

# THE JAZZ SINGER

BY  
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THE JAZZ SINGER  
A NOVEL



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STORY OF THE PLAY

Jack Robin, born Jakie Rabinowitz, son of Cantor Rabinowitz of a famous Eastside synagogue, ran away from home when he was a boy, on the Day of Atonement, when his father was counting on him to make his debut as the solo singer in the choir. Now, five years later, after his father has erased Jack from his heart, Jack returns to New York. His mother greets him with tears and love. His father greets him with suspicion. When Jack discloses that he has become a jazz singer and is opening soon in his first New York production, his father, outraged, orders him out of the house.

It is morning, preceding the afternoon dress rehearsal of the show. Jack is running through one of his numbers on the stage. Mary Dale is there. Jack is on the verge of a romance with her. Yudelson, an Eastside character, comes to tell Jack that the Cantor is sick, that tonight is the eve of the Day of Atonement, and that the Cantor wants Jack to sing in his place, for the Rabinowitzs have not missed a single Day of Atonement in five generations. Jack, touched, has to refuse, because tonight is his opening night.

Later, at the height of the dress rehearsal, Yudelson returns with Jack's mother. They both plead with Jack, and he is deeply moved. But he has to rush out

## STORY OF THE PLAY

and sing his black face number. The mother and Yudel-son give him up in despair, and they go. But a few hours later, Jack suddenly arrives in the Rabinowitz home. He has decided to sacrifice his career. His manager and Mary arrive, and they plead with him not to make this sacrifice. Into this scene comes the news from the hospital that the Cantor has died. Mrs. Rabinowitz doesn't know this yet. Jack, keeping her ignorant of his father's death, goes into the synagogue and sings the Kol Nidre.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Cast of characters in the first production of "The Jazz Singer," by Lewis and Gordon in association with Sam H. Harris at the Fulton Theatre, New York City, Sept. 15, 1925.

CANTOR RABINOWITZ.....*Mr. Howard Lang*  
 MOEY.....*Mr. George Shafer*  
 SARA RABINOWITZ.....*Miss Dorothy Raymond*  
 YUDELSON.....*Mr. Sam Jaffe*  
 JACK ROBIN.....*Mr. George Jessel*  
 CLARENCE KAHN.....*Mr. Robert Russel*  
 GENE.....*Mr. Ted Athey*  
 EDDIE CARTER.....*Mr. Barney Fagan*  
 HARRY LEE.....*Mr. Arthur Stewart Hull*  
 MARY DALE.....*Miss Phoebe Foster*  
 RANDOLPH DILLINGS.....*Mr. Robert Hudson*  
 MISS GLYNN.....*Miss Mildred Leaf*  
 FRANKLYN FORBES.....*Mr. Paul Byron*  
 A STAGE DOORMAN—JIMMY.....*Mr. Tony Kennedy*  
 LEVY.....*Mr. Nat Freyer*  
 SIX CHORUS GIRLS...*Misses Mildred Jay, Ruth Holden, Eleanor Ryan, Mildred McDough, Viola Thomas, Betty Wilton, Rita Crane*  
 A SCENE SHIFTER.....*Mr. Jack Hill*  
 DOCTOR O'SHAUGHNESSY.....*Mr. Tony Kennedy*

### DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

**CANTOR RABINOWITZ**, a spiritual, unworldly man of about sixty. He has a small grayish beard. In Act One, he wears a black alpaca coat, and a skull-cap is seen when he takes off his wide brimmed black fedora.

**MOEY**, a boy of about twelve with a beautiful alto voice.

**SARA RABINOWITZ**, a woman of about fifty—a fine Jewish mother type. She wears a simple housedress in Act One, same in Act Two, with a fine shawl as a wrap. In Act Three, her best holy day dress. Neither she nor the CANTOR nor YUDELSON should speak with any exaggerated dialect. They can speak without dialect at all if they catch the rhythm and intonation of the dialogue.

**YUDELSON**, a comedy character, anywhere from thirty-five to fifty. In Act One he wears a white panama suit and a panama hat, in Act Two a dark suit and hat. Same in Act Three. He should not be exaggerated, and always sincere.

**JACK ROBIN**, a colorful, emotional Broadway type, should look about twenty-three. He has the gift of comedy, great charm, and great sincerity. In Act One he is very smartly dressed, a little flashily. In Act Two he wears, first, shirt and trousers, and later, a conventional comic costume that goes with

x DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

black face. In Act Three he is quietly dressed in a lounge suit.

CLARENCE KAHN, a rather self-satisfied, eager young man in his early twenties. Dressed cheaply but neatly. Wears shell-rimmed glasses.

GENE, a fat middle-aged comedian in the show. Also stage manager. We see him in his shirt sleeves. EDDIE CARTER, a disappointed comedian. About forty, with all the mannerisms of a skilled vaudevillian. He was once a star, but now is slipping. Lounge suit.

HARRY LEE, a distinguished, worldly man of about fifty. Well dressed in lounge suit.

MARY DALE, a beautiful, well-bred girl in her early twenties. Scene One, Act Two, ordinary street clothes. Scene Two, Act Two, a dancing costume with very short skirt. Act Three, street clothes.

RANDOLPH DILLINGS, a slightly farcical society man type, in his early thirties. Smart lounge suit.

Miss GLENN, an inexperienced young actress, pretty, eager and pathetic. Ordinary street clothes.

FRANKLYN FORBES, thirty—newspaperman type. "Snappily" dressed.

JIMMY, a stage doorman—about sixty, both kindly and hard. Old clothes.

LEVY, a middle-aged Eastside character, loud, excitable, with a long beard. Dressed quietly in dark clothes.

Dr. O'SHAUGHNESSY, a kindly, intelligent, middle-aged Irishman. Quiet dark clothes.

SIX CHORUS GIRLS. They wear rehearsal rompers.

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SARA

All right, all right. Forget all your troubles to-night. Lawyer Adler from uptown—he is coming at eight o'clock. The Luryas and the Goldsteins are coming too,—with automobiles. Your birthday—

[The CANTOR now hears the singing, which is coming closer. He raises his hand. His face is suddenly the face of a corpse, as the door opens and MOEY enters, blithely singing, "Every time I look at you, I want to holler Hot Tamales." He sees the CANTOR, stops his singing, says, "Good evening, CANTOR," and then moves—a well-fed little boy—to the chair by the table, as the curtain falls.]

## ACT TWO

SCENE 1: The stage of the Fulton Theatre, during the morning hours just preceding the afternoon dress rehearsal of "April Follies."

AT RISE: The curtain rises on a disorderly stage where a song and comedy "number" is being rehearsed. We are looking at the stage from the back—that is, we see directly into the footlights and into an empty auditorium.

Stage hands are working, shifting scenery back and forth; electricians are placing lamps and experimenting with lighting effects. As the curtain rises we hear the banging of a piano. We see a chorus in practice clothes. We see CARTER dancing.

In the back, at the footlights, LEE, the producer, sits in a tilted chair, a manuscript in his hand. Grouped between LEE and the chorus, on either side of CARTER, are GENE, MISS GLYNN, MARY DALE, JIMMY and another actor. Seated in the shadowy foreground, playing cards with a stage-hand, is JACK ROBIN.

