"THE JOLSON STORY"

Screenplay by
Stephen Longstreet

Adaptation by
Harry Chandlee & Andrew Solt
FADE IN:

OPENING TITLES

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

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. STREET - DAY

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

SUPER:

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KERNAN'S THEATER - DAY

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

TILT DOWN to the busy sidewalk.

DISSOLVE TO:

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

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

CLOSER ANGLE FROM THE BALCONY

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

STILL CLOSER - ANGLE OVER THE ORCHESTRA

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

STEVE (O.S.)
(calling)
Hey, over here!
THE STAGE - HIGH ANGLE FROM THE BALCONY

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

MEDIUM SHOT - STEVE

STEVE

Steve Martin's the name.

He plays the note again.

REVERSE ANGLE - THE BALCONY

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

THE STAGE

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

WIDER ANGLE - OVER THE ORCHESTRA

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

STEVE

It grew!

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

STEVE

Thank you!

MEDIUM SHOT - STEVE

sits in the chair.

STEVE

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

He looks around.

WIDER ANGLE ON THE STAGE

A man's voice calls out from the audience:
MAN'S VOICE
"Stay in Your Own Backyard!"

STEVE
It's too dirty back there!

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

REVERSE ANGLE - OVER STEVE AT THE AUDIENCE

STEVE
Any other tunes?

A MAN rises.

MAN
"Banks of the Wabash!"

Steve begins to point at him with his right hand.

ONSTAGE

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

STEVE
"Banks of the Wabash." All right. Now I'll tell ya what I'll do. I'll play it if you folks'll sing it. Right?

(gestures to the conductor)

The key of "C," Professor.

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

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

STEVE
So you won't sing, heh? Am I asking you to do me a favor?

(points the bow at the audience)

I'm doing you a favor! When you sing, what happens? Your lungs get full of oxygen. It puts roses on your cheeks!
REVERSE ANGLE - OVER STEVE AT THE AUDIENCE

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

He points to the exit. The audience laughs.

FRONT ANGLE ON STEVE

STEVE
Now that we understand each other...
(points his bow at the conductor)
Let's go, professor.

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

IN THE BALCONY - ASA AND ANN
Asa starts to hum the song, then he sings it.

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

IN THE BALCONY
Asa finishes the song. The audience applauds exuberantly.

ONSTAGE
Steve applauds with them.

IN THE BALCONY
Asa looks around, impressed at the reaction.

ONSTAGE

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

IN THE BALCONY
Asa shakes his head, too shy for accolades.

STEVE (O.S.)
Ah, don't be bashful! Come on, stand right up!
ONSTAGE

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

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

The audience applauds loudly.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa rises to his feet.

STEVE (O.S.)
Attaboy!

ANGLE OVER STEVE AT THE AUDIENCE

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

IN THE BALCONY

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

STEVE (O.S.)
Professor, let's have the chorus again!

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

ONSTAGE

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

IN THE BALCONY

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

ONSTAGE

Steve applauds enthusiastically.

IN THE BALCONY

Asa, almost embarrassed, sits down again. A PATRON behind him pats his shoulder.
INTERCUT - ASA IN BALCONY/STEVE ON STAGE

STEVE
What's your name?

ASA
Asa Yoelson.

STEVE
Are you in show business?

ASA
(looks at Ann and smiles shyly)
No, sir, I'm not.

STEVE
Where'd you learn to sing like that?

ASA
Well, I sing with my father at the synagogue.

STEVE
Where?

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

He suddenly looks at Ann in a panic.

MEDIUM SHOT - THE BALCONY

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

WIDER ANGLE - OVER STEVE AT BALCONY

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - DAY

Asa runs up a sidewalk holding his cap, Ann running behind him.
ANGLE ON THE SYNAGOGUE

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

INT. SYNAGOGUE - LONG SHOT - SAME TIME

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

CLOSER ON THE CHORUS

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

INTERCUT - THE YOELSON FAMILY DURING THE SONG

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

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

PAPA

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

CLOSER ON PAPA

PAPA

You came like someone who was running a race. It is not good to run a race with God, Asa.
Asa remains sitting on the arm of the chair as Mama looks at him.

TWO-SHOT - ASA AND MAMA

MAMA
Where were you, Asa?

ASA
I was... singing.

ANGLE ON PAPA

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.

