



New Orleans New York Shakespeare Festival Script

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NEW ORLEANS: THE STORYSTYLE MUSICAL

by

Toni Morrison with Donald McKayle

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New York Shakespeare Festival
425 Lafayette Street
New York, N.Y. 10003
(212) 598-7100

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NOT FOR DUPLICATION

CAST

JOHNNY
ANA LA PREMIERE
CALLY (nee CALLA LILY)
GENEVA
BEAU
FAYE
ELISE
JESSICA FIVE (aka MADAM FIVE, JESSIVE FIVE)
OMAR
SWEET JUSTICE
COBALT BLUE
CLARENCE DEAL
KNOCKOUT (aka BELLE FLEUR)
MOUTH (aka GLORIA MOON)
COPPERBOTTOM (aka LURLEEN PRICE)
RAT (aka ROCHELLE LA FORTE)
BAD BLOOD (aka PATRICIA DIAMOND)
VESUVIUS
TRICK BABY 1
TRICK BABY 2
FRIEND 1
FRIEND 2
FRIEND 3

DISTRICT
WOMEN

Various white JOHNS and GAMBLERS and STREET PEOPLE

ACT 1SCENE 1

Congo Square in New Orleans changing from 1885 to the French Market, 1917. Unmistakably African music is heard at the rise of the curtain and we see 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, which appears to be taller than a normal person. This figure seems to be dancing with no support underfoot. The dance below builds and then quiets down as the figure descends in a costume that lets him shape-shift, as he joins the crowd, from a god to a tribesman to a slave to a ragged and indistinct mendicant. During this descent, as the sun comes up, the movements become the gestures and movements of New Orleans blacks in the French Market, 1917, at various kinds of work (men, women and children doing work of smiths, domestics, cigar makers, tanners, coppers, bricklayers, sweepers, stevedores, trawlers, cooks, barbers, plasterers, wrought iron makers, cane cutters, carpenters, levee workers, draymen, etc). By the time the figure has completed his descent to the level of the people below and become 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 "Streets". The music should sound like those beautiful five part chourses one hears in Africa, in which one voice leads and the others answer. As they sing this song, the figure moves among them, offering for sale scraps of brightly colored ribbon. No one pays him any attention.

STREETS"

Lyrics c 1984 Toni Morrison

CALLER: HEAT IN THE STREET
 ALL: GOT TO BREAK, HEAT BREAK!

CALLER: STORM OVERHEAD
 ALL: GOT TO BREAK, STORM BREAK!

CALLER: SWEAT ON THE BROW
 ALL: GONNA BREAK, SWEAT BREAK!

CALLER: NEWS OF WAR
 ALL: GONNA BREAK, WAR BREAK!

CALLER: MY FIVE DOLLAR BILL
 ALL: GOT TO BREAK, DOLLAR BREAK!

CALLER: HEAR ME WHEN I WORK THESE
 STREETS
 HEAR ME WHILE I WHIP THESE
 STREETS

ALL: PROMISES
 DON'T BREAK!

CALLER: HEART
 ALL: DON'T BREAK!

CALLER: BACK
 ALL: DON'T BREAK ON ME, ON ME

ALL: BACK DON'T BREAK ON ME.

ALL: THESE STREETS, THESE STREETS
 AM, WHIP THESE STREETS
 STREETS IN THE CITY MY HOME

ALL: (CHANTING)

VIEUX CARRE, TUPELO, METAIRIE
 VIEUS CARRE, TUPELO, METAIRIE

POYDRAS, PERDIDO, OCTAVIA, MAGAZINE
 DRYADES, MELPOMENE

RAMPART, CANAL, IBERVILLE
 NAPOLEON, ELYSIAN FIELDS
 RAMPART, CANAL, IBERVILLE
 GRAVIER, BASIN STREET

(SOFTLY)

BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE
BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE
BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE
BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE

STREETS IN THE CITY - MY HOME
MY HOME
STREETS IN THE CITY - MY HOME.

