

A Wonderful World

A musical

Book by Aurin Squire

Musical Arrangement by Annastasia Victory and Michael O. Mitchell

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

DAISY PARKER (New Orleans Woman)
LIL HARDIN (Chicago Woman)
ALPHA SMITH (Hollywood Woman)
LUCILLE WILSON (New York Woman)
THE TRUMPETER
LOUIS ARMSTRONG
BAND MEMBER # 1
BAND MEMBER # 2
PROSTITUTE #1
JUDGE
CORRECTION OFFICER
PROFESSOR DAVIS
PROSTITUTE # 2
PROSTITUTE # 3
PROSTITUTE # 4
KING JOE OLIVER
BANJO BOY
FATE MARABLE
BAND MEMBER # 3 (PIANO PLAYER)
BAND MEMBER # 4 (DRUMMER)
WHITE GIRLFRIEND
WHITE BOYFRIEND
WHITE FATHER
CHERRY
ANNOUNCER
WHITE GANGSTER
CLUB SINGER
BARTENDER (JOE GLASER)
ALPHA
BLACK GANGSTER
VALET (BAND MEMBER)
MEMPHIS POLICE OFFICER
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
STEPIN' FETCHIT (Lincoln Perry)
BLACK JAZZ MUSICIAN
GIRLFRIEND
STAGE MANAGER
PROTESTOR #1
PROTESTOR # 2
ANNOUNCER #2
RACHEL THE REPORTER
EDDIE THE EDITOR
JAZZ FAN # 1
JAZZ FAN # 2
WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

A WONDERFUL WORLD: SONGS

ACT 1

PROLOGUE

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|
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| | Trumpeter | |
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| | Daisy, Lil, Alpha, Lucille | |

CHAPTER ONE NEW ORLEANS

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| | King Oliver, Louis, Ensemble | |
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SETTINGS

PROLOGUE: Funeral

CHAPTER 1: New Orleans

CHAPTER 2: Chicago

CHAPTER 3: Hollywood

CHAPTER 4: New York

PRODUCTION NOTES

This is an epic musical that sweeps across over 70 years in four chapters. A flexible set works best. The more than can implied with lights, sound, and ensemble actors then the better. It's okay to get the abstract idea of settings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Miami New Drama, New Dramatists, and Signature Theatre.

PROLOGUE

In the darkness, we hear the sound of a Trumpet playing **#1 LOUIS' TRUMPET**. Four women appear on different levels in separate pools of light. They are dressed for a funeral.

SCENE 1: FOUR WOMEN

NEW ORLEANS WOMAN (DAISY)

Black Magic. He was. A boko. That's voodoo for high priest of funk, dirt, swamp water. My New Orleans lover. My husband.

CHICAGO WOMAN (LIL)

He gives you a \$5 smile in a \$2 suit. Good lord, he was coocountry. A country boy in the Windy City. The best student I ever had. My husband.

*

HOLLYWOOD WOMAN (ALPHA)

Fox furs, cold gin, and cellophane. In the movies. Dark as sin and up there on screen. Just blowing, scatting, and growling up there. A tugboat. Lawd, the world ain't never seen nothing like my husband.

*

NEW YORK WOMAN (LUCILLE)

Gypsy charmer. You couldn't get him to settle down. He ran so long that by the time I found he was....Always wandering: the feet, the fingers, the...(referencing crotch) horn. My husband.

NEW ORLEANS WOMAN (DAISY)

Our love was razor blades and soaked sheets.

CHICAGO WOMAN (LIL)

In the pocket. Just hitting the right groove.

HOLLYWOOD WOMAN (ALPHA)

His lips would wrap around your lips and nose when he kissed you.

NEW YORK WOMAN (LUCILLE)

If he kissed you...

NEW ORLEANS WOMAN (DAISY)

Like drinking dark liquor out of an ugly cup. And our cup runneth over with rutting, cussing, and cutting.

SCENE 2: SCRIM OUT

HOLLYWOOD WOMAN (ALPHA)

#2 WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

THE COLORS OF THE RAINBOW SO PRETTY IN THE SKY
ARE ALSO ON THE FACES OF PEOPLE GOING BY...

CHICAGO WOMAN (LIL)

...I SEE BABIES CRYING.
I WATCH THEM GROW.

NEW YORK WOMAN (LUCILLE)

THEY'LL LEARN MORE THAN
I'LL NEVER KNOW.

NEW ORLEANS WOMAN (DAISY)

(skatting some)
...I SEE SKIES OF BLUE AND CLOUDS OF WHITE.
THE BRIGHT BLESSED DAY.
THE DARK SACRED NIGHT.

NEW YORK WOMAN (LUCILLE)

AND I THINK TO MYSELF.

CHICAGO WOMAN (LIL)

AND I THINK TO MYSELF.

HOLLYWOOD WOMAN (ALPHA)

AND I THINK TO MYSELF

WOMEN CHORUS

WHATTA
MARVELOUS.
GLORIOUS.
RIOTOUS.
DELIRIOUS.
PAINFUL. SHAMEFUL.
BLACK N' BLUE.
AMERICA
WONDERFUL...
WONDERFUL...
WONDERFUL...
WONDERFUL...
WHAT A WONDERFUL

CHAPTER ONE: NEW ORLEANS

SCENE 3: STREET PARTY

THE TRUMPETER appears at the back of the audience and plays one piercing riff. Partygoers pour into theatre and do a jig down the aisles.

COMPANY

#3 BASIN STREET BLUES

COME ALONG WITH ME
TO THE MISSISSIPPI!
WE'LL TAKE A BOAT TO THE LAND OF DREAMS
STEAM DOWN THE RIVER, DOWN TO NEW ORLEANS
THE BAND'S THERE TO MEET US
OLD FRIENDS, THERE TO GREET US
WHERE ALL THE LIGHT AND DARK FOLKS MEET
HEAVEN ON EARTH, THEY CALL IT BASIN STREET.

REVELERS

BASIN STREET IS THE STREET
WHERE ALL THE BEST FOLKS MEET

ANOTHER GROUP

IN NEW ORLEANS, LAND OF DREAMS
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW NICE IT SEEMS
OR JUST HOW MUCH IT REALLY MEANS.

ANOTHER GROUP (CONT'D)

GLAD TO BE OH YES-SIREE
WHERE WELCOME'S FREE AND DEAR TO ME

ANOTHER GROUP (CONT'D)

WHERE I CAN LOSE,

SOLO BASS VOICE

LOSE MY BASIN STREET BLUES

COMPANY

COME ALONG WITH ME
TO THE MISSISSIPPI!
WE'LL TAKE A BOAT TO THE LAND OF DREAMS
STEAM DOWN THE RIVER, DOWN TO NEW ORLEANS
THE BAND'S THERE TO MEET US
OLD FRIENDS, THERE TO GREET US
WHERE ALL THE LIGHT AND DARK FOLKS MEET
WHERE ALL STOMPERS ROMP TO BOURBON STREET
WHERE ALL THE LIGHT AND DARK FOLKS MEET
HEAVEN ON EARTH, THEY CALL IT BASIN STREET.

Big finish. Partygoers applaud.

SCENE 4: BROTHEL

Lights shift. We are surrounded by prostitutes and bootleggers. A piano solo plays. We are in an upscale Negro brothel. Prostitutes wander around customers saying 'Laissez les bon temp rouler' and 'Mais cher.'

DAISY PARKER

This is New Orleans.

CHICAGO WOMAN (LIL)

Land of sin. And the heart of this sin city was Storyville. America's first legal red light district.

HOLLYWOOD WOMAN (ALPHA)

It's the early 1900s and brothels are jumping.

NEW YORK WOMAN (LUCILLE)

And soon that's all gonna change.

DAISY PARKER

But for now 'laissez les bon temp rouler.'

Partygoers cheer.

DAISY PARKER (CONT'D)

Louis was raised in the brothel like me. Daisy Parker.

#3A SONG IS BORN UNDERSCORE.

DAISY PARKER (CONT'D)

And that's where we both worked. Alongside Catholics, Voodoo women, Mardi Gras Injuns, pickpockets, and brass bands. And junk men...like Louis.

Louis Armstrong enters in shabby clothes and hauling a wheelbarrow of stuff. He toots a horn tied to a rope around his waist.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Ladies and gents, cats and rats, fat bottoms and skinny minnies, step right up, step right up. I got it all for ya. Voodoo trinkets, newspapers, rolling papers, cigs, even some Loosies, I got the finest coal in all of N'Awlings.

BAND MEMBER #1

Tell us a joke Louis. Tell us a joke!

Louis blows on a tin horn like a Herald.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How do you make your wife scream during sex?
Yell out the window and tell her about it.

Customers laugh a bit. Louis blows on the horn again.

BAND MEMBER #2

Come on, Dipper. Give us the hits.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh I got hits. I got more hits than your face.
Just getting warmed up. A sailor goes to a \$1
hooker, gets crabs, and yells at the Madame.
The Madame says 'what do you expect for \$1?
Lobster?'

More laughter. Louis blows on his horn again.

BAND MEMBER #1

That joke is old Lou.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

So's your pecker. But the ladies still find a way to laugh at it.

More laughter. Louis blows horn.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

All right, all right. Buy my shit. Come on, fellas. A cat's gotta eat.

BAND MEMBER #2

One more joke, Gatemouth.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Hey, I ain't ya momma. Quit freeloading. You're like that useless piece of skin that hangs off a pecker.

PROSTITUTE #1

I think you mean, 'a man.'

Music stops. The women get the last laugh. Louis blows his horn and bows to the Prostitute. Louis goes around, drumming up business, haggling with stingy customers, and hustling. His back is to the audience.

DAISY PARKER

(to audience)

We was born in the area of N'Awlings known as
the Battlefield. And one day when Louis was
little, he got hisself a bad idea....

*
*

SCENE 5: FLASHBACK

Louis as a little boy. He takes a
gun out from his pocket.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Hey, you guys! Look what I found.

BAM! He fires it. Lights shift and
underscore ends. Military drums
start. A JUDGE enters.

JUDGE

Louis D. Armstrong. By your arrest record and
recent gun possession charge, it is clear that
you are a public menace. I doubt anything good
is going to come from your time here on God's
Earth. You are sentenced to....

DAISY PARKER

He was locked up in the reformatory school, The
Colored Waif Home.

Louis marches in with fellow
students.

CORRECTION OFFICER

All right boys, step with purpose. Look alive.

DAISY PARKER

And there they learned something special: Louis
could blow.

*

NOISE: One of the boys bumps into
someone else in the line. The boys
start rough housing. Drums stop.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Who the hell is making all that noise?

The boys scatter. Louis is too
slow. Professor Peter Davis nabs
him.

PROFESSOR DAVIS (CONT'D)

You again! Acting the fool.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm sorry, Mister.....sir...Peter Davis.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Boy you don't need to add a mister and sir in front of my entire name. I don't have time for all of those titles. Just professor. Now what should I add before your name?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Excuse me, Mr. Davis.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

It's Professor Davis. What should your title be?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I don't know what you mean sir.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Clown? Clown Armstrong is that what you want to be? Or Blazing Fool Armstrong Jr?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Or how about son of a whore? That's what some of the boys whisper around here.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

My mom....she...

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Are you the delinquent the cops arrested for shooting a gun in the air? Maybe it should be Offender Armstrong Number #235409.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

It was the only time I've done that in my life, sir-

PROFESSOR DAVIS

It's PROFESSOR Davis. You say my title correctly.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes...Professor Davis.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Maybe it's 'can't clean for shit' Armstrong since you can't mop the floor nicely, can't make your bed like a proper gentleman...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm sorry...I do my best. I...I guess I'm nobody.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Hold out your hand, Mr. Armstrong.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No, Professor. I don't want any more lashes-

PROFESSOR DAVIS

QUIET! Hold out your hand and close your eyes.
NOW!!

Louis holds out one hand and
closes his eyes.

PROFESSOR DAVIS (CONT'D)

What are you, Lil' Louis? Are you the boy they
say you are...the worthless Negro whose gonna
end up dead? Or are you my lead trumpet player?

*

Professor Davis places the trumpet
in Louis' outstretched hand.
MUSIC. Trumpet leitmotif from
prologue. Louis almost collapses
in tears.

*

PROFESSOR DAVIS (CONT'D)

Don't you let my bugle touch the floor!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes, Professor Davis.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

Congratulations, Trumpeter Louis. You aren't
what they say you are. Always remember that.
And blow that trumpet like your life depends on
it. Because...well, it does. It will lead you
if you let it. Let it lead you to your
treasure.

*

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes, Professor Davis.

PROFESSOR DAVIS

#4 I'VE GOT A HEART FULL OF RHYTHM

NOT A DIME TO YOUR NAME

BUT YOU'RE RICH JUST THE SAME

'CAUSE YOU'VE GOT A HEART FULL OF RHYTHM

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

NOT A DIME TO MY NAME

BUT I'M RICH JUST THE SAME

'CAUSE I'VE GOT A HEART FULL OF RHYTHM.

SCENE 6: SNAP BACK TO BROTHEL

BAND MEMBER #1

(back in present moment)

Louis!! You coming down to jam with us tonight
at the Funky Butt?

MUSIC. Underscore of "Meat and
Potatoes."

DAISY PARKER

The Funky Butt was a club whose title was a
perfect description for the place. Hot, tight,
and funky.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Sure, I'll be there. And so will my
girl...Daisy. We've been dating for a few
months.

DAISY PARKER

You've been paying me for a few months.

BAND MEMBER #1

Lew, forget her man.

DAISY PARKER

The reason I don't date you horn players is
because all you brass Negroes is slick talking,
hot playing, fast tricking.

BAND MEMBER #2

And all you women is double-crossing, low-down,
hoodoo hookers.

Daisy takes out a razor and tries
to cut Band Member. Music stops.

DAISY PARKER

Motherfucker!! Say that shit to my face! People
say I have a little bit of a temper. (to Louis)
Do you think I have a temper?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No, Daisy. And I got you a present.

Music starts again.

DAISY PARKER

Louis, are you trying to make me fall in love
with you?

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Maybe.

DAISY PARKER

Louis I don't have time for love. I'm earning money. Love comes later. (to audience) Okay it's later.

Later. We have leapt ahead in time. They walk. Louis and Daisy are laughing. She Daisy opens her present.

DAISY PARKER (CONT'D)

A white parasol. (to audience) A sign of matrimonial intentions.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

So what do you say?

DAISY PARKER

You gonna treat me right?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Of course, baby.

DAISY PARKER

Heard that before. Men always talk about treating you right, but really they just want to smash themselves into you for a few minutes and drink beer. And if you want to do that you can go down to the Funky Butt and smash, grind, and gyrate your problems away.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Now wait a minute, I want to do more than smash and grab.

SCENE 7: FUNKY BUTT

We are at the Funky Butt club.
People are dancing.

FEMALE ENSEMBLE

#5 ALL THAT MEAT AND NO POTATOES

A MAN WORKS HARD THEN COMES ON HOME,
EXPECTS TO FIND STEW WITH THAT HAM BONE.
HE OPENS THE DOOR, THEN STARTS TO LOOKIN',

MALE ENSEMBLE

SAY, WOMAN, WHAT'S THAT STUFF YOU'RE COOKIN'?

FULL ENSEMBLE

ALL THAT MEAT AND NO POTATOES
JUST AIN'T RIGHT, LIKE GREEN TOMATOES.
HERE I'M WAITING, PALPITATIN',
FOR ALL THAT MEAT AND NO POTATOES.

The prostitutes mill about Louis.

PROSTITUTE #2

Dipper, Mais cher.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Lotti.

PROSTITUTE #2

How's your trombone?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I play the trumpet.

PROSTITUTE #2

(laughing)

I'm not talking about what you play-

DAISY PARKER

-You lil, skunk-faced bitch.

Daisy chases the Prostitute away
with her razor. MUSIC stops.

DAISY PARKER (CONT'D)

People say I have a temper. I don't see it. Do
you?!?

MUSIC starts again.

BAND MEMBERS (ENSEMBLE)

Nah, no, absolutely not!!

ENSEMBLE

ALL THAT MEAT AND NO POTATOES
ALL THAT FOOD TO THE ALLIGATORS
HOLD ME STEADY. I AM READY
FOR ALL THAT MEAT AND NO POTATOES.

Singers finish. Audience applause.

SCENE 8: EMPTY CLUB

Underscore starts for "I Can't
Give You Anything."

DAISY PARKER

So you been aiming your cupid's arrow at me.
What for?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I like you.

DAISY PARKER

And I like fried catfish, but I ain't trying to
marry it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Daisy, I just want to be a family man. That's
all a man needs. To find his treasure.