PAPA

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 MC GEE'S OFFICE - DAY - SAME TIME

FATHER MC GEE 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?

MC GEE

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.

MC GEE

That's just what I mean.

(touches Asa's elbow)

Now, suppose you tell me about yourself.

Asa sits in a chair.

MC GEE

Where are you from?

Asa looks down, saying nothing.

MC GEE

Where was he picked up at?

REILLY

In the freight yard. He came in on a cattle car. Can't ya tell?
McGee "tisks" at Asa.

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

ASA
I had to get here.

MCGEE
To Baltimore? Why?

REILLY
He's got a job here.

MCGEE
What kind of job?

ASA
Singing.

MCGEE
Singing! Where?

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

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

Asa looks down again, not answering.

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

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

JOHN
Come on, my boy.

Asa rises and faces McGee.

ASA
Why don't you find Steve Martin and ask him?
MCGEE
(taking Asa's elbow)
That's just what I'll do.

McGee turns Asa toward John. DOLLY IN on them.

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

Asa turns back in surprise.

ASA
Sing?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

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

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

INT. MCGEE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

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

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

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

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

IN THE CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Reilly leads Mama and Papa around a corner and down the hall. Papa wears a black hat. He sees the statue of Jesus. Mama gestures to him. Papa hesitantly removes his hat.
INT. McGEE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

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

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

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

    PAPA
    How do you do?

McGee turns to Mama and shakes her hand.

    MCGEE
    Misses Yoelson.

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

    MCGEE
    Oh, you know Mister Martin?

    PAPA
    We know him.

    MAMA
    Is our boy here?

    PAPA
    The description is like Asa.

    MCGEE
    I have a very strong feeling that...

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

    PAPA
    So have I!

McGee leads them to the door to the chapel.

CLOSER ANGLE

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

THEIR POV - THE CHOIR

Asa, in the center of the group, keeps singing.
FOUR-SHOT - MAMA, PAPA, STEVE AND McGEE

Mama steps forward, concerned.

MAMA

Asa!

THEIR POV - THE CHOIR

keeps singing.

TWO-SHOT - MAMA AND PAPA

Mama keeps looking as Papa looks over her shoulder.

PAPA

(shaking his head)

Singing without his cap on!

TWO-SHOT - STEVE AND McGEE

McGee gives Papa a kindly look.

MCGEE

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

MAMA AND PAPA

Papa gives McGee a kindly look.

CLOSE-UP - ASA

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

FOUR-SHOT

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

ANGLE ON THE CHOIR

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

THE 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 too small for Asa.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE BULLETIN BOARD

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

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE - ASA'S POSTCARDS

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

- The first postcard is labeled, "Indianapolis."

MAMA (O.S.)
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-moo."

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 go -- 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!
But they might like something different.

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

Oh, I know that, Mister Dockstader.

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

ONSTAGE

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

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.

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

(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.

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!

(Mama 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 CURTAINSPart and Jolson sticks his head out.

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

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

BACKSTAGE

The assistant stage manager does a double-take.

ONSTAGE

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

The audience laughs. Meanwhile:

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

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
Close the curtains on him!
JOLSON
Oscar, if you insist on phonin', get one for me, huh?

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

ONSTAGE

Jolson parts the curtains and steps onstage again.

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

The stage manager and his assistant glower back at Jolson.

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

The orchestra plays the intro to "MY MAMMY."

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

IN THE AUDIENCE

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

ONSTAGE

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

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A NEWSPAPER RACK - DAY

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

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. YOELSON DINING ROOM - DAY
Mama looks over Papa's shoulder at the sub-headline.

MAMA
Asa smashed something?

Dissolve to:

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

Dissolve to:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT
It reads: "GABY DESLYS WITH AL JOLSON IN VERA VIOLETTA."

Dissolve to:

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

CUT TO:

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

Dissolve to:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT
Jolson pats his face with a towel. Baron enters, reflected in Jolson's mirror.

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

JOLSON
(dourly)
Send him in.

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

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

   STEVE
   Fine. Glad to see you, Al.

   JOLSON
   Sit down. Just cleaning up.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Steve rises petulantly.

   STEVE
   That's a nice part, Mister Jolson, but not in my line.
JOLSON
(rising)
Ha-ha! Steve, you old dog! You
got to do it! I need ya! Been
lookin' all over for ya!