Figure (OMAR)

(Dangling colored ribbons)

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

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

Figure (OMAR)

(to Johnny)

Come on, ~~Johnny~~ ^{Johnny}, 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 scrap? Come on, Cally.

Figure (OMAR)

Scraps? Scraps?

(to Cally)

What about you, honey? Buy a blessing?

CALLY

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

1-1-4

Figure (OMAR)

No time like now for a blessing.

BEAU

Who is he, Ma?

CALLY

I don't know, ^{Beau} (to Figure) Who your people?

Figure (OMAR)

Name's Omar. You my people.

Cally and Johnny exchange glances and hide their smiles.

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.

(They all laugh)

OMAR

(Hurt)

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

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. Cally & Johnny 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
OUR CUSTOMS WOULD BE MISUNDERSTOOD BE-
YOND A QUIET COLORED NEIGHBORHOOD.

ALL: A NEGRO FAMILY
LIVES 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.

(Omar moves down stage and is bathed in light. He
directs a huge, windy whispering curse at Johnny's
family.)

OMAR (shredding his ribbons)

Every hello ain't a welcome
Every goodbye ain't a gone
Confusion confound you everyday
What goes up falls down
Nothing get my blessing back
Except a healing sound

Omar collects his destroyed ribbons-which are not
rightly colored now-but dirty smoking rags. He shape-
shifts again, ascends, and throws them down on the crowd.

1-1-6

All are engaged again in their "busy at Work" dance and singing last verse of "Streets" - which is interrupted by a shout.

SEVERAL: LA PREMIERE!
LOOK! LOOK!
LA PREMIERE!
WHAT'S SHE DOING
IN HERE?

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

1-1-8
MEN

BITTY WAIST
MPADOUR 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 seductive dance which challenges them all. During the dance, Beau jumps in to do a few steps with La Premier. Johnny quickly pulls him away. Omar mimics them all. The women snatch away children and some exit in a huff. La Premier is sauntering about, choosing goods from a stall. Some men approach her)

JOHNNY

Respectable people work here, woman.

LA PREMIER (unimpressed)

Slave here, you mean.

JOHNNY

Watch your mouth!

LA PREMIER

You watch my mouth. (licks her mouth)

CROWD

Oooo Oooo

CALLY

Look, you keep the District in the district. We're trying to raise children here.

JOHNNY

DECENT children, heifer.

LA PREMIER

Decent as in dumb? What you sell costs 3¢ a pound; what I sell is expensive.

1-1-9

JOHNNY

Yeah well we don't owe nobody. And we don't have to grin & show white folks a good time to put food on our table.

LA PREMIER

(laughing) What color is this? (pulls out a wad of money)
Besides, what you know about good times? (gestures wickedly).

JOHNNY

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 red and wide open (gesture)

(La Premier taps offstage to sneering but uneasy laughter: She is offstage completely, but Omar picks up her tapping-louder - louder. Johnny begins to move to its beat. Does a step or two, struggles to maintain his own beat as the scene changes. "Fueled" so to speak by Omar, Johnny enters the District. Tonk houses, cribs, music blaring, people in various poses that are the esaggerations of the cliché. All very seductive. Into this line of District types struts Sweet Justice who leads them in the song "WE AIN'T WILD"

WE AIN'T WILD

Lyrics c 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 IS THE DISTRICT CRUEL?
AND YOU'LL HEAR HIM SAY
THE DISTRICT MAKES A WAY
FROM SIDEWALK TRAMPS
TO SOCIETY VAMPS
THE DISTRICT MAKES A WAY
THE DISTRICT MAKES A WAY
ASK THE CHUMPS BREATHING DIRT
CAUSE THEY GOT THEIR FEELINGS HURT
IF THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
OH, THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
ASK THE PIMPS LOCKED IN JAIL
ASK THE WOMEN OUT ON BAIL
IF THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY
OH YEAH, THE DISTRICT PAVES THE WAY

1-1-10

SWEET JUSTICE 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

THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE THE SWIFT WIN THE RACE
THE JUNGLE IS WILD: THE DISTRICT IS STYLE
AND THE DISTRICT SHOWS THE WAY.