Most of the action in this scene is paced very swiftly. It gives the effect of the hurried disorder which is characteristic of the eleventh hour of a theatrical production. The action is almost frantic—



*one speech piles on top of another so that you can scarcely follow it. It is not necessary that you follow it. The picture is enough. It is only at certain moments—moments when the story of the play enters with its deeper note—that the action is slow, that characters begin to come into focus—such moments as when JACK and MARY are alone, when JACK is alone with LEE, etc.*

LEE

That's all right! Is everybody concerned in the Dixie scene here?

GENE

Everybody concerned in the Dixie scene stand by.

LEE

*[A tall, stout man, meticulously dressed. He has a black mustache—probably dyed—and scant, grayish hair on an impressive bald head. Adversity sent him to the theatre, where he made money. Money sent him to Europe, where he achieved good clothes and an air of distinction. He never allows his air of distinction to interfere with efficiency, however; and, on the other hand, no matter how intense the excitement and confusion of the rehearsal, he never takes his coat off. He rises].* Now, remember—this is the finale of the first act and I want lots of pep. Speak out so that everybody can hear you. This is the last time we do this scene before the Dress Rehearsal, so get it right. All ready? Let's go.

CARTER

*[He is gray-haired. He has large, wistful, cynical eyes. He has a droll, rolling, weary mouth. Once he was a great comedian. Today, while still well-known, he is relying on formula—and is speeding, without realizing it, into oblivion. Reads from part].* "Mr. Carruthers, I'm from headquarters and I tell you that Gus, your colored porter, is none other than Dixie Dan, the Bootlegger." *[Turns to DETECTIVE. Speaks.]* "Is that right?"

DETECTIVE

"That's right, chief."

CARTER

"And what's more, he has been very disrespectful to your daughter, Gwendolyn."

GENE

*[He is the stage manager and one of the actors. He is a big, fat man in shirt sleeves, with the stub of a cigar in his mouth].* "Gwendolyn, come here!"

MARY

*[She is bob-haired, slim and lovely. Five years ago she was a flapper. Four years ago she was a debutante. Three years ago she ran away and entered the chorus of the Metropolitan. Two years ago she had a minor rôle in musical comedy. Now she has the feminine lead. She is democratic, ironical, fastidious, informal, subtle and hearty].* "Yes, father,"

GENE

"Did you know that Gus is a bootlegger?"

MARY

"Father, don't believe a word he says. It's too bad Mr. Gus isn't here to defend himself."

GENE

"Where is Gus the porter? Has any one seen him? Where can he be?"

MISS GLYNN

"Look! Here he comes now."

*[In typical musical comedy fashion every one staggily steps one foot to the right and points with outstretched arm to the right. There is the typical musical comedy hush which announces the entrance of a principal.]*

"Ah"!

ALL

LEE

Where is Jack? . . . Robin! That's your cue. Come on!

*[There is a moment of confused silence and then JACK, coming out of his absorption in the card game, rises hastily, apologetically. He turns for a second to the stage-hand.]*

JACK

Spade—spade—spade! You lose! *[Now he hastens to the center of the scene. With an apologetic word*

*to Mr. LEE he turns to his script.]* Now, where are we?

GENE

"Gus, where've you been?"

JACK

"I've been down to my father's farm where we have a black hen that lays a white egg."

CARTER

"What's so wonderful about that?"

JACK

"You go home and try it!"

CARTER

That's the cue for my Poppy number, isn't it, Mr. Lee?

LEE

No, Carter, I've changed my mind about that. I've decided to let Jack do that Poppy number in the second act.

CARTER

Now, Mr. Lee, that's the best number I got. That's where I do my specialty.

JACK

Yes, Mr. Lee, I think you should let Carter keep that number. I've got enough to do now.

LEE

*[Impatiently].* That's all right, Jack. I know that. Why do you think I postponed the opening? In



order to give you more to do. You can carry this number, too. Now continue the scene and go right into the Dixie Number.

JACK

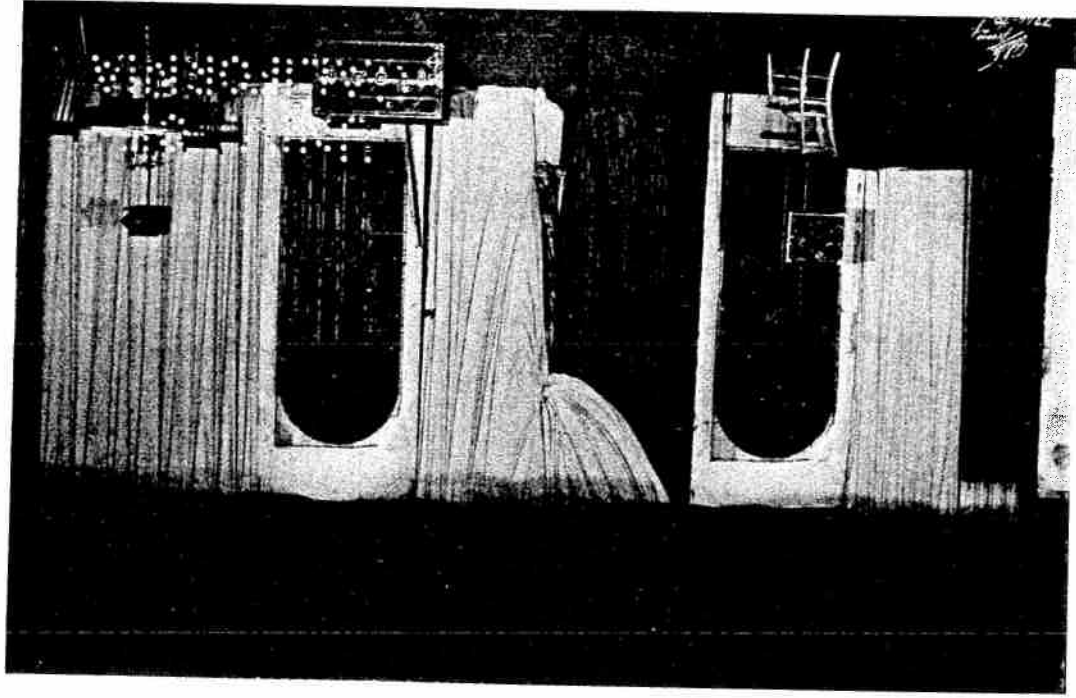
I'm sorry, Eddie . . . Where were we? Oh, yes, sir. "I'm going down South again to the land of cotton and jasmine, where the watermelons grow, where I can be with my mammy. If you'll all sit down, I'll sing you a song all about it."

*[The girls all sink down in a wide semi-circle. The other principals back away. The piano beats out the "vamp." JACK, his back to us, facing his own footlights, his shoulders shaking, his hat carelessly on the back of his head, goes into his jazz song. He does not do it earnestly, except for an occasional note on which he lingers with the easy assurance of the man who knows that when the time comes he will do it well. He sings.]*

"Home pa-hals, home pa-hals,  
Sad was the day when I blundered away  
From my  
Home pals;  
Wan-dered—  
Squ-handered—  
My mammy's lo-hove without any ru-heason or  
ru-hyme  
To have

A wo-hunderful time . . ."

*[LEE blows his whistle and stops the singing.]*



LEE

I've got an idea. We won't use this stage again until the dress rehearsal. Gene, send the girls up on the roof. [*In less time than it takes to tell, the chorus girls have been shooed off the stage. CARTER and the rest move back to an obscure part of the stage. LEE brings JACK down where we can hear clearly what they say. MARY comes with them. During the following conversation a drop comes down. It is the back of a country scene—you gather from the lights which play around its translucent surfaces that it represents a wisteria-hung house front.*] Now, Jack, there's a big kick in the Mammy number. I want you to do it alone with no one on the stage. Just you and the spot light. Cut out the running around and put your heart into it. Give it all you've got. If you do it that way, you'll be a knockout.