DAISY PARKER

Who told you that mess?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

My teacher, Professor Davis.

Daisy picks up her parasol. And
then she hands him one too.

They don't break eye contact as
they take the string off their
parasols. And on the count of 3:
1...2...3!

They open them. White flowers
flutter out of them.

DAISY PARKER

#6 I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-And a kid.

DAISY PARKER

BABY. THAT'S THE ONLY THINK I'VE GOT PLENTY OF-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And a lil' bundle of joy.

DAISY PARKER

-BABY. DREAM AWHILE, SCHEME AWHILE
WE'RE SURE TO FIND
HAPPINESS AND I GUESS
ALL THOSE THINGS YOU'VE ALWAYS PINED FOR.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

GEE I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU LOOKING SWELL, BABY.
DIAMOND BRACELETS WOOLWORTH DOESN'T SELL, BABY.

DAISY PARKER/LOUIS

TILL THAT LUCKY DAY YOU KNOW DARNED WELL, BABY.
I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE.

Louis and Daisy dance as the other
prostitutes look on.

PROSTITUTE #2

A gullible jazz man getting hitched to a
violent hooker. What could go wrong?

PROSTITUTE #3

Look at that: a match made in squalor.

DAISY PARKER/LOUIS
TILL THAT LUCKY DAY YOU KNOW DARNED WELL, BABY.

DAISY
I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING...

DAISY PARKER/LOUIS
BUT LOVE.

They kiss.

PROSTITUTE #4
I almost married one of my clients.

PROSTITUTE #3
Oh yeah. What happened?

PROSTITUTE #4
I shot him instead.

SCENE 9: KING JOE OLIVER

DAISY PARKER
Louis was making a name for himself, he was.
And then one day he got a bigger blessing than
the Pope kissing him on the lips, he did.

#6A BASIN STREET BLUES UNDERSCORE.
KING JOE OLIVER enters. Louis is
stunned. King Joe greets different
women.

KING JOE OLIVER
HEY HO!

JAMES
King Joe!

KING JOE OLIVER
Flamin' Mame, Crying Emma, Bucktown Bessie,
Big Butt Annie, Bird Leg Nora, Gold Tooth
Gussie, Peach Puss Penny, Yard Dog, Sugar Pie,
Cherry Red, Buck Tooth Rena, Boxcar Shorty,
Tenderloin Thelma, Lily the Crip, Bowl-legged
Brenda, Three Finger Annie, and Juicy Lucy!
Lawd hammericy! You ladies making me thirsty.
Someone pass me my medicine and pass a good
time!

*

Women improvise greetings 'Hey
King Joe' and 'pass a good time,
King?' King Joe is handed a drink.
Louis tries to make himself
conspicuous. He coughs, he cleans
his horn, toots on it.

DAISY PARKER
(improvised singing)
GIMME REEFER...AN A' GANG OF GIN...
SLAY ME 'CAUSE I'M IN MY SIN-

Louis bump into the King Joe. Oh,
what a coincidence!

KING JOE OLIVER
Son, you either a horn man or a lousy
pickpocket. And since I still got my wallet,
what's your deal?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I play trumpet, a little cornet. I'm playing
here tonight.

KING JOE OLIVER
You any good?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I think so.

KING JOE OLIVER
Then why ain't you in my band, Louis?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
You know my name?

KING JOE OLIVER
'Course I know your name. You've been cutting
up and down these streets, challenging other
players, and splitting lips. How do I know you
ain't just another loud blower?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I know all the rags.

KING JOE OLIVER
Then why ain't you playing on a riverboat?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
King Joe, I'm just trying to stay with my wife,
raise a family, be a good father.

KING JOE OLIVER
You want to be a ragtimer and live at home with
your wife? Ha, you gonna be whipped and pecked
by that woman.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Daisy is nice though-

MUSIC. "King of the Zulus" starts.

KING JOE OLIVER
-and now the next thing outta your mouth gonna
be about how 'she' not like that, right? How
'she' different from others, right? You're a
Negro trumpet player. You gotta cut out that
honey and get that money. Stop hoping that
someone else will do you right, and bet on
yourself.

King Joe steps out.

KING JOE OLIVER (CONT'D)

#7 KING OF THE ZULUS

IT'S MY LUCKY DAY.

ENSEMBLE

(HEY-HEY-HEY-HEY-HEY-HEY)

KING JOE OLIVER

MY MAKER DONE KISSED MY RING.

ENSEMBLE

(RING-A-DING, RING-A-DING, RING-A-DING)

KING JOE OLIVER

GABRIEL'S GOT A SONG TO SING

HE DECLARED I WAS ZULU KING!

ENSEMBLE

ZULU! ZULU! ZULU!

KING JOE OLIVER

-WELL, GIVE ME A HAND TO PLAY

ENSEMBLE

DEAL 'EM IN, DEAL 'EM IN, DEAL 'AM IN.

KING JOE OLIVER

MAN, THIS DICE FEELING HOT TODAY.

ENSEMBLE

SO HOT SO HOT SO HOT...

KING JOE OLIVER

STEP BACK AND LIGHT THE FUSE.

CUZ KING ZULU CAN NOT LOSE.

ENSEMBLE

ZULU! ZULU! ZULU!

Dance break as the horns blasts.

KING JOE OLIVER

Confidence, Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I got confidence.

KING JOE OLIVER

I'm talking regal confidence. Like a king. You
want to fill a room with it. And then you don't
need no woman.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Don't a king need a queen?

DAISY PARKER
Bartender, another drink.

KING JOE OLIVER
What do you think Lou? How does she look?

DAISY PARKER
How do I look, Louis?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Looking mighty fine, but not as fine as sweet
honey. You see, Daisy...I

Daisy goes up to Louis.

DAISY PARKER
Louis, why you looking at that girl?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
What girl?

DAISY PARKER
Don't act slick, nigga. I saw you checking out
that woman...I did.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Baby that's just my lazy eye.

DAISY PARKER
Well be careful or your lazy eye is gonna meet
my busy blade.

*

KING JOE OLIVER
PLACE YOUR BETS RIGHT HERE
CUZ THE WINNER'S CLEAR
PUT YOUR MONEY DOWN.
ON THE MAN WITH THE CROWN.

ENSEMBLE
ZULU!
ZULU!
ZUUUUULU!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Daisy, I'm my own man! I do what I want, woman!

Daisy's switchblade comes out.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
And that means loving you and cherishing you
like the queen that you are.

Daisy passes out. Louis runs and
grabs a suitcase.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

A guy approached me about joining his riverboat band?

KING JOE OLIVER

That's it, cat. Go. Riverboats are great pay. But don't let them turn you into one of them uppity reading musicians. This jazzbo is something you feel. You can't print it on sheets. If you can read it, you can't feel it. And if you can feel...what else do you need but that? Maybe you'll play with me one day.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

That would be a dream, King Joe.

KING JOE OLIVER

I thought your dream was a sweet home with kids.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Maybe I can have both.

KING JOE OLIVER

You keep telling yourself that, cat. I'm gonna go partake of this (referencing women) lagnappie.

King Joe goes off with two handfuls of laughing Prostitutes. Louis looks at Daisy, in a drunken stupor. He kisses her and heads to the dock alone.

#7A KING OF THE ZULUS TAG.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

GABRIEL'S GOT A SONG TO SING
SOON...SOON I WILL BE KING!

SCENE 10: RIVERBOAT

A BANJO BOY plays on the riverboat. The stage is split between Daisy in the brothel and Louis on the Riverboat writes a letter.

BANJO BOY

#8 UP A LAZY RIVER

OH, UP A LAZY RIVER WHERE THE OLD MILL RUN
MEET THE LAZY RIVER WITH THE NOONDAY SUN. LINGER IN THE SHADE
OF A KIND OL' TREE
THROW AWAY YOUR TROUBLES, DREAM A DREAM OF ME

DAISY PARKER

Louis went on that damn boat. But he wrote me almost every other day to check in. And one of the first things he did...was get sick.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(coughing)

I came down with something bad, honey. I just need to sleep it off.

DAISY PARKER

And the next day his voice went from this...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Baby, I just can't wait to see you again.

DAISY PARKER

To this...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(traditional Armstrong gravely voice)

Hey, honey, how's it hanging? Oh...wow...

DAISY PARKER

Baby...what's new?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(stunned by his voice)

My voice.

DAISY PARKER

Why...what happened to you?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh I think it's just...(pausing) Puberty.

DAISY PARKER

What?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm joking honey. My voice is just raw. It'll go back to normal once I get back to you.

DAISY PARKER

But it never did. And there was Mister Fate Marable and his-

FATE MARABLE enters. He's a stern and fiery band leader.

FATE MARABLE

(handing him sheets)

-Reading check.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Mr. Fate I don't read.

FATE MARABLE

Oh. So you're one of those musicians.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I just thinking reading ruins the feel of what we're doing.

FATE MARABLE

Does getting paid ruin it too? (waving loose cash)

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(taking cash)

I can't wait to dive into this sheet music.

FATE MARABLE

And your band mate Baby Dodds will help you out. (points to Band Member and exits) Baby...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(to Daisy)

Baby.

DAISY PARKER

Baby?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You missed me?

DAISY PARKER

(shooing away a man)

Of course. You miss me?

FATE MARABLE

(handing telegram paper)

You missed this telegram King Joe sent you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(reading telegram)

Yes, baby. They're trying to learn me something about reading notes. What I need that for? I'm a musician not a librarian. King Joe taught me that.

DAISY PARKER

I remember King Joe.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yeah, he's in Chicago. Sending me telegrams every few days about coming up there and joining him.

DAISY PARKER

(laughing)

Chicago?!? You can't take the cold.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(laughing)

Who you telling, baby? I'm a Southern river boy. Last week we was docking at a town and...

SCENE 11: AVALON

Music fades out. Band Member hauls in an old record player.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Where did you get this?

BAND MEMBER #1

In town. Got it cheap too. (He takes out a record.) Ever heard "Avalon?"

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No, what's that?

BAND MEMBER #1

The latest craze.

Member puts on the record. MUSIC. "Avalon" plays (:11 sec into track) but it sounds creaky and slow version of the song.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

That's a hit? Shiiiiite, we can play that.

BANJO BOY

We don't have the sheet music for it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Don't need it. Look here. Banjo: get that rhythm.

BANJO PLAYER starts. MUSIC. Louis hears the melody and plays a quick burst on the horn.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

That's the rhythm right. (pointing to different horn players) Now melody: come on, boys. Go low. Go high, and I'll play sweet and right in the middle.

BAND MEMBER #3 (PIANO PLAYER)

What about me?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You just follow. Your keeping the rhythm with the drummer. Drummer!

BAND MEMBER #4 (DRUMMER)

Yeah, man!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You know Buddy Bolden!

BAND MEMBER #4 (DRUMMER)

Of course.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Gimme that Bolden Beat.

Drummer kicks in with the rhythm.

DAISY PARKER

Bolden invented the big four beat where you add a little syncopation on the 4. It's the flair that started this thing...we didn't have a name for yet. So we called it...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Now play it Dixieland style.

The band kicks into gear. Louis recomposed the piece right on the spot and the music comes alive! The staff come from below the deck and start to dance.

FATE MARABLE

(entering)

What is this racket?

BAND MEMBER #1

"Avalon" Mr. Marable.

FATE MARABLE

"Avalon?" We don't have any sheet music for that.

BAND MEMBER #1

We don't need any. Louis just caught it by listening to a record and cut the song up for us.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#9 AVALON

I FOUND MY LOVE IN AVALON
BESIDE THE BAY
I LEFT MY LOVE IN AVALON
AND I SAILED AWAY
I DREAM OF HER IN AVALON
FROM DUSK 'TIL DAWN
AND SO I THINK I'LL TRAVEL ON
TO AVALON.

People are dancing and the band is swinging. Louis starts scatting. People go wild. YOUNG WHITE COUPLE comes on board, fascinated by the song. They're drunk.

WHITE GIRLFRIEND

What is this?

FATE MARABLE

Well fine miss, this is...I don't know what this is.

WHITE BOYFRIEND

What way are you guys playing?

FATE MARABLE

It's New Orleans style Dixieland music.

WHITE GIRLFRIEND

I've heard dixieland music and I ain't never heard anything like this.

DAISY PARKER

No one knows where the name 'jazz' came from. Some said it was named after a prostitute named Jasmine, others say it was short for jazzbo, others say jazz was slang for climaxing.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Come on...

DAISY PARKER

That's what I said.

Party is in full swing. Boyfriend grabs his girlfriend's shawl covering her shoulders. He swings it around in the air and then jokingly places it around the Banjo Boy. They laugh. The shawl falls to the ground.

ENSEMBLE

I FOUND MY LOVE IN AVALON
BESIDE THE BAY
I LEFT MY LOVE IN AVALON
AND I SAILED AWAY
I DREAM OF HER IN AVALON
FROM DUSK 'TIL DAWN
AND SO I THINK I'LL TRAVEL ON
TO AVALON.

Big finish. People cheer.

SCENE 12: LYNCHING

White Boyfriend turns around to get a drink. WHITE FATHER enters and berates his daughter, getting louder as Daisy narrates.

DAISY PARKER

And just like that he set music on fire on a riverboat. Like the sun he just...

*

*

WHITE FATHER

...just what do you think you're doing, huh? What a disgrace. (she protests)

DAISY PARKER

...he just shines and lets everything grow around it.

*

WHITE FATHER

You should be ashamed at how you look. Your dress is wrinkled, your hair is wet, your makeup is running. You look like a harlot.

DAISY PARKER

That's the way Louis was.

WHITE FATHER

This isn't my baby...Who made you look like this

DAISY PARKER

And that's the way he made me feel.

WHITE FATHER

who did this to you?...Tell me...tell me!!.

WHITE GIRLFRIEND

(pointing at Banjo Boy)

He did it! He touched me and tried to hurt me...

Banjo Boy runs. White Father picks up the shawl. Rumbling starts offstage. White Boyfriend comes back on stage and he and the white father run after him.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What's happening, cat?

FATE MARABLE

(to band)

Keep your heads down. Play something.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What did the boy do?

Band starts playing "Up a Lazy River." Underscore. They are clearly scared.

DAISY PARKER

They ain't never seen anything like it. Word of mouth spread and every time they docked the crowds got bigger and bigger.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What's with that crowd gathering over there?

FATE MARABLE

Keep playing.

Banjo Boy appears in a spotlight with a noose around his neck.

BANJO BOY

#10 UP A LAZY RIVER REPRISE

LINGER IN THE SHADE OF A KIND OL' TREE
THROW AWAY YOUR TROUBLES, DREAM A DREAM OF ME,
BLUE SKIES UP ABOVE
EVERYONE IN LOVE
UP A LAZY RIVER HOW HAPPY WE WILL BE.
UP A LAZY RIVER WITH ME.

Crowd roars.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Mister Fate....

FATE MARABLE

They claim our boy whistled at a white woman.
You know these townie folks. Keep playing.

DAISY PARKER

Louis, tell me more about the crowds.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

The crowds, Daisy. They took this boy off the boat. They took him away. And I tried to stop them, but there were so many. All these people dancing, just stopped and joined this crowd.

DAISY PARKER

And then what happened to the boy? Louis?

Louis eyes follow the Banjo Boy ascent up a tree. And then his lynching. The music becomes dissonant and warped.

Cymbals and drums crash like they're being attacked. Louis scats with a mixture of fear, hatred, disgust. **#10A LOUIS' SOLILOQUY.**

LOUIS ARMSTRONG	COMPANY
OHH, YOU'VE GONE	HANG HIM, HANG HIM
BOY, MY RIVER, THIS EVENIN',	HANG HIM, HANG HIM
I HOPE SOMETHIN'	HANG HIM, HANG HIM
OH, HEY, HEY	HANG HIM, HANG HIM
UP THE LAZY RIVER, HMM RIVER,	HANG HIM, HANG HIM
OH YOU GODLESS RIVER-	

Roar gets louder and louder until it reaches a climax, and then... Banjo Boy is killed. Lights out on him.

The crowd's blood lust is satiated. The music becomes melodic again. White Couple goes back to dancing. They waltz across the stage.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
(to Daisy)
And they just went back to dancing. As if it was nothing. What happened to the Banjo player?

FATE MARABLE
None of our business, Louis. We're just river folks. As long as we stay on this ship we're safe.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I don't like this river any more.

FATE MARABLE
Where are you going?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I need to get off this boat.

DAISY PARKER
That was the first time Louis ever saw a lynching.

FATE MARABLE
And where you gonna go? You stuck here on the river. This is the South. And you're... we're musicians.

