



New Orleans Notes for Third Revision and Revised Draft

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Notes for third revision of New Orleans

Combine II-3 with II-5 so there is only

1. One party to which Cally comes--This Piece of Planet is, therefore, sung to Cally, who represents Algiers.
2. Clarence going to St. Louis or Chicago--not being murdered--his "going" is a move to the Onstage Small Band.

Beau "joins" him at the end by doing the same i.e. going to get in the Small Band at the end after "Thank You" Tour./

(What might be nice is to see the small band in the place where Omar stood.)

3. One earlier scene with Cally and drawn Cally story all the way to the end. Cut to Johnny gambling. Johnny can't leave because Satan won't let him due to debt.

Johnny "sees" Storyville as threatening (just the opposite of the exciting Storyville he imagined earlier)
Before Longshot Gambler Johnny's debt and he goes around house sees repellant scenes. Some "action" shows the life threatening circumstance he is in with Satan.

4. Sly Life sung to Beau
5. Sweet Justice not with women
6. "Sweet Justice" opens scene
Before Masked Ball
Talks to Cobalt
~~Cobalt~~

7. Omar appears at the Ball assuaged and again at the end of the play in original place high above company.

NEW ORLEANS

Revised

Toni Morrison

George Square in New Orleans, 1917. The French Market, 1917. The music is heard at the time of the curtain. Because some music is heard, the phrase of this opening scene is repeated and developed into a new phrase of music in the course of the story. It should be distinctive, "African" as sometimes it is called. At curtain time we see something like the moonlight of the Square (a part of the scene where, until the turn of the century, there and then free blacks gathered on the square) high above the dancers, in the moonlight and but in fact, the dancer below, is a market figure in a dress of simple, possibly on a table - if not, certainly it appears to be rather than a normal person. This god seems to be dancing with a small underfoot. The dancer below holds and then quiescences at the god's command. The structure that parallels is to show - shift, i.e. to shift from a god to a tribulation, a slave to a ragged and indistinct mendicant. During this descent, as the sun comes up, the dance movements slowly, but perceptibly become the postures and movements of New Orleans blacks in the French Market, 1917, at various kinds of work and people - just explicit movements. They are men, women and children doing the work of selling, domestic, cigar makers, farmers, carpenters, bricklayers, shoemakers, stonemasons, travelers, cooks, butchers, blacksmiths, wrought iron makers, cane cutters, carpenters, iron workers, draymen, etc. By the time the god has completed his descent to the level of the people below and becomes an everyday beggar (the only one onstage working a crowd with no work to do) the work movements of the people have become harsh, and the music changes. They sing a song composed of the songs of New Orleans. The music should sound like those beautiful five part choruses, the songs of South Africa, in which one voice leads and the others answer. As they sing this song, the beggar-god moves away from the stage for a series of brightly colored robes and ribbons from his suitcase. He then looks his attention. The scene is "The Beggar" in "The Streets of New Orleans".

ACT IScene 1

Congo Square in New Orleans circa 1885 and the French Market, 1917. Unmistakably African music is heard at the rise of the curtain. Because some aspect, beat, or phrase of this opening music will be repeated and developed into a major piece of music in the course of the play, it should be distinctive, rather than "generally African" as sometimes it turns out to be. At curtain rise we see dancing figures in the moonlight of the Square (a park in New Orleans where, until the turn of the century, slaves and then free Blacks gathered on Sundays to dance). High above the dancers, in full moonlight and better seen than the dancers below, is a masked figure in a dress of grass, possibly on stilts--if not, certainly it appears to be taller than a normal person. This god seems to be dancing with no support underfoot. The dance below builds and, then quiets down as the god descends via a structure that permits it to shape-shift, i.e. to shift from a god to a tribesman to a slave to a ragged and indistinct mendicant. During this descent, as the sun comes up, the dance movements slowly, but perceptibly become the gestures and movements of New Orleans blacks in the French Market, 1917, at various kinds of work (no props--just explicit movement). They are men, women and children doing the work of smiths, domestics, cigar makers, tanners, coopers, bricklayers, sweepers, stevedores, trawlers, cooks, barbers, plasterers, wrought iron makers, cane cutters, carpenters, levee workers, draymen, etc. By the time the god has completed his descent to the level of the people below and becomes an anonymous beggar (the only one onstage wandering about with no work to do) the work movements of the people have become harsh, and the music agitated. They sing a song composed of the street names of New Orleans. The music should sound like those beautiful five part choruses one hears in South Africa, in which one voice leads and the others answer. As they sing this song, the beggar-god moves among them, offering for sale scraps of brightly colored paper and ribbon from his pockets. No one pays him any attention. They sing, in "call and answer" fashion, "The Streets of New Orleans."

THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS

Lyrics ©1982 by Toni Morrison

LIBERTY, WILLOW, BASIN STREET
DESIRE, IBERVILLE

BOURBON, PERDIDO, CARROLTON
DRADES, MELPOMENE

FRENCHMAN, CLAIBORNE, RAMPART, CANAL
NAPOLEON, ELYSIAN FIELDS

GOVERNOR, BURGUNDY, TUPELO
VILLERE, METAIRIE

ST. LOUIS, ST. JAMES, CONTI, GALVEZ
LAUREL, BIENVILLE

GRAVIER, DAUPHINE
OCTAVIA, MAGAZINE

POYDRAS, GASQUET
REX, VIEUX CARRE

ARE THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS
ARE THE STREETS OF NEW ORLEANS

WHERE WE WORK IN NEW ORLEANS
WHERE WE WORK IN NEW ORLEANS

BEGGAR-GOD

(Pulling a few scraps from his pocket)

Buy a blessing, darling? Two for the cost of one. Never-fail blessings. Never-fail. Come on, don't spite an old man, sweetheart.

No one buys; they wave him away, and do a "busy at work" dance which suggests that they are setting up stalls of goods for sale in the market. The beggar-god approaches a group of three: Cally, Johnny (her husband) and their son Beau--a family engaged in helping each other and extremely preoccupied in their "busy at work" dance.

BEGGAR-GOD

Come on, brother, I know you want a blessing.

Johnny shakes his head and waves the beggar away. At no time during the following dialogue do they miss a step of their "busy at work" dance.

JOHNNY

You see me busy, and you want me to stop and buy a scrap of paper?

BEGGAR-GOD

(to Cally)

What about you, honey, Buy a blessing?

CALLY

Come back later. Market will be open in no time.

BEGGAR-GOD

No time like now for a blessing.

CALLY

I don't think I know you. Who are your people?

BEGGAR-GOD

Name's Omar. You my people.

Cally and Johnny exchange glances

JOHNNY

You live around here, Homer?

OMAR

Omar. Close by. Pretty close by.

BEAU

Go on Daddy. Get one.

OMAR

Now that's a bright boy. Two for a penny. That's all. You can't beat that.

JOHNNY

Two for a penny? All right. I'll buy one.

(The others laugh)

OMAR

(Hurt)

You mocking me. I'm offering you a blessing, cheap, and you mock me.

Dancing stops

JOHNNY

(puts his arm around Cally and Beau and speaks to Omar kindly patronizingly)

Look, old man. Homer, Omar, whatever. We don't need you. We're already blessed.

Light focusses on this family group. Set must become or suggest a quiet block in a modest black neighborhood. They sing "A Quiet Colored Neighborhood."

"A QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD:

Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

CAN'T YOU SEE WE GOT WHAT WE NEED
CAN'T YOU GUESS WE'RE ALREADY BLESSED
IN OUR QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD

WE NEVER MEET STRANGERS ON THE STREET
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT
WHEN WE BLOW OUT THE LIGHT

ONLY THE TABLECLOTH IS WHITE
 WE HAVE DOILIES ON OUR CHAIRS
 AT CHURCH PICNICS WORK IS SHARED
 IN A QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD
 WE SEEK GUIDANCE IN THE BIBLE
 AND LOOK DOWN ON ALL THINGS TRIBAL
 IN A QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD
 YOUNG CHILDREN OBEY; NONE EVER STRAY
 FOR CUSTOMS WOULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD BE-
 YOND A QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD.

ALL: A NEGRO FAMILY
 LIVES VERY HAPPILY
 IN A QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD

OMAR
 (screaming and backing away)

Who don't need to be blessed? Which one of you don't need to be
 blessed. You want me to leave you alone? All right. That's
 the curse then. I will leave you alone.

(He moves down stage and is bathed in light and "Omar's
 Music" is heard. But only Beau reacts to it. Omar
 directs a huge, windy, whispering curse at Johnny's family.)

OMAR
 Every hello ain't a welcome
 Every goodbye ain't a gone
 Confusion, confound you everyday
 What goes up slides down
 Nothing will bring my blessing back
 Except my healing sound

(All are engaged again in their "Busy at Work" dance and
 singing the "Streets of New Orleans" which is suddenly interrupted
 'by a shout "La Premiere! Look! Look! La Premiere!")

Throughout her dance the following
libretto is sung by various CHARACTERS
in the CROWD:

"LA PREMIER"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

CHILDREN

HERE COMES THE LADY WITH THE SILVER ON HER CANE
MY MAMA WON'T LET ME SAY HER NAME
LA PREMIER, LA PREMIER
GET ON BACK TO WHERE YOU LAY
LA PREMIER
GET ON BACK TO WHERE YOU LAY

MEN

THE FIRST COLORED MADAM IN NEW ORLEANS
WHO WITH A STREET WALKER'S TRADE BECAME A WOMAN OF MEANS
THEY SAY HER UNDERWEAR IS SILK
THEY SAY SHE BATHES IN ASSES MILK
THEY SAY HER BED IS RED AND GOLD
THEY SAY HER HEART IS ICE-HOUSE COLD

THE FIRST NEGRO WOMAN IN THE WHOLE WIDE SOUTH
TO UPLIFT THE RACE WITH A CLASSY PLEASURE HOUSE
THEY SAY HER BACK IS SMOOTH AS SILK
THEY SAY SHE SOAKS HER THIGHS IN MILK
THEY SAY HER NAVEL'S A BUTTON OF GOLD
I KNOW HER HEART IS ICE-HOUSE COLD

WOMEN

IS THAT DRESS SATIN?
LOOK AT THAT CANE
A NASTY WOMAN IS A TERRIBLE THING
WHAT KIND OF BIRD GROW THEM FEATHERS?
LOOK AT HER GLOVES
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL HAT
I'D KILL MYSELF BEFORE I'D LIVE LIKE THAT

LOOK AT THE HEELS ON THEM SHOES
MONEY IN HER PURSE
DIAMONDS IN HER EARS
HER MISERABLE LIFE WILL BRING YOU TO TEARS

MEN

LOOK AT HER LIPS
OH LORD THOSE EYES

WOMEN

A LOW DOWN WOMAN I DO DESPISE

MEN

LITTY BITTY WAIST
POMPADOUR HAIR

WOMEN

A FALLEN SISTER IS A MOTHER'S DESPAIR

CHILDREN

LOOK AT THE LADY WITH THE SILVER ON HER CANE
MY MAMA WON'T LET ME SAY HER NAME
LA PREMIER, LA PREMIER
GET ON BACK TO WHERE YOU LAY

(La Premier's response to the lust of the men and the outrage and ill-hidden envy of the women is an arrogant and seductive dance which challenges them all. The women snatch away children and some exit in a huff, including Beau and Cally. La Premier is sauntering about, choosing goods from a stall. Some men approach her)

JOHNNY

Well, well. Look what the Canal threw up. You in a respectable neighborhood, girl. You lost or something?

LA PREMIER

Not at all. I just thought I'd take a look at what the Mississippi got that I don't.

MAN

What does the Mississippi have that you don't?

LA PREMIER

Oh, I don't know. A fish, maybe. A big handsome fish that don't mind getting caught.

JOHNNY

You can't catch no fish unless you got the right equipment. Must be something wrong with your net.

LA PREMIER

Then I am in the wrong place, ain't I? If my net needs fixing, I need a real man to do it.

1-1-8

MAN:

You call them pimps in the District real?

LA PREMIER

I don't have any evidence to the contrary. Do you?

JOHNNY

You don't know nothing about normal people, people who work in the daylight. You wouldn't know a real man if you fell over him.

LA PREMIER

What I do know is that a man selling crayfish for three cents pound can't do nothing for me.

JOHNNY

We don't owe nobody. And there ain't no white folks in my house.

LA PREMIER

Maybe there should be. Men working in my house make fifty, a hundred dollars a week.

JOHNNY

We know all about you and your nasty house. I got a house too and a wife inside it. She takes care of the things I need.

LA PREMIER

If she lets you get up in the middle of the night and go shrimping, she ain't taking care of nothing.

JOHNNY

Hey woman, watch yourself.

MAN

You really are the devil.

MAN

You as bad as they say

LA PREMIER

Um hm. As bad as they say and as good as they say. Try it, if you ain't scared. 200 North Basin Street. You'll recognize the house. The shutters are wide open and wild red. They don't call me La Premier for nothing00but I'm not just the First; I'm also the last. If any of you get tired of church suppers and want a real feast come see me. My shutters are wide open.