MARY

That'll be wonderful, Jack.

JACK

[*Not quite casually.*] Do you think so?

MARY

[*To LEE.*] Harry, they just brought my last act costume and it's nothing like the sketch.

LEE

Let me see it, Mary.

MARY

All right. [*She goes.*]

CARTER

[*He has been lingering, ill at ease and resentful, in the back.*] Mr. Lee, I want to see you.

LEE

Well, Carter, what's on your mind? Make it snappy.

CARTER

All right, I'll make it snappy. What's the big idea cutting my numbers down? Half the house tonight is going to be my personal friends. What do you think they're going to say about your show tomorrow on Broadway?

JACK

[*Comes between LEE and CARTER. He is disturbed. Something is troubling him. It must be something more serious than his words reveal.*] Mr. Lee, I think you ought to let Carter keep that Poppy number. He's an old song-and-dance man and that's more in his line.

LEE

What's the matter, Jack, losing your nerve?

JACK

It isn't my nerve, Mr. Lee. It's just the success of your show I'm thinking about.

LEE

Let me worry about the success of my show, Jack. Don't you want the opportunity I'm giving you?

JACK

I think it's great, Mr. Lee, but—

LEE

[*Interrupts brusquely.*] All right, then. [*Turns to GENE.*] Gene, tell O'Hara to send that little Glynn girl here at once.

GENE

Yes, sir. [*He goes.*] O'Hara, send that Glynn girl here. Mr. Lee wants to see her at once.

[*CARTER and JACK sit on trunk facing up stage. GENE returns, sits at table.*]

CARTER

[*Mutters.*] I haven't had anything like this happen to me in over forty years. I'm going to quit.

JACK

[*Pity for the old man swiftly receding up in him, yet realizing that nothing can be done, casts about for a jest with which to salve the other's pain.*] Look here, Eddie, you're not going to quit on the night I'm making my debutt.

CARTER

Debutt?

JACK

Well, if that ain't right, you can sue me! Now listen, Eddie. You just wait until after the opening tonight and you'll probably have all your numbers back and maybe some of mine. [*He rises.*] Come here, Eddie. I wrote a new scene for us.

[CARTER, pathetically grateful for the respect and affection this implies, moves back, out of the scene, with JACK. MISS GLYNN comes in. She is blond, pretty. She is in the rompers which chorus girls use as practice clothes. As she moves toward Mr. LEE she is obviously frightened.]

MISS GLYNN

Mr. Lee, did you want me?

LEE

Yes, Miss Glynn. I've been watching your work in the finale this morning, and it's very bad. Didn't you tell me you were an experienced Spanish dancer when I hired you?

MISS GLYNN

[Trembling]. Yes, sir.

LEE

Well, you're not. I don't believe you ever had any stage experience in your life. You dance like a school girl. Now answer my question. Did you do any professional work before?

MISS GLYNN

N—no— B—but I thought—

LEE

I don't care what you thought. Did you or didn't you tell me you were in the "Follies"?

JACK

[He has been listening to them while chatting with CARTER, and now moves down]. Excuse me, Mr. Lee. Could I see you just a minute? . . . Don't blame this kid. Anything she slipped over on you was my fault. She—well I saw her in the waiting room—and she looked kind of bashful, poor kid—so I told her to tell you she had been in the "Follies." I know you and Ziegfeld aren't talking, so you'd never find out!

LEE

Well, I'll be damned!

JACK

[A master of the tempo of kidding, he moves hastily toward the stricken Miss GLYNN and whispers to her. Her face lights up as she runs off the stage happily. Crescendo, JACK turns to LEE]. That's all right, Mr. Lee. She forgives you! She isn't mad at you at all! [JACK doubles up with a grimace of mock humility, and LEE succumbs. He laughs.]

LEE

You better not let Miss Dale catch you doing favors for little girls.

[JACK grins and strolls across the stage, watching the electrician who is playing with lighting effects.]

MARY

[Comes in and goes to LEE by the table. She has a sheet of paper which she places before him]. Harry, here's the sketch—

JIMMY

[*Enters*]. Mr. Lee, Mr. Randolph Dillings just phoned and told me to tell you he was coming here this afternoon.

LEE

Thank you, Jimmy. [*JIMMY goes. LEE rises, and the act settles into a slower pace; for the "atmosphere" is over. LEE speaks half to himself.*] That's too bad.

MARY

Is Randy still bothering you about Jack?

LEE

Yes. The last time he was down he wanted me to let Jack go.

MARY

Why?

LEE

You.

MARY

I don't understand.

LEE

He's jealous.

MARY

But he hasn't even met Jack. He didn't say anything to me about it.

LEE

Of course he wouldn't—to you.

MARY

That's perfectly childish of him.

LEE

[*He has been half absorbed during this dialogue with papers on the table. He picks them up and mumbles*]. Yes, I suppose it is. [*He goes off.*]

[*JACK, who has been standing back-stage chatting with some girls, is now heard laughing and joking with them. They are called away and JACK comes down to MARY who is sitting on a trunk.*]

MARY

Well, you seem to be happy, Jack. I was afraid you'd be nervous on your opening night.

JACK

Me happy? I feel like I've been elected mayor and can't find the City Hall. Mary, if any one gave me an unkind look, I'd lie down on the floor and cry.

MARY

Is there anything wrong, Jack? Is something worrying you?

JACK

You're worrying me.

MARY

I?

JACK

[*Slowly*]. I can't get over the feeling that if I don't make good tonight, you're going to be the goat. You and Mr. Lee. You've done everything for me—the two of you. So far, I haven't done a thing in return . . . I ain't even thinking about what it would



mean to me deep down here— [*He touches his heart.*]—if I flop. But then, that's my business and nobody else's . . . The way things are now, though . . . Gee, if I don't make good with you—and with Lee—I'll feel like hell.

MARY

Is that all that's worrying you? Why, Jack, how silly you are! You're going to be a sensational success, don't you realize that? And everybody's going to be proud of you.

JACK

[*Slowly*]. Not everybody. I know somebody who won't be proud of me.

MARY

[*Intuitively*]. You mean—your people? . . . I've often wondered why you never mentioned your people to me.

JACK

Well, I—I quarreled with them.

MARY

Where are they?

JACK

They're far away. [*He rises from trunk.*] Oh, it's no use to talk about it.

MARY

I'm sorry.

JACK

[*Turns to her*]. The point is, my people had other plans for me . . . They—they'd sooner I was a criminal than be on the stage . . .

MARY

Well, I guess a lot of stage people have the same sort of problem you have.

JACK

My father and mother are different. I'm the only son, and they . . . had other ideas about me . . . I ran away from home . . . They don't think I'll ever be any good.

MARY

Oh, my dear, serious young man, there's nothing terrible in that.

JACK

You don't know my father and mother, Mary.

MARY

Jack, there's nothing as selfish as the selfishness of parents. Do you think my people liked the idea of my being on the stage? Mother threatened to have a nervous collapse. Father was frantic. But I did what I wanted, and they both got over it. And now they brag about me to the rest of the family.