DAISY PARKER
And that's when he changed...

SCENE 13: GOODBYE DAISY

Lights shift. Lil, Alpha, and
Lucille appear above, still in
funeral clothes. MUSIC
UNDERScores. Daisy reads a letter.

DAISY PARKER

You want to leave? But you were just talking
about coming home.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Baby, it's hard to explain. I can't stay down
South. I just can't.

DAISY PARKER

You're gonna freeze to death in Chicago. Louis!
LOUIS!! They gonna kill you up there. Eat you
up and spit you out, Louis. You hear me?!? Like
bad fish. All grizzle and bone.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Goodbye, Daisy. I love you.

DAISY PARKER

I hate you, Louis. If I see you again, I'm
gonna gut you like a fish.

Louis has a bag packed. REPRISE of
"I've Got a Heart Full of Rhythm."

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#11 I'VE GOT A HEART FULL OF RHYTHM REPRISE

LET THE GREAT THINK I'M SMALL
I CAN LAUGH AT THEM ALL
'CAUSE I'VE GOT A HEART FULL OF RHYTHM

CHICAGO WOMAN (LIL)

New Orleans native son. There he goes.

HOLLYWOOD WOMAN (ALPHA)

Be safe.

NEW YORK WOMAN (LUCILLE)

Y'all think he's gonna make it?

LIL HARDIN

Doubtful

LUCILLE WILSON

Doesn't look good

LIL HARDIN

Ehhhh

ALPHA

It's cold up there.

DAISY PARKER

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT...

Music swells. Daisy picks up the
parasol.

CHAPTER TWO: CHICAGO

SCENE 14: TRAIN

On the train to Chicago. The
belching smoke and pounding beat
of a train's locomotive. The
landscape and people change.
There's a new feeling in the air.

LIL HARDIN

In 1920 the best thing in the world happened to
jazz. Prohibition. Cheers.

*

Chicagoans cheer with raised
flasks and keep walking.

ENSEMBLE

#12 NOW YOU HAS JAZZ

TAKE SOME SKINS,
JAZZ BEGINS,
TAKE A BASS
STEADY PACE,
TAKE A BOX,
ONE THAT ROCKS,
TAKE A BLUE HORN NEW ORLEANS-BORN.

LIL HARDIN

Jazz became the music of sex, booze, secrets,
and speakeasies.

ENSEMBLE

TAKE A STICK
WITH A LICK,
TAKE A BONE,
DIXIE-GROWN,
TAKE A SPOT,
COOL AND HOT,
NOW YOU HAS JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ.

LIL HARDIN

Oh, and they were called speakeasies because
you lowered your voice and whispered the
password to the doorman.

ENSEMBLE

(whispering)

NOW YOU HAS JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ

JAZZ
JAZZ.

LIL HARDIN

Jazz also brought New Orleans musicians to the
Windy City. Musicians like Louis who walked
around looking surprised and brand-new. Just
like the music we was playing...

*
*
*
*

ENSEMBLE

NOW YOU HAS JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ
JAZZ.

Louis arrives at the Chicago train
station with nothing but a small
bag and his horn in a case. He
looks like a hick. CHERRY, sexy
young lady in her 20s, spots an
easy mark. Under the following,
the ensemble chants the lyrics
"Chicago jazz...jazzy
jazz...Chicago jazz...jazz jazz."

CHERRY

Hey, fella... you play jazz?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I play a little bit.

CHERRY

(examining him)

You must be good.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How do you know?

LIL HARDIN enters. She's young and
sharply dressed. She spots him
with a gangster's girlfriend and
knows this isn't good. Ensemble
whispers underneath this
conversation 'jazz' and "chicago
jazz."

CHERRY

You're dressed like one of those New Orleans
musicians. I'm Cherry.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm Louis. Cherry what? Cherry pie or cherry on
top?

CHERRY

Cherry in your mouth. You play that New Orleans music?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I play everything.

CHERRY

I know a friend whose got a place looking for someone who can play New Orleans music. How about I take you to meet him-

LIL HARDIN

(quick thinking)

-there you are. Cousin...Jasper.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Jasper?

CHERRY

Your name is Jasper?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Umm...no, I-

LIL HARDIN

-true, we call him Dwight Jasper. And you brought your clothes in a horn case. What's the matter with you, Jasper. You just as country as a state fair pumpkin.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Who the hell are you?

LIL HARDIN

(sotto)

Your guardian angel (loudly) Come on, Jasper! Time to take you home to meet Uncle Joe.

CHERRY

Didn't you say your name was Louis?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well...quite frankly I don't know any more.

ENSEMBLE

NOW YOU HAS JAZZ

JAZZ

JAZZ

JAZZ

JAZZ.

Lights shift. Lil grabs Louis arms and leads him out on to the streets.

LIL HARDIN

Don't talk to women like that.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh, talking is the last thing I had in mind.
And who, pray tell, are you?

LIL HARDIN

Lil Hardin. Joe sent me when he heard you
missed your train. And you owe me \$10.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

For your hospitality?

LIL HARDIN

No, I had to cancel a gig because you can't
read a train schedule.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You ain't have to cancel nothing on behalf of
me. I can just go back to Cherry.

LIL HARDIN

That woman was gonna get you mixed up in
something you don't need to be in. Jazz
musicians are a wanted commodity. And a wanted
commodity in Chicago is an easy target. Come
on, let's go meet your maker.

SCENE 15: SPEAKEASY (GREEN BOTTLES)

#12A SPEAKEASY DANCE NUMBER.

Flappers are doing the Charleston
on the small stage while fast-
talking, card-playing, holster-
carrying people are everywhere.
KING JOE OLIVER enters.

KING JOE OLIVER

There's my Lil Louis!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(hugging him)

King Joe!!

LIL HARDIN

I didn't see what was so special about this man
who everyone called Lil Louis. First of all
there was nothing little about him. He was 200
lbs of rolls and riffs. And he was dressed like
a hick. (to Louis) You are so green!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And you are so rude. All the women here are so
blunt.

LIL HARDIN

And the women in New Orleans are soft and delicate kittens?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No, they'll poison your tea, stab you in the back, and steal a lock of hair to put a voodoo hex on you...but they're ladies about it.

LIL HARDIN

Don't tell me you're homesick already?

KING JOE OLIVER

Oh, you can't get food like you do in N'Awlings up here.

LIL HARDIN

Oh God, here we go.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And you can't get that sweet swamp smell up here like you do in N'Awlings.

LIL HARDIN

And the poverty, mosquitos, and crocodiles.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Alligators. We don't have no crocodiles.

King Joe sits at the piano.

KING JOE OLIVER

#13 DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS
AND MISS IT EACH NIGHT AND DAY
I KNOW I'M NOT WRONG, THE FEELING'S GETTING STRONGER
THE LONGER I STAY AWAY.

LIL HARDIN

He just got here. He hasn't been in Chicago for longer than a sneeze and you're already-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

MISS THE MOSS-COVERED VINES, TALL SUGAR PINES
WHERE MOCKINGBIRDS USED TO SING
AND I'D LOVE TO SEE
THAT OLD LAZY MISSISSIPPI
HURRYING INTO SPRING.

Ad-libbed cheers from the crowd.

LIL HARDIN

Don't tell me you guys are falling for this N'Awlings song and dance. I mean, all right. He can carry a tune. But I am trained musician.

(MORE)

LIL HARDIN (CONT'D)

But everybody in Chicago is willing to sell
their soul for these untrained N'Awlings-

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

OH THE MARDI GRAS, THE MEMORIES
OF CREOLES' TUNES THAT FILLED THE AIR
I DREAM OF OLEANDERS IN JUNE
AND SOON I'M WISHING THAT I WERE THERE

Louis plays the horn. It's like
heaven come to earth. Even Lil is
under the hypnotic trance.

ENSEMBLE

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS
WHEN THAT'S WHERE YOU LEFT YOUR HEART

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

AND THERE'S ONE THING MORE, I MISS THE ONE I CARE FOR.
MORE THAN I MISS NEW ORLEANS.

Louis gets backslaps and
handshakes from the patrons. Lil
takes his horn from him and looks
inside it. In her mind, there's
gotta be some trick in the horn.
But it's just Louis.

LIL HARDIN

He used the notes before and after the beat.
Also known as the blue notes. Like a swing.

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Swinging it easy, fellas.

*

KING JOE OLIVER

What do you think Lil?

LIL HARDIN

(hiding admiration)

It's, uh...interesting. I just don't know if
audiences will be ready for it.

KING JOE OLIVER

He's bringing me some of that muddy magic. You
could learn a thing or two from him, Lil.

LIL HARDIN

He could learn a thing or two from me.

KING JOE OLIVER

Like what?

LIL HARDIN

Like how to read music.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh, I picked up a bit of that on the river. But I ain't studying you or that book music. Can you believe her?

KING JOE OLIVER

We all read music, Gatemouth. We just pretend like we can't.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What? But why?

KING JOE OLIVER

And there ain't nothing white people hate more than a learned Negro. So we rehearse and then on the bandstand we hide our sheets. Just like they hide their's.

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well I learned a bit on the river...but I could learn more.

KING JOE OLIVER

Good. Lil will teach you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'd rather eat my hat.

LIL HARDIN

It looks like someone beat you to it.

SCENE 16: CLOTHES RACK

Lil brings out a clothes rack.
She puts things on him. Louis changes as they talk.

LIL HARDIN

#14 DON'T YOU PLAY ME CHEAP

BABY DON'T YOU PLAY ME CHEAP.

I MAY HAVE A HEAP OF THAT SO CALLED MONEY HONEY.

WOULDN'T YOU FEEL DISAPPOINTED, IF IT'S TRUE.

LIL HARDIN (CONT'D)

I taught him style. (handing shirt to Louis)
Here. Try this.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

This collar is stiffer than a corpse.

LIL HARDIN

(handing pants and jacket)

This collar is starched. Crisp and clean.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I look like I'm putting on airs.

LIL HARDIN

Better than attracting flies.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

These clothes are real. They're who I am. Real jazz comes out of these clothes.

LIL HARDIN

You think dressing like a bum makes you a real Colored musician? All it does is make you look cheap.

*
*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

BABY DON'T YOU PLAY ME CHEAP

BECAUSE I LOOK SO MEEK.

I MIGHT BE THE BROWN SKIN DADDY THAT COULD CALL FOR YOU
IN A GREAT BIG WAY.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Ease up, baby.

LIL HARDIN

I'm not your baby.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What's it gonna take to make that happen?

LIL HARDIN

Prayer. Lots of prayer.

Louis tries on some more clothes.

LIL HARDIN/LOUIS ARMSTRONG

DON'T YOU THINK I'M ASLEEP

AND WHEN YOU'RE WISE CRYING

I PLAY THE GAME AND I KNOW IT WELL

CAN'T YOU PULL A FAST ONE ON ANYBODY

BUT DON'T BE GOING BEHIND MY BACK.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How about a date?

LIL HARDIN

(to audience)

It was intriguing. But a girl's gotta play hard to get. (to Louis) Not right now, Louis. But maybe later. (pause) Okay, it's later.

SCENE 17: SPEAKEASY BANDSTAND

Lil and Louis banter at the microphone in front of an audience. He's now well dressed.

LIL HARDIN

(to audience)

This is the point where he fell in love with me.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Wait, wait, wait a minute. Whaddya mean I fell in you with you? You were riding my tail the whole time. Now granted, it wasn't entirely your fault. I made you fall in love with me.

LIL HARDIN

Oh, is that so Louis Armstrong?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes, that is so Lil' Hardin.

LIL HARDIN

(performance for audience)

#15 I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE /DON'T PLAY ME
I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

BUT DON'T YOU PLAY ME CHEAP.

LIL HARDIN

THAT'S THE ONLY THING I'VE PLENTY OF...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

BECAUSE I LOOK SO MEEK.

LIL HARDIN

DREAM AWHILE, SCHEME AWHILE.
WE'RE SURE TO FIND

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

DON'T YOU PLAY ME CHEAP-

LIL HARDIN

HAPPINESS AND I GUESS
ALL THOSE THINGS YOU'VE ALWAYS PINED FOR.

BAND MEMBERS

CAN'T YOU PULL A FAST ONE ON ANYBODY

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

GEE I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU LOOKING SWELL, BABY.
DIAMOND BRACELETS WOOLWORTH DOESN'T SELL, BABY.

LIL HARDIN

DON'T YOU PLAY ME CHEAP
DON'T YOU MAKE NO GRIEF
...BABY, BABY, BABY, BABY

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING.

LIL HARDIN
I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING.

LIL HARDIN/LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE.

SCENE 18: EMPTY SPEAKEASY

Lights shift. Louis and Lil Hardin
are backstage. A waiter mops.

KING JOE OLIVER
The line is around the block! We got clubs
calling from here to Kalamazoo. Can't nothing
beat N'Awlings jazz.

LIL HARDIN
And our banter.

KING JOE OLIVER
What?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
The thing we do. Crowds love a bickering
couple.

LIL HARDIN
You mean, a bickering duo.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
See: there you go again.

KING JOE OLIVER
Yes, you guys are great. I'm gonna go say hello
to my girlfriends.

Lil' Hardin sticks her hand out
for payment. King Joe gives her
the stingiest, smallest dollar.
King Joe continues counting as he
exits.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
So Lil...King Joe's got his girls. Where's
mine?

LIL HARDIN
You got more than enough girls hanging off you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I'm not looking for girls to hang off me like a
cheap suit. I'm looking to have a woman stand
next to me.

#15A BODY AND SOUL UNDERSCORE. Lil
Hardin kisses Louis. It's a tender
moment.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)
And cook and clean.

LIL HARDIN
(disappointed)
Oh...Louis...how romantic.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
You got a better idea?

LIL HARDIN
I want to be your wife, you partner, your
collaborator, your business manager.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
You want to be the Maker and the messiah too?

LIL HARDIN
If it'll help.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I want kids.

LIL HARDIN
Okay. Sure.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
And a home. And to be a good father.

Lil kisses him again.

LIL HARDIN
We can work that out once we get our names out.
And once you quit King Joe.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
(laughing)
Right. Quit King Joe Oliver's band right as
we're hitting our stride.

LIL HARDIN
Louis, you can do better. We can do better.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I can't quit King Joe. He runs this town. *
What we gonna do? Get a band of 100 people to
challenge him to a contest. *

LIL HARDIN
No. We go smaller. Easier to travel on the
road. King Joe got so many musicians he spends
half his time managing them. Five people.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Five people?!? You can't play N'Awlings jazz
with five people. What we playing? Chopsticks?

LIL HARDIN

Five people and we already got two in the band:
you and me. So we only need 3 more.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

So you've been scheming this the whole time to
get me to-

Lights shift. We're in a rehearsal
room with King Joe Oliver and
Louis in mid conversation.

KING JOE OLIVER

-QUIT?!?! Nobody quits King Joe Oliver's band.
What band you running to?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

It's not another band.

KING JOE OLIVER

Well if it's not another band the only other
thing...it's a woman. Ain't it?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

King Joe!

KING JOE OLIVER

What did I tell you about women, Louis?
Look, you got me, you got your music. I can get
you a hundred women.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I married her.

KING JOE OLIVER

What?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Last week, I married Lil Hardin.

KING JOE OLIVER

So you're henpecked? You let that uppity woman
put a bug in your ear.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Uppity? You the one that sent me to her!

KING JOE OLIVER

Lil Hardin? Yeah, I sent you to her and I'm the
one that's going to fire her.

Lil Hardin steps out.

LIL HARDIN

You'd have better luck firing the wind, King
Joe. Cause like a summer breeze, we are gone.

Lil walks away. Louis follows.
King Joe rages at their back.

KING JOE OLIVER

Louis, you ain't shit without me nigga! You
ain't shit without King Joe!! I don't care if
you get a battalion of brass and drums, you
ain't never gonna match King Joe Oliver's band.
You hear me you muddy water, flat-footed,
henpecked, soup-bowl lipped mother-

SCENE 19: SPEAKEASY (RED BOTTLES)

NIGHTCLUB ANNOUNCER enters.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, you've heard him on
records like "Cornet Chop Suey" and "West End
Blues."

KING JOE OLIVER

I wrote "West End Blues!"

ANNOUNCER

Please put your hands together for...Louis
Armstrong.

#16 WEST END BLUES UNDERSCORE.

Screens open to reveal our real
band.

LIL HARDIN

We put together the hottest group in Chicago.
On wax. And then played live. We're gonna burn
this entire city down like the Great Chicago
fire.

KING JOE OLIVER

Ungrateful black bastard. How could you do me
like that, Satch?