(La Premier taps offstage to the sneering but uneasy laughter of the men. She is offstage completely, but the sound of her tapping remains. Johnny and the others start to walk away, but he stops to listen to her rhythm. The tapping becomes part of "Omar's Music," louder and louder. Johnny begins to move to it, does a step or two, struggles to maintain his own beat as the scene changes. As he struggles he images a street in the District, and enters it. Tonk houses, cribs, music blaring, people in various poses that are the exaggerations of the cliché. All very seductive. Into this line of District types struts Satan who leads them in the song "WE AIN'T WILD"

WE AIN'T WILD

Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

WE AIN'T WILD
 WE JUST GOT STYLE
 WE AIN'T ROUGH
 WE JUST 'CUT THAT STUFF'
 WE AIN'T MEAN
 WE JUST SO CLEAN
 ASK ANY FOOL IF THE DISTRICT IS CRUEL
 AND YOU'LL HEAR HIM SAY
 THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
 FROM SIDEWALK TRAMPS
 TO SOCIETY VAMPS
 THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
 THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
 AS*THE CHUMPS BREATHING DIRT
 CAUSE THEY GOT THEIR FEELINGS HURT
 IF THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
 OH, THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
 AS THE PIMPS LOCKED IN JAIL
 AS THE WOMEN OUT ON BAIL
 IF THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
 OH YEAH, THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY

SATAN ONLY

MY MOTHER NEVER UNDERSTOOD MY SMILE
 MY MOTHER NEVER 'PRECIATED MY STYLE
 I TOLD HER SHE HURT ME
 ASKING HER BABY BOY NOT TO ENJOY HIS TOY

1-1-10

COME TO THE PLACE WHERE THE SWIFT WIN THE RACE
NOT ENOUGH TO BE WILD; THE REAL TEST IS STYLE
AND THE DISTRICT SHOWS THE WAY.

(By the end of the song, Johnny is seduced by the
district and dancing happily with the inhabitants.
As the scene closes we hear Omar's curse repeated.)

Orleans separated from the French
Quarter by the Mississippi River and
separated from Storyville by an age
old difference in values.

The front room of CALLY's and JOHNNY's
house. A typical shotgun layout with
a large front room which leads to a
bedroom which leads into a kitchen
which leads into the back yard which
one can see into from the front door
(which is to say that one can fire a
shotgun through the front door and
hit somebody out the back door). A
curtainless window is open in the
front room. CALLY (CALLA LILY) is
listless, unfocused, almost dotty with
grief.

A veil of submissive
femininity and frailty hides the adult
inside her that has never been allowed
or encouraged to appear. SHE has been
married since SHE was sixteen and
finds life without her husband
(JOHNNY) unimaginable (literally) and
impossible. Now HE has been gone for
two weeks and SHE is deeply blue.
This blue mood is pervasive as SHE
goes about her chores in a desultory
way. SHE is primarily trying to
stretch some curtains on a frame
stretcher. A basket of limp damp ones
is at her feet and they are very much
like the way SHE feels. The curtains
keep pepping away from the pins and
drooping down the frame. As CALLY
fumbles with curtains, GENEVA, a
trawler's wife, looks in window.

GENEVA

Oooo. You in there, yeah? Cally? Girl, what on earth do you
think you doing? What kind of curtain stretching is that?
Hold it. Just hold it.

(SHE walks around set to front door,
talking all the while)

ACT I

Scene 2

Algiers: a modest all black neighborhood, a detached part of New Orleans separated from the French Quarter by the Mississippi River and separated from Storyville by an age old difference in values.

The front room of CALLY's and JOHNNY's house. A typical shotgun layout with a large front room which leads to a bedroom which leads into a kitchen which leads into the back yard which one can see into from the front door (which is to say that one can fire a shotgun through the front door and hit somebody out the back door). A curtainless window is open in the front room. CALLY (CALLA LILY) is listless, unfocused, almost dotty with grief.

A veil of submissive femininity and frailty hides the adult inside her that has never been allowed or encouraged to appear. SHE has been married since SHE was sixteen and finds life without her husband (JOHNNY) unimaginable (literally) and impossible. Now HE has been gone for two weeks and SHE is deeply blue. This blue mood is pervasive as SHE goes about her chores in a desultory way. SHE is primarily trying to stretch some curtains on a frame stretcher. A basket of limp damp ones is at her feet and they are very much like the way SHE feels. The curtains keep popping away from the pins and drooping down the frame. As CALLY fumbles with curtains, GENEVA, a trawler's wife, looks in window.

GENEVA

Oooo. You in there, yeah? Cally? Girl, what on earth do you think you doing? What kind of curtain stretching is that? Hold it. Just hold it.

(SHE walks around set to front door, talking all the while)

GENEVA (continued)

Beat me, Jesus, for crying out loud. I thought the war was in France.

CALLY

They keep falling down.

GENEVA

I guess so. Whole house is falling down. You included.

CALLY

Well, what am I supposed to do, Geneva?

GENEVA

I told you what to do.

CALLY

I can't do that.

GENEVA

(Shrugs, feigning indifference)

Everybody on this street used to be proud of you. Neatest house in the neighborhood. Never thought I'd see the day you'd be stretchin curtains inside while the sun's outside. And in the parlor too.

(Slyly)

I saw her.

CALLY

You went there?

GENEVA

Jessie Five said yes, Cally.

I told you not to. CALLY

She'll see you tonight. GENEVA

But I told you -- CALLY

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. But no. Here's the address.
(Tries to hand her a slip of paper) GENEVA

(Jumps back)
Take that away from me. CALLY

She can do it, Cally. Have him back -- on all fours. GENEVA

I don't want him on all fours. CALLY

Eating out of your hand. GENEVA

(Repulsed)
Ohh. CALLY

Grinning all over himself. Might even sweep up this floor. GENEVA

Geneva, would you stop! CALLY

He might be tired though. Have to lie down and take himself
a nap first. A nice, long nap. In your bed.
(Sighs) GENEVA

I don't want a tricked man. CALLY

You worry me. He was tricked into leaving. He can be tricked
into coming back. GENEVA

CALLY

He has to want to come back.

GENEVA
(laughing)

So trick him into wanting to.

CALLY

We've known each other since we were six, Geneva. We been married 18 years. You telling me I need--conjure? After 18 years?

GENEVA

She got power, Cally. Real power and, girl, we need all the power we can get.

"WOMAN WORN ONCE"
Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

GENEVA (continued)

WOMAN: SLIGHTLY FRAYED
WOMAN: HANDMADE

CALLY

I GOT MY GOING-OUT-OF-BUSINESS SIGN UP
CAUSE MY MAN HAS GONE AND MADE HIS MIND UP

BOTH

WOMAN WOMAN

GENEVA

WOMAN: WORN ONCE

WOMAN: HARDLY USED
WOMAN: LIKE NEW

CALLY

HE TOOK AN ADVERTISEMENT PUT IN THE PAPER
"USED MERCHANDISE ON SALE" FOR

BOTH

WOMAN WOMAN

GENEVA

WOMAN: WORN ONCE

A BIT SOILED: NEVER SPOILED
NOT YOUNG:

CALLY

BUT STILL RUNS

GENEVA:

STEP THIS WAY, SIR: TERMS ARRANGED FOR
WOMAN: WORN ONCE

BOTH

WOMAN: SECOND HAND

WOMAN: ON DEMAND

GENEVA

VACANT PROPERTY: WILL BUILD TO SUIT

CALLY

THE LEASE EXPIRED: HE WON'T RENEW
WOMAN

GENEVA

WOMAN

BOTH

WOMAN: WORN ONCE

GENEVA:

WOMAN: MARKED DOWN

CALLY

WOMAN: HEART SOUND

GENEVA

EXAMINE CAREFULLY THIS FIRST RATE BARGAIN
BUY THESE GOODS BEFORE THE RUMMAGE SALE ENDS
WOMAN

1.2.6

CALLY

WOMAN

BOTH

WOMAN WORN ONCE

CALLY

GUARANTEED: HIGHLY TRAINED

GENEVA

EASY TERMS; WILL TRADE
NO DOWN PAYMENT IF YOU TAKE THIS
WOMAN

CALLY

THIS WOMAN

BOTH

WORN ONCE

GENEVA

Okay, okay, I'm gone. I have to get back anyhow. But just in case, here's the address.

(Puts it on curtain stretcher)

CALLY

I wouldn't even know what to say. I'd have to tell her--everything.

GENEVA

No you wouldn't. Besides she knows everything. Just tell her where the ache is, yeah?

(Exits out the door still talking)

Madame Five will do the rest. She'll have him back in here, sweetheart, before he knows what hit him. Cryin' his heart out, begging for a chance to clean the floor -- wash the dishes.

(Pokes her head through the window)

But first he's gonna want a nice long nap. In the bed.

(Winks and exits.)

CALLY waves her away, takes down the address thinks about GENEVA's suggestion.

BEAU, her son, enters through the door, breathlessly)

BEAU

Ma.

CALLY

Beau. You startled me, baby.

(Puts address in her pocket)

BEAU

(Looking around at the room that is in disarray, then at her)

You still moping.

CALLY

No, I'm not. I'm fine, baby.

(BEAU sniffs into the air)

CALLY (Continued)

Oh! The red beans!

(SHE runs out)

BEAU

(Shouting after her)

Jésus, Ma. You burning everything. I used to run home to eat your cooking. Now if you don't burn the pot, you forget to light the fire under it.

(HE picks up curtains from the floor
and through a portion of the following
scene is straightening up the house)

BEAU (Continued)

Ain't nobody dead, you know. Two weeks now and you still
acting like you at a wake. Life goes on, Ma. Just because
he ran off, don't mean we have to lie down and die.

CALLY

(Returning)

I'm sorry, baby. I'll make a little tomato gravy for the
rice. Will that be okay?

BEAU

Some Sunday dinner -- rice and gravy.

CALLY

You have to forgive me, Beau. My mind is so full.

BEAU

With what, Ma? Your mind ain't full of my dinner. It ain't
full of cleaning house. Look at these curtains. They ain't
on your mind. You didn't even go to mass. I never knew you
to miss mass.

CALLY

(Rubs her knees)

I know.

BEAU

What's the matter?

CALLY

My knees hurt me.

BEAU

You pray too much.

CALLY

Maybe I do. Maybe I do.

BEAU

Never did me any good. Waste of time if you ask me ...

CALLY

Beau!

BEAU

(Shrugs)

Last time anybody answered a prayer for me was when Daddy
forgot to wind the clock and didn't know what time I got home.
Remember that?

CALLY

I remember. You were 12. He bought you that horn for your birthday. And you went off to play it with that Spasm Band.

BEAU

I put the band together that same day. First thing I knew it was way past midnight. I thought he's gonna kill me sure.

CALLY

He didn't forget the clock, Beau. He just didn't want to spoil it for you -- it was your birthday. He wanted you to be happy.

(SHE breaks down. BEAU looks up)

BEAU

Ma. Come on.

CALLY

He's got to come back. I can't keep on like this: taking money from my sisters and food from the neighbors. What about next week and the week after?

BEAU

Is that all you worrying 'bout? Money? I can work. Let me out of that simple school, and I can make as much money as he ever did.

CALLY

It's not just that.

BEAU

He left us, Ma. Not just you. He left me too. We'll get along. We don't need him.

CALLY

I need him.

BEAU

No, you don't. This stuff you feel -- it'll pass. I know you're lonely, Ma, but it'll pass. Just wait.

CALLY

But it's Sunday.

"IT'S SUNDAY"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

CALLY (Continued)

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IT'S SUNDAY
HE'D BE SITTING IN THAT CHAIR NOW

I. 2:10

BEAU

I can do that.

CALLY

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IT'S SUNDAY
HE'D BE WANTING A COOL BEER NOW

BEAU

I can drink his beer.

CALLY

I CAN'T HELP IT IF IT'S SUNDAY
A WOMAN'S HEART CAN BREAK BY MONDAY
THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE ONE DAY
HE'D COME BRAID MY HAIR

BEAU

You still got me.

CALLY

CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IT'S SUNDAY
HE'D BE STRUMMING ME A TUNE NOW

BEAU

I can play his song.

CALLY

HOW COME HE DON'T KNOW IT'S SUNDAY
I'D BE DANCING ROUND THIS ROOM NOW
(SHE begins to dance)

BEAU

Aw, Ma, don't dance alone.

CALLY

I CAN'T HELP IT IF IT'S SUNDAY
A WOMAN'S HEART CAN BREAK BY MONDAY
THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE ONE DAY
HE'D COME TAKE MY HAND

(THEY dance)

CALLY (Continued)

I'M SO LONELY WHEN IT'S SUNDAY
A WOMAN'S HEART CAN BREAK BY MONDAY
THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE ONE DAY
HE'D COME TAKE MY HAND

(THEY stop. CALLY lets her hand drop
from BEAU's)

BEAU

Ma, I'm telling you. It's going to be all right.

CALLY

(Straightening)

I know it is because I'm going to make it all right. Eight o'clock tonight -- I'm going to make it all right.

BEAU

What you gonna do?

CALLY

Geneva said she'd see me.

BEAU

Who?

CALLY

Geneva says it works, that she's got the power.

(Enter FAYE and ELISE, CALLY's sisters)

FAYE & ELISE

(From outside)

Power? Power? Who's got power?

BEAU

It's Aunt Faye and Aunt Elise.

CALLY

Oh Lord.

FAYE

We brought some gumbo.

ELISE

And a loaf of fresh bread.

FAYE

We know you hungry.

ELISE

With nothing to eat.

FAYE

How come you weren't in church?

ELISE

Everybody noticed.

FAYE

Last Sunday either.

ELISE

As I recall.

FAYE
And your hair's a mess.

ELISE
Your dress is too.

FAYE
That hound bring the rent?

ELISE
Or a bite to eat?

CALLY
Oh, please. Things are bad enough without that.

FAYE
They gonna put you out of here, you don't pay the rent.

ELISE
Out in the street if you don't pay the rent.

FAYE
So we want you and Beau to move in with us.

ELISE
Pack your bags and -- move in with us?

BEAU
Thanks, Aunt Faye, Aunt Elise, but we can manage. I'm going to find me some work.

FAYE
Work?

ELISE
Work?

FAYE
You supposed to be going to high school.

ELISE
Don't you want to graduate from high school?

CALLY
It's all right. It's really all right. I appreciate your offer, but don't worry. Johnny's coming back and everything's gonna be like it was.