JACK

Well, my father ain't ever going to brag about me, I can tell you that!

[*There is a deepening cloud on his face as he moves away from MARY. He has almost forgotten the excitement of the dress rehearsal.* LEE and

FRANKLYN FORBES enter briskly. FORBES is



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*snappily dressed, about 30. The two of them bring back the speed and exuberance of the theatre.]*

LEE

Here they are! Jack, you know Franklyn Forbes, our publicity man?

JACK

How are you, Mr. Forbes?

LEE

Franklyn wants to do a story on you in a hurry.

FORBES

First of all, I want to get the story of your life.

JACK

*[Turns upon them in a curious mood—sardonic and humble, flippant and bitter].* Say I was born when I was very young. When I was a year old I sold newspapers. By the time I was two I owned the stand.

LEE

Come on, Jack. Franklyn's in a hurry.

FORBES

Stop your kidding, Mr. Robin. I can get some real stuff into the papers about the way you put over a jazz song.

JACK

What has the story of my life got to do with the way I put over a jazz song?

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MARY

Everything, Jack. If it's the right kind of a story. *[To LEE.]* You know how Jack puts over a song. That intensity of his. Something like the intensity of Billy Sunday. It's a new note.

FORBES

Yes, and if I can weave a colorful life story behind it—based just a little on fact—

JACK

All right. I'll tell you. Say that every morning at eight o'clock I take a bath in certified milk.

LEE

Don't waste any time kidding, Jack. Give Franklyn a general outline of your life—where you were born, your parents, and so on.

JACK

I—I'm sorry, Mr. Lee, but I'm kinda sensitive about my childhood. Not that I've been in jail or anything like that. But why doesn't Mr. Forbes fake a story—I don't care what he says—it'll be O. K. with me.

FORBES

Fine! I think I'll have the usual East Side background—hanging around with the gang—singing waiter in a Bowery dive—pious old father—

JACK

I—I don't think that East Side stuff is so good.

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FORBES

I do. It always makes fine human interest material.

JACK

[*Obstinately*]. Well, I don't think so.

LEE

We can't waste any more time on this. Write anything you want to, Franklyn.

JACK

Now, please . . . I don't want you to think I am swell-headed . . . I appreciate the fact that you are all trying to help me. But look— isn't there enough in that Chicago stuff without going back to my cradle days?

LEE

That's not a bad idea. Franklyn, why don't you use the story of how Miss Dale discovered Jack?

MARY

I'll tell it to you, Franklyn. I was playing in Chicago—

FORBES

[*Takes out pad and pencil, sits at table*]. You were playing in Chicago?

MARY

I had a half hour to kill one day, and I dropped into one of those West Madison Street movie houses, and there he was.

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JACK

This won't be any good either—

LEE

Why?

JACK

Because after the opening night I'll probably go back to Chicago—by freight. And the old gang at the movie house will give me the laugh. They'll say, "Here he is—the great Jack Robin from Broadway! Hurray! Catch a broom and sweep out the place!"

FORBES

What movie house was it, Miss Dale?

MARY

I don't know. What house was it, Jack?

JACK

Oh, a funny little place under an elevated station—called The Happy Hour.

FORBES

What were you doing there?

JACK

I was looking at Mary.

MARY

Jack was standing in a spotlight—dressed in *such* clothes . . .

JACK

You ought to see the suit I had, Mr. Lee, for eighteen fifty, with nine pair of pants!

MARY

And he was singing, "Take Me Back to Tennessee." I never heard jazz sung quite like that before. There was a tear in it. I came every day that week. Jack did all sorts of things, comic songs, Mammy songs, sold candy up and down the aisle, announced next week's program—about fourteen times a day.

JACK

Yeh, and I checked baby carriages, too! I did everything in that joint except collect the money. They wouldn't let me do that.

MARY

Well, you know the rest, Franklyn.

FORBES

[Rises]. Thanks very much, Mr. Robin. You gave me more stuff for a good story than you thought you did. So long, Miss Dale. See you in your office, Mr. Lee. [*He goes.*]

LEE

Come on, Jack. We've got a lot of work to do.

JACK

Mary, do you want to come along with us?

MARY

I'd love to, Jack, but I have to telephone Dad.

LEE

Give my regards to your father, Mary.

MARY

Thanks, I will. [*She goes.*]

JACK

Mr. Lee, I took the liberty of writing a new gag in. It's a good hot weather gag I'm going to pull with Carter. I say to Carter, "Now that the days are getting longer, I'm going into the ice business, so that when it gets too hot to work I can sit down on my business, and—" . . .

GENE

[Enters]. Mr. Robin, that tailor just brought your suit. He wants you to try it on.

JACK

That funny suit for the last act with the little hat?

GENE

Yes.

JACK

I want to see that. [*To LEE.*] Excuse me.

[*He goes.* LEE is at the table sorting out some manuscripts when RANDOLPH DILLINGS enters. DILLINGS is about 30, well tailored, poised, healthy looking. He is clearly a person of wealth and

*breeding—a man whose only weakness, perhaps, is that he does not know what he wants and is not intently concerned with finding out.]*

LEE

Hello, Randy.

DILLINGS

Hello, Harry.

LEE

Come to see the rehearsal?

DILLINGS

No, I came to see you. Can we go to your office?

LEE

The office is full of people. We can talk here. What's on your mind?

DILLINGS

This jazz singer of yours, Jack Robin, and Mary's interest in him.

LEE

I thought we settled that a month ago.

DILLINGS

I'm afraid we didn't. I've been thinking it over, and I've decided to take my money out of your show.

LEE

I don't get you, Randy. You know it isn't very businesslike of you to come here at the last moment like this and—

DILLINGS

This wasn't a business arrangement in the first place—and you know it. I think you know that Mary and I were once engaged to be married. You must realize that the only reason I put my money into this show was to protect her interests. She means a great deal to me . . .

LEE

Her interests are the same today as they were a month ago. The fact that she has discovered Jack and made me engage him does not alter anything.

DILLINGS

[*Quietly, without malice*]. Well, I've learned differently. The thing I was afraid of has happened. It was bound to happen sooner or later, I suppose—an attachment of this sort . . . Now, I'm no stage-door Johnny. I have my limit, and I've reached it. Today I wash my hands of all responsibility for Mary's career. Be a good fellow and don't let's argue the matter any more. Simply mail me a check today.

LEE

You're not taking him seriously, are you? Why, he's just a harmless kid—eager to get along—

DILLINGS

[*Patiently*]. You're taking him seriously enough to prefer him to my money, aren't you?

LEE

[*Pause*]. Yes, I am.

DILLINGS

And Mary is taking him seriously enough to risk the gossip of her friends, isn't she?

LEE  
Yes, but—

DILLINGS

I haven't a thing against the boy. I wouldn't know him if I saw him. But it's clear he's not Mary's sort. And if she's traveling in that direction, she's going to travel without me.

LEE

[*He has made a decision; calls suddenly*]. Gene!

GENE  
[*Enters*]. Yes, sir?

LEE  
Get Miss Dale.

[*GENE goes.*]

DILLINGS

Here! I won't have any of that. No scenes, please.

LEE

[*With grim, vulgar efficiency*]. We're going to have it out right now. I'm going to prove to you that Jack Robin doesn't mean anything in Mary Dale's life.

DILLINGS

I won't have Mary Dale brought into this discussion.

LEE

If I can prove to you that this boy doesn't mean anything to Mary, will you leave things as they are?

