

JAN 18 1998



Book by Terrence McNally

Lyrics by Lynn Ahrens

Music by Stephen Flaherty

From the novel by E.L. Doctorow

Musical Staging by Graciela Daniele

Directed by Frank Galati

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BROADWAY COMPANY

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ACT ONE

(Darkness. We hear the sound of a doorknob turning and a door swinging open. MUSIC.

We see the silhouette of THE LITTLE BOY as he stands in the shaft of light from the open door.

THE LITTLE BOY'S footsteps echo as he walks down the shaft of light to a stereopticon viewer on the floor. He picks it up and brings it to his eyes.

Two scrims, each with an image of a large Victorian house, it's inhabitants and neighbors, descend, merge and leap into three-dimension!)

THE LITTLE BOY

In 1902 Father built a house at the crest of the Broadview Avenue hill in New Rochelle, New York, and it seemed for some years thereafter that all the family's days would be warm and fair.

(PEOPLE OF NEW ROCHELLE are revealed)

PEOPLE OF NEW ROCHELLE
THE SKIES WERE BLUE AND HAZY
RARELY A STORM. BARELY A CHILL.

WOMEN
LA LA LA LA LA...

PEOPLE OF NEW ROCHELLE
THE AFTERNOONS WERE LAZY,
EVERYONE WARM. EVERYTHING STILL.

MEN
LA LA LA LA LA...

ALL
AND THERE WAS DISTANT MUSIC,
SIMPLE AND SOMEHOW SUBLIME,
GIVING THE NATION

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A NEW SYNCOPATION--
THE PEOPLE CALLED IT RAGTIME!

(FATHER steps forward, a strong,
commanding figure)

FATHER

Father was well-off. Very well off. His considerable income was derived from the manufacture of fireworks and bunting and other accoutrements of patriotism. Father was also something of an amateur explorer.

(MOTHER steps forward, a gracious,
appealing woman)

MOTHER

The house on the hill in New Rochelle was Mother's domain. She took pleasure in making it comfortable for the men of her family and often told herself how fortunate she was to be so protected and provided for by her husband.

YOUNGER BROTHER

Mother's Younger Brother worked at father's fireworks factory. He was a genius at explosives. But he was also a young man in search of something to believe in. His sister wondered when he would find it.

GRANDFATHER

Grandfather had been a professor of Greek and Latin. Now retired and living with his daughter and her family, he was thoroughly irritated by everything.

PEOPLE OF NEW ROCHELLE
THE DAYS WERE GENTLY TINTED
LAVENDER PINK, LEMON AND LIME.

MOTHER
LADIES WITH PARASOLS

YOUNGER BROTHER
FELLOWS WITH TENNIS BALLS

FATHER
THERE WERE GAZEBOS, AND...
There were no Negroes.

PEOPLE OF HARLEM
AND EVERYTHING WAS RAGTIME!

(COALHOUSE WALKER, JR. is playing
for a lively crowd of dancers)

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PEOPLE OF HARLEM
LISTEN TO THAT RAGTIME!

COALHOUSE

In Harlem, men and women of color forgot their troubles and danced and reveled to the music of Coalhouse Walker, Jr. This was a music that was theirs and no one else's.

SARAH

One young woman thought Coalhouse played just for her. Her name was Sarah.

PEOPLE OF HARLEM

OOOOH...

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Booker T. Washington was the most famous Negro in the country. He counselled friendship between the races and spoke of the promise of the future. He had no patience with Negroes who lived less than exemplary lives.

RESIDENTS OF NEW ROCHELLE

LADIES WITH PARASOLS
FELLOWS WITH TENNIS BALLS
THERE WERE NO NEGROES
AND THERE WERE NO IMMIGRANTS.

(IMMIGRANTS are in a line to board
a rag ship bound for America.

TATEH and THE LITTLE GIRL join
them. They, too, are poorly clothed
and undernourished. THE LITTLE GIRL
is the same age as THE LITTLE BOY.
TATEH looks old and we will think
he is THE LITTLE GIRL'S
grandfather.)

TATEH

In Latvia, a man dreamed of a new life for his little girl. It would be a long journey, a terrible one. He would not lose her, as he had her mother. His name was Tateh. He never spoke of his wife. The little girl was all he had now. Together, they would escape.

(HARRY HOUDINI appears above the crowd)

LITTLE BOY

Houdini! Look it's Houdini!

CROWD

OOH...AAH!
OOH...AAH!

(HOUDINI spins in the air. He throws the straight jacket to the crowd below)

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HOUDINI'S MOTHER frees him)

HOUDINI

Harry Houdini was one immigrant who made an art of escape. He was a headliner in the top vaudeville circuits.

(HOUDINI'S MOTHER points with pride)

HOUDINI'S MOTHER

Ich bin die mutter des grossen Houdinis!

(Scene continues on I-4)

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HOUDINI

He made his mother proud. But for all his achievements,
he knew he was only an illusionist. He wanted to
believe there was more.