FAYE
Oh Lord.

ELISE
Oh Lord.

I. 2:13

Oh shoot.

BEAU

He will. I know how to get him to come back.

CALLY

Stop it, Ma. Will you talk to her, Aunt Faye? She's getting ready to do something crazy.

BEAU

You buy you a pistol?

FAYE

Or a long sharp knife?

ELISE

No. No.

CALLY

Tell 'em. Tell 'em where you going tonight.

BEAU

I just can't get down on my knees no more.

CALLY

(FAYE and ELISE cross themselves)

I'm going to see Madam Jessica Five.

CALLY (Continued)

(FAYE and ELISE scream and throw up their hands to ward off the evil that comes from the sound of her name.

JESSICA FIVE's music begins here)

Have mercy. A witch.

FAYE

I. 2:14

Have mercy. A bitch.	ELISE
A fake.	FAYE
A snake.	ELISE
Oh God. Voodoo.	FAYE
Oh God. Hoodoo.	ELISE
Oh Lord. Satan.	FAYE
Oh Lord. Matin'.	ELISE
Wild raves.	FAYE
Evil graves.	ELISE
Magic potions.	FAYE
Sexy lotions.	ELISE
Tribal stuff.	FAYE
Savage stuff.	ELISE
Powers of darkness.	FAYE
Naked starkness.	ELISE
Moral ruins.	FAYE
Nasty doin's.	ELISE
Filth and sin there.	FAYE

(To FAYE)
Have you been there?

ELISE

(To ELISE)
Why you witch!

FAYE

(To FAYE)
Oh you bitch!

ELISE

(To ELISE)
You old fake!

FAYE

(To FAYE)
You old snake!

ELISE

(To EACH OTHER -- exiting)
Have mercy, have mercy, have mercy on you!

FAYE & ELISE

(Scene changes to JESSICA FIVE's
house with appropriate music)

But for this time of year wouldn't you say?

CALLY

Yes, it's very hot.

JESSICA FIVE

Would you like a cold drink of something?

CALLY

No, to thank you.

(Jessica Five looks at her carefully in a silence)

JESSICA FIVE

Well, you want his back, do you?

CALLY

Yes, as in, I...

ACT I

SCENE 3

Jessica Five's house.

Jessica Five is in a housedress doing some mundane chore as Cally enters. She is nothing like what Faye and Elise have led us to believe--nothing trivial or threatening in her manner. She could be Cally's sister. She is easy-going, gentle, and except for a huge cash register and some bottles, vials, etc., this house could be Cally's also. Cally, however, is terrified and only the seriousness of her mission makes her courageous enough to follow through. To even the gentlest touch from Jessie Five, she shows suspicion.

JESSIE FIVE:

Hello sweetheart. You want to have a seat over here?

(Cally sits and stares around her)

JESSIE FIVE

Hot for this time of year wouldn't you say?

CALLY

Yes, it's very hot.

JESSIE FIVE

Would you like a cold drink of something?

CALLY

No, No thank you.

(Jessie Five looks at her carefully in a silence)

JESSIE FIVE

Well, you want him back, do you?

CALLY

Yes, ma'am, I do.

JESSIE FIVE

I don't suppose you'd settle for a substitute.

CALLY :

A Substitute? Oh, no. I want him. I have to have him back.

JESSIE FIVE

Un hm. You will have to bring me certain things.

CALLY

What things?

JESSIE FIVE

(Shrugs and picks up a large worn book)

Oh, I don't know. I might need the hair from his head. I might need the wax from his ears. I might even need a blind man's tears.

CALLY

If you can help me, I'll bring you anything you need. Anything.

JESSIE FIVE

What I need depends on the Five.

CALLY

Who?

JESSIE FIVE

(Smiling)

'The Five. Wind. Water. Fire. Earth and the Unknown Element.

(Jessie returns to the book. As she thumbs through its pages, she touches her fingers as she identifies an ingredient)

JESSIE FIVE

'I'll need five strands of hair from his head. A piece of sheet from your bed. A little morning water and your wedding band.

CALLY

But he's gone off, Madame Five.

JESSIE FIVE

(Paying her no attention)

The underwear he wore next to his skin. Get me his picture and a long hat pin.

CALLY

How can I get strands of hair--

JESSIE FIVE

Send for them. Send somebody you trust. And somebody who's fast on his feet.

CALLY

Beau. I'll have to send my son, Beau.

JESSIE FIVE

When you get it all, bring it to me and I guarantee you, he will be back in your bed in five days.

CALLY

Oh thank you. Thank you.

JESSIE FIVE

Hush, darling. Just don't forget to thank the Five. And the best way to thank the Five is with another Five.

(Cally hands her the money and exits. Jessie Five, places the money in her cash box and as she examines other items supplicants have given her she sings. "A Woman Like Me")

"A Woman Like Me"

© Toni Morrison 1982

OH WHAT A FINGER BREAKER THIS LIFE CAN BE
WHAT WOULD PEOPLE DO WITHOUT A WOMAN LIKE ME

JESSICA FIVE (Continued)

A WOMAN LIKE ME
A WOMAN LIKE ME
AN INTELLIGENT, CLEVER WOMAN LIKE ME

FEATHERS, BEADS AND PROPERTY DEEDS
DROUGHT, FLOOD AND ANIMAL BLOOD
OH A WOMAN LIKE ME
A WOMAN LIKE ME
AN INTELLIGENT, CLEVER WOMAN LIKE ME

CAT'S BALLS
RAG DOLLS
GRIS-GRIS DUST
LODESTONES
CHICKEN BONES
AND TRAIN TRACK RUST

OH WHAT A FINGER BREAKER THIS LIFE CAN BE
WHAT WOULD PEOPLE DO WITHOUT A WOMAN
LIKE ME
A WOMAN LIKE ME
A WOMAN LIKE ME
AN INTELLIGENT, CLEVER WOMAN LIKE ME

ACT ONE

Scene Four

Beau is sitting on the steps of his porch playing his horn. He is playing a version of "Omar's Music." Some young friends are with him, accompanying him with homemade instruments; some are simply beating out the beat with hand movements on their bodies.

FRIEND 1

You coming downtown with us?

BEAU

Can't.

FRIEND 2

Why not?

FRIEND 3

You going to miss those tips?

BEAU

I gotta go do something for my mother.

FRIEND 1

OOO. Beau's got apron strings tied all round his neck.

BEAU

Quit it, man.

FRIEND 3

Where you going?

BEAU

I gotta go to the District.

FRIENDS 1 and 2

The District. So long. Nice knowing you, man. Yeah, come back and see us sometime. Wanna leave me your horn?

BEAU

What's the matter with you all?

FRIEND 1

Nothing the matter with us, but something's sure gonna be the matter with you.

FRIEND 2

Yeah. Next time we see you, you be an old man.

BEAU

I'll be back in an hour.

FRIEND 1

Yeah, that's what your Daddy thought.

BEAU

Shut your mouth.

FRIEND 1

You go in the District, you never coming out. Crib women eat you alive.

(Beau's imagination takes over. A crib whore, sucking her thumb and dressed as a baby doll appears)

KNOCKOUT

I got sugar in my bowl, little Beau
I got honey in my bowl, little Beau
I got cream in my bowl, little Beau
I got some peaches in my bowl, little Beau.

Wanna little sugar, Beau. It's sweet. How bout a little honey, Beau. It's smooth. Try a little cream, Beau, it's thick. Have some of my peaches, Beau. They real juicy.

FRIEND 1

Remember those pictures we saw of women in that Blue Book they hand out at the railroad station. OOOO!

FRIEND 2
You be crawling on all fours.

FRIEND 3
Howling like a dog.

FRIEND 1
Slobbering at the mouth.

FRIEND 2
Grunting like a hog.

FRIEND 1
People who go in there don't come back out. And if they do,
they never the same again.

FRIEND 2
They got crazy juice and funny cigarettes and they give you
dream powder.

(BEAU's imagination transforms his
friends. PUSHHER forces BEAU to
inhale drug)

FRIEND 3
They got men in there shoot you cause they don't like the
color of your tie.

FRIEND 1
Or the way your shoes squeak.

(MAN shoots another. POLICE take
away corpse. BEAU returns momentarily
to reality)

FRIEND 2
They got your daddy and now they gonna keep you.

FRIEND 1
Melt you like butter on a hot skillet.

FRIEND 3
Truss you like a chicken.

FRIEND 1
Split you so wide open you think you a twin.

(FRIENDS laugh and exit)

BEAU
Get on out of here. Nobody gonna mess with me. I know how
to take care of myself. You hear? You hear me?

VOICES OF PROSTITUTES

We hear you.

(Scene changes. Lights, backdrop, etc. PROSTITUTES appear surreally seductive and EACH ONE comes forward to sing her own publicity)

"GLORIA MOON"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

MOUTH

MY TABLE'S ALL LAID
MY PUDDING'S ALL MADE
YOU'LL SHINE
WHEN YOU DINE WITH MISS MOON

MY MENU'S COMPLETE
MY LIQUOR IS SWEET
JUST BRING YOUR CUP
SO YOU CAN SUP FROM MY SPOON
WHEN YOU DINE WITH MISS MOON
MISS GLORIA MOON

"LURLEEN PRICE"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

COPPERBOTTOM

NOTHING'S QUITE LIKE A LITTLE CLASSY VICE
IN THE COMPANY OF A GIRL THIS NICE
WHEN YOU ASK FOR A CRUMB, I GIVE YOU A SLICE
WHAT THEY DO ONCE, I DO TWICE
IF YOU COME UP WITH LURLEEN'S PRICE

"ROCHELLE LA FORT"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

RAT

I ONCE HELD COURT
IN OLD NEWPORT
IN OLD NEWPORT
I'M JUST THE RIGHT SORT
FOR A LITTLE NIGHT SPORT
A LITTLE SHADY
BUT STILL A LADY
TAKE ME
MAKE ME
I'LL EVEN LET YOU SAVE ME
PROVIDED YOU WILL PAY ME
TO BE ROCHELLE LA la la FORT
FROM OLD NEWPORT

I. 4:5

"PATRICIA DIAMOND"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

BAD BLOOD

I'M PATRICIA DIAMOND
AND I'M A SHY ONE
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN FIND ONE
ONE LIKE ME, GO AHEAD AND TRY ONE
YOU'LL COME BACK TO BUY ONE
ONE MINUTE FROM ME THE SHY ONE
YOU'LL COME BACK TO BUY ONE HOT
HOT MINUTE WITH ME

"ADELLA WESTWOOD"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

DOLLAR BILL

I'M MISS ADELLA MISS ADELLA WESTWOOD
GENTS ALL SAY I'M VERY GOOD
I'D BE BETTER IF I COULD
FIND A MAN WHO THINKS I SHOULD
HAVE A CHANCE TO SHOW
SHOW WHAT I CAN DO
TO MAKE HIM LOVE WHAT HE DON'T WANT TO

"VESUVIUS"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

VESUVIUS

THEY CALL ME VESUVIUS
I GOT LAVA ENOUGH FOR THE TWO OF US
MY VOLCANO NEVER COOLS
IN MY OVEN AIN'T NO RULES
I'LL COOK A LITTLE STEW FOR YOU
THERE AIN'T NOTHING I WON'T DO FOR YOU
WHEN MY DAMPER'S UP
I GOT A HEALING TOUCH
I DON'T USE MY GOOFY DUST
COME ON AND COOK WITH VESUVIUS
AND I GOT LAVA ENOUGH FOR THE TWO OF US

(THEY ALL sing "MY HOUSE" as THEY
try to seduce BEAU who struggles
mightily against them)

"MY HOUSE"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

ALL

DADDY DO, DADDY DO, DADDY DO, DADDY DO
COME TO MY HOUSE

ALL (Continued)

JUST KNOCK ON THE DOOR
YOU NEVER GONNA WANT TO GO HOME NO MORE
COME TO MY PLACE
KICK DOWN THE DOOR
I'LL HAVE YOU GRINNING BEFORE THE KNOB
HITS THE FLOOR

I'LL HOLD YOU
ENFOLD YOU
TAKE YOU IN MY ARMS
I'LL NURSE YOU
IMMERSE YOU
SHOW YOU ALL MY CHARMS
SEDUCE YOU
REDUCE YOU
TIE YOU UP IN KNOTS
MANIPULATE YOU
COPULATE YOU
PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS

COME TO MY HOUSE
PULL DOWN THE SHADE
TAKE YOUR SHOES OFF, BABY, YOU GOT IT MADE
GET IN MY BED
THROW AWAY THE KEY
YOU AIN'T NEVER GONNA GET AWAY FROM ME

(BEAU struggles for mastery, escape
and loses both in his dream)

"I PREFER THE PLEASURE"

Lyrics © 1982 by Tomi Morrison

ACT ONEScene 5

Ana La Premier's house.

The set is designed to reveal several rooms in the house (including the red shutters at the windows): parlor, kitchen, courtyard, gambling area, hallway, bedroom. Certain areas are lit when action occurs there or when a character moves from one room to another. In some instances action is going on in more than one room. Although the action following is written sequentially, some will be staged simultaneously. The term "meanwhile" will suggest those places where it seems to work best. The effect is of a busy, overdressed house with something very public and very private about it. It is very much dominated by women. Only the gambling area below is stark and masculine. As in Johnny's vision of the District, the music is fast and hot or slow and hot--and suggests explosiveness rather than the stability of the quiet colored neighborhood. Lights dim on everything but the kitchen where the women Beau has imagined in his fantasy from the Blue Book are in common dress at various female chores: braiding and straightening a trick baby's hair and their own; mending, ironing, cooking etc. In this very domestic activity, they sing with Ana a song about how glamorous and different their lives are--their disdain for routine life, while in fact they are doing very routine and mundane things.