MARY

[*Enters*]. Hello, Randolph.

DILLINGS

[*Nervously*]. Hello, Mary. Just dropped in for a moment. I must be running along.

LEE

[*A direct man if not a subtle one*]. Just a moment, Mary. Randy here thinks you are seriously in love with Jack Robin, and because of that he's taking his money out of this show.

MARY

You gentlemen take my breath away with you—shall I say, delicacy? It's very sweet of you to discuss me so intimately.

DILLINGS

[*Furious*]. See here, Harry, this isn't the sort of thing—

LEE

The point is this—I told Randy that Jack doesn't mean anything to you—except, of course—

MARY

Except what?

DILLINGS

Really, this is becoming intolerable. I'm going.

## THE JAZZ SINGER

MARY

[*Half amused, half indignant*]. Just a minute, Randy. I know you too well not to understand that you're acting, as usual, on principle. And I know Harry too well to mind his blunt ways. Apparently what you both want me to say is that Jack Robin doesn't mean anything at all to me and that I shan't see him after this except as one sees a fellow former.

LEE

[*With a hearty sigh of relief*]. Exactly!

MARY

Well, I can't say it. I like Jack tremendously and expect to see more of him than ever.

DILLINGS

I'm sorry this has happened.

MARY

Harry, does this mean that you're going to be in a terrible fix for money?

LEE

I'm always in a terrible fix for money. But I'm going to put this show through with what I've got if it breaks me.

MARY

Harry—you're a darling.

## THE JAZZ SINGER

LEE

No—just a business man.

[*JACK is heard singing and talking off-stage.*]

MARY

There's Jack now. Do you want to meet him? Jack! Yoo-hoo!

DILLINGS

No.

[*But JACK is already entering—in comedy costume.*]

JACK

How do you like these clothes, Mr. Lee? Don't you think I look just like a manager? How's this "Between the Acts"? [*Shows a huge comedy cigar.*] Long acts.

MARY

Jack, I want you to meet Mr. Randolph Dillings. Randy, this is Mr. Jack Robin.

JACK

[*Cordially*]. How are you, Mr. Dillings?

DILLINGS

[*Coldly*]. How do you do?

[*There is a pause.*]

JACK

Beautiful day for the opening of the new show, isn't it? [*There is a dead silence. It is not that DILLINGS wishes to snub JACK, but that he is furious and confused at the situation he has been forced into,*



and he does not quite know what to say. JACK turns to MARY and murmurs out of the corner of his mouth.] What's the matter with this guy? [Pause—to DILLINGS.] I say, it's a beautiful day.

MARY

[*Mischievously*]. Yes, Jack, it is a beautiful day.

JACK

Thank God, THAT'S settled! [There is another silence, then JACK turns, good-humoredly, to DILLINGS. He is like a healthy puppy wishing to make friends.] I feel that I have known you a long time, Mr. Dillings. Mary has spoken of you very often and any friend of Mary's is a friend of mine . . .

DILLINGS

[To MARY]. Well, I must be going. Goodbye, Mary.

[JACK realizes clearly now that he has been snubbed. With a hurt expression he backs out of the scene and sits on the trunk.]

LEE

Will I see you again, Randy?

DILLINGS

I'm sorry—I'm afraid I won't have time to see you again, Harry.

LEE

[Also snubbed]. Very well. [He goes.]

MARY

Goodbye, Randy . . . I know you don't mean to be like this.

[DILLINGS pauses a second, then he bows stiffly, turns, and, ignoring JACK, goes. After he has passed, JACK in solemn mockery tips his hat.]

JACK

[To MARY]. That's that Randolph Dillings, isn't it? I don't think he likes me. Maybe he thinks I wear these clothes on the street.

MARY

He's an old friend of mine. Fearfully rich and awfully nice, but old-fashioned.

JACK

Is he in the show business?

MARY

He was.

JACK

Smart enough to get out, huh? . . . He's stuck on you, ain't he?

MARY

We were engaged once.

JACK

Yeh . . . Any time you see a guy act like that, you know he's in love. Well, there's one thing I'll say about him, he's got good taste.

MARY

Do you think so?

JACK

[*Moves closer to MARY. She is still sitting on the trunk. All of the flippancy has left him. He is suddenly shy and very earnest.*] Yeh . . . You know, if I make one-half the hit tonight that Lee expects me to make—if I go over half as big as everybody thinks I will—do you know what I'd like to do? I'd like to come over close to you, like this, and tell you . . . that I love you.

[JIMMY enters.]

JIMMY

Mr. Robin.

JACK

That guy picks the darndest time to come in!

JIMMY

There's a man out there asking for a Jackie Robin. His name is—[*Reads from card.*]—Yudelson, Dealer in Diamonds and Jewelry. Do you know who it is?

JACK

Yudelson? It can't be. [YUDELSON enters.] Well, well, well, Yudelson! What are you doing here? . . . He's all right, Jimmy.  
[JIMMY goes.]

YUDELSON

Well, well, Jakele, what a big boy you are! I never would have known you. What a trouble I had with

him! First I asked for Jackie Rabinowitz. I forgot your Mama told me to ask for Jackie Robin.

JACK

My Mama? What's the matter with Mama?

YUDELSON

She's all right. She told me to ask you—she asked I should say to you—[*He is obviously uncomfortable in the presence of MARY.*] I must see you in person.

JACK

[*Looks around, sees MARY.*] Oh, Mary . . . I want you to meet Mr. Yudelson. This is Miss Mary Dale.

MARY

How do you do?

YUDELSON

How do you do. [*Looks at JACK as he shakes her hand.*] A pleasure!

JACK

Mr. Yudelson is an old friend of the family. He's known me since I was so high. [*Measures with hand.*] He and my father are great friends.

YUDELSON

Cantor Rabinowitz and me, we are like this. [*Puts two fingers together.*]

JACK

[*There is a pause. YUDELSON has revealed significant detail. MARY'S involuntary expression of sur-*

## THE JAZZ SINGER

*prise shows this.* JACK, *for an instant, is confused.*  
*Then, with pride in his voice].* Yeh, my Father is the  
finest Cantor on the East Side.

YUDELSON

Did you never heard of Cantor Rabinowitz of the  
Orchard Street Synagogue? I'm surprised!

MARY

*[The warm, friendly smile on her face is her answer*  
*—her fraternal declaration—to* YUDELSON *and to*  
JACK]. Well I'll run along. See you later, Jack.  
Goodbye, Mr. Yudelson. It was a pleasure to have  
met you.

YUDELSON

By me it's all right, too!

[MARY goes.]

JACK

*[His arm about* YUDELSON'S *shoulder, they move*  
*over to the table.* YUDELSON *sits in the chair and*  
JACK *lounges on the table leaning on his elbow].* Well,  
Yudelson, I'm glad to see you. Sit down. What  
brings you up in this neighborhood?

YUDELSON

Jakie, I came to tell you your papa is sick.

JACK

*[Sits up straight].* What's the matter with him?  
Has he got a good doctor?

## THE JAZZ SINGER

YUDELSON

The best doctor in New York. Dr. O'Shaughnessy  
from the Rockefeller Institute . . . Jakie, my boy, to-  
night starts the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur—  
and this is the first time in your papa's life what he  
wouldn't be able to sing in the synagogue on Yom Kip-  
pur. So we had a meeting from the committee, who  
should sing in his place. Well, I was speaking to your  
mama, and she thought it would be a beautiful sur-  
prise for your papa if you would do it.