King Joe Oliver picks up his horn
and takes over the band.

KING JOE OLIVER (CONT'D)

Come on, guys! Follow me...(counts off)

The music shifts in tempo.

KING JOE OLIVER (CONT'D)

(referring to Louis and Lil)

#17 MACK THE KNIFE

OH, THE SHARK, BABE, HAS SUCH TEETH, DEAR
AND IT SHOWS THEM PEARLY WHITE
JUST A JACKKNIFE HAS OLD MACHEATH BABE
AND HE KEEPS IT, OUT OF SIGHT.

Louis and Lil jam. Lights shift
and Daisy enters.

DAISY PARKER

Louis, I'm so proud of you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Daisy!

LIL HARDIN

Who is this?

DAISY PARKER

I'm Louis's wife. I'll take over from here (to
audience) So I decided to forgive Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

We got divorced.

DAISY PARKER

What divorce? Honey, I never signed anything.

LIL HARDIN

Excuse me, I got this. And I got Louis.

DAISY PARKER

Louis.

DAISY PARKER/LIL HARDIN

WHEN THAT SHARK BITES WITH HIS TEETH, BABE
SCARLET BILLOWS START TO SPREAD
FANCY GLOVES, OH, WEARS OLD MACHEATH, BABE
SO THERE'S NEVER, NEVER A TRACE OF RED

DAISY PARKER

I met this guy at the train station who got a
club.

LIL HARDIN

-Oh no, not this again-

DAISY PARKER

And he took me out for a few drinks, we got to
talking and I told them that Mr. Armstrong is
my husband. And they're looking for a guy like
you to play at their joint.

LIL HARDIN

Lady, we got gigs for the next few weeks-

DAISY PARKER

(ignoring Lil)

Don't worry, Louis. You'll like his club. It's gonna be a blast. He told me.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well I'll ask Lil to see if we can work something out.

DAISY PARKER

No, Louis this is the kind of guy who doesn't take no for an answer. Oh, here he come.

FOUR GANGSTERS enter: White
Gangster, Black Gangster, Cherry,
and Gangster's Moll.

*

WHITE GANGSTER

Big fan, Mr. Armstrong. I got a car out back.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm in the middle of my set.

DAISY PARKER

Forget it. They got big plans for you, honey.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How would it look if I walked out in the middle of my set? My fans would be furious. These are the same fans I'm trying to bring to your joint.

WHITE GANGSTER

You gotta a point. Okay, we'll be waiting for you at the stage door afterward.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Can't wait, sir.

Daisy exit White Gangster and
Associates. Ensemble whistles a
verse of "Mack the Knife" that
underscores.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Hey, baby. I gotta split.

LIL HARDIN

What? We are in the middle of a performance.
Where are you going?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Jail.

LIL HARDIN

Jail?!? Why are you going to jail?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

For rest. And relaxation.

Louis packs up his bags, smiles, doffs his hat to an applauding crowd. He appears to be making a glorious exit, when he's really running for his life. He slips out the other back door and escapes.

SCENE 20: LIL'S APARTMENT

LIL HARDIN

Louis liked to check himself into jail from time to time. To escape gangsters. Ex-wives. Greedy managers. Managers like Johnny Collins.

JOHNNY COLLINS enters on a balcony in a rumpled suit and with a flask.

JOHNNY COLLINS

I discovered Louis Armstrong.

LIL HARDIN

Actually he stole him from another manager, who was now suing Louis. Johnny Collins: a drunk mean, fighting Irishmen.

JOHNNY COLLINS

(exiting)

It would be a stereotype if it wasn't true.

LIL HARDIN

While Louis cooled his heels for a minute behind bars, things on the outside were burning up. I couldn't wait for him to get out and tell him about our new direction.

Louis bursts through the door with his suitcase.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Honey, I'm home.

LIL HARDIN

Louis, I thought you were still locked up.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(taking off jacket)

Yeah, well I missed you too.

LIL HARDIN

Oh, let me help you. You always wrinkle your jacket in prison.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I wasn't in prison. I was in jail.

LIL HARDIN

It's a difference without distinction.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Lil, jail is where drunks spend the night to dry out. Prison is where murderers go. I was in jail. Now where is my stash?

LIL HARDIN

No more marijuana. It messes with your rehearsal.

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Fine, then let's cancel rehearsals. Not Mary Jane.

*

*

LIL HARDIN

I'm sorry. I just want you to be as sharp as possible.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

For what?

Lil unfurls a banner that reads
'LOUIS ARMSTRONG: GREATEST TRUMPET
PLAYER IN THE WORLD.' MUSIC. A
trumpet riff from earlier.

LIL HARDIN

What do you think?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

About what? The practical joke?

LIL HARDIN

It's not a practical joke. It's going up around town. I'm paying good money for this banner.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You have me listed as the world's greatest trumpet player... in a town with King Joe Oliver and half the musicians from New Orleans?!!

LIL HARDIN

It'll make you stand out from the rest.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Now I really need my stash. What is wrong with you, woman? You can't be telling lies.

*

LIL HARDIN

It's not a lie. It's a prophecy.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh, you some sort of N'Awlings voodoo woman now.

LIL HARDIN

No.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

So how do you know I'm the greatest?

MUSIC. #17A I CAN'T GIVE YOU
ANYTHING BUT LOVE UNDERSCORE.

LIL HARDIN

Because you have me, Louis. And I AM the greatest. But people don't want to hear that. They won't laugh at you when you say you're the greatest. These folks even want to believe in you. And I'm gonna take you to the top. If I can't make it, at least you'll get there. And when you really start playing remember what I said you're gonna do to this town?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm gonna burn it down to the goddamn ground.

LIL HARDIN

You goddamn right.

.

Lil walks off excited. Louis stands there and we see his smile turn to self-doubt. Can he do it? The set starts to change around him and we're in...

SCENE 21: TWO BARS

A bar. LOUIS is drinking. The BARTENDER is cleaning glasses. (NOTE: We will find out who he is later.) SINGER is crooning at a microphone.

ALPHA enters. She thinks about saying something, but doesn't.

CLUB SINGER

#18 BODY AND SOUL

MY HEART IS SAD AND LONELY
FOR YOU I CRY
FOR YOU, DEAR, ONLY
I TELL YOU I MEAN IT
I'M ALL FOR YOU
BODY AND SOUL.

BARTENDER

What can I get for you?

ALPHA

Gin. (quiet and nervous) And don't be afraid to give me the cheapest one.

Louis plays with his wedding band as Alpha twists her drink around on the bar. BLACK GANGSTER enters and hands Louis an envelope.

BLACK GANGSTER

Dipper, there you are. Read it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Another job offer? I'll consider it.

BLACK GANGSTER

There's nothing to consider.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well my band leader has-

BLACK GANGSTER

-your band leader? This is more important than your wife. It's my boss.

Black Gangster stops and looks around.

BLACK GANGSTER (CONT'D)

Hey, isn't this guy the greatest? You'll be there.

Black Gangster arm wrestles Louis into a handshake before exiting. The singer's scattling underscores the action. Louis looks at the sheet and then balls it up.

BARTENDER

I wouldn't do that.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Did I ask you what I should do?

BARTENDER

Fair enough. It just seems like that job offer has a knife wrapped around it. You gotta a manager don't you?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yeah, Johnny Collins.

BARTENDER

Johnny Collins? That drunk? He couldn't protect you from a drizzle of rain. You need real help.

Alpha chimes in.

ALPHA

Well I think you're brave enough to handle things on your own. (takes out program) And I'm a big fan who-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-Are we taking a survey now? Do you think I need more people telling me what they think?

BARTENDER

Sorry, Louis. It's just that I think I could be that help. My name is Joe Glaser. I know people in this town. And you could say I'm in the entertainment business.

ALPHA

That means he's a pimp.

JOE GLASER

Hey, is anyone talking to you?

ALPHA

No. But I know a pimp when I see one-

JOE GLASER

-you don't know me!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Hey, quiet down. Both of you! I got too much on my mind to be dealing with all this noise.

ALPHA

Well...sorry for the noise.

Alpha is hurt by Louis yelling. Louis is embarrassed at his outburst. Alpha gets her things and starts to leave, when...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Look, I'm...

He motions for her program. She reluctantly hands it over and he signs it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

(motions for another round)

And let me buy you a drink, lady.

ALPHA

(takes back program)

It's not lady. It's Alpha.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Alpha, so what do you-

ALPHA

-does it really matter what I do? I know what you're thinking and, no, I'm not for sale.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh. Good.

ALPHA

I'm a maid.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

That's honest work.

Bartender (Joe Glaser) puts down a drink for Alpha and then he exits. Alpha takes the drink and the signed program.

ALPHA

It's not what you do. It's not fancy.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Fancy? Now who the hell needs fancy? Dressing up in these stiff suits. Some times I just want something honest and simple.

ALPHA

Like a wife and kids?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Exactly, Alpha. Life don't have to be fancy.

ALPHA

You sound just like my momma.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(flirting)

Careful. Or I might become yo' daddy.

ALPHA

Don't threaten me with a good time.

CLUB SINGER

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT
IT'S HARD TO CONCEIVE IT
THAT YOU'D TURN AWAY ROMANCE

Lights shift. Lil Hardin approaching Daisy. Another speakeasy. Daisy is drunk.

LIL HARDIN

Daisy.

DAISY PARKER

Bonjour, fake wife.

LIL HARDIN

What's it going to take for you to go back New Orleans?

DAISY PARKER

Give me Louis.

LIL HARDIN

He's my husband and he speaks to me as an artist.

DAISY PARKER

He speaks to me as a lover.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(to Alpha)

You're really speaking to me right now. Well those legs are. Shall we dance, Alpha?

Louis and Alpha dance. Lil takes out money and counts it. Then she puts it on the table.

CLUB SINGER

MY LIFE'S A WRECK YOU'RE MAKING
YOU KNOW I'M YOURS FOR THE VERY TAKING

LIL HARDIN

So I guess this isn't going to end well for one of us?

DAISY PARKER

Yeah. I think it's gonna be the one without the razor. I'm going to get out of here, Little. I would hate for something to happen to you.

ALPHA

It's a shame.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What is?

ALPHA

That with all your fame and success...you're still looking for love.

She puts a scarf around his neck.

Louis leans in for a kiss and,
just like that, Alpha slips out of
his grasp.

LIL HARDIN

Times were changing fast. Daisy got a bit too
carefree with her razor in a Chicago speakeasy.
A drunk man cut her up pretty bad and sent her
back to New Orleans scarred. Damn shame how
that happened.

Lil hands money to JOE GLASER.
It's blood money. Joe folds up a
razor and exits.

LIL HARDIN (CONT'D)

And I keep finding scarves.

CLUB SINGER

I'D GLADLY SURRENDER MYSELF TO YOU BODY AND SOUL

SCENE 22: TOURING ENERGY

LIL HARDIN

Just like I prophesied Gatemouth was being
called the greatest trumpet player in the
world. My man, my pupil. My husband. And I was
just...along for the ride. From gig to gig,
city to city. When the fellas weren't zonked
out.

Louis and the band go on tour.

*

*

ENSEMBLE

LAUGHIN' LOUIE
LAUGHIN' LOUIE
LAUGHIN' LOUIE
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

LIL HARDIN

Next stop...Kansas City.

ENSEMBLE

AIN'T NO PHOOEY
LAUGHIN' LOUIE
BOYYYYYYYYYYYYY
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

Lil finds another scarf. And
another. She becomes enraged.

LIL HARDIN

Next stop...Little Rock.

ENSEMBLE

LAUGHIN' LOUIE
LAUGHIN' LOUIE
LAUGHIN' LOUIE
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA

LIL HARDIN

Next stop: Memphis. Jail.

SCENE 23: JAIL

Music stops.

LIL HARDIN

Cops stopped the bus and threw all the Negro musicians in the hole. Because they said a white woman was on the bus with them.

Louis is in a cell with an anxious Band Member.

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

Louis, I'm sorry man. But I think I'm in trouble.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Of course you are. This is jail, son. We all in trouble.

Band Member produces a huge marijuana joint.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Is that what I think it is?

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

Yes sir. I had it in my jacket pocket and I forgot about it. It's problematic.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Young man, that's not problematic. That's what I would call 'solution-matic.'

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

Should I throw it away?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No. You should light that shit up.

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

Louis, we in prison.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Jail. We in jail, son. And we about to get toasty.

Band Member lights up. Louis
takes. Other band members start
smelling.

BAND MEMBER #2

Hey Louey! Is you crazy? You can't be smoking
that in here.

BAND MEMBER #3

Yeah you can't smoke that shit in here...
without sharing it. Pass that man.

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

What if we get caught?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(passes gage)

I guess they'll put us in double jail. Wait a
minute...we Negro so we was already born in
jail. So I guess they would have to put us in
triple jail.

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

What's triple jail?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well son, I imagine it must something like
Orlando.

*

*

JOHNNY COLLINS enters in.

LIL HARDIN

Louis' manager was sent to resolve the
situation.

JOHNNY COLLINS

Louis, are you getting high!? In prison!?

BAND MEMBER #1 (VALET)

It's jail, sir.

JOHNNY COLLINS

Well I pulled some strings. I got you out on
one condition.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Johnny, explain it to me in the car. Cause I
never want to see another Memphis cop for as
long as I live.

SCENE 24: MEMPHIS BENEFIT CONCERT

Applause. Louis turns around and
has his horn. He just finished a
song.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the Memphis Police Department. It has been a great pleasure to perform for you tonight. Your hospitality has been completely unbearable...I mean unbeatable.

MEMPHIS POLICE OFFICER enters.

Music underscore: YOU RASCAL YOU.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

But anyway, we wanted to conclude this benefit concert for your benevolence union with this tribute song. To you. And away we go....

Louis smiles brightly before...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

#20 YOU RASCAL YOU

NOW I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU, UH-HUH
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU, OH YEAH
WELL I LET INTO MY HOME, YOU GONNA LEAVE MY WOMAN ALONE
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU

Johnny almost chokes in shock. But he's standing next to the Memphis cops. He tries to read their reaction. Memphis officers have stopped tapping their sticks. They just stand their.

Johnny goes to the Memphis Captain.

JOHNNY COLLINS

It's a really popular song. On the road.

THREE SHOWGIRLS enter with lyrics written on flipboards and a pointer. They point out the words so people can sing along.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Ah, you just ain't no good! oh, you dog
Now, come on ladies... sing it.

BAND MEMBERS

I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Now just all the colored servers!

ENSEMBLE

I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Now everybody.

ENSEMBLE

I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU!

Louis Armstrong scats for a few measures and then wraps up.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

NOW I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU DIE, YOU RASCAL YOU
OH I'LL BE TICKLED TO DEATH WHEN YOU LEAVE THIS EARTH IT'S
TRUE, OH YEAH
WHEN YOU'RE LYIN' DOWN SIX FEET DEEP, NO MORE FRIED CHICKEN
WILL YOU EAT
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU RASCAL YOU, OH YEAH
I'LL BE GLAD WHEN YOU'RE DEAD YOU RASCAL YOU.

Applause. Memphis Police Officer
rushes to Louis.

MEMPHIS POLICE OFFICER

Boy, I tell you... (getting menacingly close)
That's the first time anyone has ever dedicated
a song to the Memphis Police.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(grinning)

Oh, wow. Thank you, Captain. Well every word of
it, comes from the bottom of my heart...you ol'
rascal, you.

FLASH! A camera goes off capturing
Louis and Memphis Cop. FREEZE.
Louis stops smiling and steps out
of the picture.

SCENE 25: BAR (AS BEFORE)

Lights up on Johnny Collins and
Louis are at the bar. Joe Glaser
is bartending. Johnny has been
drinking a lot.

LIL HARDIN

It wasn't just one thing that went wrong. It
was the stock market, the Great Depression. And
then the end of Prohibition. The end of
everything.

JOHNNY COLLINS

I gotta guy. Club owner. He just lost a butler.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And he wants some mean jazz for the cat's
funeral?

JOHNNY COLLINS

No, Louis. He's looking for a new butler.
You're a man with strong hands. It's easy work.
And honest work. You don't have to be on your
feet all day. Some times you'll get a tip.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

This is all you got for me?

JOHNNY COLLINS

There's no money for Negro tomfoolery. King Joe
left town with his tail between his legs. Most
of these musicians are taking jobs as janitors
and cooks. Louis, I'm telling the truth. Me and
you go way back.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yeah. Like Cain and Abel. But you're not my
keeper, Johnny. You can't even protect me from
thugs.