HOUDINI

Hello, sonny.

THE LITTLE BOY

Warn the Duke!

HOUDINI

What did you say?

(CROWD silently applauds. The
moment is broken as HOUDINI is
enveloped by his crowd of admirers)

PEOPLE OF NEW ROCHELLE
AND THERE WAS DISTANT MUSIC
CHANGING THE TUNE, CHANGING THE TIME

PEOPLE OF HARLEM
GIVING THE NATION
A NEW SYNCOPATION:

ALL

LA, LA, LA.

(J.P. MORGAN and HENRY FORD appear)

MEN

LA, LA, LA, LA...

J.P. MORGAN

Certain men make a country great.

HENRY FORD

They can't help it.

MORGAN

At the very apex of the American pyramid--

FORD

--that's the very tip-top!--

MORGAN

Like Pharoah's reincarnate, stood J.P. Morgan.

(Scene continues on I-5)

FORD

And Henry Ford.

MORGAN

All men are born equal.

FORD

But the cream rises to the top.

(EMMA GOLDMAN steps forward)

EMMA GOLDMAN

Let me at those sons of bitches! These men are the demons who are sucking your very souls dry! I hate them!

MORGAN

Someone should arrest that woman!

(MORGAN and FORD move away)

EMMA GOLDMAN

The radical anarchist Emma Goldman fought against the ravages of American capitalism as she watched her fellow immigrants' hopes turn to despair on the Lower East Side.

(EVELYN NESBIT appears, dressed in her costume from MAMZELLE CHAMPAGNE)

EVELYN NESBIT

LA LA LA LA
LA LA LA LA LA

Whee!

EMMA

But America was watching another drama.

EVELYN NESBIT

Evelyn Nesbit was the most beautiful woman in America. If she wore her hair in curls, every woman wore her hair in curls.

STANFORD WHITE

Her lover was the eminent architect, Stanford White, designer of the Pennsylvania Station on 33rd Street.

HARRY K. THAW

Her husband, the eccentric millionaire, Harry K. Thaw, was a violent man.

EVELYN

After her husband shot her lover, Evelyn became the biggest attraction in vaudeville since Tom Thumb.

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(the music grows eerie, echoing)

NEW ROCHELLE WOMEN
LA LA LA LA LA

(THAW takes aim at WHITE with a
small revolver)

MEN

Bang!

NEW ROCHELLE WOMEN
LA LA LA

MEN

Bang!

NEW ROCHELLE WOMEN
LA

MEN

Bang!

(EMMA GOLDMAN steps forward)

EMMA GOLDMAN

And although the newspapers called the shooting the
Crime of the Century, Goldman knew it was only 1906...

ALL

AND THERE WERE NINETY FOUR YEARS TO GO!

EMMA

Whee!

ALL

AND THERE WAS MUSIC PLAYING,
CATCHING A NATION IN ITS PRIME...
BEGGAR AND MILLIONAIRE
EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE
MOVING TO THE RAGTIME!

(Scene continues on I-6A)

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(The dance swirls around our three principals: MOTHER, TATEH and COALHOUSE, increasing in intensity. BLACKS, WHITES and IMMIGRANTS find themselves in moments of contact or confrontation; there is the potential for violence. The dance swells to a crescendo)

ALL

AND THERE WAS DISTANT MUSIC
SKIPPING A BEAT, SINGING A DREAM.

WOMEN

LA LA LA LA LA

ALL

A STRANGE, INSISTENT MUSIC
PUTTING OUT HEAT
PICKING UP STEAM.

MEN

LA LA LA LA LA

(Scene continues on I-7)

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ALL
THE SOUND OF DISTANT THUNDER
SUDDENLY STARTING TO CLIMB..

IT WAS THE MUSIC
OF SOMETHING BEGINNING,
AN ERA EXPLODING,
A CENTURY SPINNING
IN RICHES AND RAGS,
AND IN RHYTHM AND RHYME.
THE PEOPLE CALLED IT RAGTIME...
RAGTIME!
RAGTIME!
RAGTIME!

(We hear the stentorian blasts of an ocean-going steam vessel. Immediately we hear the confident sounds of a ship's Sousa-esque orchestra playing the "All ashore" music prior to its immediate departure. We are on the main deck of the ship that will be carrying FATHER on an expedition to the Pole with ADMIRAL PEARY.

FATHER is bidding goodbye to his FAMILY. They have all gathered to see him off. Various ship personell, their families and an historical society mill about the pier below)

FATHER
Everything will be fine, Mother. You'd think the world was coming to an end every time a man sailed off to the North Pole with Admiral Peary.

MOTHER
I shall miss you.

FATHER
Of course you will. But it's only a year. Nothing much happens in a year. The world will not spin off its axis. Nothing will change, Mother. We will miss each other but the world will stay the same.

