Florence Ziegfeld, Jr.  
Presents  
SHOW GIRL  
starring  
JULIE BENSON."

We hear a male chorus singing the opening bars of "LIZA."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Ziegfeld leads Jolson down an aisle to two vacant seats. They sit beside each other. The chorus keeps singing.

LONG SHOT - THE STAGE

A dozen chorus men in blue suits point up at Julie, who stands, all in gold, on the top step of a series of disks.

MEDIUM SHOT - JULIE

DOLLY IN tight as she holds her arms out.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Jolson leans forward, watching.

HIGH ANGLE ON THE DISKS

Julie starts dancing as the men start singing the chorus of "LIZA."

IN THE AUDIENCE

Jolson still leans forward. Ziegfeld taps his arm to signal him to sit back in his seat.

LONG SHOT - THE STAGE

Julie starts dancing down the series of disks.

ANGLE ON THE DISKS

Julie continues down three disks then makes a wrong turn and almost falls.

MEDIUM SHOT - JULIE

catches herself, frightened, and stops dancing.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Jolson watches anxiously.

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT - JULIE

still hasn't caught her bearings.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Suddenly Jolson rises and starts to sing "LIZA" with the orchestra.

JULIE

hears him and happily resumes dancing.

When she reaches the bottom disk, she jumps into the air. The men catch her in a sitting position and bounce her to her feet; she twirls a few times then poses grandly for the finish.

The audience applauds.

Julie blows Jolson a kiss as the curtains come down.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JULIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The entire room is full of flowers. Julie walks in with her DRESSER and does a double-take.

Jolson rises from a chair across from her.

JOLSON

Hello, baby.

JULIE

Hello, honey.

She goes to him and they embrace and kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STEVE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Steve is asleep in bed. The phone rings, awakening him. He rolls over and answers it.

STEVE

(into phone)

Hello?... Who?... Al!

(rising to his elbow)

How are you? Tell me, how'd it go?... What? I can't hear ya!... Connecticut! What are you doing in Connecticut...?!

(sits up shocked)

You what?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jolson stands in the doorway with Julie.

JOLSON

Meet Misses Jolson.

REVERSE ANGLE

Mama and Papa look on a few feet away.

MAMA

Oh, my!

Mama runs to Julie and hugs her; Papa runs to Jolson and hugs him.

PAPA  
Asa!

MAMA  
(to Julie)  
I'm so -- I'm so happy, dear!

PAPA  
(tapping Mama's shoulder)  
Mama! Mama, please. Please give me  
a chance!

Mama moves over to hug Jolson while Papa hugs Julie.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The foursome -- Jolson, Mama, Julie and Papa -- sit at the table eating.

MAMA  
I don't understand. Married a few  
hours, he runs to California --

JOLSON  
It'll just take me a couple of  
months to make this picture, Mama.  
Then I'll be home.

JULIE  
And that's where he's gonna stay.

[Papa leans forward and says something but there is no sound.  
The next shot starts with Jolson nodding in acknowledgement of  
what Papa said.]

MAMA  
Asa staying home? That will be a  
miracle.

PAPA  
Julie, there's only one thing the  
matter with Asa. He's got to sing.  
It's a wonderful thing. Success is  
beautiful. But Mama and I have  
worried, because a home with love in  
it is even better.

JOLSON

The way you say that is a little corny, Papa, but you're right. Julie agrees with you. What do you think we're gonna do? We're gonna build a real home and settle down -- out in the country where it's nice and quiet, nothing but crickets and frogs.

JULIE

I'll teach the frogs to sing "Mammy" so Al won't be lonely.

The others laugh.

JOLSON

Thank ya, honey.

PAPA

Asa, are you serious?

JOLSON

Sure. In fact, Julie doesn't know this yet. I've got an architect at work.

JULIE

Al!

JOLSON

I told him, "Build a house for Julie. The sky's the limit."

PAPA

Well, that I approve of.

MAMA

So do I.

(she hands Julie a plate)

Here. Here, have some gefilte fish with the horseradish, Julie.

JOLSON

Look out for the horseradish, honey. That stuff will curl your hair. -- Y'know, I think we'll have a barn Mama. And some cows. Gonna milk 'em myself.

PAPA

You?

Julie takes a forkful of gefilte fish and coats it in horseradish.

MAMA  
You milk cows, Asa?

PAPA  
You have to get up at five o'clock!

JULIE  
Well, we'll keep the cows up at  
night so they'll sleep later in the  
morning.

Everyone laughs. Julie takes the bite of gefilte fish.

JOLSON  
(in a panic)  
Julie, you've got too much!

She shakes her head then suddenly swallows and gags.

She covers her mouth with a napkin as Jolson hands her a glass of water. She drinks.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

VARIETY

A page turns to reveal an ad:

"AN EXCITING EVENT!  
World Premiere Showing Tonight  
AL JOLSON  
in  
THE JAZZ SINGER  
THE FIRST TALKING PICTURE  
WINTER GARDEN THEATRE."

At the same time we hear an orchestra play the intro to "THERE'S A RAINBOW 'ROUND MY SHOULDER."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATRE - NIGHT

The Jolson party sits in a box watching the movie (Jolson, Julie, Steve, Mama, Papa and Glenn). We never actually see the movie they're watching.

We hear the "movie Jolson" start to sing the song. Jolson starts humming along in harmony with himself.

A GRUMPY MAN in the row behind them gets increasingly irritated and finally blurts out:

GRUMPY MAN  
Let Jolson sing it, mister. He's  
doing all right.

JOLSON  
(smiling back at him)  
Think so?

Jolson stops singing but excitedly sways in his seat to the music. When the song ends, the audience around him applauds and he looks back at them.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Baron sits at a grand piano reading a copy of Variety; Mama, Papa and Julie surround the piano, all with their own copies.

PAPA  
(reading aloud)  
"Jazz Singer' marks the end of  
silent pictures."

MAMA  
(reading aloud)  
"First talking picture sensation."

PAPA  
I have followed show business for  
many years, but I must say I have  
never seen a thing like this.

MAMA  
Oh-ho, my expert.

BARON  
I haven't seen anything like it  
either, Cantor.

MAMA  
(looking at her watch)  
Ooh, it's almost three o'clock.  
Where's Asa?

JULIE  
Well, you know what a half-hour  
business talk is, Mama. You should  
really go to sleep. Tom and I'll  
wait up for them.

PAPA  
Who can sleep on a night like this?

Jolson enters. Steve follows.

JULIE

Al!

She runs over and gives him a hug.

JOLSON

(embracing her)

Hello, everybody. Gee, we didn't  
realize how late it was.

PAPA

Asa, did you see the papers?

JOLSON

Yeah, we saw them in Glenn's office.  
They're -- they're really something.

PAPA

"Something," he says!

JOLSON

(to Julie)

I'm sorry, baby. I wanted to  
celebrate tonight, but -- well, you  
see, honey, we -- we got to talking  
about --

JULIE

I know. They want you to go right  
back to the Coast and make another  
picture.

JOLSON

How'd you know?

STEVE

That was tough to figure out.

JOLSON

Well, they argue this way. This  
first talking picture will be a  
great hit and it ought to be  
followed up with another one right  
away.

JULIE

They're right, Al. I think you  
ought to go.

JOLSON

But that's the point, baby. I'd have to go all by myself again. You can't leave your show in the middle of a run.

Papa watches them, aware a conflict is built into their relationship.

JULIE

Well, we'll just have to wait a little while longer.