JOHNNY COLLINS

Well too bad you're stuck with me. We gotta
contract. You hear me, you ungrateful
little...I'll sue you, you black bastard. I
swear to God, Louis. I swear to God...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Go ahead Johnny. Keep swearing to God. Maybe
he'll take your calls because no one else will.
I gotta make some changes.

BARTENDER (JOE GLASER)

How about I get you some coffee? It'll help
straighten you out.

JOHNNY COLLINS

(passing out)

Why don't you get lost you...

SCENE 26: FINALE

Lights shift and we are in between
the bar and Lil's apartment. Lil
Hardin enters.

LIL HARDIN

I made you, Louis!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I need a fresh start.

LIL HARDIN

A fresh start, huh? (starts throwing scaves)
Is this the fresh start you're talking about?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I told you when we first met, what I wanted.

LIL HARDIN

And I told you what I wanted. I need to get mine first Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Why? Cause you're selfish?

LIL HARDIN

Cause once I have kids, I don't have a career, Louis. It's cleaning, cooking, sowing, feeding, dressing. And this is my one chance. Why can't you wait?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Cause I'm not getting any younger either, Lil. And with you around, you're probably gonna work me to death.

LIL HARDIN

But that work is what made you. I did that.

Louis goes to Alpha. Lil watches.
Alpha kisses him. MUSIC.

ALPHA

#21 I CAN'T GIVE YOU (2ND REPRISE)

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING...

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING...

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE, BABY.

Louis and Alpha grab their things.

ALPHA (CONT'D)

Where are we gonna go, Louis?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I hear there's work out West.

ALPHA

Out west, like Michigan?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

California. If we're gonna starve, we might as well have sunshine.

ALPHA

We're gonna be okay, right Louis?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Baby, you're with the greatest trumpet player in the world.

ALPHA

California here we come!!

LIL HARDIN

#22 AFTER YOU'VE GONE

NOW WON'T YOU LISTEN HONEY WHILE I SAY

DAISY PARKER

HOW CAN YOU FIX YOUR MOUTH TO SAY YOU'RE GOIN' AWAY

LIL HARDIN

DON'T SAY THAT WE MUST PART

DAISY PARKER

I'LL BREAK YOUR ACHING HEART

DAISY PARKER/LIL HARDIN

YOU KNOW YOU LOVE ME

TRUE FOR MANY YEARS

LOVE ME NIGHT AND DAY

CAN'T YOU SEE MY TEARS

DAISY PARKER

HOW CAN YOU LEAVE ME

LIL HARDIN

LISTEN WHILE I SAY

AFTER YOU'VE GONE AND LEFT ME CRYING,

AFTER YOU'VE GONE THERE'S NO DENYING,

YOU'LL FEEL BLUE, YOU'LL FEEL SAD,

YOU'LL MISS THE GREATEST MAMA YOU EVER EVER EVER HAD.

DAISY PARKER

THERE'LL COME A TIME, DON'T YOU FORGET IT,

THERE'LL COME A TIME WHEN YOU'LL REGRET IT.

DAISY PARKER/LIL HARDIN

SOMEDAY WHEN YOU GROW LONELY,

LIL HARDIN

YOUR HEART WILL BREAK LIKE MINE AND HE'LL WANT ME ONLY

DAISY PARKER

AFTER YOU'RE GONE DON'T YOU FORGET IT

LIL HARDIN

AFTER YOU'RE GONE AND YOU'LL REGRET IT

DAISY PARKER/LIL HARDIN

AFTER YOU'RE GONE AWAY.

END OF ACT I

CHAPTER THREE: HOLLYWOOD

SCENE 27: SOUNDSTAGE

Soundstage scenery and backcloths are around. A bright bursting overture. Performers of all sorts hustle around in costumes. Showgirls, jazz musicians, Flowerpeople and cowboys...and what's that: a gorilla? WTF kind of movie is this? The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR is trying to direct traffic. In this madness, Louis Armstrong runs on stage.

COMPANY

#23 ZIP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH

ZIP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH

ZIP-A-DEE-A

MY OH MY, WHAT A WONDERFUL DAY

PLENTY OF SUNSHINE HEADING MY WAY

ZIP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH

ZIP-A-DEE-A

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(talking song)

And action! Louis, hit your mark.

Louis moves over a bit.

COMPANY

MISTER BLUEBIRD'S ON MY SHOULDER

IT'S THE TRUTH, IT'S "ACTCH'LL"

EVERYTHING IS "SATISFACTCH'LL."

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

CUT! Louis, that's not your mark.

Louis moves again and almost gets hit by a moving palm tree.

COMPANY

ZIP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH, ZIP-A-DEE-AY

WONDERFUL FEELING, WONDERFUL DAY!

Alpha enters in furs and pearls.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

ACTION!

ALPHA

We. Are. In. The Movies.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

BIG SMILE, Satchmo and Cowgirls...or whatever the hell you're supposed to be.

Louis grins. He takes out his horn
and mimes playing a few bars.

ALPHA

Well Louis is, but it feels like we're all in
it. Me, his fans, and jazz music.

*
*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

BIGGER SMILE! Like you're so goddamn happy to
be alive that you're going to explode.

The smiles get bigger. Louis stays
the same with a warm sincere grin.

COMPANY

MISTER BLUEBIRD'S ON MY SHOULDER
IT'S THE TRUTH, IT'S "ACTCH'LL"
EVERYTHING IS "SATISFACTCH'LL."

Here comes the big finish.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Biggest smile of your cocksucking miserable
lives.

COMPANY

ZIP-A-DEE-DOO-DAH, ZIP-A-DEE-AY
WONDERFUL FEELING, WONDERFUL DAY!
WONDERFUL FEELING, WONDERFUL DAY!
WONDERFUL FEELING, WONDERFUL DAY!
WONDERFULLLLLL
FEEELING
WONDERFULLLLL
DAAAAAAAAAYYYY

BIG FINISH! The whole point is TA-
DA!! BEAT. Assistant Director
looks up to check the Director's
approval.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Umm...you know what? We'll fix it in post.
Moving on. Strike!

SCENE 28: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR CHAT

The spotlight goes out on Louis.
He fumbles through the pages of
his script.

ALPHA

Hollywood! Louis and I moved out here to get
away from the Great Depression.

(MORE)

ALPHA (CONT'D)

Los Angeles is so bright and shiny. Perfect place for starting a family. And for Louis to get in the movies.

*
*
*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How did it look, Mr. Director sir?

*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Louis, I'm just the assistant director.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How did it go, Daddy?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The cowboy was smiling too much. It makes him look like a fagalah.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Fagalah...something my Yiddish grandmother would say. It means...nevermind.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(showing star of David necklace)

Oh I know all about the people of bagel persuasion. See...this here is the star of David. I got this from the Karnoffsky's when I was a kid. Jewish family from N'Awlings. Best people in the world. They gave me my first job. Always been a fan of the Jews ever since.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Well, try being one-

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Now, Mr. Director-

*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

-assistant director-

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-I've been in tons of movies. Standing around with the band. But my lines get chopped. I want to stand out.

*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

You're an incredible musician, but you're not a star Satchmo. A star POPS! The camera picks that up. You can't look away from them. They jump off the screen and into your lap.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I got stage presence.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

The camera can't read that.

Assistant Director exits.

SCENE 29: MAKING WHOOPEE

ALPHA

How did it go, Daddy? They gonna actually let
you say a few lines in this picture? *

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I don't know.

ALPHA

Daddy, you're the king.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Being the king don't mean a thing. Not out
here. Wait: is that a new pearl necklace?

ALPHA

Yes, you said I could have it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

When?

ALPHA

(kissing)

When I told you what the first name of our son
will be.

Alpha takes out a blue baby bonnet
and hands it to Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh yeah.

MUSIC. "MAKING WHOOPEE." Yeah,
we're going there. Showgirls re-
enter with palm fronds decorated
backcloth.

ALPHA

Speaking of which, we should get home so we can
get to work on that other project.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Sounds good as long as my part doesn't get cut
from that too.

ALPHA

#24 MAKING WHOOPEE

ANOTHER BRIDE, ANOTHER JUNE

ANOTHER SUNNY HONEYMOON

ANOTHER SEASON, ANOTHER REASON

FOR MAKIN' WHOOPEE

SHOWGIRLS

DOO WOP
BOP SHOO-BA BEE-BOP
BOP SHOO BOP

Lights shift. Time passes. They
'dance' lovemaking behind the
cloth.

ALPHA

(to audience)

And a few more days passed. (to Louis) How's it
looking?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(reading)

Not looking too good, Alpha. New pages came
out.

ALPHA

(sexy)

I know something that can cheer you up.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Baby time?

She smiles. Lights shift.

ALPHA AND LOUIS

PICTURE A LITTLE LOVE NEST
DOWN WHERE THE ROSES CLING
PICTURE THE SAME SWEET LOVE NEST
THINK WHAT A YEAR CAN BRING

SHOWGIRLS

AAH
AAH
AAH
AAH

SHOWGIRLS

WOP SHOO-BOP BEE-BOP
WOP SHOO BOP

Days pass. Dance break. Alpha is
exhausted from all this 'whoopie
time.'

ALPHA

How was work today?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

They're cutting my part back to nothing.

ALPHA

Oh.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

But I know something that could take my mind
off of it.

ALPHA

What's that? Stamp collecting?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You funny, honey. How about some baby time?

SHOWGIRLS

SHE'S WASHIN' DISHES AND HIS CLOTHES

SHE'S SO AMBITIOUS SHE EVEN SEWS

BUT DON'T FORGET, FOLKS

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET, FOLKS, FOR MAKIN'-

ALPHA

(weary)

-OKAY! We get it. If this motherfucker doesn't get a bigger role, I might die from exhaustion. And then my prayers were answered...in the form of four Cadillacs and eight trunks of clothes being dragged behind on carts. It looked like the Pharaoh was in town. And then he came to us.

SCENE 30: STEPIN FETCHIT

STEPIN FETCHIT enters. He is preceded by 3 BELLHOPS carrying expensive luggage. Unlike his screen persona, the real person is lightning quick.

STEPIN FETCHIT

Quit standing around, gawking. Move my trunks into my dressing room.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I ain't never seen a Negro with that many cars and servants. Are you the president of the NAACP?

STEPIN FETCHIT

No, I'm Lincoln Perry. I go by Stepin Fetchit. And you're Louis Armstrong right? Big fan.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Man this cat pulling my leg. I've seen Stepin Fetchit and he don't sound like you.

STEPIN FETCHIT

That's an act, cat. You doing film?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes, you seen me?

STEPIN FETCHIT

Yeah, in the background. With the band.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

They keep cutting my parts.

STEPIN FETCHIT

That's cause you gotta turn on the shine.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What?

STEPIN FETCHIT

Add a little grinning and tapping tomfoolery.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

People already look at me as being too nice to whites. This just makes me nervous.

STEPIN FETCHIT

Nervous about what? You nervous about these four Cadillac's I got? You nervous about this knot of cash in my pocket?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What will people think with I'm acting like you?

STEPIN FETCHIT

White people love that shit. They don't know we lying to them when we do it. They think they seeing some sincere Mammy plantation shit. And if they can smear their face with shoe polish and earn a killing playing us, then why can't we?

MUSIC. "WHEN YOU'RE SMILING."
Stepin Fetchit transforms into his stage character. It's grotesque and captivating.

STEPIN FETCHIT (CONT'D)

Howdy, now Iza be here fo' dey big boss. Yassur...yassur. Dey big money but foist imma take me a little stepin and a little...

*

Stepin does a tap number and improvises some kidding with Louis.

STEPIN FETCHIT (CONT'D)

-Vaudeville baby! A decade straight. I made a fortune doing the thing white folks been doing to us and doing it better than them. With a smile.

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Okay, maybe I can try smiling more?

STEPIN FETCHIT

#25 WHEN YOU'RE SMILING

WHEN YOU'RE SMILIN', WHEN YOU'RE SMILIN'
THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU
WHEN YOU'RE LAUGHIN', OH WHEN YOU'RE LAUGHIN'
THE SUN COMES SHININ' THROUGH.
BUT WHEN YOU'RE CRYING, YOU BRING ON THE RAIN
SO STOP YOUR FROWNING, BE HAPPY AGAIN
CAUSE WHEN YOU'RE SMILING, WHEN YOU'RE SMILING

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH YOU.

Louis and Stepin Fetchit engage in
a buffoonish dance competition,
trying to out-clown each other.
Music underscore.

STEPIN FETCHIT

CAUSE WHEN YOU'RE SMILING,

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

KEEP ON SMILING

STEPIN FETCHIT

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES...

STEPIN FETCHIT/ LOUIS ARMSTRONG

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH...
YOU.

STEPIN FETCHIT

These rednecks laugh themselves blue when I do
what I do. I get letters, cards, liquor, and
stronger stuff. I even get...(sharing secret)
panties. I could start up a white woman's
lingerie store with all the drawers I get. Take
their money, their panties, and their laughter.
It's yours, Louis. People will love you.

Stepin Fetchit lights a big fat
joint. He passes it to Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Which people?

STEPIN FETCHIT

Lou, you see, people is white. Coloreds is
folks. And we are cats. Now Lou, are folks
paying your bills?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No.

STEPIN FETCHIT

Well then fuck'em. They ain't keeping your
lights on. If they ain't putting gas in our
Caddy, they ain't have a right to say shit.
Fuck them folks.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Is that what cats out here do?

STEPIN FETCHIT

The smart ones. That's what you gotta do.
Please the people and fuck the folks. And keep
grinning and shining while you do it.

Lights shift and Louis is in the
middle of filming a movie scene.
Maybe two dancers join in the
finale.

STEPIN FETCHIT (CONT'D)

CAUSE WHEN YOU'RE SMILING,

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

KEEP ON SMILING

STEPIN FETCHIT

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES...

STEPIN FETCHIT/ LOUIS ARMSTRONG

THE WHOLE WORLD SMILES WITH...
YOU.

Big finish. Stepin Fetchit tips
his hat and walks off with his
caravan.

SCENE 31: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SECOND CHAT

Lights shift. Assistant Director
comes out, smiling after a take.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

That was incredible. Best take you have ever
done, Louis. You really popped.

ALPHA

And Louis kept popping up. As the films started
rolling in.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(hands Louis a script)

You got a problem with this? We need you to really...give us that, uh, happy fella shine.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Sounds good. You know I can also do something more classy.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(laughs)

Classy. That's cute. No just do...what you do.

ALPHA

And as the movies got bigger, his roles changed.

*
*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

(hands him another script)

So you're a stable hand.

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Ok, boss. What's my name?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Um, well. Your name is Tom. But some times people call you...Uncle.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

So my character's name is Uncle Tom?

ALPHA

And the backlash started.

SCENE 32: BACKLASH

MUSIC. #25A WHEN YOU'RE
SMILING/LAUGHING LOUIE UNDERSCORE.
BLACK JAZZ MUSICIAN enters with
GIRLFRIEND. Too cool for school.

BLACK JAZZ MUSICIAN

Will you look at this nigga? Straight shucking and jiving. (to Louis)

JAZZ GIRLFRIEND

Pit-i-ful. Hey, what are you doing?!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(beaming)

Entertaining.

BLACK JAZZ MUSICIAN

But this is exactly what white people want.

JAZZ GIRLFRIEND

That's right, that's right!!

BLACK JAZZ MUSICIAN

And we gotta get outta of they game and start playing our own. We gotta, as a people, say-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-fuck off with that shit.

BLACK JAZZ MUSICIAN

Excuse me, Pops?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You can fuck right the hell off...

BLACK MUSICIAN & JAZZ GIRLFRIEND

Sell out.

WHITE GANGSTER

Hey, Louis. I think you need our protection now that you got all this extra cash laying around.

They surround Louis, yelling and screaming. Louis escapes out of their clutches.

ALPHA

To get away from the heat, Louis hit the road.

SCENE 33: SECOND TOURING

They struggle to keep up with the frenetic pace. The underscore changes to "Laughing Louie." The ensemble sings a few refrains. Louis' other wives enter and circle.

ALPHA

One-nighter after one-nighter. Playing until the crack of dawn in juke joints, back rooms, small clubs. Trying to stay one step ahead of gangsters trying to grab him. One step ahead of...

LIL HARDIN

Hey, Louis. I'm in town. Maybe we could discuss some collaboration.

ALPHA

One step ahead of-

DAISY PARKER

Louis, baby. I still think about you!

LUCILLE WILSON

To Mr. Louis Armstrong: thank you for the
flowers. I can't believe you would pay
attention to a chorus girl like me-

ALPHA

-One step, one step, one step, one-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-Alpha, you put too much starch in this shirt.