GRANDFATHER
I hope not. What this world needs is a good swift kick in the pants. *Evelyn enters - Stephen, Rusty, + Jan X US of "boat"*

YOUNGER BROTHER
Look! Down there! On the pier! It's her! Evelyn Nesbit!

I-8
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YOUNGER BROTHER

She's even more beautiful in real life than she is in the magazines. I'm going to try to speak to her.

(He goes. THE LITTLE BOY wants to follow)

LITTLE BOY

Me too!

FATHER

Edgar, stay here.

LITTLE BOY

I want to see her, too.

FATHER

You're the man of the house now. You have to keep an eye on Mother for both of us. Will you do that?

LITTLE BOY

Yes, sir.

FATHER

That's my little soldier.

GRANDFATHER

I want to go now. My legs hurt. Everyone say goodbye.

(GRANDFATHER and THE LITTLE BOY start to go)

FATHER

I'll miss you, sir.

GRANDFATHER

Then stay home.

(they are gone)

MOTHER

Come back soon and safe to us.

FATHER

That is my intention.

MOTHER

And not too many polar bear skins this time.

FATHER

I promise. Now unless you want to be the only woman left on a shipful of men, you'd better get ashore.

(This is FATHER'S idea of a joke)

I'm sorry. That was coarse. Goodbye.

(he kisses her)

Stay well. God bless you.

I-9
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(The other wives and families are waving their final farewells to the departing explorers. MOTHER watches as the figure of FATHER recedes)

And remember to cancel our subscription to the Philharmonic. I left money for an emergency under the library rug. Don't smile. You can never have enough money. And you'll remember to bring in the dahlias? Goodbye. Say a prayer for us. God bless America. God bless each and everyone of us.

GOODBYE MY LOVE

MOTHER

GOODBYE MY LOVE.
GOD BLESS YOU.
AND I SUPPOSE,
BLESS AMERICA, TOO.
YOU HAVE PLACES TO DISCOVER,
OCEANS TO CONQUER,
YOU NEED TO KNOW
I'LL BE THERE AT THE WINDOW...
WHILE YOU GO YOUR WAY.
I ACCEPT THAT.

BUT, WHAT OF THE PEOPLE
WHO STAY WHERE THEY'RE PUT,
PLANTED LIKE FLOWERS
WITH ROOTS UNDERFOOT.
I KNOW SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE
HAVE HEARTS THAT WOULD RATHER
GO JOURNEYING
ON THE SEA.

TELL ME,
WHAT OF THE PEOPLE
WHOSE BOUNDARIES CHAFE,
WHO MARRY SO BRAVELY
AND END UP SO SAFE.
TELL ME HOW TO BE SOMEONE
WHOSE HEART CAN EXPLORE
WHILE STILL STAYING HERE.
LET THIS BE THE YEAR
WE BOTH TRAVEL...

GOODBYE, MY LOVE
JOURNEY ON.

(FATHER and ADMIRAL PEARY can be seen on the bridge of their ship. It is night.

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The ship rides a swell.)

FATHER

It's an honor to go on expedition with you, Admiral Peary. It's men like you who've made this country great.

ADMIRAL PEARY

It's men like you who will keep it great.

(MATTHEW HENSON appears)

HENSON

All sails set, Admiral.

PEARY

Thank you, Mr. Henson. This is my First Officer, Mr. Matthew Henson.

FATHER

Good evening.

HENSON

Welcome aboard.

FATHER

What's that? In the distance? Such a ghostly glow.

PEARY

They're called rag ships. Immigrants from every cesspool in western and eastern Europe. Most of them become very patriotic Americans. They're your future customers.

HENSON

My people were also brought here on ships.

PEARY

Good watch, Henson.

(PEARY and HENSON go. FATHER stares across the dark waters to the rag ship. At some distance he sees TATEH and THE LITTLE GIRL.)

FATHER

You're a brave man, whoever you are. Coming so far, expecting so much.

JOURNEY ON

A SALUTE TO THE MAN
ON THE DECK OF THAT SHIP!
A SALUTE TO THE IMMIGRANT STRANGER.
HEAVEN KNOWS WHY YOU'D MAKE
SUCH A TERRIBLE TRIP.

I-10A
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MAY YOUR OWN GOD PROTECT YOU
FROM DANGER.
IS IT FREEDOM OR LOVE
THAT YOU PRAY FOR
IN YOUR GUTTURAL ACCENT?
TOO LATE, LONG GONE.
A SALUTE TO A FELLOW
WHO HASN'T A CHANCE.
JOURNEY ON.

(TATEH is combing THE LITTLE GIRL'S
hair)

TATEH
If people ask, how old are you?