(By the end of the song, Johnny is seduced by the
district and dancing with the inhabitants. As the
scene closes we see Omar dancing happily as well.)

1-2-11

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)

1-2-12

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

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

CALLY
(Jumps back)
Take that away from me.

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

CALLY
I don't want him on all fours.

GENEVA
Eating out of your hand.

CALLY
(Repulsed)
Ohh.

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

CALLY
. Geneva, would you stop!

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

CALLY
I don't want a tricked man.

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

1. 2. 17

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 ^{Kids} ~~Geneva~~. ~~She was married to~~
~~Geneva~~. 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

1-2-15

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, 16

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.

1. 2. 17

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.

1-2-18

(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~~.

Church

Church

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?

I. 2-19

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. 2:20

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.

1-2-21

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.

1-2-22

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. 2:23

BEAU

Oh shoot.

CALLY

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

BEAU

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

FAYE

You buy you a pistol?

ELISE

Or a long sharp knife?

CALLY

No. No.

BEAU

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

CALLY

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

(FAYE and ELISE cross themselves)

CALLY (Continued)

I'm going to see Madam Jessica Five.

(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)

FAYE

Have mercy. A witch.

I 2:24

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

I. 2:25

(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

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

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

1-3-26

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 tribal 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 (Nervously)

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.

1-3-27

JESSIE FIVE

Where is he?

CALLY (softly, ashamed)

The District.

JESSIE FIVE (loud)

What?

CALLY

The District! Gambling and drinking and...

(Omar, in a derby, mimics Cally's fears of what Johnny is doing)

JESSIE FIVE

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

CALLY

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. Blood, fingernails, hair, who knows?
(Warming to her list) Ear wax might be just the thing. Or some nice, hot tears.

CALLY

I'll bring you anything you need. Anything.

JESSIE FIVE

What I need depends on the Five.

CALLY

Who?

1-3-28

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)

All right. This is simple, so I'll keep it simple. The hat off his head. The sheet from your bed. (Searching) A little morning water and your wedding band. (Spies Cally's hand and examines it)

CALLY

How am I gonna get his cap?

JESSIE FIVE

(Paying her no attention, enjoying the "ingredients")
The underwear he wore next to his skin. Get me his picture and a long hat pin.

CALLY

I can't go where he is.

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

1-3-29

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

1-4-30

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

000. 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.

1-4-31

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!~~

I.4:32

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. PUSHER 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?

Beau Turns \$ sees by Blue Book

Framed
pictures of
prostitutes
emerge in
"lady-like"
poses.

1-4-33

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

1-4-34

"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

1-4-35

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)~~

They pull him into the "pages" of the
Book. Omar slams the door shut.

1-5-36

ACT ONE

Scene 5

Ana La Premier's house

The set is designed to become several rooms in the house (including the red shutters at the windows): parlor, kitchen, courtyard, bedroom, and other areas in the District. 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. The effect is of a busy, overdressed house with something very public and very private about it. It is very much dominated by women. The gambling area, by contrast, is stark and masculine. Scene opens on both kitchen and gambling house. Johnny is seen desperately gambling while Sweet Justice lords it. In the kitchen 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.

Lights up on kitchen and gambling house.
Lights fade on kitchen and stay up on gambling house where a male dance takes place - a dance of risk, wins, and losses.
Johnny loses and sings:

"LONGSHOT GAMBLER"

Lyrics © 1982 by Toni Morrison

1-5-37

"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

Fade on gambling house.
Lights up on Kitchen. La Premier I. 5-38
with the women at their chores

"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

1-5-39

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 Satan, Sweet Justice, Johnny and others play. Knockout meets Cobalt Blue and stares at her.