MUSIC. "Big Butter and Egg Man."

ALPHA

I didn't sign up for this.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Alpha!

ALPHA

We should have servants do this. I should be
eating caviar in box suites with gloves.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

ALPHA!

ALPHA

#26 BIG BUTTER AND EGG MAN

NOW I WANTS A BUTTER AN EGG MAN
FROM WAY DOWN IN THE SOUTH
I WANTS SOMEBODY WHO'S WORKIN' ALL DAY
SO WE GOT MONEY WHEN WE WANTS TO PLAY
NOW PRETTY CLOTHES THEY'LL ALWAYS BE MINE
THAT'S WHAT YOU TOLD ME
I HOPE YOU DON'T CHANGE YOUR MIND
OH I WANTS A BUTTER AN EGG MAN
A GREAT BIG BUTTER AND EGG MAN
FROM WAY DOWN SOUTH

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Alpha, what the hell are you doing?

ALPHA

What am I doing? I'm doing your socks, your
shirts, your pants, your dinner-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-Dinner? I didn't see any rice and beans out!

ALPHA

Louis I'm getting sick of your rice and beans,
rice and beans, rice and beans.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Fine. baby. We can have grits. Or corn bread. I
don't care. Just stop crying.

(MORE)

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Will you stop crying? I can't handle this right now. Stop the bus. I...I...just...can't breathe. Hey, pull over right here.

ALPHA

Louis we're not at the venue yet. I don't know where we are.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

We're in Savannah. I just need some space. Stop the goddamn bus!

SCENE 34: SAVANNAH STREET

Louis gets off the tour bus. He's in the middle of nowhere.

ALPHA

Louis, stay near the bus. Louis, don't go down there. Louis! Louis!

He walks down the street. Louis spots an OLD VENDOR. He's bent over his cart, dragging his feet along.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(to Vendor)

Hey Pops!! What are you selling? You got fish? Shrimp? Excuse me Daddy, you got some-

Old Man Vendor turns around and it's King Joe Oliver. Times have been hard to him. King Joe is dressed in rags. He seems to have aged 100 years.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

King Joe.

Long pause. King Joe takes off his hat. MUSIC. underscore of "Do You Know What It Means To Miss New Orleans."

KING JOE OLIVER

Satchelmouth. Well...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

King, what are you doing in Savannah?

KING JOE OLIVER

Trying to make a living.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

But what about your band?

KING JOE OLIVER

All the money dried up and no one wanted to pay
for big band jazz. So it all went away.

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You could have gone back to Chicago or New
Orleans.

KING JOE OLIVER

I didn't want people to see me like this.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I can help you. How much money do you need?
You need to get a horn, right?

KING JOE OLIVER

-You can give me every single dollar outta your
pocket, but you is still you...black and blue.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I got connections. I know people now.

KING JOE OLIVER

Yeah, but you still a nigga Louis. No matter
how many movies you star in, the world ain't
gonna let you forget that. I should've got me a
white man.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

King Joe, you're the greatest jazz musician in
the world.

KING JOE OLIVER

And look where it got me? You see them weak
pathetic cats playing our music in New York.
Around the world. White boys swinging like dead
cats. No soul, no grit. Just playing notes. And
they rich and happy and stupid as gold fish. I
should've been like them. Stupid and happy.
Should've snagged one of them white managers
when I had the chance.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I got one and he don't do shit for me. Now
listen-

KING JOE OLIVER

-Then get yourself a better one-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-you and me going on tour. King Joe Oliver and
Louis Armstrong! You can see it, can't you?

KING JOE OLIVER

No, Louis. I can't see any of that shit. And
stop calling me King Joe. It's Joe Oliver.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Joe...pops...

Louis presses his money clip into
King Joe Oliver's hand.

KING JOE OLIVER

#27 DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS REPRISE

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO MISS NEW ORLEANS
AND THERE IS SOMETHING MORE
...I MISS THE ONE I WAS BEFORE
MORE THAN I MISS NEW ORLEANS

SCENE 35: ALPHA AND LOUIS IN THE STREET

King Joe exits. Alpha runs up.

ALPHA

Baby, I'm sorry. There's a reason I've been
acting so emotional lately.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You don't have to apologize. I need to make a
phone call.

ALPHA

Now?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes.

ALPHA

Well okay but Louis I have some news to tell
you-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-It can wait a bit, can't it baby?

ALPHA

Sure, we can talk later.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I gotta go...(has epiphany) find a man who can
help us.

ALPHA

Who?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

A bartender in Chicago.

SCENE 36: CUP OF COFFEE

MUSIC. #28 MACK THE KNIFE
UNDERSCORE. Joe Glaser and Black
Gangster walk down the street.

*
*
*
*

It's early in the morning. They wear leather gloves.

JOE GLASER

I saw it in the store window: an ostrich hat with a giant feather. That's my first big payday.

BLACK GANGSTER

An ostrich hat? And then what?

JOE GLASER

A gold pocket watch. And lots and lots of salami.

BLACK GANGSTER

Salami? What?

JOE GLASER

Just a nice office with racks of salami for guests. You know, something classy.

BLACK GANGSTER

...Sure. Classy.

JOE GLASER

Here we are. Our Future. Now-

Thug puts on a mask and takes out a brick. SMASH. The brick flies through the glass panes of Johnny Collins Management. Johnny startles awake from a drunken stupor at his desk. Joe and Thug step inside. Music stops.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

Good morning, Johnny. Looks like you had a very late evening...

JOHNNY COLLINS

What the hell is your problem?!?

JOE GLASER

And another boozy morning, Johnny. Well I brought you some coffee to straighten you out.

JOHNNY COLLINS

What? Wait...I know you.

JOE GLASER

Well one cup is coffee and the other cup is something with a little more kick. Acid, right?

BLACK GANGSTER

That's right.

JOHNNY COLLINS

What?!?

JOE GLASER

Let's see how lucky you are today.

Joe throws one cup of coffee in
Johnny's face. He screams and
grabs his face.

JOHNNY COLLINS

You goddamn maniac!!! WHAT IS THIS?

JOE GLASER

This is your lucky day. That cup just had
coffee. Scalding hot, but still coffee.

JOHNNY COLLINS

What the fuck do you want?

JOE GLASER

Negotiations. You have Louis Armstrong tied up.
And it's terrible to tie up Louis. That's like
tying up the American flag--

BLACK GANGSTER

--Or the Statue of Liberty.

JOHNNY COLLINS

He's my client!

JOE GLASER

Yeah, but you squandered him Johnny. Half the
time you're in such a stupor you can't even
walk straight. So I'm gonna take him off your
hands.

JOHNNY COLLINS

FUCK. OFF.

JOE GLASER

Sign.

Joe takes out a contract.
Or it's the second cup. Ever seen what acid
does to the skin? It would be a shame to melt
all that good whiskey you got in you.

JOHNNY COLLINS

Okay, let's talk this through.

JOE GLASER

Johnny, we just did! Sign.

Johnny hesitates. The Gangster
presses his head against the desk.

Joe lifts the cup and dangles it over Johnny's head. Johnny screams.

JOHNNY COLLINS

FINE! Take the bum off my hands. You'd be doing me a favor.

JOE GLASER

(putting cup back down)

See! I love doing favors. Do you mind if I make a phone call in my office?

JOHNNY COLLINS

Go ahead.

JOE GLASER

Well you're standing in my office.

JOHNNY COLLINS

You arrogant little bastard-

JOE GLASER

-just helping you out, Johnny. You're retired now. What do you need with a big fancy management office? I'll take this off your hands too. Another favor.

Johnny exits, grabbing his mementos.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

(to Thug)

Get the word out. Louis Armstrong is open for business. Film, TV, tours, commercials, cereal boxes, birthday parties, and bar mitzvahs.

Joe picks up the second cup. He holds it in his hand and then gulps it down. The cup doesn't have acid in it. Just coffee.

BLACK GANGSTER

How does it taste?

JOE GLASER

A little hot. But like victory.

SCENE 37: HEEBIE JEEBIES

Split scene between Joe Glaser's office and Louis Armstrong in front of an adoring Miami Beach Fontainebleau audience with FOUR SHOW DANCERS (two men, two women).

ALPHA

With Joe Glaser in charge, the threats went away. But something else went away too. A spark in Louis. But...Pops was popular. And who could argue with the adoring crowds.

*
*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#29 HEEBIE JEEBIES

OH, I'VE GOT THE HEEBIES
I MEAN THE JEEBIES
TALKING ABOUT
THE DANCE, THE HEEBIE JEEBIES
DO, BECAUSE THEY'RE BOYS
BECAUSE IT PLEASES ME TO BE JOY.

A battered CONCERT PROMOTER crawls away from Joe and Black Gangster.

JOE GLAZER

You see, Charlie, I'm a numbers man.

CONCERT PROMOTER

Please, Joe. Please...

JOE GLAZER

And the numbers just don't make sense with the concert that Louis just did for you.

ALPHA

Joe went from a street thug to one of the most successful talent managers of all time. Working deals for Louis, Ella Fitzgerald.

Joe is about to hit Concert Promoter, but he reaches in his pocket and pulls out cash. Joe takes it and counts it.

BLACK GANGSTER

(beating up promoter)

And Barbara Streisand.

ENSEMBLE

SAY, DON'T YOU KNOW IT?
YOU DON'T KNOW HOW;
DON'T BE BLUE
SOMEONE WILL TEACH YOU
COME ON AND DO THAT DANCE
THEY CALL THE HEEBIE JEEBIES DANCE
YES, MA'AM
LET'S DO THE HEEBIE JEEBIES DANCE

Joe and Black Gangster visit Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I thought the promoter said he would pay me at the end of the year.

JOE GLAZER

It was an accounting problem. We fixed it.

BLACK GANGSTER

Yeah.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG/ENSEMBLE

COME ON NOW AND DO THAT DANCE

THEY CALL THE HEEBIE JEEBIES DANCE

SWEET MAMA

PAPA'S GOT TO DO THE HEEBIE JEEBIES DANCE.

SCENE 38: BACKSTAGE TALK

Alpha enters.

JOE GLASER

-Louis, my boy. How's life treating?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Swell and sweet. Got a full plate of events.

ALPHA

And rice and beans at home.

JOE GLASER

Louis, we need to talk about something.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh, sure, sure. Let's go to the club.

JOE GLASER

Sounds good.

ALPHA

What about dinner?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

We'll be right back, honey.

ALPHA

They think I don't know what they're doing when they go to the club to check out women. Well I can make plans of my own.

Lights shift. VIP club area with two armchairs. They drink and watch the dancers. We only see their shadows. MUSIC UNDERSCORE: "Meat and Potatoes."

*

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I don't know about more touring, Joe. I was thinking about finally settling down and starting a family. (gawking at dancer) Wow, isn't she something?

*
*
*

JOE GLASER

You're a jazz man. Jazz men go on the road. They tour, they travel. You promised me.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I know, Joe.

JOE GLASER

This is the deal we made. You called me up...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

We don't have to go into that, Pops. Just look at Brown Sugar and-

JOE GLASER

-You call me up from Savannah talking about wanting protection. Didn't I make all the bad guys go away?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You did.

JOE GLASER

So isn't it time you held up your part of the deal?

Louis looks at the papers. Lights shift to Alpha. MUSIC. "Laughing Louie"

SCENE 39: TOURING #3

ALPHA

So it was back on the road. Rice and beans. Rice and beans. Rice and beans...

MUSIC. #29A ALL THAT MEAT AND NO POTATOES/LAUGHING LOUIE.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(entering)

Alpha! Alpha!! Hope you got dinner ready because I am ready for some rice and-

SCENE 40: ALPHA AND LOUIS BREAKUP

Alpha picks up her suitcase. Music stops.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-What are you doing?

ALPHA

Louis, remember when you said we would talk later? Well it's later.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You weren't talking about leaving me when you were living fancy and easy, you ungrateful-

ALPHA

-I never wanted your fancy, Louis. I just wanted a home. But you're never gonna settle down.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm an entertainer. I gotta tour. Joe said-

ALPHA

Don't get me started on that devil.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I signed a deal with Joe.

ALPHA

You signed a deal with me too. But I guess that one doesn't matter.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

We are man and wife, Alpha.

ALPHA

Yes, man, wife, and Brown Sugar. Enjoy.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And where you going?

ALPHA

Away from you...with your drummer. We moving up north and he said he would take care of me. And I wouldn't have to cook rice and beans.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What about our little project?

ALPHA

I took care of it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What?

ALPHA

(exiting)

You heard me.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
You can't do that.

ALPHA
But --

Alpha tries to exit and Louis stops her. And then he backs her up against the wall (without touching her). That's when Alpha let's loose with...

ALPHA (CONT'D)
#30 BIG BUTTER AND EGG MAN REPRISE
I'VE GOT MY BIG BUTTER AND EGG MAN
FROM WAY UP, FROM WAY UP NORTH
'CAUSE I DON'T WANT TO BE COOKING ALL DAY
SO I GOT MONEY, WHEN I WANTS TO PLAY
NOW PRETTY CLOTHES THEY'LL ALWAYS BE MINE
BUT WHEN MY DREAMS COME TRUE, THE SUN'S GONNA SHINE
NOW I'VE GOT MY BUTTER AN EGG MAN
AND NO
MORE
RICE
AND BEANS!
(SPOKEN) STUFF YOUR BULLSHIT BEANS.

Alpha triumphantly exits. Full of pride.

SCENE 41: FINDING LOVE

Louis takes a moment. Daisy and Lil enter as he puts a smile on his face and goes to the Cotton Club. **Underscore of Body & Soul.**

DAISY PARKER
He always wanted that one thing.

LIL HARDIN
Always talking about wanting to be a family man.

LIL HARDIN (CONT'D)
He would have been a terrible father.

DAISY PARKER
Really? I think he would have changed. Maybe.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
(talking to himself)
What did I do?

SCENE 42: COTTON CLUB VIP ROOM

BROWN SUGAR...aka LUCILLE enters.
Lights shift to a club. She's
backstage in a bathrobe.

LUCILLE WILSON

What do I do? Cotton Club and then some dancing
around town. But people like you and me are
always doing things. Gotta keep busy.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Lucille, I have a question to ask you.

LUCILLE WILSON

I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-No. No. We've done that already. Can you cook?

LUCILLE WILSON

I can learn to cook. What do you like?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Rice and beans.

LUCILLE WILSON

Well I can learn.

JOE GLAZER

Louis! I got you the biggest tour. You don't
mind being on the road some more, do you?

LUCILLE WILSON

Do you mind that?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(answering both)

No don't mind at all. So how about a first
date? Let's go get something fancy.

*

**I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT
LOVE UNDERSCORE.**

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

What's wrong, Lucille?

LUCILLE WILSON

Louis. A lot of guys...Look: just don't step on
my heart.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Why would I do that?

LUCILLE WILSON

Because... it's open.

"A Wonderful World"

3/9/20

82.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

So is mine. And it's crazy 'bout you.

CHAPTER FOUR: NEW YORK

SCENE 43: INTERVIEW

It's the 1950s. FIVE SHOWGIRLS lead Joe Glaser in. Joe and Lucille are being interviewed, surrounded REPORTERS and SECURITY GUARDS.

JOE GLASER

#32 I'M CRAZY BOUT MY BABY

I'M WALKING ON AIR
FOR I LEFT ALL MY BLUE DAYS BEHIND
I'VE LEARNED HOW TO CARE
AND THERE'S LOVE, REALLY LOVE ON MY MIND
I'M THE WORLD'S MOST HAPPY CREATURE
TELL ME WHAT CAN WORRY BE
I'M CRAZY 'BOUT HIM... BABY

SHOWGIRLS

BABY, HE'S CRAZY 'BOUT ME

JOE GLASER

Legacy. That's what we all want. What did it all amount to? Louis Armstrong stands head and shoulders above anyone else.

LUCILLE WILSON

What do I think of my husband? He's a-

JOE GLASER

(talking over her)

-My client is the most successful musician in the world and perhaps the most successful American who ever-

LUCILLE WILSON

(talking over him)

-He loves me. That's why I keep our marriage certificate right up front. First hallway before you get to the bedroom. So that people know 'HEY!! He loves me.'

JOE GLASER

MR. CUPID WAS THEIR TEACHER
THAT'S THE REASON WE AGREE

SHOWGIRLS

YES, WE'RE CRAZY 'BOUT OUR BABY

JOE GLASER

AND BABY, HE'S CRAZY 'BOUT ME

LUCILLE WILSON

Me.

JOE GLASER

Yeah, whatever.