"I PREFER THE PLEASURE"

Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

I.5:1a

"I PREFER THE PLEASURE"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

LA PREMIER

I PREFER TO RESIST AN UNEVENTFUL LIFE
NO BUTTER CHURNING, BISCUITS BURNING, MELON RINDS

NO BABY BLANKETS HANGING OUT ON MY LINE
NO KITCHEN GARDEN IN THE REAR

I BEG TO DECLINE A HUMDRUM LIFE
AVOID THE MILKIN' AND THE QUILTIN' STUFFED IN CHINKS
NO DIRTY DISHES WAITIN' FOR ME IN MY SINK
OLD YARD DOG LYING NEAR

SOME WOMEN ARE CONTENT WITH WHAT THEY FIND
BUT I REQUEST THE PLEASURE OF MY MIND

I CHOOSE TO AVOID A TREADMILL LIFE
NO ROCKING CHAIR, SILVERED HAIR ON MY HEAD
NO HEATED WATER BOTTLES WARMING UP MY BED
NO CARPET SLIPPERS ON THE FLOOR

I STAND ALOOF FROM A MUNDANE LIFE
NO SPINNING WHEEL, NO FISHING REEL ON MY PORCH
NO STANDING BY THE WINDOW WITH A LIGHTED TORCH
NO HONEY SUCKLE ROUND MY DOOR

SOME WOMEN ARE CONTENT WITH A GREAT DEAL LESS
BUT I REQUEST THE PLEASURE OF MY FLESH

1.5:3
YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME
Lyrics © 1987 by Tom Morrison

1-5-2

(Attitude of a servant)

I PUT ON AN APRON

DID MY HAIR

TO DO THE WORK

AND Y At the end of song, Knockout, a young crib whore (the one we met in Beau's fantasy) enters and as she wanders through parlor, lights come up on the gambling area where Saṭan, Sweet Justice, Johnny and others play. Knockout meets Cobalt Blue and stares at her.

I MAKE THE FIRE - HIGH COBALT

(annoyed at this stranger's manners)
Excuse me. And who are you?

I'M EARLY I'M LATE KNOCKOUT
I OPEN (disdainful and arrogant)

Knockout. Who are you?

COBALT

Well, I could be a friend. HE OUTS

I KNOW THE REASONS KNOCKOUT

I got one. Where's Ana? She told me to come here.

COBALT

I'M LO (Disgusted, Points her to the kitchen. Knockout wanders off.)

DIDN'T AS SPACE COBALT
(to herself)

Who am I? Who am I?

(Sings the first verse of "You Can't Handle Me")

I. 5: 3

YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME
Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

(Attitude of a servant)

I PUT ON AN APRON,

BIND MY HAIR

TO DO THE WORK

AND TAKE THE CARE

WHILE THEY SLEEP

I MAKE THE FIRE - HIGHER, HIGHER

I'M EARLY I'M LATE

I OPEN THE DOOR

I LOCK THE GATE

I SEE THE INS, I SEE THE OUTS

I KNOW THE REASONS

FEEL THE DOUBTS

I'M LONG AS TIME

DEEP AS SPACE

BUT IF I EVER LET GO THIS PLACE

YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME.

(Knockout wanders into the parlor where Clarence Deal, a musician, is setting up to play.)

KNOCKOUT

Hey

CLARENCE

Hey yourself.

KNOCKOUT

You play?

CLARENCE

I make music. You play.

KNOCKOUT

Well, make me something.

CLARENCE

(playing)

What you doing in here, girl?

KNOCKOUT

I'm gonna work here. Just like you. Ana La Premier told me to come. Look at that.

(She touches furniture, draperies, etc.)

So soft. Is this what they call velvet?

CLARENCE

Where you come from, you don't know velvet when you see it.

KNOCKOUT

Robertson Street.

CLARENCE

Oh, I see. Yeah. Well ain't much velvet in a crib is there?

KNOCKOUT

That ain't what they come in there for.

(Clarence chuckles)

KNOCKOUT

I bet I'm going to like it here. Don't you think so?

CLARENCE

Hard to say. You'll never be bored, anyway. You may be miserable, but never bored.

(He plays the music to "I Prefer" as Ana and her girls pick up a portion of that song, Knockout makes her way into the kitchen and joins them.

LA PREMIER

There you are. Good God. What kind of get-up is that, child? Take that mess off your face. And that dress, and those shoes. This is a house, girl, not a crib. The men who come here have time as well as money to spend.

(Ana is undressing her, rearranging her clothes to mostly underwear and/or a chemise. The other girls are going on about their business, but looking at Knockout with free expressions of disgust or humor.)

LA PREMIER

Men in here don't want a woman to look like what she is. They want dolls, ladies, school girls, nuns if they can get them. You have to look delicious, not eaten. Girls, come over here and meet Knockout.

BAD BLOOD

Knockout? Looks like knocked down to me.

MOUTH

Knocked down and stomped.

KNOCKOUT

(Starting to fight)

You gonna find out what stomped is.

(Ana separates them)

LA PREMIERE

Will you all shut up? Now. If I put you in the advertisement, I have to think up another name for you.

MOUTH

Call her Country.

LA PREMIERE

Mouth? Close it.

DOLLAR BILL

Hey, I got it. Belle Fleur. I had a cousin named Belle Fleur, So pretty. Lived over in —

LA PREMIERE

All right. All Right. Belle Fleur, let me introduce you. This is Mouth, Copperbottom, Rat.

RAT

Rochelle La Forte, if you please.

MOUTH

We all please.

LA PREMIERE

Dollar Bill.

KNOCKOUT

That what they pay you? A dollar?

DOLLAR BILL

(Laughing)

No. They call me that because I have a special way of picking a dollar bill up.

RAT

Ain't nothing hard about pickin up paper money. Now, a coin? That's hard.

BAD BLOOD

You the only fool I know what somebody to work harder for less.

LA PREMIER

Blood, come over here.

BAD BLOOD

Hi, baby.

(Knockout stiffens remembering the "knocked down" insult.)

BAD BLOOD.

Oh, come on. Lighten up. You gonna be Belle Fleur ain't you? Well loosen up a little.

MOUTH

Just don't let her loosen up near me.

DOLLAR BILL

Leave her alone. She'll be all right. Get her some decent clothes.

LA PREMIER

And this is Vesuvius

VESUVIUS

'In the smoldering flesh.

KNOCKOUT

Okay. What do I do?

MOUTH

Ignorant and country.

LA PREMIER

First take a basin and water up to your room. Cobalt!
Cobalt! Bring this girl some fresh towels.

COBALT

I got ten fingers, not ten hands.

LA PREMIER

Be nice now. You know I love you.

COBALT

And only two feet. honey, having legs like that?

LA PREMIER

Knockout. This is Cobalt. the first thing they push aside.

COBALT

We met. Everybody is here looks on a mattress. Knockout, you've
been working in a crib, so you're quick.

LA PREMIER

She's all the family you'll ever need.

COBALT

Well I don't mind being the family she need, but I hope I ain't
all the family she know.

KNOCKOUT

I don't need nobody.

COBALT BLUE

Um hm. fifteen minutes is the limit. If he wants more he pays
more. And if he wants you to call on him, call on him. And keep a little
for him.

(Hands towels to Knockout)

LA PREMIER

A fresh towel for each trick, Knockout, remember that. Now sprinkle
a little potash--just a few drops in the water and throw the water
out as soon as you finish, so your customer can see you pour fresh
water for him.

The kind that costs five dollars. You can feel his money but not his
stomach.

MOUTH

Yeah, we use fresh water here and we have inside toilet. You ever seen a inside toilet?

KNOCKOUT

I'm looking at one.

OTHERS

Ooooooooooooo.

(Copperbottom laughs)

MOUTH

Does it bother you, honey, having legs like that?

KNOCKOUT

Don't bother me none. Legs the first thing they push aside.

LA PREMIER

Quiet. Everybody in here works on a mattress. Knockout, you've been working in a crib, so I know you're quick.

RAT

Crib? What's it like working a crib for a dime?

KNOCKOUT

Your mama was next door. Ask her.

RAT

Ooo! My Mama!

LA PREMIER

Here, fifteen minutes is the limit. If he wants more he pays more. And if he gives you any lip--call me. And keep a little lye under the bed just in case.

KNOCKOUT

Lye? What kinds of mens come here?

LA PREMIER

The kind that has five dollars. You can read his money but not his mind.

LA PREMIER^E

Dollar Bill, put more water in your drink. He's supposed to get drunk. You supposed to stay sober. Blood, those stockings don't match each other.

BAD BLOOD

I can't find a match. Bill stole my new ones.

DOLLAR BILL

She's a lying whore. Rat stole them.

BAD BLOOD

You another! You drunken Heifer.

(Dollar Bill slaps Bad Blood. Bad Blood pushes Dollar Bill)

TRICK BABY

She hit my mama.

TRICK BABY 2

She pushed my mama.

LA PREMIER^E

Stop it. Cobalt! Come get these children.

COBALT

I have to shell these peas, Ana. I dont have time to —

LA PREMIER^E

'Shell them inthe courtyard, and take them with you.

(Cobalt leaves with the children heading for the courtyard)

BAD BLOOD

Look what she did.

LA PREMIER^E

Mouth, you got any stockings?

MOUTH

Yes. On my legs.

1-5-11

LA PREMIERE

(Impatient)

Where's Sweet Justice. He should have been here by now. Blood, here's six dollars. When he comes, buy another pair from him. Bill, put your fingers to better use.

(Sweet Justice comes in through the door with an armful of clothes)

GIRLS

(running toward him)

Oh, Sweet Justice.

SWEET JUSTICE

Bloomers, shawls, chemise, opera hose. Oh, baby I got it all.

(They all crowd around him as he distributes the items. Sweet Justice sings "Sweet Justice")

SWEET JUSTICE

Lyrics © Toni Morrison 1982

SWEET JUSTICE IS A KIND OF REVENGE
THE ILLUSION OF A CRINGE
OR A GRIN
GIVING IN
BUT A TRICK KNEE NEVER BENDS

SWEET JUSTICE IS A SPECIAL KIND OF RAGE
A WAR THAT YOU CAN WAGE
WHEN IT PAYS
TO OBEY
BARE TEETH LOOK POLITE IN A CAGE

TAKE A TIP
FROM THE SHIP
SINKING FAST
SWEET JUSTICE IS WHAT HAPPENS TO THE RATS

TAKE YOUR CUE
FROM THE VIEW
OF A HAWK
JAILER GOT THE KEY--BUT YOU GOT THE LOCK

MOUTH

He said that was for me.

RAT

I don't care what he said.

COPPERBOTTOM

She's lying. I heard him.

LA PREMIER

Girls, give me that.

(Beau enters and stands at the kitchen door.)

VESUVIUS

Well, well looka here.

DOLLAR BILL

Hi, sweetie.

RAT

Ain't he cute.

COPPERBOTTOM

Wanna dance?

LA PREMIER

What's your name, Sugar?

BEAU

My Name's Beau.

LA PREMIER

You sure are.

BEAU

I came here to see my father.

LA PREMIER

Who's your daddy, baby?

BEAU

His name is Johnny.

SWEET JUSTICE

That your daddy? Well, well.

LA PREMIER

Sweet, show him how to get to Satan's. That's where his daddy is.

(As Beau follows Sweet Justice, the lights come up on Cobalt in the courtyard with the trick babies. As they listen to her, Sweet Justice and Beau are walking through to Satan's Hole.)

TRICK BABY 1

I can do all that stuff the grown-up girls do.

COBALT BLUE

Grown-ups? Girl, your name ain't much older'n you are.

TRICK BABY 2

How old is my daddy?

COBALT BLUE

Your guess is as good as mine.

TRICK BABY 3

Guess, Cobalt, guess!

COBALT BLUE

Oh, somewhere between fifteen and eighty. A tall short white black man in a sailor suit who came from a poor rich family that lived in Texas and Satan Rouge selling insurance on him, back in the navy.

TRICK BABY 4

Did he like my name?

COBALT BLUE

Did he like her? Oh, baby, he loved her and oh, did she love him! Nothing in this world could separate 'em, for, good Lord, a whole twenty minutes, maybe more!

I. 5:14

COBALT BLUE

(Putting the CHILDREN to work on
the peas)

All I got to do, and now I got to watch you all too. You
getting too big to put down and too little to stay up.

TRICK BABY 1

How come they never let us stay for the party?

COBALT BLUE

Calm yourself. Pretty soon you'll be the party.

TRICK BABY 2

How soon is soon?

COBALT BLUE

What's the matter with you all? You can't wait, can you?

TRICK BABY 1

I can do all that stuff the grown-up girls do.

COBALT BLUE

Grown-ups? Girl, your mama ain't much older'n you are.

TRICK BABY 2

How old is my daddy?

COBALT BLUE

Your guess is as good as mine.

TRICK BABY 2

Guess, Cobalt, guess!

COBALT BLUE

Oh, somewhere between fifteen and eighty. A tall short white
black man in a sailor suit who come from a poor rich family
that lived in Texas and Baton Rouge selling insurance on
horseback in the navy.

TRICK BABY 2

Did he like my mama?

COBALT BLUE

Did he like her? Oh, baby, he loved her and oh, did she love
him! Nothing in this world could separate 'em, for, good Lord,
a whole twenty minutes, maybe more!

I. 5:15

TRICK BABY 2

How come he leave her?

COBALT BLUE

That's the way it is, darling. That's always the way it is.

TRICK BABY 2

Can't you follow where he go?

COBALT BLUE

You poor little ignorant things. If they ever do close down the District like they keep sayin' I suspect it'll be mercy in disguise. Much as it's going to hurt me and everybody else in here makin' good money for a change, it might do you all a favor.