(Scene continues on I-11)

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I don't answer. THE LITTLE GIRL

Your name? TATEH

No name. THE LITTLE GIRL

Where your mother is? TATEH

Dead. THE LITTLE GIRL

This is my father. He speaks for both of us. TATEH

This is my father. He speaks for both of us. Is that other ship going home? THE LITTLE GIRL

No! America is our home now. America is our shtetl. TATEH

Amekhaye khlebn. TATEH & THE LITTLE GIRL

(A flare goes off, illuminating FATHER and TATEH)

Look. Someone is waving. Where is he going? THE LITTLE GIRL

He's a fool on a fool's journey. TATEH

(THE LITTLE GIRL lies down and goes to sleep)

TATEH
YOU DEPART ON A SHIP
FROM A COUNTRY LIKE THIS.
WHY ON EARTH WOULD YOU WANT TO
BE LEAVING?
WAS IT SOMETHING YOU LOST
THAT YOU SUDDENLY MISS?
ARE YOU ANGRY,
OR POSSIBLY
GRIEVING?
DO YOU SEE IN MY FACE
WHAT YOU'VE LOST, SIR?
ARE YOU MOVED BY THE DEATH SHIP
WE SAIL UPON?
WELL, PERHAPS YOU'RE A MAN
WHO'S IN SEARCH OF HIS HEART.
JOURNEY ON.

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FATHER

JOURNEY ON.

BOTH

TWO SHIPS PASSING
IN THE KINSHIP
OF THE DARKNESS--

FATHER

ONE GOING FROM,

TATEH

ONE COMING TO

BOTH

AMERICA.

TWO MEN MEETING
AT THE MOMENT
OF A JOURNEY.
FOR A MOMENT,
IN THE DARKNESS,
WE'RE THE SAME...

(lights come up on MOTHER, now home
in New Rochelle. She has put THE
LITTLE BOY to bed)

MOTHER

AND WHAT OF THE PEOPLE
WHOSE BOUNDARIES CHAFE,

WHO MARRY SO BRAVELY
AND END UP SO SAFE?

I WILL BE JOURNEYING
HERE, MY LOVE,
AS YOU GO
JOURNEYING

ON THE SEA.

FATHER

I SALUTE YOU,
MY FRIEND

AS YOU GO

JOURNEYING
ON THE SEA.

TATEH

MAY YOU
FIND WHAT
YOU NEED

AS YOU GO

JOURNEYING

ON THE SEA.

ALL THREE

WE'RE TWO SHIPS PASSING
AT A DISTANCE,
THROUGH THE DARKNESS,

FATHER

ONE GOING FROM

MOTHER AND TATEH

ONE COMING TO

ALL THREE

AMERICA.

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ALL THREE
STRANGERS SHARING
THE BEGINNINGS
OF A JOURNEY

FATHER
I SALUTE YOU

TATEH
GOD BE WITH YOU

MOTHER
I WILL MISS YOU

ALL THREE
IN THE DARKNESS
OF THE DAWN
JOURNEY ON!

(MOTHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER appears.)

YOUNGER BROTHER
Mother's Younger Brother was in love with Evelyn Nesbit. Ever since that first glimpse of her on the pier, nothing else mattered. He was late for work. He forgot to shave. He dreamed of writing her name with fireworks in the sky. When she opened in a new review at Hammerstein's Olympia on West 44th Street, he took the day off and was first in line to buy a ticket!

(THE JUDGE, JURY, SOB SISTERS and CHORINES run on in chaos.)

HE runs to his seat in the second balcony, a spectator at the "Trial of the Century")

JUDGE
And now, testifying for the defense, Miss Evelyn Nesbit.

(EVELYN NESBIT makes her "entrance")

THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

EVELYN
WHEE!

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
LA LA LA LA
LA LA LA LA LA

EVELYN
WHEE!

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CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
LA LA LA LA
LA LA LA LA LA

EVELYN

YOUR HONOR,
I WAS ONCE THE LADY FRIEND OF STANFORD WHITE.

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
HE'S THE FAMOUS ARCHITECT!

EVELYN

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
HE PUT ME ON A VELVET SWING.
AND MADE ME WEAR...WELL...HARDLY ANYTHING!
Ruined at the age of fifteen!
YOUR HONOR!

THEN I WENT AND MARRIED MR. HARRY THAW,

EVELYN, CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
ECCENTRIC MILLIONAIRE.

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
OH! OH!

EVELYN

HARRY'S A JEALOUS MAN.

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
BANG! BANG!

EVELYN

THAT WAS THE END OF STAN.

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
BOO HOO!

EVELYN

YOUR HONOR, BE FAIR!
MY HARRY WENT CRAZY, I SWEAR!

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
LA LA
LA LA LA

ALL, EVELYN

NOW IT'S THE
CRIME OF THE CENTURY!
CRIME OF THE CENTURY!
GIVING THE WORLD A THRILL!

EVELYN

HARRY'S IN TROUBLE
AND STANNY'S IN HEAVEN
AND EVELYN IS IN VAUDEVILLE!

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ALL, EVELYN
THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY,
CRIME OF THE CENTURY!
ALL FOR A YOUTHFUL FLING.
FORTUNE, FAME,
AND A RUINED NAME!