COBALT

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

KNOCKOUT

(disdainful and arrogant)

Knockout. Who are you?

COBALT

Well, I could be a friend.

KNOCKOUT

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

COBALT

(Disgusted, Points her to the kitchen. Knockout wanders off.)

COBALT

(to herself)

Who am I? Who am I?

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

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

1-5-40

(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.

1-5-41

(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?

1-5-42

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.

1-5-43

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 back~~ 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.

1-5-44

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.

1-5-45

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.

LA PREMIER

Knockout. This is Cobalt.

COBALT

We met.

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.

(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.

1-5-46

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.

1-5-47

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)

Act I Scene 6
Court yard

1-6-48

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 oome 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!

1-6-49

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)

(Silent Omar above with dancers. They are figures/shadows of the kinds of people who inhabited early New Orleans. They dance as Cobalt speaks.)

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.

1-650

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

1-6-51

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

1-6-52

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

1-6-53

After Cobalt's song, the lights focus on the gambling area where Johnny is with Sweet Justice 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.

SWEET JUSTICE

Go on, man. Talk to him.

JOHNNY

Well, make it short.

BEAU

When are you coming home?

JOHNNY

Soon. Real soon.

BEAU

It's been two weeks.

JOHNNY

(as thought he can't believe it)
Two weeks? Damn.

BEAU

What is the matter with you? One day you on me for coming home after 10:00. The next day you-

JOHNNY

I know! I know! Got in a game, and Beau, I won! You hear me. I won!
I kept on winning and winning and--

BEAU

And?

1-6-55

GIVE ME THE SLY LIFE - THE HERE TO DIE LIFE
AND THE GLITTER OF THE BACKROADS
OH GIVE ME THE SLY LIFE - THE KILL FOR SPITE LIFE
WHEN I'M SLICK, I CAN CLICK
DOWN THE BACKROADS
IN THE GLITTER OF THE BACKROADS
MY SLY LIFE CARRIES ON
MY SLY LIFE CARRIES ON

BEAU (To Johnny)

You don't need time or luck daddy. You got feet. Walk out -
just walk.

(Johnny tries to head toward the door. The tapping beat
that signalled Omar's curse stops him).

JOHNNY

I can't.

BEAU

Come on.

JOHNNY

I can't!

BEAU

You like it here! You don't want to Leave!

JOHNNY

Look, here's five dollars. Tell Your mother-

BEAU

I don't want your money! We don't need nothing from you!

Snatches hat from Johnny's head and runs out- wiping
his eyes, before he hits the street.

Suddenly a perfectly beautiful piece of piano music
is heard.

Clarence Deal is playing in Ana's house. Beau is
mesmerized by it).

1-6-54

JOHNNY

I need a little more time, that's all. Get my luck back. How-how's the weather back home?

BEAU (getting angry)

She's fine. I'm fine. Everything's fine.

(Sweet Justice enters)

JOHNNY (quieting Beau)

Watch yourself. Go on home, now, you hear?

BEAU

By myself?

JOHNNY

That's the way you got here.

SWEET JUSTICE

He's scared.

BEAU

I am not.

JOHNNY

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

SWEET JUSTICE

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

SWEET JUSTICE sings "The Sly Life".

"THE SLY LIFE"

Lyrics c 1982 Toni Morrison

YOU GOTTA CUT A DEAL WITH YOUR FEELINGS
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE THE NIGHT FLY
YOU GOTTA CUST A DEAL ~~WITH~~ YOUR FEELINGS
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE THE NIGHT DIE
BE WILLING TO LOSE BY THE RULES
LAID DOWN BY THE NIGHT'S EYES
I TOOK UP THE SLY LIFE
THE THIN-SHARP-KNIFE LIFE
AND THE GLITTER OF THE BACK ROADS.
O IT'S THE GAZE OF THE DAYS THAT
FRY ME, HANG AND DRY ME
(9 TO 5 ME APPLE PIE ME)
DOWN TO SIZE ME STERILIZE ME

1-6-56

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?