STEVE
Quit kidding. You've got Tom.

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

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

STEVE
At my age, ride on a comet?

JOLSON
Tom, meet my new manager. Mister
Steve Martin!

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A BILLBOARD - NIGHT

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. YOELSON LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

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

PAPA
Twenty minutes to twelve. Why
doesn't he phone?
ANN
The show isn't over yet, that's all.

MAMA
So what are you worried about?

PAPA
Mama, when will you learn about show business?

(he picks up a Variety and slaps it)
Running time is everything. You can have a smash show, but if it's too long, it can take a nose-dive.

(shrugs)
Happens all the time.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

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

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

IN THE WINGS (STAGE RIGHT)

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

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

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

SALLY
Henry will never believe I love him and not Lester.

IN THE WINGS (STAGE RIGHT)

Steve, Baron and the assistant keep signaling to Jolson.

ONSTAGE - ANGLE FROM THE WINGS

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

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

SALLY

He won't even listen to me.

JOLSON

(looking at the watch)

He won't, huh

SALLY

No.

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

JOLSON

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

The audience laughs.

IN THE WINGS (STAGE RIGHT)

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

JOLSON (O.S.)

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

The audience laughs again.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON

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

(calling into the wings)

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

The audience applauds.

JOLSON

C'mon, Henry. C'mon out.

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

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

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

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.

Has he lost his mind?

ONSTAGE

Go ahead, take it up!

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

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.

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 the Philadelphia Gazette Journal: "JOLSON STARTS NATION WIDE TOUR TONIGHT AT BIJOU THEATER," with a picture of Jolson singing without make-up. A sidebar story adds: "BROADWAY SHOW GREAT SUCCESS."

- In the Chicago Record: "WINDY CITY ROARS WELCOME TO JOLSON," with a portrait of Jolson without make-up. A side-bar story adds: "JOLSON SHOW SLATED TONIGHT."

- In the Kansas City Times: "K.C. OPERA HOUSE A SELL-OUT FOR AL JOLSON", with two pictures of him performing -- one in blackface, the other not. A side-bar story adds: "JOLSON ON TOUR GREAT SUCCESS."

- In The Des Moines Dispatch: "JOLSON IN TOWN," with two pictures of Jolson performing in blackface.

- In the Lincoln Gazette: "TOWN TURNS OUT FOR JOLSON," with two pictures of him performing -- one in blackface, the other not.

- In the Cheyenne Globe Times: "JOLSON DAY IN CHEYENNE," with two pictures of him performing -- one in blackface, the other not.

- In the Spokane Sentinel: "FIRST BROADWAY SHOW VISITS NORTHWEST," with two pictures of Jolson performing in blackface.

- In the Seattle Transcript Journal: "AL'S HERE! THEATER GOERS GET TREAT," with two pictures of Jolson performing, one in blackface, the other not. A side-bar story adds: "INNOVATION IN ENTERTAINMENT."

DISSOLVE TO:

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

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

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

The song ends.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

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

CUT TO:

INT. DINING CAR - DAY - SAME TIME

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

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

Jolson looks up enthralled.

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

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

JOLSON
So what?
STEVE
So pretty soon you're doin' eight performances a week again -- like you've done steady for five years. And now you want to add an extra show on Sunday.
(pointing at him)
That's a short-cut to the morgue.

JOLSON
Sweetheart, what you like doing keeps you healthy.

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

JOLSON
(looking up)
Like what?

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

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

STEVE
Two weeks.

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

STEVE
Of the United States?

JOLSON
No, the synagogue.

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. WINTER GARDEN - BOX SEATS - NIGHT

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

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

WIDE SHOT - THE STAGE

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

JOLSON
(singing out)
Hamburgers! Hamburgers!
Hamburgers!

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

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

JOLSON
One of us should have stayed home!

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

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

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

PAPA
A Spaniard all of a sudden!

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

MR. MURRAY
You were great. I enjoyed you very much.
Jolson turns to Mr. Samuels and shakes his hand.

JOLSON
Mr. Samuels, how are you?

DOLLY IN as Jolson talks to Mama and Papa.

JOLSON
Well, how'd you like it?

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

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

They all laugh.

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

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

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

MAMA
Sunday nights, too?

JOLSON
By popular request, Mama. Don't worry about it, honey.