BARON

(rising, concerned)

What happens to the new Winter Garden show?

STEVE

That waits like Julie does.

JOLSON

Yeah, Tom. We'll talk about that later.

MAMA

Wait a minute. Julie will be here, Asa in California. So where will you build your house? In Kansas City?

Jolson and Julie both laugh

JOLSON

Don't worry, Mama. We'll build it.  
(to Julie)

Ah, you're terrific to take it this way, baby. It's another bad break, but it won't be for long.

(hugging her)

Ah, gee, then you'll get everything you want, angel.

(backs up)

In fact, listen. While I'm gone, you go ahead with the house, see? Get it ready. Start building it and start teaching those frogs how to sing "Mammy."

They both laugh and then they embrace and kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

DOLLY IN. It pictures Julie and reads:

"SHOW GIRL  
JULIE BENSON  
FINAL WEEK."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JULIE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

She is on the phone. A framed photo of Jolson rests on a table-top.

JULIE  
Yes, we're closing Saturday, Al.  
It's definite.

INT. JOLSON'S HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME

At the other end of the line, he reclines on a couch. A framed photo of Julie is on a table-top.

JOLSON  
Julie, I want you to fly out here  
the minute you're through.

INTERCUT - JOLSON AND JULIE

JULIE  
(disappointed)  
You were coming east when you were  
through.

JOLSON  
A little change in plans, baby.

DOLLY IN as he looks at her picture.

JOLSON  
A big surprise.

JULIE  
But Al!

JOLSON  
Be on that plane no later than  
Sunday. I'm dying to see you.

JULIE  
(laughing)  
California here I come!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. JOLSON'S RENTED MANSION - DAY

Jolson shows Julie into the giant entrance hall. Steve follows with Glenn. The hired staff look on (HENRY the butler, ALICE the maid, a woman in black and a maid in black).

JOLSON

Here we are, baby. Home. Ha-ha!  
This is really something!

STEVE

(to Henry)

Hiya, Henry.

JOLSON

(to the others)

Oh, meet Misses Jolson. Great to have her here, isn't it?

(takes Julie's coat)

Here, baby. Let me take this.

He tosses it to the woman in black.

JOLSON

Let's, uh -- Oh, ya want something, baby? Ya want to clean up? Want something to eat? Henry will rustle up some grub for ya.

JULIE

No, I don't want a thing.

JOLSON

Come on, let's go inside then. Come on, fellas.

PAN on them as they pass through an archway into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Jolson and Julie enter followed by Steve and Glenn.

JOLSON

Ah, it's been a long time, honey.  
Here, wait a minute, let me look at you.

He turns her by the shoulders and looks into her face.

JOLSON

Never gonna let you out of my sight again.

JULIE

Good for you.

They kiss.

STEVE

(to Glenn)

Sit down, Dick. This may take a little time.

PAN on the party as Julie leads them further into the room. A grand piano comes into view near a large window.

JULIE

(looking around)

Hmm. A little large, isn't it?

JOLSON

Well, it -- it ain't exactly small.

STEVE

Y'see, they used to play football here before they built the Coliseum.

The others laugh.

JOLSON

Ah, no, honey. You wouldn't care for a place like this, but don't let it get you down.

JULIE

Darling, since we don't have to stay here very long, I just love it.

JOLSON

(a forced laugh)

Yeah, that's right. And yet, on the other hand, baby, y'know...

He turns her toward the couch.

JOLSON

Come here. Sit down. Got something to tell ya.

JULIE

(sitting on the couch)

On the other hand, what?

STEVE

On the other hand, he's talking through his hat!

(catches himself)

(MORE)

STEVE (cont'd)

Oh, uh -- uh -- we had a little dinner planned, Julie, and --

JOLSON

Forget it, Steve. Forget what we arranged. I can't wait, gotta tell her now.

Jolson sits on the couch beside her.

JULIE

What goes on here?

JOLSON

Now, honey. Talking pictures are here for good. They're getting better all the time. In a couple of years, they'll have audiences nobody ever dreamed about. The studio's got terrific plans. All I know is, a man would have to be insane to walk away from this now.

JULIE

Al, you went and did it.

JOLSON

What?

JULIE

You bought a house out here.

JOLSON

No!

JULIE

Or you're building one --

JOLSON

No, no!

JULIE

With sunken gardens.

JOLSON

No!

Jolson gets up laughing.

JULIE

That was the surprise you talked about.

JOLSON

No, honest.

STEVE

You ain't heard nothin' yet, Julie.

JOLSON

You said it!

Jolson gets down on one knee.

JOLSON

Now, baby. Now, listen.

JULIE

Al, are you gonna sing "Mammy?"

JOLSON

Quit clownin'. Look. You don't think I'd ask you to give up the stage and dancing and just have you come out here and settle down?

JULIE

I might consider it.

JOLSON

No, but I wouldn't let you do that. You're too terrific. In fact, do you know what pictures need? Talent, and something beautiful at the same time, like you.

JULIE

Whoa! Wait a minute!

JOLSON

Listen, show business is here now, baby. You belong in it -- you and me both. And if we're together, who cares where we live? The world's gotta hear about you, honey. Your name on billboards in ninety-seven languages. The greatest star pictures ever had! You can't miss.

(to Glenn)

Where's the document, Dick? You didn't forget to bring it?

Glenn hands Jolson a blue-backed contract.

GLENN

It's right here.

JOLSON

(tapping Glenn's chest)

Your studio's about to own the  
biggest hunk of talent in the land.

(to Julie)

Papa's been working on this contract  
for weeks, honey.

(he sits beside her)

It's all ready to sign.

STEVE

Wait a minute! Julie hasn't said  
anything!

JULIE

(dumbfounded)

Well, I -- I can't think of  
anything.

JOLSON

There you are.

STEVE

Maybe she doesn't want her name in  
more than seventeen languages. Or  
maybe none.

JOLSON

Julie, don't listen to this guy.  
For weeks he's squawking about me  
rushing you into this.

STEVE

And Julie, this guy is out of his  
mind about pictures. The latest  
type of Jolson rocket has taken off.  
I've been riding those dizzy things  
for years. It's all right with me,  
but maybe you had something a little  
slower in mind.

JOLSON

Baby, what's he talking about?

JULIE

Haven't the faintest idea.

(to Steve)

My dear Mister Martin, pictures need  
talent. And what girl would take  
seventeen languages when she can  
have ninety-seven?

(starts to take her  
gloves off)

Shall I sign this now, Mister  
Jolson?

Jolson laughs and gives her a hug and kiss.

JOLSON

Thanks, Steve. You talked her into it. Here you are, baby. Got a pen, Dick? We're gonna do this right now.

Steve looks at Julie. She returns the look, then turns to Glenn.

JOLSON

Call the studio. Misses Jolson is ready for her first starring vehicle!

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - JULIE'S FIRST MOVIE

Throughout these shots, an orchestral version of "ULLABY OF BROADWAY" is heard.

- ZOOM IN on a rehearsal call sheet. DISSOLVE TO:
- DOLLY IN on a door labeled "REHEARSAL STAGE 3." The door opens. DISSOLVE TO:
- INT. REHEARSAL HALL: Julie dances in front of a mirror as a pianist plays. DISSOLVE TO:
- MEDIUM SHOT of Julie's legs dancing. DISSOLVE TO:
- MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT of Julie's legs dancing. DISSOLVE TO:
- Julie wipes the back of her neck with a towel. DISSOLVE TO:
- ZOOM IN on another rehearsal call sheet. DISSOLVE TO:
- MEDIUM SHOT of Julie dancing. DISSOLVE TO:
- MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT of her legs dancing, reflected in a mirror with an "infinite regression" effect. DISSOLVE TO:
- CLOSE-UP: Julie spins around at the end of the dance.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A THEATER - NIGHT

Klieg lights shine in front of a theater where the marquee reads:

"JULIE BENSON  
42ND STREET."