Joe points to Reporter.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

PAPA, GET THAT BOOK OUT
READY IN YOUR HAND
KEEP A STEADY LOOK OUT
AND YOU CAN UNDERSTAND
IT'S AN A-ONE COMBINATION
WITH A PERFECT HE AND ME

LUCILLE WILSON

-and me!

JOE GLASER

I'M CRAZY 'BOUT MY BABY
AND MY BABY IS CRAZY 'BOUT ME.
FINE... WE.

Joe spins Lucille off-stage.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

His soul and his home is now here in New York
City. Capital of the free world. Louis
"Satchmo" Armstrong embodies the spirit, the
charm.

LUCILLE WILSON

(listening to question)

My background?

JOE GLASER

His wife, Lucille? Very wholesome. Clean.
American.

LUCILLE WILSON

Well...Cotton Club. Night. If you're sensitive
you better close your eyes. This is gonna get a
little blue.

SCENE 44: COTTON CLUB STAGE

Lucille rips off the housecoat to
reveal a sexy bodice of feathers
and beads. Suddenly we're in the
Cotton Club. Sex and booze
everywhere.

LUCILLE WILSON

I was one of the finest dancers at the Cotton
Club when Louis came in one night. My name was
Brown Sugar. I was sexy but most customers give
more attention to the lighter hues. But not
Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You and me could make hot chocolate together.

LUCILLE WILSON

Most people around here only want egg cremes.

STAGE MANAGER

Brown sugar! Places.

LUCILLE WILSON

I gotta go.

STAGE MANAGER

Stay. Look, we been out a few times. And I didn't step on your heart, did I?

LUCILLE WILSON

No, but my show is about to start in-

STAGE MANAGER

30 seconds.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I don't need 30 seconds to see what is in front of me.

LUCILLE WILSON

Can we talk about this later?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Ok. It's later.

LUCILLE WILSON

Much later.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Lucille, I love you and I'm a simple man who is getting old. In the past I would get down on my knees and pop the question. But these days my knees don't get down like they used to. Now we're both standing here on solid ground, eye to eye. And we want the same thing.

*

*

LIL HARDIN AND LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Home.

LUCILLE WILSON

And that's how it happened.

Cotton Club dancers come out to congratulate Lucille on her engagement. **#32A CRAZY ABOUT MY BABY REPRISE.**

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)

I'M THE WORLD'S MOST HAPPY CREATURE,
TELL ME, WHAT CAN WORRY ME?
I'M CRAZY 'BOUT MY BABY,
AND BABY'S CRAZY 'BOUT ME!

SCENE 45: COTTON CLUB TAG

Show Girls take over as scene transitions.

COTTON CLUB GIRLS

SHE'S THE WORLD'S MOST HAPPY CREATURE,
TELL ME, WHAT CAN WORRY SHE?
SHE'S CRAZY 'BOUT HER BABY,
BABY HE'S CRAZY 'BOUT!

SCENE 46: JOE'S OFFICE

Lucille storms into Joe's office.

LUCILLE WILSON

I need to see Louis' money.

JOE GLASER

Why?

LUCILLE WILSON

Because you got a problem with numbers, Joe.
And I'm trying to buy a house.

JOE GLASER

Well, I can buy that for you. I take care of
Louis needs and even give him an allowance.

LUCILLE WILSON

A tiny allowance.

JOE GLASER

Just tell me what kind of house you need-

LUCILLE WILSON

-no. I want the money.

JOE GLASER

That's not the arrangement I worked out with
Louis. Hey, you want some salami?

LUCILLE WILSON

Well that arrangement can change.

JOE GLASER

Because you're Louis' new wife, I will try to
respect you. But Mrs. Armstrong you're wearing
out my patience.

LUCILLE WILSON

Well I'm sorry I'm wearing you out. Maybe because I'm not your type. Maybe if I was a bit younger.

JOE GLASER

What the hell are you talking about?

LUCILLE WILSON

Joe, I did some research on you. You were arrested recently for-

JOE GLASER

It was a one time thing. She lied about her age.

LUCILLE WILSON

Did all the other girls lie too?

JOE GLASER

So you're blackmailing me?

They look at each other.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

How about a compromise? You grew up in New York right?

LUCILLE WILSON

Queens. It's where I want our home.

JOE GLASER

Okay, so I will increase Louis's salary and I will also create a savings for him. I will write down a number that I think you will like.

LUCILLE WILSON

Just as long as it isn't too young. I'd hate for the press to find out about your numbers problems.

Joe and Lucille go back to being interviewed. Reporters re-enter. Music reprise of "Crazy Bout My Baby."

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)

We came to an understanding.

JOE GLASER

I almost demanded that Louis and Lucille take more money. They needed a nest. We all agreed.

LUCILLE WILSON

I'M THE WORLD'S MOST HAPPY CREATURE

JOE GLASER
TELL ME WHAT CAN WORRY BE

REPORTERS
THAT'S RIGHT

LUCILLE WILSON/JOE GLAZER
I'M CRAZY 'BOUT HIM... BABY
BABY, HE'S CRAZY
BABY, HE'S CRAZY
BABY, HE'S CRAZY 'BOUT --

SCENE 47: QUEENS HOUSE

Lucille enters new house with a few moving boxes. Joe brings a housewarming gift. Louis looks around.

LUCILLE WILSON
What do you think?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
It's nice.

JOE GLASER
Nice? It's Norman Rockwell. It's Betsy Ross, it's American values-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
-Joe, stop it.

LUCILLE WILSON
Just nice? There's a private room to listen to your records. We got all new floors.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Yes, Lucille. It's swell baby.

LUCILLE WILSON
Well, what's wrong?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Nothing. It's a house.

LUCILLE WILSON
I know it's a house, but I want it to be a home.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Something is missing.

LUCILLE WILSON
What?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
I don't know. I've been waiting my whole life and...something is off.

LUCILLE WILSON

But Louis-

JOE GLASER

You know what I think you need? A tour.

LUCILLE WILSON

Louis, you said you would stay and we would-

JOE GLASER

- but not just any tour. An ambassador tour.
The State Department wants you to travel around
the world representing these United States of
America.

Joe takes a bunch of tiny American
flags out of the box.

LUCILLE WILSON

My God, don't you ever stop?

JOE GLASER

This is our chance to solidify your legacy for
all time-

LUCILLE WILSON

-And to maximize your profits-

JOE GLASER

-as the greatest American who ever lived.

LUCILLE WILSON

Why would the State Department want you to
represent our nation?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Hey, why not?

JOE GLASER

Rags to riches. He is as American as apple pie.

LUCILLE WILSON

Louis, you smoke pot all day, watch porn, hang
out with gangsters, cuss like a sailor, and
screw like a dirty old man.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yeah. America.

JOE GLASER

Plus look at that smile. Every Armstrong song
is like a bright beautiful smile.

LUCILLE WILSON

Why don't you take a break, honey? Get settled
in...

JOE GLASER

No time, duty calls. Your country needs you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Sorry baby. (looks around) I like the curtains.

SCENE 48: TOURING #4 (CIVIL UNREST)

TOUR MUSIC. "Laughing Louie."

LUCILLE WILSON

So Louis went back on the road. Touring non-stop, but this time around the world. Busting his lip open from playing so much.

BANG! We are launched into a whirlwind worldwide tour. Luggage, shouting, hustling to and from different planes. We are in frantic tour mode.

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)

I tried to keep up. But even I had to take breaks from Joe's touring schedule. And things were starting to happen here at home.

We see civil unrest. Civil rights protesters and violent mobs beating up people. Blacks run as Louis continues to play. The music keeps getting faster and faster with the violence.

TWO PROTESTORS battered and bruised enter. They look at Louis Armstrong smile and play.

PROTESTER #1 JAMES

Look at this Uncle Tom motherfucker.

PROTESTER #2 TRACI

He don't care for nobody but his'self.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(struggling to hear over music)

What's that now?

JOE GLASER

OH that? That? It's nothing.

PROTESTERS

LAUGHING LOUIE
LAUGHING LOUIE
LAUGHING LOUIE
AHAHAHAHAHAHA

PROTESTER #2 DORI

You don't even care about us.

JOE GLASER

Ambassador Satchmo is the greatest American-

PROTESTER #1 JAMES

They got you by the balls, Satchmo!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Joe, what are these fools talking about?!?

Band Members remove the
Protestors.

JOE GLASER

Nevermind. We gotta get you to your hotel,
Ambassador Satch!

PROTESTER #1 KHADIJAH

(dragged out)

Little Rock!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Little who?

PROTESTER #2 TRACI

Little Rock! There are protests in Little Rock.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

They always protesting and complaining. But a
wise man always said if they ain't paying your
bills you got-

BAND MEMBER #1 KAREEMA

-no, Louis these are kids. Negro kids who are
trying to go to school.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm sure President Eisenhower will fix it. We
are all Americans and...and...

SCENE 49: HOTEL ROOM/PRESS OFFICE

"Laughing Louie" cross fades into
a **#33A BLACK AND BLUE UNDERSCORE**.
Louis is in his hotel room
watching the Little Rock protests
on TV. We hear the mob of white
parents, fire hoses, and of dogs.
The smile from Louis' face fades.
He watches. Announcer on screen...

ANNOUNCER

Today in Little Rock, nine Negro children were
met with thousands of angry white citizens.

JOE GLASER

Time to get ready for the concert, Satchmo.

ANNOUNCER #2

Governor Orville Faubus denied entry to students trying to attend. Negro chaperones and children were showered with bottles, spit, and urine.

Lights shift to An Editorial office. RACHEL THE REPORTER enters and talks to EDDIE THE EDITOR.

RACHEL THE REPORTER

Eddie, I just came back from Satchmo's hotel room.

EDDIE THE EDITOR

Oh, you got some good quotes about the concert?

Lights shift. We're in the interview with Louis as he continues watching the TV.

RACHEL THE REPORTER

Satch...my name is Rachel. Do you mind if I ask you some questions?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

...Sure.

RACHEL THE REPORTER

(to Louis)

Reverend Satch, you must be really excited to be back in North Dakota.

*

Louis stares off. Thinking. As he talks we get tableaux of his past...the Banjo Boy before getting lynched...Stepin Fetchit telling him to 'put on the shine'...maybe even the Memphis Police. These ghosts can swirl around him or stand behind him.

RACHEL THE REPORTER (CONT'D)

People love you around here. Highlight of some people's year is seeing you play-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(softly)

-you know...I've spent my whole life playing for white people.

BANJO BOY

UP A LAZY RIVER

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Smiling at them --

STEPIN FETCHIT
WHEN YOU'RE SMILIN'

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
joking, making them laugh --

MEMPHIS CAPTAIN
Boy, I tell you --

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
My whole life, since I was a
little kid.

KING JOE OLIVER
QUIT? Nobody quits King Joe
Oliver's band

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
That's been my thing...every
day.
And I just don't understand.
I just don't get it,
like...it's bad out there.
It's...It's getting so bad
out there it's like a Colored
Man hasn't got any country.

ALL FOUR
UP A LAZY RIVER / WHEN YOU'RE
SMILIN' / Boy I tell you, no
one has ever / you muddy
water, flat-footed, hen-
pecked, soup-bowled,
mother...nobody quits King
Joe Oliver

EDDIE THE EDITOR
He said what?

RACHEL THE REPORTER
So I asked him about President Eisenhower.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
Gutless and two-faced liar.

Lights shift to Joe Glaser in his
office. The phone rings.

JOE GLASER
Karen I told you I didn't want to be...what?
Slow down...what?

EDDIE THE EDITOR
He can't say that about the president of the
United States. Did you ask him about the
Governor of Arkansas?

RACHEL THE REPORTER
Yes.

EDDIE THE EDITOR/JOE GLASER
What did he say?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG
That motherfucking worthless uneducated redneck
hick.

RACHEL THE REPORTER
(looking at notes)
He said he had issues with the governor.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

That motherfucker! That stupid low-down, dirty scumbag can kiss MY ENTIRE BLACK ASS. FROM THE TITS TO THE GRITS!

RACHEL THE REPORTER

And he was 'perturbed.'

Light shift to Lucille Wilson
unpacking at home. Phone rings.

LUCILLE WILSON

Good morning, Armstrong residence. Oh hi, Denise. I just bought new...no, I didn't hear.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I've seen blacks get beaten till their unrecognizable for doing nothing. I've seen Colored women pushed down stairs for not walking fast enough.

RACHEL THE REPORTER

Ambassador Satchmo, are you still going to do your tour in the Soviet Union for the State Department?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I don't know. The way they treating my people...the government can go to hell.

It's like a nuclear bomb has gone off for the Eddie, Joe, and Lucille. They are stunned.

LUCILLE WILSON

Oh, Louis...

JOE GLASER

Nonononono!!!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And I'll tell you another fucking thing-

JOE GLASER

-no, no more fucking things!! NO MORE! STOP!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

They got me out here grinning and singing the national anthem. But that's not the anthem my people know. You want to hear how we hear the "Star Spangled Banner?"

LUCILLE WILSON

Well...I'm curious.

JOE GLASER

NOOOO!!!!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#34 STAR SPANGLED BANNER

OH SAY CAN YOU KISS MY ASS?
BY THE PROUD BULLSHIT LIES
WHO SO GALLANTLY LYNCHED
AT THE TWILIGHT'S BURNING CROSS,
WHOSE BROAD KLANS AND BRIGHT REDNECKS
THROUGH THE PERILOUS FUCKS,
O'ER THE RAMPARTS WE BEAT, TORTURED, WHIPPED,
US INTO THE GRAVE.

Band Member stop Louis.

JOE GLASER

We're ruined. All that work, years of
marketing. Ruined! Sammy Davis Jr. turned
against us.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I can sing better than him anyway.

LUCILLE WILSON

Adam Clayton Powell, tons of black politicians
and celebrities are speaking out against Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

One minute they call me a coon and a sellout,
the next minute I'm too radical to be a Negro!
What the hell do they want?

LUCILLE WILSON

Well don't shout at me, Louis. I'm just telling
you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How about you stop telling me and you start
supporting me by being my wife?

LUCILLE WILSON

How can I be your wife when you're never
around.

Lucille picks up some stuff and
leaves.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

And where are you going?

LUCILLE WILSON

(exiting)

Away from you.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#31 BLACK AND BLUE

COLD EMPTY BED, SPRINGS HARD AS LEAD
PAINS IN MY HEAD, FEEL LIKE OLD NED
WHAT DID I DO TO BE SO BLACK AND BLUE?
NO JOYS FOR ME, NO COMPANY
EVEN THE MOUSE RAN FROM MY HOUSE
ALL MY LIFE THROUGH
I'VE BEEN SO BLACK AND BLUE
I'M HURT INSIDE BUT THAT DON'T HELP MY CASE
'CAUSE I CAN'T HIDE WHAT IS ON MY FACE
OH, HOW WILL IT END?
AIN'T GOT NO FRIEND
MY ONLY SIN IS MY SKIN
WHAT DID I DO TO BE SO BLACK AND BLUE?
TELL ME, WHAT DID I DO
POO DOO DA POO DOO DA
WHAT DID I DO
WHAT DID I DO
WHAT DID I DO
TO BE SO BLACK AND...
BLUE

SCENE 50: TOURING #5 (HELLO DOLLY)

#34A LAUGHING LOUIE/HELLO DOLLY.
Touring.

LUCILLE WILSON

And so it was back to scrambling for money. For years and years. One-nighters in small towns, big city halls, bit parts in movies, singing on children's albums, two-bit jingles and then...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(hello)

"Well Hello, Dolly....looking swell, Dolly.'
Joe, what is this? You brought me in here on a weekend to sing this crap?

JOE GLASER

Yeah. And with a smile.

MUSIC. "Hello Dolly."

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(bright smile)

WELLLLLLLL, HELLO DOLLY.
YES HELLO-

Louis stops.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I can't do this.

LUCILLE WILSON

But he did. And months later.

JAZZ FAN

(shouting at Louis)

Hello Dolly!!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(waving)

Yes, Hello to you too.

JAZZ FAN #2

We love "Hello Dolly!"

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

"All right cat!" Who the hell is Dolly and why do people keep telling me to say hello?

JOE GLASER

Remember that song you called a piece of crap?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Joe, I'm old. I call a lot of songs pieces of crap these days.

JOE GLASER

Well that piece of crap known as "Hello Dolly" just knocked The Beatles off the top spot. It's your first national and international #1 hit.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

A global hit?

JOE GLASER

Yeah. How does it feel, Satchmo?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(thinking)

I always knew that song was a hit. The moment I read it, I said 'this...this is golden.'

LUCILLE WILSON

And then more hits starting pouring in. (to Louis) More hits than a tambourine.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Or your fat bottom.