(looks up)
Ann!

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

ANN
Al, it was marvelous.

JOLSON
Gee, I'm glad to see you, Ann.

(notices the other man)
Say, I know him.
ANN
That's Roy Anderson, Al. He was in school with us.

JOLSON
(shaking his hand)
Sure. Hello, Roy.

ROY
How are ya, Al?

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

CLOSE-UP - JOLSON
He tries not to let his anguish show.

CLOSE-UP - STEVE
looks up, knowing Jolson hurts.

JOLSON (O.S.)
You and Roy?

ANN (O.S.)
Uh-huh.

CLOSE-UP - JOLSON
as it sinks in:

JOLSON
Well, what d'ya know.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT
It reads:

"WINTER GARDEN
AL JOLSON
IN SINBAD"

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

DISSOLVE TO:
EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POSTER - NIGHT

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINTER GARDEN MARQUEE - NIGHT

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

"WINTER GARDEN
AL JOLSON
IN
BIG BOY
OPENING TONIGHT"

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."
EXT. THE SAME MARQUEE - NIGHT

Now it says "3rd YEAR."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

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

GLENN

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

STEVE

But why Al?

GLENN

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

STEVE

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

GLENN

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

Jolson enters through an archway with a VALET.

STEVE

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

JOLSON

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

GLENN

Fifty million in this country alone.

JOLSON

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

The valet helps Jolson into his jacket and brushes it off.
STEVE
That may be true, Al, but --

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

From O.S., music starts to play.

JOLSON
That's really something!

STAGE HAND (O.S.)
Ready for the finale, Mister Jolson!

JOLSON
(heading out the door)
Stick around, Mister Glenn. We'll talk about it later.

PAN on Jolson as he leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

VARIETY

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

CUT TO:

INT. YOELSON DINING ROOM - DAY

Papa reads Variety as Mama sips tea.

MAMA
Pictures that talk? Is that possible, Papa?

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

MAMA
But tell me, exactly, how does this work?

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

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

He looks at the paper then glances up at her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A POSTER - NIGHT

It reads:

"TONIGHT
SUNDAY CONCERT
WITH
AL JOLSON"

DOLLY IN on the poster.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WINTER GARDEN THEATER - NIGHT

The orchestra plays "MAMMY."

IN THE BACK OF THE HOUSE

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

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

STEVE
Al, there's your music!

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

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

IN THE AUDITORIUM

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

JOLSON
Hi, folks. Hello, Jerry!
WIDER ANGLE

showing the entire house. Jolson continues down the runway.

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

ONSTAGE

Jolson arrives on the stage.

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

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

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

The audience applauds.

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

More applause. Jolson notices someone in the audience.

    JOLSON
Well, I see a rival producer sitting
down front.

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE

FLORENCE ZIEGFELD sits in the second row with a pretty redhead
-- JULIE BENSON.
JOLSON (O.S.)
Mr. Ziegfeld. Ziggy, will you stand up and take a bow?

ONSTAGE

JOLSON
Try and stop him!

IN THE AUDIENCE
Ziegfeld rises and turns to the audience. They applaud.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON
Not too much, folks. Not too much.

He suddenly catches himself, looking into the audience again.

CLOSE SHOT - JULIE
She looks up smiling at him.

ONSTAGE

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

IN THE AUDIENCE
Julie glances down diffidently. Ziegfeld rises again.

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

He points to her and the audience applauds.

ONSTAGE

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

IN THE AUDIENCE
The audience laughs. Ziegfeld smiles and sits again.

ONSTAGE

JOLSON
Glad to know you, Miss Benson.
She nods courteously to him.

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

Julie and Ziegfeld laugh.

JOLSON
(to the audience)
Well, what'll it be?

MAN CALLING OUT
"Swanee!"

ANOTHER MAN CALLING OUT
"Rock-a-Bye!"

JOLSON
(holding his hands up)
Wait a second! Hold it! I don't care what you mugs want! I want to know what Miss Benson would like to hear.

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

JOLSON
Miss Benson, what is your pleasure?

JULIE
(after a moment)
"April Showers."

The audience applauds.

JOLSON
"April Showers."
(to the conductor)
Let's not keep the lady waiting, Henry.

The orchestra plays the intro to "APRIL SHOWERS."