DISSOLVE TO:

A SCENE FROM "FORTY-SECOND STREET"

Julie dances on a stage with a chorus of men and they sing  
"SHE'S A LATIN FROM MANHATTAN."

DISSOLVE TO:

HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

A page bearing the paper's logo is in a typewriter. Someone has typed, in black ribbon, "MOVIE REVIEW - FORTY SECOND STREET." Below that is a sub-headline in red: "JULIE BENSON A NEW SENSATION." Below that, the keys are typing, "Tonight When Forty-Second"...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S RENTED HOUSE - JULIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Julie sits on a large chair; Jolson, Steve and Glenn surround her, all holding champagne glasses. A bottle of champagne is in a bucket near Steve.

JOLSON  
(toasting)  
Here's to the real star of this family.

JULIE  
I'll have a drink to that! I thought I was pretty good!

GLENN  
And now to Julie's next picture.

JULIE  
No, wait. Let's not even think about it! Not another one, not right away. I couldn't go through all that work again.

JOLSON  
Ah, ya can't stop now, sweetheart. You're up there! Do another one right away and prove the first one wasn't a fluke. You won't mind the next one, honey. You're used to it now.

STEVE

And after the first dozen you won't  
mind anything.

JULIE

Dozen?

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - JULIE'S CAREER

Throughout the montage we hear an orchestral version of "WE'RE IN THE MONEY."

- Julie's legs dance in yellow shorts during a rehearsal superimposed over call sheets, fingers playing a keyboard and drumsticks hitting a drum. Again, her legs are reflected in a mirror creating an "infinite regression" effect. DISSOLVE TO:

- Julie dances in a rehearsal hall in blue jeans as a man plays an upright piano behind her. CUT TO:

- Julie's face as she spins around dancing. DISSOLVE TO:

- A POSTER which reads: "JULIE BENSON IN 'SHIPMATES FOREVER.'" DISSOLVE TO:

- Julie's legs dancing in a mirror again; this time she wears a white skirt. DISSOLVE TO:

- Drumstick hit a drum. DISSOLVE TO:

- Julie dances in a rehearsal hall in black shorts. DISSOLVE TO:

- Another poster: "JULIE BENSON IN 'DAMES.'" DOLLY BACK. During the shot, superimpose fingers playing a piano. Then FADE OUT on everything.

FADE IN:

INT. JOLSON'S RENTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Julie walks upstairs in an expensive bathrobe. In b.g. we hear Jolson singing "AVALON" on the radio.

Steve hurries to catch up with her; he wears a suit.

STEVE

Julie!

(taking her arm)

My mother said, "Always be kind to tired ladies, especially when they're pretty."

(they walk up some steps)

Is the mob getting you down, babe?

JULIE

Oh, no. I like people, Steve. I just wish sometimes there weren't so many of them.

STEVE

Funny how they never get tired listening to him, night after night.

JULIE

Not so funny. He's a pretty remarkable fella.

The song on the radio ends to applause.

STEVE

That he is. Well, pretty soon now, you and Al will wash up these pictures and you're both gonna knock off for a long rest.

JULIE

That'll take a miracle, Steve. When I'm finished, he's in the middle of one, and vice versa. We'll never come out together.

They reach the top of the stairs.

STEVE

Then somebody's got to quit for once and wait for the other guy.

JULIE

No waits, no delays in the life of the Jolsons.

STEVE

Just a matter of putting your foot down once.

JULIE  
 He'll know the right time, Steve.  
 He's happy, so am I.  
 (taps his tummy)  
 And it's not nice to put your foot  
 down.  
 (pinches his cheek)  
 Good night, my friend.

She turns toward the bedroom.

STEVE  
 Julie, remember those plans you had  
 for that house in the east?

JULIE  
 (stopping)  
 Yeah.

STEVE  
 Well, I just happened to think of  
 that the other day. Why don't you  
 find a piece of land out in the  
 country around here, over in the  
 Valley, for instance, and get the  
 thing built? You'd get a big kick  
 out of that, wouldn't you?

JULIE  
 (turning back)  
 Oh, I don't know, Steve. That was  
 just a romantic idea I once had.  
 What's wrong with this house? It's  
 got marble, even.  
 (pats his shoulder)  
 Good night, Steve. I'm absolutely  
 dead.

She goes into the room and closes the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - JULIE CONTINUES TO WORK

Throughout the montage we hear generic fanfare music:

- CLOSE SHOT of a drum roll. FADE IN a superimposition of Julie's legs dancing again, in black shorts. DISSOLVE TO:
  - Julie's head whirls around. SUPER over it a billboard: "JULIE BENSON IN 'GOLD DIGGERS.'" Within the super, DISSOLVE from her face to her legs and DOLLY OUT on the poster.
- DISSOLVE TO:

- Fingers play a piano keyboard again. FADE IN a super of Julie in a flowered dress holding a parasol. DISSOLVE TO:

- Another billboard: "JULIE BENSON in 'FLIRTATION WALK.'" Superimpose over it dancing couples.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GLENN'S OFFICE - DAY

MEDIUM SHOT of Jolson looking down.

JOLSON

Oh, I agree with you, baby. No more contracts. I've told Dick how you feel.

DOLLY BACK to include Glenn behind his desk, Julie in a chair across from him and Steve pacing behind them.

JOLSON

But this last one, honey. This isn't just another one. This is you and me in the same picture. That's one thing I've always had my heart set on. When we've done that, we've done everything. Then we blow this town, do anything you want.

GLENN

The script is ready, Julie.

JOLSON

And it's good.

GLENN

You could shoot in a month.

JULIE

Yeah -- a hard month of dance rehearsals.

JOLSON

Julie, but this'll be fun.

STEVE

Al, why don't you go away for a year or so and do this thing when you come back?

JOLSON

Ah, that's no good!

Jolson leans forward braced on the arms of Julie's chair.

JOLSON  
Say "yes," Julie!

STEVE  
You can say "no," too. You're a citizen.

JOLSON  
Ah, shut up, Steve.

TIGHT TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND JULIE

JOLSON  
Huh?

Julie smiles and nods her head. An orchestra playing the intro to "A QUARTER TO NINE" comes up.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

As the music continues, the poster reads:

"JULIE BENSON  
AL JOLSON in  
'GO INTO YOUR DANCE.'"

Pasted over that are the words: "WORLD PREMIERE TONIGHT."

DISSOLVE TO:

A SCENE FROM "GO INTO YOUR DANCE"

Jolson sings "A QUARTER TO NINE" as he dances with Julie.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S RENTED HOUSE - NIGHT

Henry waits at the open door as Jolson, Julie and Steve enter the house.

JULIE  
Good evening.

JOLSON  
Henry.

HENRY  
How was the picture?

JULIE  
It was really wonderful.

STEVE

Henry, it was a mild sensation.

HENRY

Oh, I'd glad.

PAN on Jolson as he walks to the entrance to the living room, surprised. The room is empty.

JOLSON

(looking back)

Hey, there's nobody here?

REVERSE ANGLE

DOLLY BACK on Steve and Julie as they walk through the entrance hall.