TRICK BABY 1

Are they closing down our house?

COBALT BLUE

There's some talk. Not just this house, baby, the whole neighborhood.

TRICK BABY 2

How come?

COBALT BLUE

Beats me. Some old white man named Storey figured out a way to keep sportin' people -- that's them -- away from other people.

TRICK BABY 1

What other people?

COBALT BLUE

(Laughs)

North Basin and Iberville ain't the whole world, darlin'. There's a great big city out there. It's got gardens and levees and schoolhouses and markets. Talk about pretty! You'll see it maybe one of these days. Nothing but flowers.

TRICK BABY 1

We got flowers.

(Runs to one of the potted plants
in the courtyard)

COBALT BLUE

Yeah, we do. But it seems like flowers were prettier when I was a little girl. But I guess every old woman sitting around shelling peas thinks things was prettier when they was young. But, oh my Lord, you should have seen it when I was a girl. Way back, I'm talking about 1850. And before that, when my mama was a girl. I used to hear her talk about New Orleans

COBALT BLUE (Continued)

then. Now that was way, way back. 1792. When the river was high you could look up and see tall white ships sailing in the sky. The Mississippi River is higher than the ground down here, so if you stood in a certain place at evening, you could see them floating -- just like clouds. And Indians swarmed all over the levee selling herbs and pots and cloth. And plantation owners in white suits came in carriages to buy dresses and diamonds for their wives. English wasn't even a little language then. If you walked around you'd hear Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian and French mostly, of course. But almost no English. She say Africans walked all over this town in their own clothes. Their own clothes -- from Africa. They was slaves from Santo Domingo and Africa, but they didn't wear those old missionary dresses and pants. And they didn't wear no tied up shoes. Oh no. They had robes in Sapphire blue and green and yellow the color of butter. And not only did they wear their own clothes, they spoke their own language and used their own true names. You know there were places in the city and right outside of it where no white man could set foot and expect to come out alive. African places. And sometimes at night or on Sunday -- that was the free day for slaves -- they would go into the very middle of town, to a big square and they'd have drums and flutes and rattling things. And right there under a sky full of stars they'd dance and dance and dance.

(SHE drifts off in memory)

TRICK BABY 2

We got dancing.

COBALT BLUE

That stuff? Shoot. I mean real dancing. Where whole lines of men and whole lines of women would talk to the ground with their feet. People come from all over just to see. They still dance there and people still come to see them, but the way she told it, it was better then. Just like I'm telling you it was better when I was little. Flowers. Nothing but flowers. Everywhere we looked -- flowers and mimosa trees and birds like you can't find nowhere anymore.

(COBALT BLUE sings:)

"NEW ORLEANS"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

COBALT BLUE (Continued)

NEW ORLEANS, NEW ORLEANS
 YOU'RE THE MUSIC SONGS PICK TO SING
 THE FLOWERS WILD ROSES CHOOSE TO BREATHE
 YOU'RE THE TIDES RIVERS WANT TO SWIM
 THE LIGHT THAT LIGHT ITSELF WANTS TO SEE
 AND WHEN THE MOON GOT TIRED OF GOING ROUND AND ROUND
 AND ROUND
 IT DREAMED UP NEW ORLEANS

COBALT BLUE (Continued)

NEW ORLEANS, NEW ORLEANS
YOU'RE THE FEELING LOVE WANTS TO FEEL
THE FIRE FLAMES WANT TO BURN
YOU'RE THE BREEZE THE WIND WANTS TO RIDE
THE COLOR LEAVES WANT TO TURN
AND WHEN PROUD BIRDS OF PASSION SEARCHED THE RAINBOW
FOR A HOME
THEY SETTLED DOWN IN NEW ORLEANS

LET ME TELL YOU 'BOUT NEW ORLEANS
LET ME HEAR YOU SAY NEW ORLEANS
SING A SONG ABOUT NEW ORLEANS

(TRICK BABIES and COBALT BLUE
sing:)

"DADDY"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

TRICK BABIES

WHO'S MY DADDY
WHERE'S MY DADDY
MISS YOU DADDY
KISS YOU DADDY
LOVE YOU DADDY
NEED YOU DADDY
OH MY DADDY
LET'S PLAY DADDY
PLEASE STAY DADDY
DOWN IN NEW ORLEANS

COBALT BLUE

WHAT'S THE MATTER, DADDY
CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE
YOUR TRAIN DON'T RUN
DOWN THIS WAY
WHAT'S THE MATTER, DADDY
YOU LOST YOUR TICKET
YOU COULDN'T STICK IT
ONE MORE TIME
YOU COULDN'T STAY
YOU WOULDN'T STAY
WAY DOWN HERE IN NEW ORLEANS

TELL ME SOMETHING, DADDY
FORGOT YOUR ADDRESS
YOU GOT IN SOME MESS
WITH ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE
WELL BUY YOU A MAP
PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT
PUSH IT DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI

I. 5:18

COBALT BLUE (Continued)

AND STOP DOGGONE IT
YOU IN NEW ORLEANS
OH YES THAT'S NEW, NEW ORLEANS

COBALT BLUE & TRICK BABIES

WAY DOWN
WAY DOWN
COME ON DADDY
COME ON WAY, WAY DOWN
LOW DOWN, BREAK DOWN
STOMP DOWN TO NEW ORLEANS

NO WE AIN'T GOOD LOOKING
WE BUILT FOR SPEED
WE GOT EVERYTHING A SWEET PAPA NEED
MY SUGAR'S SWEET, OH YEAH AND SO'S
MY MEAT

THE ONLY WAY YOU EVER GONNA GET YOU
A PIECE

IS IF YOU GET DOWN
WAY DOWN
WAY DOWN TO NEW ORLEANS

WHO'S MY DADDY
WHERE'S MY DADDY
HELLO DADDY
GOODBYE DADDY
MISS YOU DADDY
KISS YOU DADDY
HOLD ME DADDY
SCOLD ME DADDY
LET'S PLAY DADDY
PLEASE STAY DADDY
DOWN IN NEW ORLEANS

1-5-19

After Cobalt's song, the lights focus on the gambling area where Johnny is with Satan and other men at a game.

BEAU

I have to talk to you, Daddy. In private.

JOHNNY

This ain't no place for no talk.

BEAU

I got to. You owe me that.

SATAN

Go on, man. Talk to him.

JOHNNY

Well, make it short.

BEAU

When are you coming home?

JOHNNY

Tomorrow. I'll be back tomorrow.

BEAU

It's been two weeks.

JOHNNY

(as though he can't believe it)

Two weeks? Damn.

BEAU

What happened to you? One day you on me for coming home after 10:00. The next day you--you slicked back your hair, look at you! Mama is--

JOHNNY

I don't know! I don't know. I thought I'd just take a look around. Got in a game, and Beau, I won! You hear me. I won! I kept on winning and winning and--

BEAU

And the women?

JOHNNY

Well. Here. Here's **five** dollars for you, I'm a little behind now (looks at Satan) but I'm getting back. I can feel it.

BEAU

Something happened to you, Daddy.

JOHNNY

I meant to send you all something long before now, but I didn't know what the weather was like back home.

BEAU

Weather's fine back home. We don't need nothing from you. I just came cause Ma asked me to look in on you and see how you was doing. Now I can tell her you doing fine. Pimping agrees with you.

JOHNNY

Don't talk to me like that.

BEAU

Oh, sorry, Daddy. I forgot where I was.

JOHNNY

You get out of my face and don't never let me catch you back in here. Go on home, you hear.

BEAU

By myself?

JOHNNY

That's the way you got here ain't it?

SATAN

He's scared.

BEAU

I am not.

SWEET JUSTICE

It's still light out. Nothing's gonna get you.

SATAN

He ain't scared of the dark, he's scared of what he feels in the dark.

(Satan and Sweet Justice sing "The Sly Life.")

(Beau backs away from the men and exits but making a wrong turn passes by the parlor where Clarence Deal is playing and singing "Here in My Sound.")

The music is so beautiful and so unlike any Beau has heard before that he is transfixed. The music and the words make an enormous impression on him--it is as though he is bathed, cleansed by the sound of this music.

Beau starts to leave but remembers the purpose of his visit: to get some of his father's hair that Cally needs for the Voodoo. He can't find any so he pulls hairs from his own head and dashes out.

CLARENCE

HERE, IN MY SOUND
IS A ROOM FOR YOU
DROPPED YOUR LONGING BESIDE ME

HERE, IN MY SOUND
IS A BETTER FOR YOU
HEAR IT BY THE LIGHT INSIDE ME

WHAT YOU FEEL IS NOT COMPLEX
THE CLOSER YOU GET
TO MY SOUND: LOST IS FOUND;
SOMETHING WILL DIE
MY, OH MY
MY SOUND IS A ROOM WITH A VIEW
WAITING JUST FOR YOU

HERE IN MY SOUND
IS A PLACE FOR YOU
SPACE FOR YOU BESIDE ME

HERE IN MY SOUND, IN MY SOUND
LOVE IS GENTLE TO YOU
UNFOLD YOUR POISED HEART
ABIDE IN ME

"IN MY SOUND"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

CLARENCE

HERE, IN MY SOUND
IS A ROOM FOR YOU
DROP YOUR LONGING BESIDE ME

HERE, IN MY SOUND
IS A LETTER FOR YOU
READ IT BY THE LIGHT INSIDE ME

WHAT YOU FEEL IS NOT COMPLEX
THE CLOSER YOU GET
TO MY SOUND: LOST IS FOUND;
SUFFERING WILL DIE
MY, OH MY
MY SOUND IS A ROOM WITH A VIEW
WAITING JUST FOR YOU

HERE IN MY SOUND
IS A PLACE FOR YOU
SPACE FOR YOU BESIDE ME

HERE IN MY SOUND, IN MY SOUND
LOVE IS GENTLE TO YOU
UNFOLD YOUR FOLDED HEART
ABIDE IN ME

As lights dim on Beau and Clarence, we see Bad Blood and a Trick Baby enter a bedroom with Knockout.

BAD BLOOD

This is it. You bring anything with you? Any clothes?

KNOCKOUT

I brought what I need.

(puts her hands on her hips and gestures. Trick Baby giggles. Then she flops down on the bed)

BAD BLOOD

Tough, ain't you?

KNOCKOUT

Tough enough. That your little girl?

BAD BLOOD

Uh huh.

KNOCKOUT

Cute.

BAD BLOOD

Watch out. You'll have one too.

KNOCKOUT

Not me. I got things to do.

TRICK BABY

What things?

KNOCKOUT

Make me some money. Then--

BAD BLOOD

Then what?

I. 6:1
1-5-25

KNOCKOUT

I'm gonna quit all this mess.

BAD BLOOD

(Laughing)

Yeah. Sure.

KNOCKOUT

I mean it.

BAD BLOOD

Never happen, baby. Twenty years from now, if you're lucky
two people will remember your name.

KNOCKOUT

I don't care what they remember. I got things to do.

BAD BLOOD

Don't dream up nothing. That just makes it harder later on.

KNOCKOUT

You trying to tell me I should settle for this--forever?

BAD BLOOD

That's all there is, honey. Whether you settle for it or not,
that (looking at the bed) that's all there is.

Bad Blood and the Trick Baby exit. Knockout sings "First"

"FIRST"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

FIRST, I'D TRY LOVE
ALTHOUGH I'VE NEVER HEARD THE WORD
REFERRED TO
WHISPERED TO
ME
FIRST, I'D TRY LOVE
SO WHEN WINTER COMES
AND SUNDOWN BECOMES MY TIME OF DAY
IF ANYBODY ASKS
I CAN SAY, I CAN SAY
FIRST, I TRIED LOVE

ACT I

Scene 6

JESSICA FIVE is seated on her flowered throne. Her body sways in small continuous circles as SHE moans. Her guttural sounds are echoed by the FOUR DRUMMERS who flank her. Intermittently the moaning resolves into a clicking of her teeth as SHE draws in a deep breath. This sound is reinforced by a seemingly GIANT FIGURE that dominates the space behind her, towering above her throne and wielding a giant rattle. SHE lifts a bottle of rum to her lips, coughs a hot breath and hands it to CALLY who takes a quick sip and hands it back. JESSIE smiles as CALLY pats her chest, shuts her eyelids and sucks in a mouthful of cooling air. Then JESSIE extends her hands to CALLY and repeats:

JESSICA FIVE

The five strands of hair
All picked from his head
Your morning water
Your wedding band

The clothes he wore
Next to his skin
His picture
A long hat pin

(CALLY delivers the items as JESSIE requests them. JESSIE flourishes open a red kerchief and drops the nail clippings into it. SHE places the picture wrapped in the underwear over the clippings, gathers the corners of the kerchief together, weaving them through the wedding band. CALLY takes the hat pin from her hat, uncovering her head, and hands the pin to JESSIE who pierces the kerchief with it and begins to sing in a sustained obligato, spiraling up the scale. SHE bends CALLY backward, placing the gris-gris on her groin,

sprinkling it with a few drops of the morning water CALLY has brought to her in a small jar.

At this moment, the drums strike up the ceremonial rhythm and JESSIE commences to sing a voodoo chant which is answered antiphonally by the FIVE MALE MUSICIANS. SHE calls forth the ELEMENTS)

JESSICA FIVE (Continued)

... Wind ... Water ... Fire ... Earth ...

(EACH ELEMENT is a female celebrant who cleverly manipulates five props: various fans for wind; liquid filled gourds for water; candles for fire; sprigs and branches of healing plants for earth.

THEY dance and join into the antiphonal singing, placing their props on CALLY's body. JESSIE draws herself up on the seat of her throne and stands as the throne revolves to reveal ...)

JESSICA FIVE (Continued)

The Unknown Element.