ON THE RUNWAY

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

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

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

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

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

MEDIUM-SHOT - JOLSON

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

Julie watches with increasing interest, almost studying him.

Again, Jolson does a big finish with full embellishment.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S APARTMENT - IN THE LIVING ROOM

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

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

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

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

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

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT - SAME TIME

They step outside and Jolson closes the door.

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

You sure?

JULIE

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

JOLSON

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

JULIE

That's good.

JOLSON

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

JULIE

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

JOLSON

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

JULIE

Thank you.

JOLSON

Look, will you do me a big favor?

JULIE

What?

JOLSON

Will you marry me, Miss Benson?

JULIE

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

JOLSON

I didn't suppose you would, but you could think about it, huh? Of course, you'd have to decide tonight. Y'see, I'm going to California tomorrow.
JULIE
Well, then, this last weekend
belongs to your friends.

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

JULIE
How'd they get there?

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

JULIE
... you're singing for them.

JOLSON
Yeah -- just for three or four
hours.

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

JOLSON
I don't mind.

JULIE
You mean you love it.

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

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

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

He hears Steve's voice calling:
STEVE (O.S.)

Al!

THREE-SHOT - AL, JULIE AND STEVE

Steve has just opened the balcony door.

STEVE
It's getting late and the gang wants --

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

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

TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND JULIE

She turns toward the door.

JULIE
You really ought to go in, Mister Jolson.

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

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

JOLSON
Ah, yeah. That's too bad. If it just wasn't for that, huh?
JULIE
And a few other things.

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

JULIE
Well...
(gestures ahead)
That street down there.

JOLSON
Broadway? Heh, what a street!

THEIR POV - BROADWAY
a long shot showing lights blazing at night.

BACK TO SCENE

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

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

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

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

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

JULIE
That's the big difference.

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

JOLSON
Like what, Julie? Gotta know.

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

JOLSON
Sure, everybody wants a home.

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

JOLSON
Why not? Why wouldn't I?

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

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

Steve's voice interrupts them again:

STEVE (O.S.)
Al!

THREE SHOT - JOLSON, JULIE AND STEVE

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

Steve starts to turn away.
JOLSON
Tell Ziggy I'll see Miss Benson home.

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

Steve goes inside again and closes the door.

TWO-SHOT - JOLSON AND JULIE

JOLSON
Late? But, baby, I'm going away tomorrow, and we're just getting places.
(motions with his head)
Come here, sit down. Oh, look, can you cut out that "Mister Jolson?"
Why don't you just call me by my southern name: honey.

He winks to her and walks her off.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROADWAY - NIGHT
A panorama of the entire area with lights blazing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BROADWAY - DAY
The same view but now bathed in daylight. Morning has come.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOLSON'S LIVING ROOM - DAY
Steve, still in his tuxedo, lies asleep on the couch. The sound of a door opening awakens him.

Jolson and Julie walk in from the balcony.

JOLSON
I know what's the trouble, baby. You just don't believe me. You don't believe I want anything different. And I'm tryin' to tell you, honey, I was barging through this great, big, beautiful world like a fool!
JULIE
Oh, I do believe you, honey. But I always thought I'd like to fall in love with the man I was going to marry.

JOLSON
(walking off with her)
Oh, you're absolutely right, and I'm not gonna rush you, baby.

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

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

Steve looks off at them in disbelief.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY

The train races along the tracks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

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

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GLENN'S OFFICE - DAY

Jolson and Glenn shake hands.
INT. STUDIO - DAY

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

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

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.
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.
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.

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

(rising, concerned)
What happens to the new Winter Garden show?

That waits like Julie does.

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

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

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.
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.

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 All 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 who 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?
They move the table further from the fireplace. Steve walks back in and looks at the table.

JULIE
All right.

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.
(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 maître '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.
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.

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?

Anything.

Jolson 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.

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.


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.
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.

Jolson finishes the song to a tremendous ovation. He steps back waving to the audience. Voices call out for another song: "April Showers."

Julie, still smiling enigmatically, looks at Jolson then around at the audience.

Jolson (to the conductor)
You heard them, Professor.

As a piano plays the intro to "APRIL SHOWERS," Steve looks over at Julie. She keeps looking at Jolson.

Jolson starts to sing.

Steve looks at Julie again. Her gaze remains on Jolson.

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