STEVE

Well, what do you know? A big Jolson preview and no mob waiting at home!

JOLSON

What do you suppose happened?

JULIE

Well, it -- it could be me.

JOLSON

It could be you?

JULIE

Well, I told Henry to tell any callers that we went straight from the theater to Santa Barbara for the weekend. Suppose that did it?

JOLSON

You're kidding.

The doorbell rings.

JULIE

Shh!

She closes the doors to the entrance hall as Henry goes to the front door.

JULIE

Show you how it works. Listen.

HENRY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Sorry. Mister and Misses Jolson left for Santa Barbara.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Oh, that's too bad. Say we stopped  
by, will you? Good night, Henry.

HENRY'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Good night.

They hear the front door close.

JULIE  
Simple.

JOLSON  
Sweetheart, that's cute.

JULIE  
Should have thought of it a long  
time ago. You don't really mind, do  
you, Al?

JOLSON  
Mind?

JULIE  
You see, tonight's a different  
night. The last picture's finished.  
We're free. Not a contract in the  
world.

STEVE  
The governor sent the pardon.

JULIE  
That's right. So I thought a quiet  
evening around the fire, discussing  
plans for the future.

(takes their arms)  
Look, sandwiches, coffee...

REVERSE ANGLE

She walks them further into the room.

JULIE  
... and we'll play some records by a  
fella named Al Jolson. Very  
talented.

JOLSON  
Ah, that guy's washed up. Hasn't  
even got a picture contract.

Steve sits in a chair.

JULIE

Have some coffee, Steve?

STEVE

Thanks, Julie. I believe I will.

Jolson walks up to her as she pours a cup for Steve.

JOLSON

Y'know, honey, you sound like a gal  
with a program all figured out.

JULIE

Uh-hmm. First we shake this town  
for points east. Maybe farther east  
than that -- across the Atlantic,  
who knows? -- Cream for you, Steve.

(she adds cream to  
his cup)

And when that's out of our system,  
there's a little matter of building  
that house.

DOLLY BACK as Jolson sits on a couch across from Steve. Julie  
hands Steve his coffee and starts to pour a cup for herself.

STEVE

That I gotta see if I never see  
another house in the world.

JOLSON

Y'know, I kinda got a hankerin' to  
see it myself.

JULIE

I'm glad to hear that, because I can  
have it up in no time. I know every  
room in the place. I've even got it  
furnished. Just one thing: in our  
travels to find the right place to  
put that house.

JOLSON

You, uh -- you don't mean the east,  
do ya, baby?

She almost responds but hesitates.

STEVE

That was the original idea. Why  
change it?

JOLSON

We've gotten used to this country out here. I like it. I don't know, it feels more like home than any place in the world. And it doesn't matter too much to you, does it, sweetheart?

JULIE

(a pause)

No, not really. And if it does to you, Al...

JOLSON

Well, don't put it that way, honey. There's nothing so special you want in the east, is there?

JULIE

Well, no. That's true. That settles it. It's going to be here.

JOLSON

Wonderful.

JULIE

(to Steve)

And you keep quiet.

Jolson sits on the couch again. Julie sits beside him.

JULIE

Only, Al... we could get out in the country a little way, couldn't we?

JOLSON

Sure, why not?

JULIE

Thanks.

(kisses his cheek)

That's all I wanted.

STEVE

With no number on the house and a couple of vicious dogs in the yard, you can keep the callers down to practically nothing.

Jolson laughs.

STEVE

Well, this is Friday. What about train tickets out of here, say, Sunday?

JULIE

I can be ready tomorrow, but Sunday  
will have to do.

JOLSON

Hey, what's the rush? Let's give  
ourselves a little time. Let's say  
a week or so.

JULIE

What will we want with a week or so?

JOLSON

No kidding. A week would wrap up  
everything fine for me.

JULIE

What have you got to wrap up?

STEVE

(rising)

Nothing. He just thinks he has.  
Nothing important at all.

(to Jolson, quickly)

Have a cup of coffee, Al. It's  
great.

JULIE

Look, boys, is something cooking?

STEVE

No, there's nothing cooking.

JOLSON

No, Baby, it was just an idea,  
that's all. There's a proposition  
come at us about putting a company  
together and making our own  
pictures. And --

Steve, looking over Julie's shoulder, waves to Jolson to be quiet.

JOLSON

(adding quickly)

Oh, nothing definite, just talking  
about it. Of course, in a week or  
so, it could gel. It might be a  
pretty exciting thing to come back  
to. And, well -- that's all it was.

JULIE

(holding his arm)

Sorry, darling. No gelling. First thing you know, you've set a date to make a picture. Then we'll have to travel with one eye on the calendar --

JOLSON

I promise you, baby.

JULIE

Or something just as bad: talking about a picture all the time we're gone.

JOLSON

No, sir. Not a peep. Give you my word.

JULIE

Fine, darling. But -- well, I know this is silly, but it's -- it's gotten to be a sort of principle. Once we do say we're going to quit for a while --

JOLSON

Oh, who said we weren't?

JULIE

Well, then whatever this proposition is, it'll still be there in three months, or six months --

STEVE

And just as hot, so why bother now? Why don't you lay off, Al?

JOLSON

(paces away)

Wow! What a beating I'm taking here!

(turns back)

But look, honey. Remember me? This is Jolson. I go with the principle every time. But all I'm talking about is a couple of days!

JULIE

But when you want to spend them that way, Al, that's where the principle is! It isn't the days.

(MORE)

JULIE (cont'd)

It doesn't have anything to do with time.

(crying)

If you can't see that, Al, I wouldn't know how to --

(wipes her eyes)

Holy smoke, this is a kid stunt, isn't it?

Jolson looks at her amazed.

JULIE

I'll be right back.

Julie runs off.

IN THE DOORWAY

Julie opens the door to the entrance hall and hurries out of view.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

JOLSON

First time I ever saw Julie cry.  
Must be something wrong with me, I guess, Steve, huh?

STEVE

Yeah. Has been for a long time.

Jolson gives Steve a hard look then walks off.

INT. JULIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

She sits in front of a mirror crying. In the mirror we see Jolson opening the door behind her and entering. He takes a few steps toward her.

JULIE

Al, you're going to hate to stop work and go away, aren't you?

JOLSON

No, baby.

JULIE

It's going to be awfully tough, isn't it? Not singing always is. And here I am asking you to go away without any plans, without even any work to come back to.

JOLSON

Honest, it doesn't matter that much,  
baby. You know how it is when an  
old fire horse hears the bell.

JULIE

I didn't say it was your fault.  
(rises and faces him)  
That's not what I'm trying to say.  
What we've got to discuss is you and  
me.

JOLSON

Julie --

JULIE

Please, Al, just listen hard for  
once, will you?

(she turns away)

You see, I'm like somebody with one  
desperate chance left. I couldn't  
go on this way if I wanted to. That  
means you'd have to change. You'd  
have to get off this merry-go-round  
and quit for once, for a long time.  
And I know you'd make promises and  
try to keep them. But I'd know how  
you felt. And I couldn't have any  
happiness out of wishing the tiniest  
misery on you. So you see, Al, any  
way you look at it, there's got to  
be misery for both of us. And the  
way we feel about each other, and  
rather than let that die a slow,  
painful death, I think we ought to  
have the courage to quit now.

JOLSON

That's the one thing that can't  
happen, baby.

JULIE

(turns to him)

Be honest, Al.

JOLSON

I never understood a thing.

She walks past him. He speaks to her from behind.

