

"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 tumblers.

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?

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 FOURSOME

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 to 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.)

Indian-apolis.

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 jut
 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 as 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 hooper, 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 "LULLABY 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 anyplace.

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