Louis grabs Lucille and they start dancing seductively.

LUCILLE WILSON

You gonna hit it?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I'm gonna hit it like Dolly, Jolly, and Miss Molly. How would you like that?

LUCILLE WILSON

I would love that. We haven't danced together in years.

Louis realizes that's true and the dancing becomes more romantic.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh, I see. You looking for a little romance first?

LUCILLE WILSON

We don't need to do that, if you're busy.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No, no. Let's be romantic for a night.

LUCILLE WILSON

You mean it?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Of course. Put on your best dress and dancing shoes. Let's go out. Any club you like. Drink till we're dizzy, fall in bed at 5, and sleep till lunch. I'll get the champagne. Let's fall in love again, baby.

Louis twirls Lucille and then exits. She spins and spins and spins around as time passes...

SCENE 51: QUEENS RECEIPTS

Lucille stops spinning and she's at home later. Joe is with her.

JOE GLASER

A baby make a place feel like home.

LUCILLE WILSON

Babies make a place feel like a daycare. Besides, he spends all his time hanging out with the kids on the street. Buying them ice cream. He already got a whole platoon of kids.

JOE GLASER

(handing over papers)

Well he does seem more relaxed. Here are the receipts.

LUCILLE WILSON

Thank you. Now that he's not touring as much he can lay back. That backlash was the best thing that ever happened to him.

*

JOE GLASER

Yeah and now you two can be lovebirds again. I see how he's taking you out to fancy supper clubs.

*

LUCILLE WILSON

He does spoil me.

JOE GLASER

He must be if he's blowing money at Macy's, Tiffany's, Bergdorfs.

LUCILLE WILSON

(laughs)

...wait what?

JOE GLASER

I'm just saying he's spending all this money at department stores, spoiling you rotten.

LUCILLE WILSON

You said Tiffany's?

JOE GLASER

Or something like that.

LUCILLE WILSON

He's never gotten me anything from Tiffany's. Is there a receipt in here from Tiffany's?

JOE GLASER

Lucille...I think I got my spending charge mixed up with Louis. I remembered that I bought something for my wife at Tiffany's.

Lucille looks through receipts.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

Like I said, I think one of my receipts got tossed in there.

Lucille finds the Tiffany's receipt. She looks at it.

JOE GLASER (CONT'D)

Lucille...

LUCILLE WILSON

No, I remember. Louis did buy me something from Tiffany's.

JOE GLASER
(relieved)

Oh.

LUCILLE WILSON
Yeah. It must have slipped my mind. Along with
these charges to... The Ritz.

JOE GLASER
I'm glad. I'm really really...well, all right.

LUCILLE WILSON
I really should get dinner ready.

MUSIC UNDERSCORE: "That's My Home"

JOE GLASER
I will see you around. And Lucille?

LUCILLE WILSON
Yes, Joe?

JOE GLASER
You have a lovely home.

LUCILLE WILSON
Thank you, Joe.

Joe exits. Lucille makes sure no
one is around and then she breaks
down. Louis is cheating on her.

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)

#35 THAT'S MY HOME

WHERE THE SUNSET IN THE SKY
AND FLOWERS NEVER DIE, BABE
FRIENDS DON'T PASS YOU BY
BECAUSE THAT'S MY HOME
WHEN THE FOLKS SAY, "HOW DE DO?"
LIKE THEY MEAN IT TOO, GIRL
WHERE MAMA'S LOVE IS TRUE
BECAUSE THAT'S MY HOME
I'M ALWAYS WELCOMED BACK
NO MATTER WHERE I ROAM, ALWAYS WELCOME
JUST A LITTLE SHACK TO ME
IS HOME SWEET HOME
WHERE A LONELY RIVER FLOWS
WEEPING WILLOW GROWS
I NEEDN'T SAY NO MORE
BECAUSE THAT'S MY HOME

Lucille picks another receipt from
the box.

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)
(reading)

Macy's. \$75. Baby clothes.

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)

THAT'S MY HOME.

SCENE 52: PARTY

Louis is partying with his Band Members at home. Band Members sit around laughing at a joke he's finishing. Lucille sits off to the side, watching them with cold detachment.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

...and the Madame said, 'what do you expect for \$1? Lobster?'

They laugh. Louis takes a shot and passes the bottle to Lucille.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Lucille, you next. Tell 'em the joke about the hairy potato.

LUCILLE WILSON

I don't feel like talking about that filth.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Filth? That's one of your best jokes. You ain't getting a drink unless you joke.

BAND MEMBER #1

Come on, Lucille. This is just a game.

Phone rings. Louis goes to answer it. WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY appears.

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

Good evening, could I speak with Louis Armstrong?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes.

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

This is Ambassador Satch? The king of jazz?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(laughing at band)

Yeah. Who dis?

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

This is the White House calling.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

...all right. So what do you want?

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

(stunned that he's not impressed)

Oh. Okay. Well we have a special invitation from...President Nixon! He wants to invite you to: the White House.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Why?

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

Oh. Okay. Well he wants you to play at the White House for some of the world's highest dignitaries. President Nixon thinks that jazz is the very symbol-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-tell the president fuck that shit.

WHITE HOUSE SECRETARY

Oh...I...what? I don't understand. I...I can't do that.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Sure you can. It's easy. Just say that the grinning, singing, dancing king of jazz told him to go fuck himself.

Louis hangs up the phone.

BAND MEMBER #1

What was that?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Just a gig. Now, Lucille, it's just dirty jokes-

LUCILLE WILSON

-I'm not spreading any more dirt in my house.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Oh, it's your house?

Stand-off. Louis backs down and smiles for his guest.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Ha ha, Lucille just gassing me up. (sotto to her) Tell the joke.

LUCILLE WILSON

No.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Tell the joke.

LUCILLE WILSON

No.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Tell the goddamn joke.

LUCILLE WILSON

(softly)

Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you.

BAND MEMBER #1

Oh, well look at the time. We should be going-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-you sit down. You ain't going nowhere.

(switches to a happy mood) You ain't going nowhere 'till I play you something. A little New Orleans Dixieland music.

BAND MEMBER #1

That's not necessary Louis-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-This was back before it was even called jazz. Played at a place called the "Funky Butt" where I partook of many stinky front and backsides.

Lucille storms out. Louis takes out his horn. He starts to blow. He struggles to play the trumpet. The sound of air.

BAND MEMBER #1

Satch, are you okay?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yeah, just gotta clean the pipes a bit.

Louis tries to play again. He's flustered and laughs it off. He adjusts the horn.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

The horn is fighting me tonight.

BAND MEMBER #1

Satch, why don't you take it easy?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

No, I got it.

Louis blows and blood spills down his front. A shrill sound comes out. He struggles to control the sound as he goes out of breath. And suddenly....

RED ON HIS SHIRT! Blood starts spreading across his collar and down his front. He's bleeding from his mouth. Band members gasp and yell at Louis to stop.

BAND MEMBER #1

Lou! LOU!! LOU!!! STOP IT!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(stops playing)

Man, why can't you let me jam I...

Louis looks down at his shirt.
He's bleeding everywhere.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Oh this? This is nothing. I...I get like this some time. Ain't no reason to stop the party. You act like you ain't...never seen a little...blood on the lip...

Louis collapses. The band members rush to him. Lucille comes from the other room.

LUCILLE WILSON

Call an ambulance!!

SCENE 53: HOSPITAL

Louis is in the hospital. All of the wives enter.

DAISY PARKER

#36 ST. JAMES INFIRMARY

I WENT DOWN TO ST. JAMES INFIRMARY...

LIL HARDIN

I SAW MY BABY THERE.

ALPHA

HE WAS STRETCHED OUT ON A LONG WHITE TABLE.

LUCILLE WILSON

SO SWEET, SO COOL, SO FAIR.

FOUR WIVES

LET HIM GO, LET HIM GO, GOD BLESS HIM
WHEREVER HE MAY BE
HE MAY SEARCH THIS WHOLE WIDE WORLD OVER
BUT HE'LL NEVER FIND A SWEETER GIRL THAN ME.

DAISY PARKER

The doctors came.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well to be honest, Doc: I've been running
around a bit.

ALPHA

And they ran their tests...

LIL HARDIN

...while Louis flapped his gums.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You see I got a sweet thing upstate. She about
to have a baby. Joe knows about her.

LUCILLE WILSON

Joe Glaser was down the hallway from Louis in
another hospital bed.

LIL HARDIN

Fighting his own battle

ALPHA

...and hearing his own bad news...

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

...what?...what do you mean...spit it out,
doc...

FOUR WIVES

You can't play anymore...because you're dying.

Louis mutters to himself. He takes
out his mouth piece and fidgets
with it.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Dying? I got more life in my
pinky finger than you got in
those stupid charts? Yeah,
yeah... stupid doctor. Trying
to tell me I 'can't blow no
more.' That's ridiculous.
Been blowing for 50 years.
(yelling) I know my time.
I've been keeping my time
since I was on the riverboat.
I make time. Time don't make
me. I...I...

FOUR WIVES (CONT'D)

MMN MMN MMN

MMN MMN MMN

MMN MMN MMN

MMN MMN MMN

FOUR WIVES (CONT'D)

LET HIM GO, LET HIM GO, GOD BLESS HIM
WHEREVER HE MAY BE
HE MAY SEARCH THIS WHOLE WIDE WORLD OVER
BUT HE'LL NEVER FIND A SWEETER LADY THAN ME
OH, HE'LL NEVER FIND A SWEETER LADY THAN ME
NO, HE'LL NEVER FIND A SWEETER LADY THAN ME.

SCENE 54: JOE'S VISIT

Louis drifts off to sleep. Lights shift. It's nighttime. Joe Glaser enters in a hospital gown.

JOE GLASER

Hey, stop sleeping, bastard! The tour bus is waiting!

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(waking up)

Huh? Oh, Joe! Doc told me you were in here too.

JOE GLASER

Yeah, it's my ticker. They won't even let me eat any salami. So I've been just walking around the halls and thinking.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

About what?

JOE GLASER

Time. I just wanted to tell you I may have not been the most...I don't know: 'reputable' manager or 'ethical' or 'honest' or whatever the hell people say, but now that things are wrapping up-

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

-Oh, don't start with the retirement speech, Joe. You'll put us both to sleep. And you're not going anywhere.

JOE GLASER

Oh is that so?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes. No apologies. We were all scrapping and hustling.

JOE GLASER

Two old men trying to claw out a few more days.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Hey, I ain't old. I'm gonna play for another 50 years.

JOE GLASER

50?! That's a lot of tour dates.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well then you better get started booking them.

Music. "We Have All the Time" in the world creeps in.

JOE GLASER

All right, how about The Copa?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Let's do it. We got time, Joe.

JOE GLASER

And then the Apollo, swinging over to Blue Note for a comeback concert.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Sign me up.

JOE GLASER

#37 WE HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

WE HAVE ALL, THE TIME IN THE WORLD
TIME ENOUGH FOR LIFE
TO UNFOLD
ALL THE PRECIOUS THINGS
LOVE HAS IN STORE.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

WE HAVE ALL THE LOVE IN THE WORLD
IF THAT'S ALL WE HAVE
YOU WILL FIND
WE NEED NOTHING MORE.

SCENE 55: LUCILLE'S VISIT

Joe exits. Lights shift to morning. Lucille enters.

LUCILLE WILSON

How you feeling?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Hey, doc says I need to tour more. Get my chops back.

LUCILLE WILSON

That's not what the doctor said, Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well not in so many words. But I can interpret Doc-speak.

LUCILLE WILSON

-Doc says you think you have a kid.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Well...I was trying to find a way to break this to you baby, but yes. There's a girl named Sweetie. And she's finally given me what I wanted. A child. And a real family. That's what was missing from our house.

LUCILLE WILSON

Louis, you are a fool.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Lucille, I'm so sorry. I still love you with all my heart. But Sweetie and her child are apart of our home now.

Lucille hands him a piece of paper.

LUCILLE WILSON

That's a copy of the birth certificate for Sweetie's son. Sweetie has a man, and it ain't you. And that son has a father, but it ain't you either. She knew what you wanted and played you like a sucker.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

You're lying.

LUCILLE WILSON

No, Louis. I hired someone to do some research after I saw your expenses.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

How do I know this is real? I'm gonna take this to Joe and he'll check it out.

LUCILLE WILSON

Joe Glaser?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Yes, he's down the hall.

LUCILLE WILSON

Louis...Joe died last night.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

What? No, but I was...we were...I've made a mess of everything, haven't I? I'm so sorry, Lucille.

LUCILLE WILSON

Are you all right, honey?

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

I always thought I would figure it out. Maybe not now, but later.

LUCILLE WILSON

Well Louis...it's later.

LUCILLE WILSON (CONT'D)

WE HAVE ALL THE LOVE IN THE WORLD
IF THAT'S ALL WE HAVE
YOU WILL FIND
WE NEED NOTHING MORE

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

EVERY STEP OF THE WAY
WILL FIND US
WITH THE CARES OF THE WORLD
FAR BEHIND US

LOUIS ARMSTRONG/LUCILLE WILSON

WE HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

JUST FOR LOVE

LUCILLE WILSON

NOTHING MORE

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

NOTHING LESS
ONLY LOVE

SCENE 56: EXILED KING

Lights shift. Louis passes away
peacefully. #37A WHAT A WONDERFUL
WORLD UNDERSCORE.

*
*

DAISY PARKER

And there he sat. The man who made me smile.

LIL HARDIN

The man who was my best student. And changed
the beat of my heart.

ALPHA

Who loved making whoopee. And eating rice and
beans.

LUCILLE WILSON

A cheater and a liar. But also...my home.

SCENE 57: FINAL CONCERT

*

Lucille takes a moment. A Blazing
white light fills the stage. Pre-
recorded Announcer.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentleman, please welcome back home
the Ambassador of blues, the king of jazz,
Reverend Dippermouth, Duke Satchmo, the
legendary...Louis Armstrong.

*

Louis smiles and walks to the lip
of the stage. Then he looks
concerned.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

These lights are bright. Where is everybody? I
can't see them. Is this a prank of some sorts?
Because if it is, boy, did you get Old
Satchelmouth over here.

The whole company enters from the
back of the auditorium.

COMPANY

#38 SAINTS GO MARCHING IN

OH WHEN THE SAINTS
GO MARCHING IN
OH, WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN.
I WANT TO BE IN THAT NUMBER.
WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

(Overlapping with last two lines of
lyrics.)

I remember this. Used to play it at...

COMPANY

OH WHEN THE TRUMPET SOUNDS THE CALL
OH WHEN THE TRUMPET SOUNDS THE CALL
OH O LORD I WANT TO BE IN THAT NUMBER.
WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN.

Louis takes off his hospital robe.
He's dressed in white. MUSIC:
"What a Wonderful World."

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Wait, I just need one more day. I'm sorry. I'll
make it up to you. I'll do better. Just one-

LUCILLE WILSON

-No more days. You're home Louis.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

But I was going to perform for the people.

LUCILLE WILSON

You're home. Play for us.

Louis breaks down. He hugs the
women. He cries and hugs them.

DAISY PARKER

Sing to me, Louis.

LIL HARDIN

Soothe me.

ALPHA

Love me like you said you would.

LUCILLE WILSON

Shake up the world. For the muses and mentors.
And for all the women.

*
*

The ceiling opens up to veil a
vault of blue sky. They all look
up in wonder.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

#39 WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

I SEE TREES OF GREEN, RED ROSES TOO
I SEE THEM BLOOM FOR ME AND YOU.
AND I THINK TO MYSELF
WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD
I SEE SKIES OF BLUE AND CLOUDS OF WHITE
THE BRIGHT BLESSED DAY, THE DARK SACRED NIGHT.
AND I THINK TO MYSELF WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD.

DAISY PARKER

THE COLORS OF THE RAINBOWS SO PRETTY IN THE SKY

ALPHA

ARE ALSO ON THE FACES OF PEOPLE GOING BY

LIL HARDIN

I SEE BABIES CRYIN' AS I WATCH THEM GROW

LUCILLE WILSON

THEY'LL LEARN MORE THAN I'LL EVER KNOW

COMPANY

I SEE TREES OF GREEN, RED ROSES TOO
I SEE THEM BLOOM FOR ME AND YOU.
AND I THINK TO MYSELF
WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD
I SEE SKIES OF BLUE AND CLOUDS OF WHITE
THE BRIGHT BLESSED DAY, THE DARK SACRED NIGHT.
AND I THINK TO MYSELF WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD.

They continue in a huge procession
that encircles Louis Armstrong.

END OF MUSICAL