JOLSON

Look, Julie. You've heard of fellas who hit the bottle and wind up hopeless drunks. Well, whatever drives me that way and won't let me understand, it's the same thing. I've been like a fella who's been drunk all his life. And you know, a guy like that'll get so bad he'll pass up the thing he wants more than anything else in the world.

JULIE

You don't have to tell me how you feel about me, Al. I know that.

JOLSON

No, listen, baby. I do have to tell you because, listen. I've been kicked around in my time. I thought I could take anything. But having you say you want to quit because -- Well, look, baby. If it means losing you, it isn't even a contest. I don't want any part of any more contracts, or shows, or any singing in the world.

JULIE

Al, you can't make me a gift of your whole life. I just couldn't take it.

JOLSON

No, look, baby. It's given you nothing, except this show business, and that's cheated me all my life. It stands to cheat me right now, because I know what would happen. I'd just go on the same way, working my head off, living everybody's life but my own, and at the same time lose the only thing I was lucky to get out of it. I know what you're thinking, baby. I'm kidding myself and don't know it. Well, maybe yes. I -- I don't know. When you've been like I have all my life like a drunk, you can't quit all of a sudden. Sometimes you crave the stuff.

DOLLY IN closer as he turns her around.

JOLSON

But I am sober now, baby. And I want you to help me. If I start yelling, hit me over the head, tie me down. Because when you go, baby, I got nothing left. So be a pal, Julie. Do what I ask you.

He hugs her tightly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOLSON'S ENCINO HOME - DAY

A car drives up the road to a ranch house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S ENCINO HOME - DAY

Jolson carries Julie in over the threshold. Henry holds the door open for him. Alice stands nearby.

JOLSON

Hello, Henry.

HENRY

Sir, welcome.

Steve follows them inside and Henry closes the door.

JOLSON

(looking around)

Honey, it's a miracle! Why, it fell from heaven.

JULIE

Hey, you're over the threshold, you fool. Put me down.

Laughing, Jolson sets her down.

STEVE

It's a sensational job, Julie.

JULIE

Thank you, boys. Thank you.

(turns back to the  
servants)

Oh, Alice, Henry, the house looks beautiful. You've done a wonderful job. But, look, you've worked hard enough now. So why don't you take the rest of the day off?

JOLSON

Yeah, that's right. Go ahead.

JULIE

And don't worry about dinner. We'll get a snack straight out of the kitchen.

JOLSON

Kitchen snack. That's for me.

HENRY

Shall I take the bag up now?

JULIE

No-no-no, don't worry about it. We'll take care of it.

JOLSON

Yeah, so long, Henry. Have a good time.

Henry and Alice exit out a back door (presumably to the servant's quarters). Meanwhile Jolson notices a checkers table and claps his hands together.

JOLSON

Wow! Checkers.

(heads for the table)

I used to be a champ back in Washington. Come on, honey, I'll play you a game.

JULIE

Okay!

They sit at the table. Steve looks on cantankerously.

STEVE

Checkers? Now? You just came in!  
How about unpacking??!

JOLSON

Ah, we got months to unpack!

JULIE

Months!

Steve shrugs and turns away. Meanwhile Jolson notices the fireplace.

JOLSON

Hey, wood and everything! I'll  
light a fire.

(walks to the fireplace)

We'll play right over here, nice and  
cozy.

STEVE

It's not cold enough for a fire!

Jolson strikes a match and lights some kindling.

JULIE

If he wants to light a fire in his  
own home, he certainly can.

JOLSON

That's telling him, baby! Honey,  
move that lamp off. We'll bring the  
table right up here. Steve, get  
this one out of the way.

STEVE

(reaching for the table)  
What'll I do with it?

JOLSON

Put it anywhere.

Steve picks up the coffee table. Just then the phone rings.

JULIE

Oh, get that, will ya, Steve?

Steve stops and looks around.

JULIE

In the library.

She points off to the side. Steve turns back to put the table  
down where he found it and bumps into Jolson.

JOLSON

Put it there. -- Steve, the phone!  
The phone!

Steve sets the table down and walks off. Jolson and Julie  
move the checkers table over to the fire.

JOLSON

Huh-huh! Let's take that telephone  
out, Julie, huh?

JULIE

Don't be silly. We've got to have a telephone.

JOLSON

(pulling up a chair)

Why? People got along without them for thousands of years. Anybody wants to get in touch with us, let 'em do it by carrier pigeon.

Julie pulls her chair up. Jolson laughs and kisses her lips.

JOLSON

We've retired, sweetheart. Come on, sit down. I'll play you for, uh -- I'll play you for who's going to be boss in the house.

They both sit at the table.

Steve walks in from the library.

STEVE

It's Dick Glenn, the studio.

JOLSON

Not here.

STEVE

He wants to wish you luck in the new home.

JOLSON

Tell him thanks. -- Oh, and Steve, if the studio has this telephone number, change it.

(he moves a white piece)  
Your move, baby.

Steve goes back into the library.

WIDER ANGLE - TAKING IN THE FIREPLACE

Julie moves a black piece.

JULIE

Big fire, isn't it?

JOLSON

Yeah, it sure is.

(feeling the heat)  
Uh, want to move this way a little bit, baby?

JULIE

All right.

They move the table further from the fireplace. Steve walks back in and looks at the table.

JULIE

Cozy, huh, Steve?

STEVE

(unbuttons his coat and  
fans himself with it)

For a Turkish bath, it's very nice.

JOLSON

Uh, is it a little warm in here,  
baby?

JULIE

It is, a little.

JOLSON

(putting his hands  
under the table)

Hmm?

He and Julie move the table still further from the fireplace. Steve continues fanning himself, then looks down at them in consternation.

STEVE

There's nothing like a five-alarm  
fire on a nice spring day.

JULIE

(to Jolson)

You know, darling, I never wanted  
this table in the living room. It  
should be in the library. It's much  
cozier in there.

JOLSON

You want to move in there now,  
honey?

JULIE

Yeah, let's.

Jolson and Julie pick up the table.

JOLSON

We'll be with you in a minute,  
Steve. Just sit down and relax.  
It's your home, too, y'know.

They walk off with the table. Steve looks back at the fire that now burns only for him. He takes off his jacket, undoes his tie and sinks back in a chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - MAGAZINE ARTICLES

- CLOSE SHOT of the title: "The Jolsons in Retirement: Mammy singer finds happiness back in his own back yard." ZOOM OUT to show the whole article, which includes a photograph of Jolson and Julie playing with a dog. DISSOLVE TO:

- CLOSE SHOT of the title: "The Jolsons say they've just begun to live." ZOOM OUT to show the whole article, including the main headline: "Al and Julie Off to See the World" and a photograph of them waving as they board a train. DISSOLVE TO:

- CLOSE SHOT of the title: "Al and Julie Still Remembered After Two Years." TILT DOWN to show a photograph of them sitting at a table covered in fan mail and the caption: "Fan mail heavy after two-year absence from Screen." DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOLSON'S ENCINO HOME - BACKYARD PATIO - DAY

Jolson sits on a chaise lounge wearing a turtleneck and sport coat and reading a fan letter.

JOLSON

New Zealand. "Go Into Your Dance"  
was playing there lately. Hmm,  
funny. Still hearing from places  
like that after all this time.

DOLLY BACK to reveal Steve seated in a chair across from him reading a script.

STEVE

It's the fan letters from China I  
like to read.

JOLSON

Where's Julie?

STEVE

She'll be back.