1-6-57

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

1-7-58

ACT I

Scene 7

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 sheet from your bed
The hat from his head.

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,

1-7-59

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.

1-7-60

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

2-1-61

ACT II

SCENE I

(Clarence Deal is playing piano in Ana's house
Beau enters).

CLARENCE

What you doing in here?

BEAU

(Lifts his horn case)

I thought--

CLARENCE

You thought what?

BEAU

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. 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.)

2-1-62

BEAU

Will you teach me?

CLARENCE

Your Daddy might not like that.

BEAU

He doesn't care nothing about me. ~~He gave me 5~~ ^{He gave} 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. Dealer. Teach me.

2-1
(Clarence plays and sings "IN MY SOUND". As he does Omar's ribbons (raggedy and dirty) become colorful again as the "healing sound" does its work.)

"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

2-2-67

ACT II

Scene 2

CALLY's and JOHNNY's livingroom.
Three woman FRIENDS, ~~who are~~
~~assembled~~, 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
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? (sarcastic giggles)

FRIEND 1

~~Clarence Deal.~~ You know. Mary Deal's oldest ~~boy~~ boy.
(Name of Clarence.)

2-2-68

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

2-2-66

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)

2-2-61

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.

2-2-68

GENEVA
Oh-oh, the girl is gone. There's a grown up woman standing here.

CALLY
Can't no man just walk off from me. No man! 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.

2-2-69

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 fix her hair

Then, the phrase
becomes a chorus for themselves, as
well as CALLY, as SHE struts around.
Then,
it becomes a battle cry)

SINGLE VOICE

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

2-2-70

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 *stove top* 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

FRIENDS

OH GET IT

GO GET IT

CRACK THE EGG

PIERCE THE YOLK

OH GET IT

GO GET IT

FRIENDS (Continued)

2-2-71

RAVEL THAT MEN
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.

2-3-72

ACT II

Scene 3

Late morning at La Premiere's house. Cobalt is making the Trick Babies comfortable as they lie sleeping in chairs or on the floor. She sings Part Two and Three of "You Can't Handle Me" during which shadows/figures from earlier scene surround and "back" her. Parts of the song they sing with her.

"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

(Figures/Shadows
Join in)

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

2-3-73

(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

figures/
shadows/
DINING
(IN)

2-3-73A

Figures fade as

SWEET JUSTICE enters ~~with a basket~~
~~fall of opaque stockings, and is~~
~~anxiously looking around.~~

Where's everybody?

SWEET JUSTICE

Sleep. What you think?

COBALT BLUE

Ana?

SWEET JUSTICE

Sleep, I told you. It's

COBALT BLUE

twelve noon.

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

2-3-74

COBALT BLUE
You better not be fooling nobody.

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

(COBALT exits. SWEET JUSTICE is
agitated. KNOCKOUT enters.)

KNOCKOUT
I need some coffee.

SWEET JUSTICE
You need a suitcase.

KNOCKOUT
What's that supposed to mean?

SWEET JUSTICE
Never mind. You'll find out.

(Enter ANA LA PREMIER with COBALT)

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.

COBALT
Spit it out, man.

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.

2-3-75

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?

~~He's~~ **Knockout**

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!

~~(More~~ **Women** ~~enter down the~~
staircase) ~~Knockout and the others~~

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?

Cobalt

No, fool. If they ain't gonna be no whore houses, you know there ain't going to be no cribs.

2-3-76

SWEET JUSTICE

~~way to go, godd be no saloon~~ No saloons either and no gambling.

RAT

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

(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 PERMIER

(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? (Pacing) Who do they think I am? This is my
world they are fooling with. I live here too. Change my life?
Mess in my dreams? I'll be damned! I do more for this town than
the whole fleet! Crackers! Bastards! Hypocrites! God, what I
wouldn't give for some 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. Costumes, masks, food, liquor on the
house. And when I close a district, believe me, it's going to
stay closed!