EVELYN
AND NOW I'M THE GIRL ON THE SWING!
WHEE!

YOUNGER BROTHER
From what had become his regular seat in the front row
of the second balcony, Younger Brother would lean far
over the railing, hoping his goddess would notice him.
One night he almost fell. Evelyn caught sight of him
and smiled. Life was suddenly wonderful and full of
delicious possibilities.

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
OH! OH!

EVELYN
HARRY MUST NOT BE HUNG!

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
(as JUDGE bangs gavel)
BANG! BANG!

JUDGE
LET'S HAVE THAT VERDICT SONG!

CHORINES & SOB SISTERS
BOO HOO!

JURY FOREMAN (Spoken)
YOUR HONOR WE FIND
THAT HARRY'S NOT GUILTY...

EVELYN (Spoken)
MY HARRY'S NOT GUILTY!

ALL
'CAUSE HARRY IS OUT OF HIS MIND

AND IT'S THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY
CRIME OF THE CENTURY
MAKING THE WORLD GO "WHEE"!
HARRY'S IN TROUBLE
AND STANNY'S IN HEAVEN

i
EVELYN
AND EVELYN GETS PUBLICITY

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ALL
THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY,
CRIME OF THE CENTURY,
NOT SUCH AN AWFUL THING--

EVELYN
STANNY'S KILLED,
BUT MY MOTHER'S THRILLED
'CAUSE NOW I'M THE GIRL ON THE

ALL
NOW SHE'S THE GIRL ON THE

EVELYN
NOW I'M THE GIRL

ALL
ON THE SWING

EVELYN
WHEE!

(JUDGE, JURORS & CHORUS GIRLS
exit.)

(Outside the theatre. EVELYN
enters. She is being hounded by an
unrelenting REPORTER)

(Scene continues on I-16)

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REPORTER

Daily Journal Miss Nesbit! Is it true you haven't visited your husband in the asylum since the trial?

EVELYN

I don't know what you're talking about!

REPORTER

And you have nightmares about your lover's shot-off face?

YOUNGER BROTHER

(stepping forward)

Leave the lady alone.

EVELYN

Thank you. You! You're at the theatre every night. You've never missed a performance. You deserve a reward.

(she kisses him)

Is that what you wanted?

YOUNGER BROTHER

I love you, Miss Nesbit.

EVELYN

Would you repeat that for the press?

YOUNGER BROTHER

No, I really love you.

EVELYN

You love the Girl on the Swing. Well, now you can say she kissed you. But she could never love a man as poor or as thin or as nice as you. I'll blow you a kiss from the stage tomorrow night, if I haven't forgotten all about you.

(She goes, followed by the REPORTER. YOUNGER BROTHER sinks to his knees in despair)

YOUNGER BROTHER

I was going to change the world for you.

(We hear "CRIME OF THE CENTURY" being played as a Victrola recording now. The words seem to mock YOUNGER BROTHER. At the same time, MOTHER and LITTLE BOY will enter. She is humming along with the song, making ready to work in the garden of her home)

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YOUNGER BROTHER, CHORINES
CRIME OF THE CENTURY,
CRIME OF THE CENTURY!
ALL FOR A YOUTHFUL FLING.

MOTHER
FORTUNE, FAME,
AND A RUINED NAME...

YOUNGER BROTHER
I never want to hear that song or her name again.

(HE rushes into the house as
GRANDFATHER passes through the
garden)

GRANDFATHER
I guess he met her.

(GRANDFATHER exits)

THE LITTLE BOY
Is Evelyn Nesbit the Harlot of Babylon?

MOTHER
Where did you hear that?

THE LITTLE BOY
I read it in one of Uncle's magazines.

MOTHER
I don't want you going in his room. I'm sure Evelyn
Nesbit is a very nice person. She's just confused.
She's strayed from the path.

(Scene continues on I-18)

THE LITTLE BOY

What path?

MOTHER

The right path. The one we all want to be on if only we could and if only it weren't so difficult.

THE LITTLE BOY

Not for women it's not. Men are tested almost every day of their Christian lives.

MOTHER

Not everyone's a Christian. You know that.

THE LITTLE BOY

They are in New Rochelle.

(a plane flies above, advertising an appearance by HOUDINI. MOTHER starts digging in the earth)

THE LITTLE BOY

Houdini! Houdini's coming! Can we go? I'll do anything. Please!

MOTHER

We'll see.

(THE LITTLE BOY calls up to HOUDINI's plane as it circles overhead)

THE LITTLE BOY

Warn the Duke!

(HE stands watching the plane disappear overhead as we hear it fly away. MOTHER looks at him, troubled)

MOTHER

Edgar! Why did you say that?

THE LITTLE BOY

I don't know.

MOTHER

What did you mean, "Warn the Duke"?