JACK

Me to sing? My God, Yudelson, he kicked me out  
of the house only a month ago.

YUDELSON

Don't be foolish, Jakie. How much times was you  
kicked out—one time? A son could be kicked out  
twenty times, and yet a son is a son. If your papa  
knew you was singing tonight, it would make him  
happy.

JACK

But, Yudelson, I can't do it!

YUDELSON

Nonsense. I was telling the committee—you know  
how it is a committee—they wanted Levy, the Shamus,  
should sing. But I'm the chairman, and they all owe  
me money, so when they voted it was the way your  
mama wanted. I told them, "Jakie, when he was a  
little boy and he sang in the choir, his papa learned

him all the words of all the prayers. And what a little boy learns he never forgets . . ." And even if maybe a few words you should forget, you can look in the prayer book. Jakie, you can do it! I got confidence in you! And your mama—she'll be the happiest—

JACK

But, Yudelson, this show opens tonight!

YUDELSON

What's the matter with you, Jakie? Ain't I telling you your papa is sick and your mama is waiting I should give her an answer?

JACK

[*Stoically*]. Yudelson, the show business is different from anything else. The finest actors keep right on working, even if there's a death in the family. The show must go on . . . It's like a religion . . . It's like soldiers in an army . . .

LEE

[*Enters with JIMMY*]. Now remember, Jimmy, I don't want any strangers on the stage during dress rehearsal. [JIMMY goes.] Jack! I want to see you.

JACK

Excuse me, this is Mr. Lee—my boss. Mr. Lee—gee, I don't know how I can explain this to you. Well—this is Mr. Yudelson, an old family friend. He just told me that my father, down on the East Side, is very sick—

East Side?

LEE

JACK

I held out on you, Mr. Lee, because my father and I had quarreled. I thought he never wanted to see me again. It hurt me so much that I wanted to start fresh, live a new life . . . But now I find I didn't quite understand. My father is the Cantor of the Orchard Street Synagogue. Tonight is the eve of the Day of Atonement. He and my mother sent Mr. Yudelson to ask me to sing in my father's place tonight. I know all the prayers—

LEE

My dear boy, it's out of the question.

JACK

Mr. Lee, isn't there any possible chance?

YUDELSON

Only tonight and tomorrow until it gets dark.

LEE

No, absolutely not. Why you're the whole show. I've staked everything on you . . . Jack, I'm going to tell you something. I was an actor myself once. My mother died one afternoon, but I went on that night . . .

GENE

[*Appears left*]. Say, chief—

LEE

What is it?

GENE

The fire underwriters are here.

LEE

I'm coming. [*To JACK, slowly, earnestly, in a lowered voice.*] Something happened a while ago that puts me in a position where I'm depending on you more than you know. Now, talk him out of it. [*He goes.*]

YUDELSON

That's your boss?

JACK

[*After a moment of thought.*] Yes . . . Yudelson, do you realize what an awful lot of money is tied up in this show? It costs thousands and thousands of dollars . . .

YUDELSON

[*Impressed, the business man in him responding.*]  
Is that so!

JACK

The scenery . . . the costumes . . . and all the actors . . . Mr. Lee is responsible for everything—and he's counting on me. You heard him—he's staking everything on me.

YUDELSON

Is that so?

JACK

Yudelson, you're a business man . . . now I ask you, how can I leave this show . . . on a big opening night . . . just because my mama and papa all of a sudden . . . don't you see?

YUDELSON

Well, Jakie, if you can't sing tonight, I'll have to sit and listen to that voice from Levy's.

JACK

Levy—that's the Sexton, isn't it? I'll bet he's got a fine voice.

YUDELSON

Yeh, like a nanny goat! Nu, what can I do? I'll explain to your mama the best way I can.

JACK

Yes, try to explain to them, Yudelson.

YUDELSON

You're sure you can't come?

JACK

[*With feeling.*] You wouldn't have to ask me twice. You know I'd come if I could.

YUDELSON

[*Shrugs shoulders.*] All right, Jakie. Well, goodbye. Leshono Tovo Tikosamu.

JACK

Thank you. Happy New Year to you, too.

YUDELSON

Look! He remembers! [*He goes.*]



GENE

[*Off-stage*]. Dress rehearsal just starting. Everybody concerned in the opening on stage!

[*From off-stage come the bustling sounds of final preparations for the dress rehearsal. JACK is standing motionless where YUDELSON left him. A brown velvet drop comes down. JACK is the figure of a tragic Pierrot as he stands against this simple background in his ludicrously wide comedy pants and his ludicrously short comedy coat . . . He turns . . . finds himself sitting on the trunk alone, heavy-hearted. LEE comes bustling in. He goes over to table, not seeing JACK. He is busy, with a manuscript for a few seconds, then he feels JACK's presence; looks up.*]

LEE

Well, Jack, that old boy from the East Side has gone, eh?

JACK

[*Barely raising his head*]. Yes, he's gone.

LEE

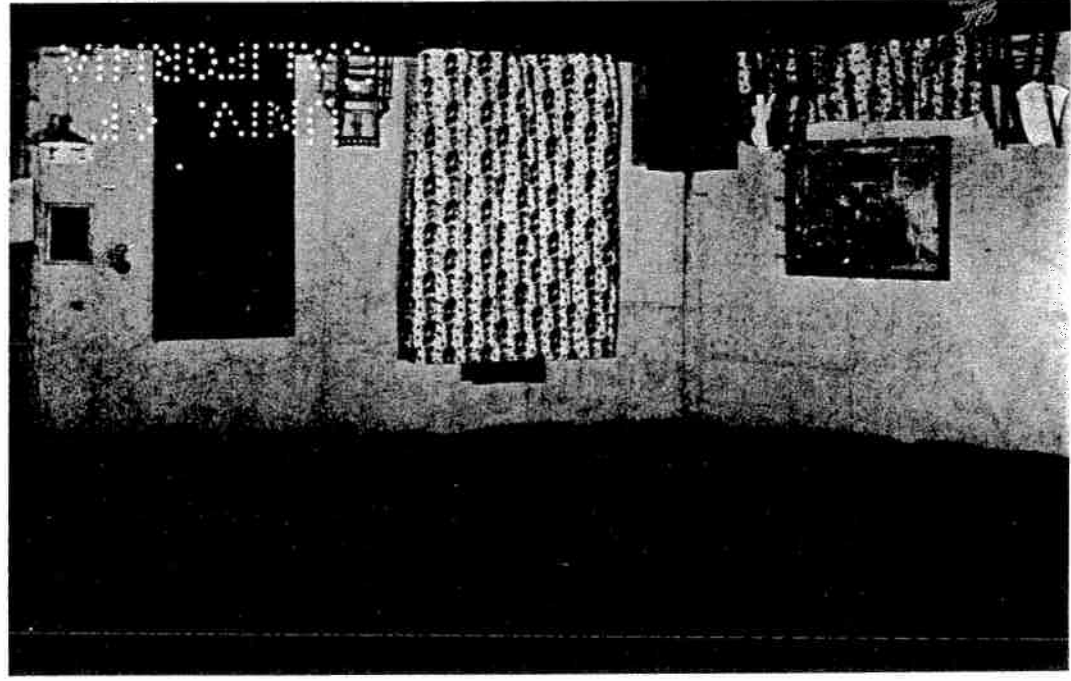
[*Goes over to JACK*]. Talked him out of it, did you?