(... a huge BLACK DOLL. Around her rotund figure SHE wears a dress covered with cabalistic signs and elements. A necklace comprised of snake vertebrae ending in a silver encased alligator's fang hangs from her plump and neckless shoulders. From her perch, JESSIE sprinkles the gathering with rum and finishes by placing the bottle to the lips of the huge BLACK DOLL.

A strange hissing seems to come from the BLACK GODDESS as her head turns completely to reveal the black tignon-tied head of the FIFTH CELEBRANT singing. JESSIE begins to shiver. A SERPENT emerges from the black skirts. The UNKNOWN ELEMENT's voice rises, octave upon octave, as the SNAKE rises upright, balancing on its narrow tail. It falls suddenly to the ground and with it, the FOUR ELEMENTS drop to the floor writhing, hissing and crying strangely.

The SNAKE retraces its path under the voluminous skirts and a DANCING FIGURE emerges slowly, transformed into the serpent god, ZOMBI. HE slithers over the supine ELEMENTS, speaking and singing hissing syllabants until HE reaches CALLY.

Within their dance, HE coils his serpentine torso about her and then lifts her. The CELEBRANTS circle about the duo. As the ritual climaxes, CALLY is dropped to the floor; the ZOMBI disappears from where HE came; the throne revolves to once again reveal JESSIE seated. The drums and the dance crescendo)

JESSICA FIVE (Continued)

In five days he will be back in your bed.

ACT I CURTAIN

I DEAL THE CARDS, THEN PICK THEM UP
SPREAD THEM IN MY FIVE
I PLAY THE JACK, YOU
HIT THE DECK WITH A FIVE IF I CAN

DON'T LOOK IN MY PALM
WHERE THE LINES ARE RUNNING OUT EVERYDAY
THE MESSAGE THERE IS CLEAR AND CALM
THE GAME'S A GAME UNTIL YOU PAY
I'M A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
AIN'T NO FUTURE IN MY HAND

BROKEN LINES RUNNING CROSS MY HAND
DAMN THIS HAND
SEE MY LUCK BRADIN' FOR THE DOOR
LOST SO MUCH CAN'T LOSE NO MORE
PLACE THE BET, TOOK A CHANCE
LOOKING FOR A STREAK OF LUCK
RISK THE DICE
NOT ONCE BUT TWICE
LORD DON'T LET ME
LOSE TOO MUCH

DON'T OPEN MY PALM
WHERE THE LINES ARE RUNNING OUT EVERYDAY
THE MESSAGE THERE IS CLEAR AND CALM
THE GAME'S A GAME UNTIL YOU PAY
I'M A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
CAN'T SEE NO FUTURE IN MY HAND

ACT TWO

Scene One

Ana La Premier's house. Johnny, walking about the house, sings "Longshot Gambler." Each scene he witnesses as he goes from room to room repels him: a Trick Baby on a man's knee; some activity of the women; Ana joking with white customers, etc. Each vignette is danced or mimed and Johnny turns away from each with sadness.

JOHNNY

Sings "Longshot Gambler"

"LONGSHOT GAMBLER"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

JOHNNY

I DEAL THE CARDS, THEN PICK THEM UP
SPREAD THEM IN MY FINGERS LIKE A FAN
I PLAY THE JACK, TO HOLD THE QUEEN
HIT THE DEUCE WITH A TRES IF I CAN

DON'T LOOK IN MY PALM
WHERE THE LINES ARE RUNNING OUT EVERYDAY
THE MESSAGE THERE IS CLEAR AND CALM
THE GAME'S A GAME UNTIL YOU PAY
I'M A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
AIN'T NO FUTURE IN MY HAND

BROKEN LINES RUNNING CROSS MY HAND
DAMN THIS HAND
SEE MY LUCK HEADIN' FOR THE DOOR
LOST SO MUCH CAN'T LOSE NO MORE
PLACE THE BET, TOOK A CHANCE
LOOKING FOR A STREAK OF LUCK
SHOT THE DICE
NOT ONCE BUT TWICE
LORD DON'T LET ME
LOSE TOO MUCH

DON'T OPEN MY PALM
WHERE THE LINES ARE RUNNING OUT EVERYDAY
THE MESSAGE THERE IS CLEAR AND CALM
THE GAME'S A GAME UNTIL YOU PAY
I'M A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
A LONGSHOT GAMBLER
CAN'T SEE NO FUTURE IN MY HAND

As Johnny repeats "ain't got no future in my hand," his "future," so to speak, comes tipping in the door: Beau. He has a horn and is looking for Clarence Deal. He locates him in the parlor.

CLARENCE

Thought your daddy told you to stay out of here.

BEAU

He don't know I'm here.

CLARENCE

Then why are you?

BEAU

(Lifts his horn case)

I thought--

CLARENCE

You thought what?

BEAU

That you'd listen. I heard you the other day and I thought, maybe you'd listen to me play. I have this tune in my head, see, and--

CLARENCE

Un huh. Okay. Let's see what you got.

Beau plays his version of "Omar's Music." As he progresses, Clarence begins to accompany him on the piano. As they play together the music takes a different shape or texture becoming more complicated. HEARING IT, Johnny is aroused. He moves toward the sound of the music and overhears the following conversation.

CLARENCE

Ain't you something.

BEAU

Will you teach me?

CLARENCE

Your Daddy might not like that.

BEAU

He doesn't care nothing about me. ^{He gave} ~~You saw him give me 5~~ dollars. That's what he thinks of my mother and me.

CLARENCE

Don't be too hard. The District can look awful good to somebody new--at first--anyway. Looks like a lot of fun and games. And money. But there's a lot of blood in here too. People risk the blood to get to the money.

BEAU

I don't care about the money. And blood don't scare me. I just have to play.

CLARENCE

Okay, okay, okay, but let me tell you something else before you start thinking it's all gravy. Everybody ain't wild about this music. Some people hate exactly what you love.

BEAU

How could anybody hate it?

CLARENCE

(Playing)

'Because it makes them think and feel things they don't want to think or feel.

Some people think it's entertainment but it's a secret weapon. They can't kill a man's music and they can't kill a man who knows that.

BEAU

Just teach me, Mr. Deal. Teach me.

They begin to play "Omar's Music" again. And as it fades, Johnny backs away. Suddenly he hears (and sings) a combination of "Quiet Colored Neighborhood" and "We Ain't Wild." The music is cacophonous and the conflict tears Johnny apart. We leave him "split" but "Omar's Music"

soars and takes us to Scene 2

Scene 2

CALLY's and JOHNNY's livingroom.
Three women FRIENDS, wives of the
travellers, are assembled. GENEVA
enters.

GENEVA

Is she dead?

FRIEND 1

Too hush! No, she ain't dead. She's lying down in her bed
trying to get a little peace and quiet. Her sisters are
in there with her now.

GENEVA

I heard she was dead or dying or asleep or something.

FRIEND 2

It's a long way from sleep to dying.

GENEVA

Maybe not as long as you think.

FRIEND 1

Will you hush? The girl is tired is all.

FRIEND 3

Three days in the bed is a mighty lot of tired.

GENEVA

Three days? Where's that boy of hers?

FRIEND 3

I heard he been sneaking in and out of the District too.
Just like his daddy.

GENEVA

Oh my Lord. These men! Soon's they get old enough to buckle
their own belt they go find some place they can unbuckle it.

FRIEND 1

That's not it. He's taking music lessons over in there.

GENEVA

Oh yeah? Who's teaching?

FRIEND 1

Clarence Deal. You know. Mary Deal's oldest son.

2.2.1

ACT II

Scene 2

CALLY's and JOHNNY's livingroom.
Three woman FRIENDS, wives of the
trawlers, are assembled. GENEVA
enters.

GENEVA

Is she dead?

FRIEND 1

You hush! No, she ain't dead. She's lying down in her bed
trying to get a little peace and quiet. Her sisters are
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GENEVA

I heard she was dead or dying or asleep or something.

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It's a long way from sleep to dying.

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Maybe not as long as you think.

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Three days? Where's that boy of hers?

FRIEND 3

I heard he been sneaking in and out of the District too.
Just like his daddy.

GENEVA

Oh my Lord. These men! Soon's they get old enough to buckle
their own belt they go find some place they can unbuckle it.

FRIEND 1

That's not it. He's taking music lessons over in there.

GENEVA

Oh yeah? Who's teaching? (sarcasm)

FRIEND 1

Clarence Deal. You know. Mary Deal's oldest son.

2.2.2.

FRIEND 3

Oh yes. I know him. That whole family plays music. They say he's awful good.

FRIEND 2

I don't care how good he is. Beau shouldn't stay away from home so much. His mama needs him.

FRIEND 1

Her sisters see after her.

FRIEND 2

Them two? Good God. If I ever get sick please don't let them stand at my bedside. I believe I'd just as soon pass on.

GENEVA

What I want to know is what got her down so? Look like she was doing fine a few days back: cleaned this house from roof to floor.

FRIEND 1

That was right after she went to see Jessie Five.

GENEVA

Don't I know it?

FRIEND 1

Jessie Five said five days. In five days he be back and --

GENEVA

And nothing happened?

FRIEND 1

Not a thing. And it's the seventh day.

GENEVA

I can't believe that. Jessie Five's stuff always works.

FRIEND 2

Well what she gonna do? Stay in bed forever?

GENEVA

Let me tell you women something. Being married is hard, you hear? Hard.

(GENEVA and FRIENDS sing "WE BEEN MAMA")

"WE BEEN MAMA"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

WE BEEN WIVES, ALL OUR LIVES
WE BEEN MAMA
WE ARE AUNTIE, WE ARE SIS
HAND ME THAT -- GIVE ME THIS

BY THE TIME THE SUN COMES UP
 STARING INTO COFFEE CUPS
 JUST ABOUT TO
 FIGURE HOW TO
 WALK ON WATER ONE MORE DAY
 SEE A WALL WE MAKE A WAY

WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WE BEEN MAMA
 WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WITNESS TO OTHER FOLKS' DRAMA
 ALTO SONG IN OTHER FOLKS' HARMONY
 WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WE BEEN MAMA

WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WE BEEN MAMA
 ARE YOU SICK, ARE YOU BLUE
 LET ME KNOW, I'LL CRAWL TO YOU

BY THE TIME THE MOON COMES ROUND
 FORE WE SMOOTH THE PILLOW DOWN
 WE STILL GOT TO
 FIGURE HOW TO
 WALK ON WATER ONE MORE DAY
 SEE A WALL WE MAKE A WAY

WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WE BEEN MAMA
 WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WITNESS TO OTHER FOLKS' DRAMA
 THE HA-HA-HA IN OTHER FOLKS' COMEDY
 WE BEEN WIVES ALL OUR LIVES
 WE BEEN MAMA

(CALLY enters in her slip rushing
 behind ELISE and FAYE whom SHE is
 forcing toward the front door)

(CONTINUED)

CALLY

Out! Out!

FAYE

... And he'll never be nothing.

ELISE

Never. Nothing.

GENEVA

I thought you said she was sick.

FAYE

You can't get water from a stone.

ELISE

Or blood from a turnip.

CALLY

If you want to help me then help me, but don't come in here signifying on me and my son and my husband!

FAYE

You're going to be sorry.

ELISE

You're going to need us.

CALLY

I don't need you as much as you need me. You need to pity somebody, you need to feel better than somebody. I believe you're glad he left me because it makes you feel good and holy. You can't help me because you don't know what I feel. You never loved nobody. Out! Get out!

(SISTERS exit -- CALLY paces --
furious)

FRIEND 1

Come on, honey.

FRIEND 2

It's going to be all right. Poor Cally.

CALLY

Get away from me! Get away. I'm sick of all that. "It's gonna be all right." It ain't gonna be all right. It's never gonna be all right. I'm sorry. I know you mean well, but I can't take any more "Poor Cally, poor little Cally." I'm sick to death of it. I'm not poor little Cally. I'm Calla Lily, you hear? Calla Lily and Calla Lily is not a little girl. She's a woman.

GENEVA

The girl is gone. There's a grown up woman standing here.

CALLY

Nobody's gonna just take my man from me. Nobody. You got that?

FRIEND 1

I got it.

CALLY

You got it?

FRIEND 2

I got it, girl.

CALLY

And you? You got it?

FRIEND 3

We got it.

CALLY

Okay! Now! Battle stations!

GENEVA

What you gonna do?

CALLY

I'm gonna take what is mine.

FRIEND 1

Oh Lord.

CALLY

I'm gonna hold what I have.

GENEVA

Praise His name.

CALLY

I'm going in there and snatch him out by the scruff of his neck if I have to.

FRIEND 3

Sweet Jesus.

CALLY

I'll pull him out by his ankles if I have to.

FRIEND 2

Save us.

2.2.6.

~~WIP~~

And I need shoes!

CALLY

Amen.

ALL

I got some shoes.

GENEVA

Get 'em.

CALLY

I got some real pretty stockings.

FRIEND 3

Get 'em.

CALLY

(To FRIEND 1)
Didn't that woman whose house you clean give you a dress?

FRIEND 2

Sure did. Got a grease spot on it.

FRIEND 1

Get it, girl.

CALLY

Get it, girl.
Get it, girl.
Get it, girl.

ALL

(The phrase "Get it, girl" is --
at first, a reference to go get
the clothes. Then, as repeated,
becomes a rhythmic chant to CALLY
as THEY dress her, fix her hair
and SHE becomes glamorous in a loud
tacky raiment. Then, the phrase
becomes a chorus for themselves, as
well as CALLY, as SHE struts around
completely dressed. Then, as SHE
exits, it becomes a battle cry)

(After a huge swell of voices saying
"Get it, girl")
Get him, girl. Get him!

SINGLE VOICE

2-2-+

CALLY

Well, get it, Girl, get it.