THE LITTLE BOY

I don't know. /

MOTHER

The things you children say. Read Father's letter if you're not going to tell me.

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THE LITTLE BOY

"Dear Mother. This letter will reach you via the supply ship ERIK..."

(MOTHER has stopped digging in the earth. She has found something)

MOTHER

Get Kathleen.

THE LITTLE BOY

What's wrong?

MOTHER

Get Kathleen, I tell you.

(THE LITTLE BOY runs into the house. KATHLEEN, the Irish maid, and YOUNGER BROTHER join MOTHER. In silence, they look at the swaddled infant MOTHER is holding in her arms)

KATHLEEN

Oh Holy Mother!

MOTHER

Get water, clean linens. Call the doctor.

(YOUNGER BROTHER goes back into the house)

KATHLEEN

Is it alive? Oh, please, God, let it be.

MOTHER

It's alive. It's a Negro child. A newborn baby boy.

KATHLEEN

It's like Moses in the bulrushes.

MOTHER

It's like nothing of the sort.

KATHLEEN

What's to become of us?

MOTHER

For the last time, Kathleen, make yourself useful.

(KATHLEEN runs into the house. MOTHER holds the swaddled infant. THE LITTLE BOY silently watches them)

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WHAT KIND OF WOMAN

MOTHER

WHAT KIND OF WOMAN
WOULD DO SUCH A THING?

WHY IN GOD'S NAME
IS MY HUSBAND NOT HERE?

I'M SUCH A FOOL!

WHY DID I SAY
HE WAS FREE TO GO?
WHAT AM I TO DO?
WHERE ARE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS,
MY DEAR?

YOU LEFT ME LISTS.
EVERYTHING IN LISTS!
WELL, YOUR LITTLE LISTS
AREN'T VERY HELPFUL,
I FEAR!

EACH DAY, THE MAIDS
TRUDGE UP THE HILL.
THE HIRED HELP ARRIVES.
I NEVER STOPPED TO THINK
THEY MIGHT
HAVE LIVES BEYOND OUR LIVES...

(YOUNGER BROTHER appears)

YOUNGER BROTHER

They're here.

(A POLICEMAN enters with SARAH,
simultaneously with the DOCTOR,
KATHLEEN and GRANDFATHER.)

POLICEMAN

We found her in the cellar of a home on the next block.
She's a washwoman there. Her name is Sarah.

(she approaches SARAH)

MOTHER

Are you the mother? Thank God, I found him. What if I
hadn't been working in the garden today?

POLICEMAN

Don't waste your time, ma'am. She won't say a word to
anyone.

MOTHER

Where will you take her?

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POLICEMAN

To the charity ward. Eventually she will have to stand charges.

YOUNGER BROTHER

What charges?

POLICEMAN

Well, attempted murder, I should think.

MOTHER

What's going to happen to the baby?

DOCTOR

They have places for unfortunates like this.

MOTHER

I will take the responsibility. For Mother and child. Please take Miss Sarah inside.

(The DOCTOR, POLICEMAN and LITTLE BOY exit, as KATHLEEN ushers SARAH inside, led by GRANDFATHER. MOTHER is left holding the baby)

YOUNGER BROTHER

Thank you.

(he goes into the house)

MOTHER

WHAT KIND OF WOMAN
WOULD DO WHAT I'VE DONE--
OPEN THE DOOR
TO SUCH CHAOS AND PAIN!

(as if to FATHER)

YOU WOULD HAVE GENTLY
CLOSED THE DOOR,
AND GENTLY TURNED THE KEY,
AND GENTLY TOLD ME NOT TO LOOK,
FOR FEAR WHAT I MIGHT SEE.

WHAT KIND OF WOMAN
WOULD THAT HAVE MADE ME?

i

(Scene continues on I-22)

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(We are at Ellis Island. Waves of immigrants are arriving and waiting for processing. They will go through a series of massive, foreboding gates)

TATEH, THE LITTLE GIRL
A SHTETL IS AMERIKE
AMEKHAYE KHLEBN

TATEH, LITTLE GIRL, JEWISH IMMIGRANTS
ES RUT OYF IR DI SHKINELE

ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS
MERICA, MERICA, BEL MASSOLINO DI FIOR.

TATEH, LITTLE GIRL, JEWISH IMMIGRANTS	ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS	HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS
MIR ZOLN AZOY LEBN.	BEL MASSOLINO DI FIOR.	GRAN MESI, WASHINGTON, KI BA NOU LAMERIK.
MIL KHOMES, BIKSN MENTSHN BLUT	MERICA, MERICA BEL MASSOLINO DI FIOR	GRAN MESI, WASHINGTON,
A GUBERNATOR DARF MENNIT,	MERICA, MERICA,	GRAN MESI, WASHINGTON,
A KEYSER OYF KAPORES.	BEL MASSOLINO DI FIOR.	KI BA NOU LAMERIK.
AMERIKE! AMERIKE! AMERIKE! AMERIKE! AMERICA!	MERICA! MERICA! MERICA! MERICA! MERICA! MERICA! MERICA! MERICA! AMERICA!	LAMERIK! LAMERIK! LAMERIK! LAMERIK! AMERICA!