JOLSON

For lunch?

STEVE

That's what she said.

JOLSON

Well, where'd she go?

STEVE

Into town. I don't know.

JOLSON

Well, why didn't she tell me? I could have gone along for the ride.

STEVE

Your folks' wedding anniversary tomorrow. You'll phone 'em, huh?

JOLSON

Yeah. I wish we'd have gone east and celebrated.

STEVE

Julie wanted to go and you said "no."

JOLSON

I know. I just didn't feel like it then. We should have brought the folks out to California for their anniversary this year. We talk about doing it every year, and never do. It would have been nice.

Steve nods. Jolson gets up and paces across the patio.

JOLSON

Ah, I wish Julie had told me where she was going.

STEVE

She'll be here in a little while.  
Look, Al...

Steve gets up and approaches him.

STEVE

This manuscript of Baron's new show.  
Do you want to change your mind and read it, or shall I send it back?

JOLSON

(impatient)

I don't know. Better send it back.

STEVE

He's wired about it twice.

JOLSON

Well, why doesn't he stop wiring?  
We've told him fifty times in this  
last year I'm not interested in any  
shows.

STEVE

Wait a minute, Al. Tom knows that.  
All he wants is your opinion, and  
any ideas you might have.

JOLSON

(glances at the script)

Well, tell him I'm sorry, Steve. I  
don't want to read it. Haven't the  
patience.

Steve turns away.

ANGLE ON THE DOORWAY

Just then Julie steps out onto the patio.

JULIE

Hello, Al.

JOLSON

stops and turns, smiling.

JOLSON

There she is --

He suddenly freezes.

IN THE DOORWAY

Mama and Papa step around the corner.

JULIE

Surprise!

STEVE (O.S.)

Surprise!

ANGLE ON JOLSON

He is dumbfounded.

JOLSON

Mama! Papa!

He runs to them.

MAMA  
Asa!

They embrace, then Jolson turns to Papa.

PAPA  
Asa!

They embrace.

JOLSON  
Ah, what a surprise! Who thought of this?

JULIE  
Steve.

STEVE  
(walking up to them)  
Julie.

PAPA  
Mama.

MAMA  
No, Papa.

PAPA  
Well, look. He's gonna cry.

JOLSON  
Ah, go away!

He turns and hugs Mama again.

MAMA  
A big boy like him!

She and Steve laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATIO - DAY

The family (Jolson, Steve, Julie, Papa and Mama) sit around a table eating as Henry goes inside.

PAPA  
(with a sigh)  
This is the life. You know, Mama,  
if I tried, I could get used to  
this.

The others laugh.

JOLSON  
You go right ahead and try, Papa.

Henry returns with a tray and serves some food to Mama.

JULIE  
That's right. You and Mama ought to move out here.

A doorbell rings.

JULIE  
Henry, will you see who that is, please?

Henry nods and leaves the table.

JULIE  
(to Mama and Papa)  
You know, we've got acres of land.  
We'll build you a house right next door.

MAMA  
Next door? And how would Papa get to a synagogue on the Sabbath?

PAPA  
You know, on the Sabbath, you mustn't ride.

STEVE  
It would be a long walk back to Washington, especially two trips a week.

The others laugh.

IN THE DOORWAY

Henry walks outside followed by Baron.

HENRY  
Mister Baron.

BARON  
Hello, everybody!

Julie gets up and gives him a kiss.

JULIE  
Tom, how wonderful to see you!

Jolson meanwhile looks up glaring at him.

STEVE  
(going to him)  
Hello, Tom. You're looking fine.  
Where'd you drop from?

BARON  
New York, Steve. How are you?

PAPA  
(rising)  
Mister Baron.

BARON  
(shaking his head)  
Cantor, please sit down.

PAPA  
Thank you.

BARON  
(taking Mama's hand)  
Misses Yoelson.

MAMA  
How do you do, Mister Baron?

BARON  
(turning to Jolson  
and shaking his hand)  
Al! You look wonderful!

JOLSON  
Hello, Tom. When did you arrive?

BARON  
Just flew in. I had no idea I'd  
find the whole family here.

JOLSON  
You lost no time finding me.

BARON  
Well, that's right. Naturally --

JOLSON  
Well, you wasted a trip, Tom. You  
can turn around and go back. I'm  
not interested in your show. Don't  
want to read it. Steve's told you  
that, hasn't he?

Julie looks on alarmed.

STEVE  
Al, wait a second!

JOLSON

I've quit. I've worked enough.  
Yes, and for you in my time, too.  
And busting out here like this'll  
get you nothing.

JULIE

Al, what's the matter with you?!

Jolson catches himself.

BARON

You happen to be wrong, Al. You  
see, to cast a Broadway show these  
days, you have to come to Hollywood  
to find the actors. I can't imagine  
coming out here and not saying hello  
to you after quite a few years  
together.

Jolson is remorseful now.

JULIE

Of course. Tom, you'll have lunch  
with us, won't you?

BARON

Well, Julie, I'd love to, but as a  
matter of fact --

Jolson takes his arm.

JOLSON

As a matter of fact, we wouldn't  
think of letting you go. Henry, set  
Mister Baron up here. Move over,  
Steve.

Julie looks on, relieved. Jolson pulls an extra chair up to  
the table.

JOLSON

Come here, Tom. Sit down.

Tom sits at the table.

JOLSON

Look, pal. Look, everybody. There  
was a crazy fella here a minute ago,  
but I think he's gone now. You can  
relax.

Mama and Papa look relieved.

JOLSON

(to Tom)

How long are you staying, Tom?

BARON

I'm flying back late tomorrow night.

JOLSON

Julie, Mama and Papa have the guest room, but there's a studio bed in the library for Tom tonight, with bath. What do you say, Mister Baron?

BARON

No, I really --

JULIE

That's settled. And tomorrow night you will attend the wedding anniversary dinner of Cantor and Misses Yoelson.

BARON

Oh, I wouldn't miss that for anything. But about tonight, I've got a hotel room.

JOLSON

Sorry, you're staying here, my boy. And look, son. Gonna read that little show of yours tomorrow. Yes sir, I'm gonna give it Mister Jolson's personal attention and advice. And tomorrow night -- Mama, what do you say to our having the dinner party right out here? What do you think of that idea, Papa?

PAPA

This I could also get used to.

Everybody laughs. Jolson returns to his seat at the head of the table.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

Henry lights candles on a beautifully set table.

INT. JOLSON LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Julie plays "LIZA" on the piano. Steve and Papa stand nearby and Mama sits on the couch.

PAPA

It's going to be beautiful out there  
tonight.

STEVE

(gesturing toward the  
library)

It's about time those two stopped  
talking in there, isn't it?

INT. JOLSON LIBRARY - SAME TIME

Baron sits appreciatively behind a desk as Jolson sets the script down.

JOLSON

(raising a glass)

Well, luck to it, Tom.

BARON

(lifting a glass)

You've been a big help to me, Al.

JOLSON

(thumbs through the  
script)

I got a kick out of working on it.  
Like old times. It happens to be  
good. In fact, y'know, if I ever  
had any idea of going back to the  
old grind, it's the kind of a show  
I'd want. Not that I have any such  
idea, Tom. Matter of fact, I -- I  
couldn't stand it.

BARON

What do you mean?

JOLSON

Well, a show's a big job. You gotta  
be up to it. Look at me. Laying  
off for a long time like this. The  
pipes not what they used to be.  
I'll tell you something you never  
knew. Every opening night of my  
life, I used to have knots right in  
here.