(As the music of "The Masked Ball" begins, All
change into costumes with incredible masks.

During the "Ball" - as the figures dance and strike
postures- Cally enters - very much out of place in
her home spun version of dressing up. The dancers,
their costumes their activities overwhelm her. As
does the hissing, chant "This Piece of Planet").

"THIS PIECE OF PLANET"

Lyrics c 1982 by Toni Morrison

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

2-3-77

(Cally overcomes her shock and "dances back"-
searching among them for Johnny.

Johnny (in costume) sees her and rushes to
her).

2-4-78

1/23/78

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 (SCANS his costume)

You look the same.

JOHNNY

You're not the woman I ~~was~~ Knew.

CALLY

You're not the man I loved.

JOHNNY

The woman I ~~was~~ ^{Knew} 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

2-4-79

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)

2-4-80

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

exit)---

THEY

2-5-81

II
SCENE 5

La Premier and the District Women are angrily, sadly perparing to leave. After the wild surreal Masked Ball- they have come back to reality and the seriousness of their situation. Led by La Premier they sing a moving "goodbye" to District life, accompanied by Clarence and Beau who join the small onstage orchestra.

AU REVOIR, BON SOIR

Lyrics c 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

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.

2-5-82

(Sweet Justice enters. The women are leaving, sadly).

SWEET JUSTICE (to cheer them)

Hey! Hey! Come on, now. It's a new day.

LA PERMIER

What am I going to do, Sweet? I don't want to leave this town.

KNOCK OUT

There's other towns.

COBALT

Not like this one. Ain't another city in the world like this one.

COPPERBOTTOM (whining)

I'm sick.

MOUTH

You telling me!

TRICK BABY 1

I'm hungry.

TRICK BABY 2

Me too.

BAD BLOOD

It ain't fair.

RAT

What is?

VESUVIUS

Ain't no justice in this world.

SWEET JUSTICE

You want Justice? At your service!

(Sings "Sweet Justice" rousing the girls to take command).

2-5-83

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

2-5-84

LA PREMIER (smiling)

They said leave the District-we leave the district. But we don't leave town.

SWEET JUSTICE

Now you're talking!

(With an entirely new outlook, the women, led by La Premier, "invade" the other parts of New Orleans, singing a reprise of "Streets" - with a different slant on the words).

"STREETS" Reprise

LA PREMIER: HEAT IN THE STREET
ALL: GONNA SHAKE, SHAKE SHAKE

LA PREMIER: SWEAT ON YOUR BROW
ALL: GONNA MAKE MAKE MAKE

LA PREMIER: YOUR FIVE DOLLAR BILL
ALL: GONNA TAKE TAKE TAKE

ALL: COME ON GIRLS LET'S WORK THESE STREETS
LOOK OUT!
COME ON GIRLS LET'S WORK THESE STREETS
LOOK OUT! LOOK OUT! LOOK OUT!

BACK DON'T BREAK ON ME ON ME
BACK DON'T BREAK ON ME!

THESE STREETS, THESE STREETS
AW WORK THESE STREETS
STREETS IN THE CITY IS HOME

(Chanting)

BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE
BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE
BOURBON, DESIRE, FRENCHMAN, DAUPHINE

STREETS IN THE CITY - IS HOME
IS HOME
STREETS IN THE CITY - IS HOME
IS HOME.

(During this "invasion" they encounter and confront the residents of Algiers - the quiet colored neighborhood citizens -

Who "battle" them with a reprise of "Quiet Colored Neighborhood" led by Cally and Johnny. As the confrontation builds Omar laughs and eggs everybody on.

2-5-85

In the midst of this Clarence and Beau interrupt with instrumental music from the onstage small orchestra- beautiful and transcendent- (combining elements of both worlds).

The crowds stop and listen as Ribbons of color stream over them. Omar is reconciled. The two camps merge as the music changes to "New Orleans" sung by all).

NEW ORLEANS (Reprise)