SUCCESS

TATEH
I PROMISED YOU AMERICA,
AND LITTLE ONE, WE'RE THERE.

IMMIGRANTS, LITTLE GIRL
AMERICA!

TATEH
OUR FEET ARE ON THE SOLID GROUND
AND HOPE IS IN THE AIR!

IMMIGRANTS, LITTLE GIRL
AMERICA!

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TATEH
YOU'LL SOON BE EATING APPLE PIE
FROM OFF A CHINA PLATE.
PRETTY DRESSES, PRETTY DOLLS,
JUST WAIT!
FOR SHINING IN YOUR TATEH'S EYE
AND JUST BEYOND THIS GATE---

ALL
AMERICA!

(The final gates are raised. There
is a surge forward and we are on
New York's bustling Lower East
Side)

(Scene continues on II-23)

TATEH
HERE IN AMERICA
ANYONE AT ALL CAN SUCCEED. AMERICA! HERE IN AMERICA
DO WHAT YOU DO,
AND THE WORLD WILL COME TO YOU
GUARANTEED! AMERICA! WE'RE IN AMERICA
I MAY BE JUST A MAKER OF ART,
BUT HERE YOU COULD START WITH LESS
AND MAKE A SUCCESS!

(TATEH begins to set up his cart and begins
to address people on the street)

Step right up and have a silhouette made by a real
artist! With ordinary paper, a pair of scissors and
some glue I will give you a thing of such beauty! A
life-like portrait of someone you love. Silhouettes of
your favorite celebrity.

EVELYN NESBIT. HEY, LOOK!
SHE'S ON HER VAUDEVILLE STAGE.
HARRY HOUDINI. HE PRACTICALLY ESCAPES
FROM THE PAGE.
ONLY A NICKEL.
DON'T WALK AWAY!
SOMEDAY THESE WILL IMPRESS..
WHEN I'M A SUCCESS!

(EMMA approaches TATEH's cart. SHE
examines his silhouettes.)

EMMA

J.P. Morgan! You should be ashamed of yourself,
comrade.

TATEH

Don't make a lecture, Mrs. Goldman. I'm here to work,
not make politics.

(HE begins to cut her
silhouette)

EMMA

Work is politics.

TATEH

You are barking up the wrong tree, Mrs. Goldman. I am
an artist. I work for no one. Trade unions are fine
but they are not for me. Now be nice and don't move.
This is a complimentary silhouette because I admire you
anyway. (EMMA starts to say something) Sssh! That
doesn't mean I have to listen to you. I was in your
socialist frying pan over there; I'm not jumping into
the same fire over here.

EMMA

What's your name?

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TATEH

They gave me a name I can't pronounce so you can call me Tateh like everyone else.

EMMA

What about her mother?

TATEH

Dead. I said I worked for no one. Not true. I work for my child. (HE hands HER the silhouette) With my compliments, Mrs. Goldman.

EMMA

You can call me Emma. (SHE reacts to the silhouette) Mein Gott, what a kisser! (SHE reaches in her pocket) Here.

TATEH

You're insulting me, Mrs. Goldman.

EMMA

It's not for you. It's for the child.

TATEH

Thank you.

IMMIGRANTS (2 GROUPS)
AMERICA, AMERICA

TATEH

LOOK AT THE SILHOUETTES
HERE IN THE TENEMENTS,
BENT OVER SEWING
OR DANCING OR ARGUING
THOUSANDS OF SILHOUETTES,
THOUSANDS OF STORIES TO TELL.

LOOK AT THEM, LITTLE ONE,
SUCH OPPORTUNITY!
RIGHT ON THE CORNER OF
ORCHARD AND RIVINGTON.
WE'LL MAKE OUR SILHOUETTES,
THINK HOW THEY'LL SELL.
WE'LL JOIN THE PARADE
OF AMERICANS ALL DOING WELL!

(Now J.P. MORGAN thunderously
appears he begins to speak, the
bridge he walks on drops with his
sheer weight, until it practically
crushes the IMMIGRANTS)

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TATEH & IMMIGRANTS

SUCCESS!
SUCCESS!

MORGAN

I'M J.P. MORGAN, MY FRIENDS
THE WEALTHIEST MAN ON THIS EARTH!

TATEH & IMMIGRANTS

SUCCESS!

MORGAN

YOU IMMIGRANTS, LOOK UP TO ME
AND YOU'LL SEE WHAT MONEY IS WORTH!

TATEH & IMMIGRANTS

SUCCESS!

MORGAN

ONE DAY YOUR IMMIGRANT SWEAT
MIGHT GET YOU THE WHOLE U.S.!

(The IMMIGRANTS are squashed
beneath MORGAN. HOUDINI appears.)