JACK

[*Slowly*]. Yes, I talked him out of it.

LEE

I knew you could do it! You're clever enough to get away with anything. . . . Just think of it, one more





rehearsal and then the big opening. Aren't you thrilled? Tomorrow everybody will be talking about you.

JACK

*[To himself, in barely audible tones].* This is the first time in his life he won't be able to sing in the synagogue . . .

LEE.

What's that, Jack?

JACK

*[He rises, with a visible effort to shake himself out of his mood. He turns to LEE and begins walking off with the manager].* Oh, yes, Mr. Lee. I'll do the best I can tonight—I only hope I won't disappoint you.

*[The words are scarcely out of JACK's mouth when music is heard blaring off-stage, and the lights black out.]*

CURTAIN

MARY

What enthusiasm!

[The dialogue that follows goes on while JACK is preparing his make-up. He moves about occasionally, going from his dressing table to the wash-basin, to the clothes closet. This movement and this general business of his hands give an air of casualness to the rendition of lines which are anything but casual in their meaning to JACK and to MARY.]

JACK

Gee, Mary, I've got other things besides costumes on my mind.

MARY

What is worrying you? That man who was here just now? [JACK nods.] What's the matter with him?

JACK

Nothing the matter with *him*. He brought me some news about my father and mother.

MARY

Oh, it isn't fair! It isn't fair for him to disturb you when you are all keyed up before your opening to-night . . . Oh, Jack—I just want to keep you away from everything—from everybody—until tonight is over.

JACK

You've got the right hunch all right. Mary, Yudel-son told me things that are making me hate myself.

## SCENE 2

SCENE 2: JACK'S dressing room a few minutes later. JACK enters looking very unhappy. Automatically he glances at himself in the mirror, takes off his tie, his coat, his trousers, revealing another pair underneath. Then he sits down before the mirror. There is a knock at the door.

JACK

Come in.

[MARY enters. She is in pink costume. As she opens the door, music off-stage is heard. As the door closes the music is muted.]

MARY

Hello.

JACK

Hello.

MARY

Well?

JACK

Well, what?

MARY

Haven't you anything to say about my costume?

JACK

Oh . . . it's nice . . . very nice . . .

MARY

Tell me about it. Maybe I can help.

JACK

No, if I told you about it, you'd hate me, too.

MARY

I don't think anything could make me hate you, Jack . . . [*There is a pause. She leans back, pretends to be absorbed in the ruffles on her costume.*] Did you mean it . . . when you said you loved me?

JACK

Sure, didn't you know that? I'm crazy about you . . .

MARY

No, I didn't know it. . . . Jack, since you told me about your father I've been thinking about you. I can't get you out of my mind. A son of a Cantor . . .

JACK

Maybe it's better that you *should* get me out of your mind. Maybe it would be better if I got you out of my mind . . . Since Yudelson was here, I got a different slant on everything . . . Yudelson and me, Dillings and you . . . We're far apart. We're worlds apart. [*He is now standing by the wash-basin filling a small bowl of water, and he moves slowly back to the dressing table carefully balancing the water.*]

MARY

You don't have to worry about Randolph. I'm not like him.

JACK

Well, you're certainly not like *me* . . . I know what you're figuring. I'm a rough diamond—you'll get me and polish me. Well, it'll never happen. I'm going to be what I am all my life. And you're going to be what you are.

MARY

[*Stoicly*]. Then why did you say you loved me?

JACK

[*Pause*]. Do you really want to know? [*MARY nods her head breathlessly.*] Because I couldn't help it. Love means marriage to me, and marriage means a home and kids . . . I—I'd like to have a kid like you . . . a little boy—but like you . . . Gee, I'm crazy about you!

MARY

[*Quaintly*]. Say it again!

JACK

I ain't going to say it no more . . . because I've got no right to say it . . . Yudelson came and told me—

MARY

You've simply got to forget . . . Let's just talk about you and me.

JACK

I can't forget what Yudelsohn said. He said my father is sick. Tonight is the eve of the Day of Atonement—the most solemn Jewish holy day of the year, the big day of every Cantor's year. You know what a Cantor is? He's the mouthpiece of the congregation. He sings to God. My mother sent Yudelsohn to ask me to sing in my father's place. You don't know what it means to them. For five generations the Rabinowitzes have been Cantors. The name Rabinowitz is like a trade mark on Orchard Street. No substitutes will do . . .

MARY

What did you tell Mr. Yudelsohn?

JACK

What could I tell him? . . . The most important part of the services will be starting just about the time I have to go on the stage tonight . . . I told him no, that I wouldn't miss this opening, not even for my father and mother.

MARY

[*Gravely*]. I am glad you said that, Jack.

JACK

Glad?

MARY

Yes, my dear. You've got to think only of your work.

JACK

I've tried so hard to do that, but . . . Mary, here's something I never told anybody in my life . . . Sometimes when I'm alone—and I'm alone a lot more than you think—the old songs from the synagogue start wailing in my ears . . . and I—I cry . . . In that hall bedroom in Chicago, I used to get down on my knees in the dark and talk to God in Hebrew. I—bawled him out . . . because he made me only half a Cantor—half a Cantor, and half a bum. [*He begins to black up.*] If I was all bum, I wouldn't care. What does a bum care? But if I was all Cantor, I would be happy.

MARY

Would you?

JACK

I think I would.

MARY

Then why didn't you go with Yudelsohn?

JACK

[*As he blacks up*]. Why? You know why—people like you—like Lee. I've got Broadway in my blood. There's something sweet about the sound of the English language in my ears . . . I want to be part of America. I want to take it in my arms . . . Gee, I wish I could express myself! . . .

MARY

[*Understandingly*]. My dear, I think I realize what you're going through.

JACK

No you don't . . . [*Intently.*] Mary, my father is sick because of me.

MARY

[*Quickly.*] Nonsense.

JACK

He said a month ago he never wanted to see me again. I can see him now, eating his heart out ever since.

MARY

[*Gently.*] What can you do about it? Go down on the East Side and be a Cantor the rest of your life?

JACK

No. [*Pause.*]

MARY

Don't you care about your career on the stage?

JACK

[*Passionately.*] It's the only thing in the world for me.

MARY

The only thing?

JACK

Yes, the only thing.

MARY

[*Slowly.*] More than me, Jack?

JACK

More than you.

MARY

[*Swiftly, with feeling.*] That's what I've been waiting to find out. [*Music begins again off-stage.*] Oh, don't you see, Jack—I don't want you selfishly. I want to see you live your own life. If the thing you want most is to be a black-face minstrel, then don't let *anything* stand in your way—not your parents—me—anything . . .

JACK

[*He is finishing blacking up.*] I guess you've got the right idea, Mary. You're O. K. [*There is a knock on the door.*] Come in.

GENE

[*Enters.*] Time you're ready for your first number, Mr. Robin.

JACK

I'm almost ready now, Gene.

GENE

All right, Mr. Robin. [*He goes.*]

JACK

Hear that music? That's that new fox-trot. [*Hums, crosses stage and washes hands.*] It's a steal from something . . . Mary, you know, if people only knew what it was to black up like this, I bet everybody would do it. What's the name of that bird that puts his head in the ground and thinks he's all covered up?

Ostrich?