(clenches a fist against  
his stomach)

No, that's all behind me, Tom.

(raising his glass)

Well, luck again, pal.

They toast each other and drink.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Julie gets up from the piano and walks over to Steve.

JULIE

Al hasn't been as excited about anything in a long time, has he, Steve?

STEVE

Oh, I don't know.

JULIE

Must be a good show.

STEVE

Not bad. He gave Tom some good ideas this afternoon.

Julie goes around the room cleaning out ashtrays.

MAMA

Julie, make him sing tonight.

JULIE

I'm afraid we won't have any more luck than we had last night, Mama. He'll play records again, but that's all.

PAPA

(rising)

Well, I can understand. He has sung enough. Let the records sing for a change.

STEVE

Nice idea, Cantor.

JULIE

Speaking of change, Papa, do you think it's been good for Al?

PAPA

Good? How do you mean?

JULIE

I mean, does he seem happy to you?

PAPA

Well, of course.

JULIE

Exactly like he used to be?

PAPA

A little more settled, maybe. After all, it's time. He's no boy any more.

HENRY (O.S.)

Dinner is ready, Misses Jolson.

STEVE

Good. I'll break this up.

Steve walks to the library door and opens it.

STEVE

All right, that's all, boys. Join the party. Dinner's served.

Jolson emerges slapping his hands together.

JOLSON

Ha-ha. Well, that's that. Washes everything up.

Baron follows him from the library.

JOLSON

(giving Mama a kiss)

From here on, Mama, we belong to you. I'm hungry. Let's go.

JULIE

(to Papa)

My dear Cantor, if you'll give your arm to the bride and lead the way...

Papa takes Mama's arm and leads her outside. Jolson takes Julie's arm and she starts to hum the "Wedding March." Steve and Tom bring up the rear, linking arms and humming the "Wedding March," too.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

The party all sit at the outside table, except Steve is standing, delivering a toast.

STEVE

The Cantor and Misses Yoelson are the youngest couple I've ever known. It doesn't matter how many years they've been married.

(MORE)

STEVE (cont'd)  
All that counts is the spirit. And  
I wish them a hundred more young  
years of happiness. L'chaim.

The party toast and drink. Julie applauds.

PAPA  
Thank you, thank you.

BARON  
Speech, Cantor!

The others all applaud.

STEVE  
Yeah, speech! Come on!

PAPA  
Oh, no, I --

MAMA  
Come on, Papa. Come on.

Papa rises.

PAPA  
Thank you, Mister Martin. Thank  
you. That was very beautiful. In  
fact --  
(he feels his head)  
Ooh. That wine was very good, Mama.  
-- I mean, what you said before,  
about the spirit, Mister Martin. By  
a strange coincidence, we actually  
said something just like that the  
night of our wedding...

(he strokes Mama's cheek)  
... while Mama and I were dancing.  
I said, let's always dance. Oh, and  
how we danced that wedding night.  
Asa -- Asa, you should have seen us.  
-- Oh, oh, I remember, you couldn't  
be there.

The others burst out laughing.

PAPA  
Anyhow, I -- I thank you. I thank  
you all.

The others applaud.

JOLSON

Ah, that was very good, Papa. Very good.

Papa lifts his glass and starts to hum "THE ANNIVERSARY SONG."

PAPA

Remember that, Asa?

JOLSON

I've heard you sing it a thousand times, Papa.

PAPA

That was the waltz at our wedding. Come on, Asa. Come on, sing with me.

Julie looks from Papa to Jolson, certain he won't sing.

JOLSON

No, you go ahead, Papa.

PAPA

Oh, ho. Listen to this.

Julie looks back at Papa.

PAPA

As a little boy, he used to sing with me at the synagogue. Well, what's the matter? Too -- too big a man now, huh?

Jolson looks down. Julie looks at Jolson again. Her expression almost asks him to sing.

PAPA

Mama, mama, tell me the truth. Who was always a better singer, me or Asa?

She winks at Jolson then turns back to Papa.

MAMA

You, of course, Papa.

PAPA

Uh-huh.

(to Jolson)

Do you hear that? Ah, come on. Please.

Papa hums the "ANNIVERSARY SONG" again. Jolson joins in, harmonizing with him.

Papa gestures to Mama to dance with him. She shakes her head at first, then gets up with him. Julie looks on as they begin to dance.

Then Jolson starts to sing the chorus. Julie looks at him surprised. Jolson keeps singing. Steve looks at him with a trace of sadness.

Mama and Papa continue to dance.

In the middle of the song, Jolson raises his emotional and volume level. Julie gives Steve a concerned look as if asking if Jolson really wants to quit singing. Steve avoids her glance and looks at Jolson.

Jolson continues singing. Julie gives Steve another look, but Steve can only look back with a poker face.

Mama and Papa continue dancing. Jolson finishes the song and looks down thoughtfully.

Julie also looks down, concerned.

Jolson picks up a drink.

JOLSON  
Well, that's that.

Mama and Papa look back at him.

PAPA  
Thank you, Asa. That was very nice.

They return to their seats. Steve watches them. Everyone is quiet. Steve breaks the ice.

STEVE  
Cantor, you two have a fine dancing act there.

PAPA  
Do you think we could pick up a little time?

The others laugh.

STEVE  
I can book you solid for the season.

BARON  
Oh, it was a beautiful party, Julie. You know, I'd like to take over from here on. Suppose we drive into town and you all be my guests at a nightclub. What do you say?

Jolson looks down, not liking the idea. Julie looks at the others uncertain what to think.

MAMA  
Nightclub? Now?

BARON  
Yes. We can see an early floor show and I can catch my plane.

JOLSON  
No, let's not.

BARON  
Why?

JOLSON  
Well, I haven't been in one of those spots in years.

Julie looks at him searchingly.

JOLSON  
You see, we're just country folks, Tom. We don't go for that fast life. And anyway, Mama and Papa wouldn't be interested in a nightclub.

PAPA  
Yes, yes.

MAMA  
Yes, we would.

The others laugh.

BARON  
Well, there you are. And it's not your anniversary, son. It's theirs. Come on, let's go.

DOLLY BACK as they all get up from the table.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A floor show is underway featuring a big band and dancing girls.

## AT A CORNER TABLE

A MAITRE 'D shows the Jolson party to a corner table, where they all sit down -- except Papa, who remains on his feet looking at the dancing girls.

The girls shake and twirl on the floor.

Mama tugs on Papa's coat sleeve and he finally sits, still watching.

## IN THE WINGS

The maitre 'd runs up excitedly behind the manager (EDDIE), taps his shoulder and talks animatedly while motioning toward Jolson's table.

Eddie smiles broadly. He walks over to the BANDLEADER, cups a hand over the microphone and whispers to him.

The bandleader keeps conducting but turns to say something to the band.

## AT THE TABLE

MAMA

(to Papa)

In all your years in show business,  
Papa, you didn't see anything like  
this yet.

PAPA

Oh, no.

He laughs and pats her hand.

## ONSTAGE

The dancers finish with a flourish and run into the wings to applause. The band plays a brief coda of exit music.

Then Eddie gets on the microphone.

EDDIE

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to interrupt the show to make an announcement. We have a celebrity with us, a man you've enjoyed and admired for many years.

Jolson looks the other way and lights a cigarette.

EDDIE

He's been away for a long time and  
we've missed him a lot. But he  
still is the greatest entertainer of  
them all.

BARON

Wonder who he means.

EDDIE

It's an honor to introduce...