(THEY go and return with clothing during
the following song)

"DAMSEL IN DISTRESS"

Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

THIS DAMSEL IS IN DISTRESS

DARING TO HAVE ALL - NOT LESS

OF THE LIFE I GREW UP TO LIVE

LOOSE THE FIRE MY HID

I DIDN'T GROW WINGS TO HELP ME WALK

WHEN I WANT TO SING DON'T TELL ME TO TALK

THIS HERE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

SAYS NO TO NO AND YES TO YES

I'M GONNA DO WHAT EVE NEVER DID

TAKE THE LIFE I CAME HERE TO LIVE

CAME HERE TO LIVE

THIS DAMSEL IS IN DISTRESS FRIENDS

OH GET IT

GO GET IT

CRACK THE EGG

PIERCE THE YOLK

OH GET IT

GO GET IT

FRIENDS (Continued)

RAVEL THAT HEM

UNBUTTON YOUR COAT

OH GET IT

GO GET IT

THROW OUT THE LAUNDRY

THROW OUT THE SOAP

OH GET IT

GO GET IT

STOKE THE FIRE

TEAR DOWN THE STOVE

STRUT ON OUT

THE GODDAM DOOR

CALLY

GONNA DO WHAT EVE NEVER DID

TAKE THE LIFE I CAME HERE

CAME HERE

CAME HERE TO LIVE.

THIS DAMSEL IS IN DISTRESS.

is PREVIEW's partner. CLARENCE DEAL is at the piano. CHERRY is watching a TRUCK BABY dressed in under-vest dance on top of the piano. SAILORS and PLANTERS and other white folks leer. The Women of the House clap.

Toward the end of this dance, CALLY enters. SHE is in some distress--hat wrongly tipped, cash loose, etc. When SHE sees the little girl dancing, SHE is shocked, but before SHE can register fully what SHE sees, a white SAILOR puts his arm around her and kisses her neck.

As the dance is completed, there is riotous applause and calls for more. CALLY steps free of the SAILOR and jumps into another TRUCK BABY dressed only in woman's portion of the fashion and holding a doll. A MAN picks her up and holds her high in the air.

All the while CALLY is surrounded by COMPLETS and TRIFLES laughing, fondling one another. A PLANTER jumps over and lifts the hem of her dress. SHE is fighting him off when SOMEONE breaks a bottle over ANOTHER'S head. There is a lull while a FEW watch the hit MAN slump to the floor. A THIRD MAN punches the BUTLER. LA PREVIEWE rushes over to see what is going on.

Into the space (in movement as well as visual space) CALLY spots LA PREVIEWE then JOHNNY. And then BEAD who is playing with CLARENCE DEAL. BEAD sees her too and calls "Ma!" The music stops as EVERYBODY stares at CALLY. SHE is thoroughly non-pleased. Hurt, angry, completely out of her element.

Into the silence LA PREVIEWE advances forward with her walking stick and taps CALLY with it. CALLY TRIPS and stumbles over the stick. BEAD turns

Act II

Scene 3

LA PREMIERE's parlor
CLARENCE DEAL is at the piano.
A CROWD is watching a TRICK BABY
dressed in underwear dance on top
of the piano. SAILORS and PLANTERS
and other white johns leer. The
Women of the House clap.

Toward the end of this dance, CALLY
enters. SHE is in some disarray--
hat wrongly tipped, sash loose per-
haps. When SHE sees the little girl
dancing, SHE is shocked, but before
SHE can register fully what SHE sees,
a white SAILOR puts his arm around
her and kisses her neck.

As the dance is completed, there is
riotous applause and calls for more.
CALLY struggles free of the SAILOR
and bumps into another TRICK BABY
dressed only in woman's panties of the
fashion and holding a doll. A MAN
picks her up and holds her high in the
air.

All the while CALLY is surrounded by
COUPLES and TRIPLES dancing, fondling
one another. A PLANTER comes over and
lifts the hem of her dress. SHE is
fighting him off when SOMEBODY breaks
a bottle over ANOTHER'S head. There is
a lull while a FEW watch the hit MAN
slump to the floor. A THIRD MAN punches
the HITTER. LA PREMIERE sallies over
to see what is going on.

Into the space (in movement as well as
visual space) CALLY spies LA PREMIERE
then JOHNNY, And then BEAU who is
playing with CLARENCE DEAL. Beau sees
her too and calls "Ma!" The music
stops as EVERYBODY stares at CALLY,
SHE is thoroughly non-plussed. Hurt,
angry, completely out of her element.

Into the silence LA PREMIERE saunters
forward with her walking stick and
teases CALLY with it. CALLY TRIPS and
stumbles over the stick. BEAU darts

ACT II

Scene 4

The courtyard
something --
two. CALLY
nothing. SHE
and standing
back to look

forward but is held back by CLARENCE who shakes his head as if to say "This is not your affair-" JOHNNY moves in to take LA PREMIERE'S stick away. THEY stand for a moment and look at each other. LA PREMIERE snatches the stick and pokes JOHNNY with it.

CALLY, outrage surfacing, kicks JOHNNY in the shins. The CROWD laughs and oo's. JOHNNY, surprised, tries to pull CALLY away from the CROWD and from LA PREMIERE'S malice. CALLY refuses to go and dances around HIM with a great deal of aggression and then turns to LA PREMIERE. LA PREMIERE enters into a dance with CALLY with confidence and contempt. The TWO WOMEN then dance competitively, a dance which illustrates the difference between the two ways of life they represent as well as the difference between themselves. The dance ends in a "draw."

JOHNNY comes to CALLY and tries to take her by the arm, outside to the courtyard. SHE resists. HE prevails. The CROWD picks up its activity as CALLY AND JOHNNY GO together into the courtyard.

You look different.

You look the same.

You're not the woman I left.

You're not the man I loved.

The woman I left wore braids in her hair.

The man I loved braided it for me.

I kinda like it this way.

(HE reaches to touch her hair.
CALLY moves away)

Cally.

Calla Lily!

Calla Lily!

(SHE begins to cry. HE sings)

"CALLA LILY"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

JOHNNY (Continued)
CALLA LILY DON'T CRY
LORD KNOWS I'VE BEEN STONE BLIND

2.4.1

~~1/10/24~~

ACT II

Scene 4

The courtyard. JOHNNY starts to say something -- walks away a step or two. CALLY stands still saying nothing. SHE is flushed and beautiful and standing very tall. JOHNNY turns back to look at her.

JOHNNY

You look different.

CALLY

You look the same.

JOHNNY

You're not the woman I left.

CALLY

You're not the man I loved.

JOHNNY

The woman I left wore braids in her hair.

CALLY

The man I loved braided it for me.

JOHNNY

I kinda like it this way.

(HE reaches to touch her hair.
CALLY moves away)

JOHNNY (Continued)

Cally.

CALLY

Calla Lily!

JOHNNY

Calla Lily?

(SHE begins to cry. HE sings:)

"CALLA LILY"

(Lyrics (C) 1982 by Toni Morrison)

JOHNNY (Continued)

CALLA LILY DON'T CRY
LORD KNOWS I'VE BEEN STONE BLIND

JOHNNY (Continued)

I KNOW THAT I DON'T DESERVE THE FAVOR
 TO BE EVEN STANDING IN YOUR SHADE, GIRL
 CALLA LILY DON'T CRY
 HEAR ME WHEN I SAY MY
 LOVE FOR YOU IS REAL BUT IT NEEDS GUARDING
 I HAVE SERVED MY TIME GRANT ME A PARDON
 FORGET I FORGOT YOU'RE MY GIRL
 JUST LET ME GET CLOSE TO MY GIRL
 TAKE ME BACK AND I WON'T NEVER LEAVE YOU
 CAUSE YOU'RE MY GIRL

(CALLY sings "IT'S SUNDAY", JOHNNY
 joins her)

"IT'S SUNDAY" (Reprise)

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

CALLY

ALL I KNOW IS THAT IT'S SUNDAY
 I'D BE RESTING IN MY BED NOW

JOHNNY

Let me make your bed.

CALLY

DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? IT'S SUNDAY
 I MIGHT LIKE SOME LEMONADE NOW

JOHNNY

Let me squeeze your lemons.

CALLY

HOW COME YOU DON'T KNOW IT'S SUNDAY?
 A WOMAN'S HEART CAN BREAK BY MONDAY
 THIS SHOULD BE THE ONE DAY
 YOU'D UNBRAID MY HAIR

JOHNNY

OH BABE I KNOW IT'S SUNDAY
 LET ME STRUM US UP A TUNE NOW
 I REMEMBER HOW ON SUNDAY
 WE'D BE DANCING IN OUR ROOM NOW

I FEEL LUCKY WHEN IT'S SUNDAY
 LET'S NOT PUT IT OFF TILL MONDAY
 I CAN'T WAIT NOT EVEN ONE DAY
 TO GET 'WAY FROM HERE

(THEY dance)

2.4.3

ACT II

Scene 5

Late morning at LA PREMIERE's house.
CORALIE BLUE is dressing. SHE passes
a mirror, stops to wipe it, looks at
herself and sings the last two parts
"You Can't Handle Me."

BOTH
I'M SO LUCKY THAT IT'S SUNDAY
CAUSE WHEN WE WAKE UP ON MONDAY
WE ARE GOIN' TO BE A LONG WAY
A LONG WAY FROM HERE

THEY

exit)

I HAVE A NAME

AND CARRY THERE

THE GRIEF OF SEASONS

BLOSSOM AND BARE

WHEN YOU SLEEP

I TEND THE FIRE'S DESIRE, DESIRE

I'M EARLY I'M LATE

I WATCH THE DOORS

AND LOCK THE GATES

I KNOW YOUR INS, YOUR OUTS

I KNOW THE REASONS

FEEL THE DOUBTS

I'M LONG AS TIME

DEEP AS SPACE

BUT IF I EVER LEAVE THIS PLACE

YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME

ACT II

Scene 5

Late morning at LA PREMIERE'S house.
COLBALT BLUE is cleaning. SHE passes
a mirror, stops to wipe it, looks at
herself and sings the *last two parts* of
"You Can't Handle Me."

"You Can't Handle Me" Part Two
Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

(Attitude of a woman)

I HAVE A WOMB

AND CARRY THERE

THE GRIEF OF SEASONS

BLOSSOM AND BARE

WHEN YOU SLEEP

I TEND THE FIRE'S DESIRE, DESIRE

I'M EARLY I'M LATE

I WATCH THE DOORS

AND LOCK THE GATES

I KNOW YOUR INS, YOUR OUTS

I KNOW THE REASONS

FEEL THE DOUBTS

I'M LONG AS TIME

DEEP AS SPACE

BUT IF I EVER LEAVE THIS PLACE

YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME

"You Can't Handle Me" Part Three
Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

2.5.2.

(Attitude of a goddess)

MY ARMS HOLD MIDNIGHT

MY VOICE IS AIR

MY WORK IS WONDEROUS

EVERYWHERE

IN YOUR DREAMS

I AM THE FIRE - WILDER, WILDER

I'M EARLY, I'M LATE

I BREAK DOWN DOORS

AND SLAM THE GATES

I AM YOUR INS, I AM YOUR OUTS

I AM YOUR REASONS

I AM YOUR DOUBTS

I'M LONG AS TIME

DEEP AS SPACE

AND WHEN I TAKE MY RIGHTFUL PLACE

YOU CAN'T HANDLE ME

SWEET JUSTICE enters with a carton full of opera stockings. HE is anxiously looking around.

Where's everybody?

SWEET JUSTICE

Sleep. What you think?

COBALT BLUE

Ana?

SWEET JUSTICE

Sleep, I told you. It's twelve noon.

COBALT BLUE

Well, wake her up.

SWEET JUSTICE

Not me.

COBALT BLUE

Well somebody better.

SWEET JUSTICE

You want to leave 'em? You know she'll pay you exactly what you ask.

COBALT BLUE

I ain't asking you to wake somebody out of a sleep just to buy some stockings. I got some information, woman.

SWEET JUSTICE

You always do.

COBALT BLUE

I mean real information.

SWEET JUSTICE

Graveyard?

COBALT BLUE

Graveyard if she don't get up.

SWEET JUSTICE

COBALT BLUE
You better not be fooling nobody.

SWEET JUSTICE
Hurry up, girl, and go wake the lady.

(COBALT exits. SWEET JUSTICE opens
his carton and examines the hose.
SATAN comes in)

SATAN
I need some coffee.

SWEET JUSTICE
You need a suitcase.

SATAN
What's that supposed to mean?

SWEET JUSTICE
Never mind. You'll find out.

(Enter ANA LA PREMIER)

LA PREMIER
This better be good. Never felt worse in my life.

SWEET JUSTICE
Well, you gonna feel worse than that before you feel better.

SATAN
Spit it out, man. Stop cock teasin'!

SWEET JUSTICE
Why don't you get out of my face?

LA PREMIER
Quit! What you wake me for?

SWEET JUSTICE
(Whispering)
They did it! You all said they wouldn't, but they did. And
the Mayor can't do a thing about it.

(TWO GIRLS come down the stairs with
a JOHN)

JOHN
(Tying his tie and yawning)
Gawd, what time is it?

LA PREMIER
(To SWEET JUSTICE)
Can't do a thing about what?

SWEET JUSTICE
The Navy, that's who. This place is over!

COBALT BLUE
Oh Lord.

LA PREMIER
You know what you're talking about?

SATAN
He's lying.

SWEET JUSTICE
The City Council just met this morning. I'm telling you.
The Navy say if the city don't close the District down, they
will. You got till midnight the twelfth. They moving out
of the Arlington and Mahogany Hall now. As we speak!

(CLARENCE and BEAU enter with
their instruments)

CLARENCE
What's going on?