MARY

Well, I feel like him with this black on. It covers your face and hides everything . . . You know, Mary, this would be a good job if I didn't have to buy so much soap. [*Crosses to make-up shelf. Another knock on the door.*] Come in.

JIMMY

[*Enters, leaving door wide open. Music swells until door closes.*] That man, Mr. Robin, the one who was here a while ago—he's back. He insists on seeing you at once.

JACK

[*Visibly affected.*] It's Yudelson . . . Tell him he'll have to wait until after this number.

JIMMY

There's somebody with him—a lady.

A lady?

JACK

MARY

I'll go, Jack. [*She starts. JACK stops her.*]

JACK

No, Mary. Stay here. [*JACK moves swiftly in front of her. He has almost got to the door when YUDELSON enters, followed by SARA. She has evidently come in great haste, for all she wears is a shawl over her house dress. She is almost exhausted*

*from the trip, and numb with the emotions with which she is stricken.*] Mama!

SARA

Jakie, this ain't you . . .

YUDELSON

It's a nigger!

JACK

[*In sudden agony.*] Yudelson, didn't you tell my mama?

YUDELSON

I told her everything, the same way you told me, Jakie, but she made me I should bring her here.

SARA

[*In a monotone.*] Jakie, your papa is sick. He is laying in bed. His face is white . . .

JACK

Mama, sit down, please.

[*All this happens very quickly. And now JACK, for an instant, has forgotten everything except his mother's presence. He places a chair for her and automatically sinks back in his chair, arms on knees, facing her.*]

SARA

[*Continues numbly, hardly seeing the youth in blackface.*] All the time he is talking about you. His eyes is open like a baby's eyes. His face is white like a yahrzeit candle. He was saying, "Sara," he said—



his voice was so low, I could hardly hear him—"maybe Jakie will sing tonight in the synagogue . . ."

JACK

[*Strangely touched*]. He really said that, Mama?

SARA

He said it—the way I'm sitting here this minute, he said it . . . For five generations God always heard a Rabinowitz sing every Day of Atonement, every holy day, every Sabbath. God is used to it now . . . Maybe your papa is dying. God will ask him, Is Jakie singing in the synagogue tonight? How can he say, No, he is singing in a theatre! . . . Oh, my son, my heart is breaking in pieces . . . You got two hours before the sun goes out of the sky and it gets dark. Come with me home, Jakie.

JACK

[*Despairingly, head sunk on his chest*]. Mama, I can't. I can't do it!

SARA

[*In a more intense monotone*]. How can you say this to me, your mama? . . . When you was a little boy, we were so poor . . . I slaved my fingers to the bone that there should be money to buy you nice things. My fingers, they used to bleed. Look at my hands, Jakie. It is still there the marks.

JACK

[*Bends over her hands*]. I know, Mama. I know.

GENE

[*Enters*]. Your specialty'll be on in a minute, Mr. Robin.

JACK

All right, Gene . . . Mama, I haven't time to tell you—I've got to go on! Yudelson . . . Mary . . . tell my mother . . .

MARY

I'll go out and see if I can't hold them for a moment. [*She hastens out.*]

SARA

[*As if in a trance*]. Your papa said, "Ask Jakie he should forgive me. He is doing things from sin, but he don't mean it. In his heart he is a Rabinowitz" . . . Jakie, the way I'm sitting here, before God I swear it—that is what he said.

JACK

[*His voice almost breaking*]. I believe you, mama! I believe you!

GENE

[*Enters again*]. We're waiting for you, Mr. Robin. We can't hold it any longer.

JACK

[*Frantic*]. Yes, yes, I'm coming! . . . Mama, if you only knew how the manager is depending on me . . . [*Off-stage can be heard the introductory chords to a jazz song*]. They're going to make me a star, Mama . . .

[*With irritated finality.*] There's your introduction, Mr. Robin! [*He goes.*]

GENE

JACK

Yes, yes! [*He is now in full comedy costume and is kneeling before his mother.*] Mama, there's my introduction—wait here fifteen minutes—I haven't got time to tell you . . . Yudelson! Please talk to my mama.

GENE

[*Enters again.*] Mr. Robin, they'll blame me for this!

JACK

Yes, yes, I'm coming. Mama—Yudelson—wait! Please!

[*He goes. The door is open. We see the changing lights through the door. YUDELSON gently forces SARA into a chair by the door as we hear JACK off-stage shouting the comedy lines of the beginning of the act . . . "I'm going down South to the land of cotton and jasmine, where the watermelons grow, where I can be with my Mammy. If you'll all sit down I'll sing you a song all about it" . . .*

*Then the orchestra throbs into wailing, syncopating life, and JACK is heard off-stage singing a verse and chorus of "Dixie Mammy." His rendition is excellent jazz—that is, it has an evan-*

*gelical fervor, a fanatical frenzy; it wallows in plaintiveness and has moments of staggering dramatic intensity, despite the obvious shoddiness of the words and the music. We are listening to a Cantor in blackface, to a ritual supplication on the stage, to religion cheapened and intensified by the trappings of Broadway. He finishes his first chorus.]*

YUDELSON

[*Crosses to the door, listens.*] That's Jackie.

[*JACK is going into a complicated staccato "talking" dramatization of the last half of the chorus—something like this:*

"I—want—you—to—understand . . .  
That—it's—my—mammy . . .

My—mammy—I—tell—you . . .

And—my—daddy . . .

You—bet . . .

Your—life . . .

It's—my—mammy—and—daddy, I—tell—you  
. . .

I'm—going—back—

I'm—going—back—down—South—

Down—South,—I—tell—you . . ."

[*SARA rises, a broken creature, her frail body barely able to carry her out. She moves out of the door, YUDELSON following her, trying to detain her.*]

SARA

That ain't my Jakie! That ain't my boy! . . .  
I'm going home!

[*The stage is empty. We see the grotesque, elongated shadows of SARA and YUDELSON against the multi-colored lights back-stage as they pass, evidently out of the theatre. We are hearing JACK's last line of the song—*

"I've had my fling,  
And it don't mean a thing—"

*His voice breaks. He repeats in intensely personal agony, "It don't mean a thing . . . it don't mean a thing—my God!—it don't mean a . . ."*  
*There is a sudden awkward silence—a silence of a fraction of a second; and then we hear, off-stage, a surge of congratulations. We hear CARTER's voice, the voices of women, GENE's voice. The next instant JACK is in the door-way. He sees that the dressing room is empty. He turns, helplessly looking about. He knows it is no use—that his mother has gone. He stands for a second brushing the eyes of his blacked up face with his white glove.*

*And then CARTER, GENE, half a dozen chorus girls, and FORBES break in upon him. They are enthusiastic, excited, congratulatory. Their remarks tumble one on top of the other in a confusion of sound:*

"I take off my hat to you, JACK!"  
"You certainly can put over a song!"  
"Oh, Mr. Robin, it was wonderful!"  
"It was grand, Mr. Robin—just grand!"  
"You won't need a press agent after tonight, old fellow!"

"It was just gorgeous—simply gorgeous!"  
*LEE plunges in and scatters them all, crying—*  
"Get out for the next number!" . . . and LEE and JACK are alone. JACK is standing, his back to LEE, his head bent.]

LEE

Jack, that was wonderful! Why, you actually cried! Say, do it that way tonight and you'll be a knock-out. [LEE bolts out, calling as he goes.] All right, Gene! Ready for the next number!  
[JACK is alone on the stage. He sinks into a chair as the curtain falls.]