The band plays the intro to "MY MAMMY." Jolson steams and looks at Julie. She looks back serenely.

EDDIE

That's right, folks! It's "Mammy!"  
And the man who made it famous --  
the one and only Al Jolson!

The crowd applauds. A spotlight lands on Jolson. He politely rises, nods to the crowd and sits down.

JOLSON

The idiot.

Julie looks on with an enigmatic smile and fingers a string of pearls around her neck. Steve, concerned, looks at Julie then at Jolson.

EDDIE

And there's a chance in a thousand  
if we ask him hard enough, just for  
old times' sake, Mister Jolson might  
give us a song!

JOLSON

This guy's crazy.

The crowd applauds and cheers. Someone yells out, "Come on, Al!"

Jolson tries to wave them off.

JOLSON

Sorry, no.

The applause continues and the spotlight remains on him.

BARON

They're not going to stop. Better  
do it and get it over with.

Jolson looks at the audience then back at Julie.

JOLSON

Baby, it looks like I'm not going to  
get out of this. I'm sorry.

Julie grins and looks around at the audience.

Jolson stubs out his cigarette, rises and walks through the cheering crowd to the stage. The spotlight follows him all the way. Eddie sets down a microphone stand for him.

JOLSON

Thanks, Eddie. Thank you, boys.

That was a big introduction.

(indicating the mic)

Just talk into this?

(addressing the crowd)

Thank you, folks. It's -- it's nice to be remembered. I can't tell ya how nice. But, about singing for you, y'see, I'm a little rusty. But -- well, you asked for it, so we'll just make it a quick one, huh?

(to Eddie)

What'll the boys handle that I can sing?

EDDIE

Anything.

JOLSON

(calling back to the band)

"Robert E. Lee!"

(hands the mic stand to Eddie)

I don't think I'll need this, Eddie.

Eddie walks off with the mic stand.

The band plays the intro to "WAITING FOR THE ROBERT E. LEE." Julie looks on still with an enigmatic smile and fingering her pearls. Jolson sings the song full throttle.

Papa smiles and sways to the music. Julie maintains the enigmatic smile and keeps fingering her pearls.

At the end, the entire Jolson party joins the audience in applauding.

BARON

Great!

Jolson waves to the audience and walks away from the stage.

Suddenly the crowd jumps to their feet, blocking his path and calling, "More, more, more!"

Jolson tries to work his way through but the crowd holds him back.

AT THE TABLE

Everyone but Baron look on concerned.

STEVE  
(rising)  
They'll mob him!

Papa casts a wistful look over the top of his eyeglasses at Julie. She maintains her enigmatic smile, glancing from side to side.

NEAR THE STAGE

Jolson finally gives in.

JOLSON  
(nodding)  
Oh, all right! All right!

He backs up toward the stage.

AT THE TABLE

Julie suddenly lowers her hands from her necklace, concerned. Papa looks at her with concern, then at Jolson.

ONSTAGE

Jolson goes to the stage and waves to the wings.

JOLSON  
Come on out, gang! Everybody!  
Everybody in the show, come on out  
and sit down!

The dancers come out and sit on steps leading up to the band.

JOLSON  
You know, you work hard every night.  
You must be tired of doing this  
show. Just sit down and I'll take  
over for you tonight.

STEVE

Unsmiling, he looks over at Julie then back at the stage.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON

Haven't worked in a long time. Just  
gather around, make yourselves  
comfortable. You ain't heard  
nothin' yet!

JULIE

looks at Jolson and quietly nods, as if finally realizing  
where they stand.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON

You pick it, Professor. What'll it  
be?

The band plays the introduction to "ROCK-A-BYE YOUR BABY WITH  
A DIXIE MELODY."

JOLSON

Ah-ha! "Rock-a-Bye!" Yes sir, I  
think I remember that one.

Jolson sings "ROCK-A-BYE," thoroughly enjoying himself.

AT THE TABLE

Mama, Papa and Julie look on. Julie has one hand on the table  
and with the other keeps fingering her pearls. Papa glances  
at Julie again over the top of his glasses.

CLOSE-UP - JULIE

Now she holds both hands clasped at her throat.

JULIE

You see, what he didn't have at  
home, Mama, was an audience. Live  
faces. Isn't that it, Steve?

WIDER ANGLE ON THE TABLE

Steve looks at Julie with a poker face. She looks again at  
the stage, still with the enigmatic smile and fingering her  
pearls.

ONSTAGE

As Jolson sings on, FADE IN a SUPERIMPOSITION of a PAN across  
the audience. Each patron looks on happily. Then FADE OUT  
the super. The song continues.

## AT THE TABLE

Julie quietly shakes her head as she watches. Papa glances at her sadly over his glasses.

## JULIE

You see, Papa, Al was sure he didn't want to sing any more. He wanted to be with me. I think I let him make the wrong decision.

## STEVE

I don't get this, Julie.

Papa looks sadly at Julie again.

## JULIE

I think Papa does.

Papa casts his eyes downward.

## ONSTAGE

Jolson finishes the song to a tremendous ovation. He steps back waving to the audience. Voices call out for another song: "April Showers."

## AT THE TABLE

Julie, still smiling enigmatically, looks at Jolson then around at the audience.

## ONSTAGE

## JOLSON

(to the conductor)

You heard them, Professor.

## AT THE TABLE

As a piano plays the intro to "APRIL SHOWERS," Steve looks over at Julie. She keeps looking at Jolson.

## ONSTAGE

Jolson starts to sing.

## AT THE TABLE

Steve looks at Julie again. Her gaze remains on Jolson.

## ONSTAGE

Jolson continues to sing.

CLOSE SHOT - JULIE

She sighs deeply, appearing close to tears.

JULIE

Excuse me.

She gets up.

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT - PAPA

looks up at her sadly.

MEDIUM LONG SHOT - THE TABLE

Julie pats Papa on the shoulder, grabs her coat and heads down a corridor toward the foyer.

ONSTAGE

Jolson continues to sing.

IN THE CORRIDOR

DOLLY BACK on Julie walking. Steve rises from the table in b.g. and runs after her. PAN on her as she heads for the entrance.

STEVE

Julie!

She pauses. He turns her gently by the shoulders to face him.

STEVE

Where do you think you're going?

ANGLE ON JULIE OVER STEVE'S SHOULDER

JULIE

Home. Throw some things in the car.  
I'll be gone by the time he gets  
back.

STEVE

Don't do that, Julie.

JULIE

He tried awfully hard, Steve. But  
you and I know: he's got to do that.

STEVE

Now, wait!

JULIE

See that he's on that plane with Tom  
tonight. They'll do a great show.

STEVE

Y'know, this is gonna kill him,  
Julie.

JULIE

It isn't going to be so good for me,  
either. But look. When did you  
last see him as happy as that?

Steve looks back over his shoulder.

MEDIUM SHOT - JOLSON

continues to sing.

TIGHT TWO-SHOT - STEVE AND JULIE

She touches his arm.

JULIE

And, Steve, when he gets home nights  
after the show, don't let him sing  
too long.

WIDER ANGLE

She kisses him on the cheek and turns away. PAN on her and  
DOLLY IN as she walks toward the entrance. She stops in an  
archway to the foyer, takes a last look back, then walks to  
the door.

A DOORMAN opens it. She walks out and he follows, shutting  
the door behind them.

MEDIUM SHOT - THE STAGE

CRANE BACK to a high, wide angle as Jolson sings the last line  
of the song.

FADE OUT.

THE END