(TWO more GIRLS enter down the
staircase: KNOCKOUT and VESUVIUS)

VESUVIUS
What's all the racket? People trying to sleep.

SWEET JUSTICE
They shutting it down!

LA PREMIER
(Stunned)
It's true then.

(Some general moans of outrage and
confusion)

KNOCKOUT
You mean I got to go back to a crib?

SWEET JUSTICE
No, fool. If they ain't gonna be no whore houses, you know

SWEET JUSTICE (Continued)

they ain't gonna be no cribs. No saloons either and
(To SATAN)
no gambling.

SATAN

All they can do is make it illegal. They can't make it
unpopular.

(COPPERBOTTOM is crying)

VESUVIUS

Shut up!

(OTHER GIRLS enter, a FEW gather
in clusters whispering)

COBALT BLUE

I'm too old to go looking for another job. What you gonna
do, Ana?

LA PREMIER

(Standing)

First I'm going to comb my hair. Then I'm going to get
dressed. Then I'm going to the bank. Who do they think
they are? Who do they think we are? Who do they think I
am? This is my world they are fooling with. I live on this
planet too. Change my life? Mess in my dreams? I'll be
damned! The pot-bellied apes! I do more for this town than
the whole fleet! Crackers! Bastards! Hypocrites! God,
what I wouldn't give for a stick of dynamite. I'd sink the
whole Navy. Blow the Gulf of Mississippi all the way back
to Canada! Those dirty, rotten lying hogs! Close the
District, huh? With a piece of paper, hah! I'll show them
how to close a district. Tell everybody La Premier is having
a party. What's the date, November 30? On November 30 --
costumes, masks, food, liquor on the house. And when I close
a district, believe me, it's going to stay closed!

(LA PREMIER exits and CLARENCE begins
to play with BEAU accompanying him.
The music swells to a surreal and
sensuous dance of costumed and MASQUED
PARTY-GOERS (including ALL of the
identifiable MEMBERS of the House as
well as JOHNS and OTHERS). THEY chant
a song that "lays claim to" the
excitement and imaginative license
that the District offers. The song
is "addressed" to the audience)

"THIS PIECE OF PLANET"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

LA PREMIER & MASQUERS

THIS PIECE OF PLANET IS MINE
I DON'T WANT YOUR KIND
IT STIMULATES MY MIND
TO KNOW THAT I CAN FIND
DAY, NIGHT, ANY TIME
THIS PIECE OF PLANET IS MINE
IT STIMULATES MY MIND

(Following the masqued dance, the party becomes normal level background activity.)

CLARENCE starts to play the piano -- a very lively tune. The GIRLS dance with each other and the TWO or THREE MEN there. THEY drink and chat and laugh with the WHITE SAILORS who enter a few minutes later during the dialogue below. Also during the dialogue below, SATAN and SWEET JUSTICE are arguing)

BEAU

(To CLARENCE)

Why you grinning? You glad the District is closing?

CLARENCE

I ain't glad, exactly. But in a way, I guess I am.

BEAU

(Accusingly)

You going North, ain't you?

CLARENCE

Gotta do it. I told you, Beau, you have to move if you want to keep up with the music.

BEAU

Take me with you.

CLARENCE

I can't do that. Your daddy would kill me.

BEAU

He have to catch me first.

CLARENCE

Well, let me get situated up there, and maybe I'll send for you.

BEAU

You won't.

CLARENCE

Yes, I will. Just wait. You'll get a letter from me at the Royal Gardens in Chicago or the Deluxe Hotel or the Dreamland. All my buddies are up there. All the boys: Mutt Carey, Sugar Johnny, Tubby, George Baquet, Lawrence Duke, Roy Palmer, Freddie Keppard, Tig Chambers, Kid Ory, Joe Oliver, Tony Jackson, Minor Hall. They got a Chicago style and a New York style and a Kansas City style. Now all of it comes from right here, but you got to move with the music, and nothing's gonna stop me now.

The masked dancers become frenzied with all the recklessness they can muster because this is the last day of an open District. During the raucus activity a white john picks up a TRICK BABY and starts climbing the stairs with her. CLARENCE sees him and shouts

CLARENCE

Hey, Sucker! Put that baby down!

The JOHN ignores him. CLARENCE jumps up from the piano to follow him. HE is followed in turn by OTHERS. A fight breaks out and CLARENCE IS killed

Screams. The JOHNS run out immediately. BEAU grabs CLARENCE by the shoulders. EVERYBODY is still. Then, LA PREMIER rushes toward CLARENCE)

LA PREMIER

Call the doctor! Run! Sweet, you go. Now!

LA PREMIER (Continued)

Oh Clarence. You of all people.

(CLARENCE coughs)

CLARENCE

Take it out. Somebody take that cracker's steel out of my back.

(Nobody moves. Then BEAU does it. Bracing himself, HE pulls it out. Some blood flows. HE looks at his hands. LA PREMIER takes the knife from him and gives it to COBALT who drops it in her apron. BEAU holds CLARENCE in a sitting position)

BEAU

The doctor is coming.

CLARENCE

Tell Freddie and Joe I was on my way, but was -- unavoidably detained. Tell 'em, Beau. Tell Kid Ory boxcars don't carry no freight.

You go, in my place, hear me? Tell 'em I sent you. But when you go, don't stay long. Keep moving. The music gotta keep moving. And don't write it down. If you write it down it'll freeze to death. Keep it moving: Kansas, St. Louis, Los Angeles, Detroit, New York.

(HE dies. BEAU lets CLARENCE's head gently rest on the back of the chair. Then HE picks up his horn. SOMEBODY sobs) Beau plays

the song he and Clarence played together (the developed "Omar's Music"). It fades into a dirge and a funeral cortege with ALL in attendance. After the dirge the music becomes the bouyant, celebratory post-internment music typical of musician's burials in New Orleans.

AS REMOIN FRIENDS I'VE HAD A
BALL OLD FRIENDS KISSING ME
SHUTTERS WIDE OPEN FOR YOU
AS REMOIN FRIENDS TAKE TO FLY
HE OLD FRIENDS THERE'LL BE
BE NIGHTS WILDER WITH STARS
NO TEARS, GIVE NO DIAMOND
CLEAN IN EYES THAT HAVE BEEN
KINGDOMS OTHERS
DREAMED. WE'VE
GREAT TIME FRIENDS SINCE IT'S

ACT II

Scene 6

ANA LA PREMIER enters her bedroom. Removes her mourning hat and veil. The huge brass bed with red satin pillows and spread is disassembled: head board and foot lying against the wall. Trunks are being wheeled out by TWO MOVERS. There is a tall mirror and a washstand, an armoire, a chaise lounge. All of this is being moved out. Next to the French doors is a brightly painted wooden chest. SHE moves toward it, kneels, unlocks it and examines the contents: a jewel box, some items of clothing, an album of photographs, a couple of pillows, some lace and finally a doll.

Outside the French doors MEN are pounding wooden slats against the glass. As THEY cover the doors, the light from the courtyard disappears.

The WOMEN OF THE HOUSE enter and along with La PREMIERE they sing "Au Revoir."

"AU REVOIR, BON SOIR"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

LA PREMIER

AU REVOIR FRIENDS I'VE HAD A
BALL OLD FRIENDS KEEPING MY
SHUTTERS WIDE OPEN FOR YOU
AU REVOIR FRIENDS TAKE IT FROM
ME OLD FRIENDS THERE'LL NEVER
BE NIGHTS WILDER WITH STARS
NO TEARS, GIRL NO DIAMOND
GLEAM IN EYES THAT HAVE SEEN
KINGDOMS OTHERS NEVER
DREAMED. WE'VE HAD A
GREAT TIME FRIENDS AND SINCE IT'S

ACT II

Scene 1

LA PREMIER (Continued)

GONE MY FRIENDS WHY NOT SAY
 BON SOIR LONELINESS GOOD
 EVENING LONELINESS OH
 AU REVOIR LOVE I'VE HAD A
 BALL MY LOVE, AU REVOIR

WILL CAST (when Clarence) is in
 off for BEAU
 take his music to a larger audience
 and join those musicians CLARENCE had
 mentioned just before he died. The
 mood is festive as BEAU visits those
 parts of New Orleans (both his own
 neighborhood, the District and the
 Market) where he has heard the music or
 learned something. At each place he
 acknowledges his debt and thanks the
 PEOPLE there. As he journeys through,
 Oscar returns and, watching BEAU sing
 and hearing parts of HIS (OSCAR'S) music,
 he litters the stage with his scraps of
 paper and ribbon blessings. Then WILL
 climbs back up the structure: shape-
 shifting again, but now from MEDICANT
 to SLAVE to TRIBESMAN to the MASKED GOD.
 As the song "Thank You" builds, Oscar is
 high above the crowd below, assuming his
 place.

"THANK YOU"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

BEAU

(To CALLY)

GOT DOWN FROM MY MOTHER'S KNEE
 THANK YOU I'M A MAN
 STANDING ON MY OWN TWO FEET
 THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(To JOHNNY)

GOT A GIFT FROM MY OLD MAN
 THANK YOU I'M A MAN
 MAKING IT NOW WITH MY OWN HAND
 THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(To LA PREMIER'S GIRLS)

SWAN THE RIVER GOT TO SHORE
 RIVER WON'T SOAK MY HEAD NO MORE

COMPANY

OH BEAU, BEAU YOU A MAN

BEAU

THANK YOU, THANK YOU I'M A MAN

ACT II

Scene 7

FULL CAST (minus Clarence) is in attendance at a send-off for BEAU who is going to leave New Orleans to take his music to a larger audience and join those musicians CLARENCE had mentioned just before he died. The mood is festive as BEAU visits those parts of New Orleans (both his own neighborhood, the District and the Market) where he has heard the music or learned something. At each place he acknowledges his debt and thanks the PEOPLE there. As he journeys through, Omar returns and, watching BEAU sing and hearing parts of HIS (OMAR'S) music, he litters the stage with his scraps of paper and ribbon blessings. Then OMAR climbs back up the structure: shape-shifting again, but now from MEDICANT to SLAVE to TRIBESMAN to the MASKED GOD. As the song "Thank You" builds, Omar is high above the crowd below, assuming his place.

"THANK YOU"

(Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison)

BEAU

(To CALLY)

GOT DOWN FROM MY MOTHER'S KNEE
THANK YOU I'M A MAN
STANDING ON MY OWN TWO FEET
THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(To JOHNNY)

GOT A GIFT FROM MY OLD MAN
THANK YOU I'M A MAN
MAKING IT NOW WITH MY OWN HAND
THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(To LA PREMIER'S GIRLS)

SWAM THE RIVER GOT TO SHORE
RIVER WON'T SOAK MY HEAD NO MORE

COMPANY

OH BEAU, BEAU YOU A MAN

BEAU

THANK YOU, THANK YOU I'M A MAN

COMPANY
OH BEAU, BEAU YOU A MAN

BEAU
THANK YOU, THANK YOU, I'M A MAN

(TO SATAN)
MET A GAMBLER, EVIL AS SIN
THANK YOU I'M A MAN
TAUGHT ME HOW TO SAVE MY SKIN
THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(TO SWEET JUSTICE)
WATCHED A THIEF FINGERS SO LIGHT
THANK YOU I'M A MAN
KEPT MY POCKETS BUTTONED UP TIGHT
THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(TO LA PREMIER)
HERE'S THAT LADY WITH THE DAZZLING SMILE

COMPANY
LA PREMIER, LA PREMIER

BEAU
TOOK THE TOWN AND GAVE IT STYLE
THANK YOU I'M A MAN

(TO JESSIE FIVE)
IN TROUBLED TIMES WHEN LIFE IS SOUR
THANK YOU, THANK YOU, I'M A MAN
GO TO THE WOMAN WITH THE CONJURE POWER

COMPANY
OH LOOK AT BEAU, LOOK AT BEAU

BEAU
THANK YOU, THANK YOU, I'M A MAN

COMPANY
HE'S A MAN, HE'S A MAN
LOOK AT BEAU, LOOK AT BEAU

BEAU
THANK YOU, THANK YOU, I'M A MAN

COMPANY
LOOK AT BEAU, LOOK AT BEAU

BEAU
THANK YOU, THANK YOU, I'M A MAN

(TO the TOWN)
I LIVED ON THE SHIP, WORKED WITH THE CREW
GONNA LEAVE THIS HARBOR, WON'T LEAVE YOU

(For CLARENCE)
 HEARD A NOTE PLAYED SO SWEET
 THANK YOU I'M A MAN
 STOLE MY HEART AND MOVED MY FEET
 THANK YOU I'M A MAN
 GOT MY MUSIC FROM THAT MAN
 TAKE IT NOW ALL OVER THIS LAND

COMPANY
 OVER THIS LAND, OVER THIS LAND
 TAKE IT NOW ALL OVER THIS LAND
 OVER THIS LAND, OVER THIS LAND
 SPREAD NEW ORLEANS ALL OVER THIS LAND

COBALT BLUE
 LET ME TELL YOU 'BOUT NEW ORLEANS

COMPANY
 OVER THIS LAND, OVER THIS LAND
 SPREAD NEW ORLEANS ALL OVER THIS LAND

COBALT BLUE
 SING A SONG ABOUT NEW ORLEANS

COMPANY
 OVER THIS LAND, OVER THIS LAND
 SING NEW ORLEANS ALL OVER THIS LAND

COBALT BLUE
 LET ME HEAR YOU SAY NEW ORLEANS

COMPANY
 NEW ORLEANS, NEW ORLEANS
 THANK YOU, THANK YOU, NEW ORLEANS
 NEW ORLEANS, NEW ORLEANS
 THANK YOU, THANK YOU, NEW ORLEANS

(Etc.)

NEW ORLEANS

THE END