HE sings directly to TATEH)

HOUDINI

AND IF YOU'RE TRAPPED
AND FAILURE SEEMS IMMINENT,
THINK OF HOUDINI,
THAT FABULOUS IMMIGRANT!
BREAK THOSE CHAINS WITH ALL YOU POSSESS!

(He has freed himself again. He
holds his chains above his head in
triumph)

TATEH & IMMIGRANTS

THIS IS AMERICA!
THIS IS THE LAND OF SUCCESS!
SUCCESS!

(The streets return to "normal". As
the seasons change [we have begun
in summer and will end in bitter
winter] TATEH's attempts to
"succeed" as a silhouette-maker
become more and more desperate.
IMMIGRANTS continue to leave the
stage until it is nearly bare)

EMMA

The angry, fetid tenements of the Lower East Side were
worse than anything Tateh and his wife had suffered in

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Latvia. The little girl was often sick now. Tateh wrapped her in his prayer shawl. What rabbi would disapprove?

(A chill wind begins to blow)

IMMIGRANTS

AMERICA!

EMMA

Are you a rich man yet, Tateh?

TATEH

Don't make fun.

EMMA

I'm not making fun. I think you are already rich in spirit and good of heart. It's just your pockets that are a little empty.

TATEH

Please, Mrs. Goldman. I'm working. This is my busiest time. You're blocking the sidewalk.

EMMA

I'm sorry.

(The streets are empty of course)

TATEH

Step right up! Without art, what is our existence but chaos?

EMMA

Tateh, there's a rally tonight at Union Square.

TATEH

I told you, Mrs. Goldman, no politics. My daughter needs to eat!

(a MAN has stopped and addresses TATEH)

MAN

How much?

TATEH

(delighted, to EMMA)

You see? Opportunity knocks, I answer.

(Scene continues on I-26A)

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MAN

I said, how much?

TATEH

Five cents but for you I'll make it three. You have a small head, I'll save on the paper.

MAN

Not for a silhouette, you idiot Yid. How much for the little girl?

(TATEH takes a moment to digest this and then violently attacks the MAN. A POLICEMAN rushes forward to pull TATEH off the frightened MAN)

POLICEMAN

Hey, easy, you want to kill him?

TATEH

Yes! I want to reach inside and pull his heart out!

POLICEMAN

You people.

TATEH

I am not "you people". I am Tateh. And she is not for sale.

(TATEH holds THE LITTLE GIRL close to him. He can no longer escape the reality of his failure and unfulfilled dreams)

TATEH

LOOK AT MY DAUGHTER, GOD.
 WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT US HERE?
 HOW CAN I FEED HER OR CLOTHE
 OR PROTECT HER HERE?
 WHERE'S THE AMERICA
 WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GET?
 WAS IT A SILHOUETTE?!
 HEY, MISTER,
 HERE IN AMERICA
 ANYTHING YOU WANT, YOU CAN BE!
 SUCKER, STEP UP,
 AND I'LL CUT YOU OUT YOUR OWN GUARANTEE!
 COME SEE THE ARTIST!
 BIG SHOT, OH YES!
 RED, WHITE AND BLUE!
 HOORAY AND GOD BLESS!
 I'M A SUCCESS!
 I'M A SUCCESS!
 ...SUCCESS!
 ...SUCCESS!!!

(A large silhouette image of

I-27
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HOUDINI forms and grows on the drop
behind TATEH)

HOUDINI
IF YOU'RE TRAPPED
AND FAILURE SEEMS IMMINENT,
THINK OF HOUDINI,
THAT FABULOUS IMMIGRANT!
BREAK THOSE CHAINS WITH ALL YOU POSSESS!

TATEH
I PROMISED YOU AMERICA,
AND LITTLE ONE....
We will find it.

(TATEH and THE LITTLE GIRL pack
their belongings onto his peddler's
cart and aggressively push the cart
offstage)

Harlem. The lights come up and we
are in the Tempo Club.)

PEOPLE OF HARLEM
HIS NAME WAS COALHOUSE WALKER

(Scene continues on I-28)

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SOLO MAN
 WAS A NATIVE OF ST. LOUIS SOME YEARS BEFORE.

SOLO WOMAN
 WHEN HE HEARD THE MUSIC OF SCOTT JOPLIN

SOLO MAN
 IN ST. LOUIS

SOLO WOMAN
 BOUGHT HIMSELF SOME PIANO LESSONS
 WORKING AS A STEVEDORE.

SOLO MAN
 HERE WAS A MUSIC
 THAT TRULY INSPIRED HIM.

LADIES
 DANCERS REQUIRED HIM

MEN
 CLUB OWNERS HIRED HIM

ALL
 THE STRIVERS OF HARLEM
 RESPECTED AND ADMIRER HIM.

SOLO MAN
 FOR TURNING HARLEM INTO ART

COALHOUSE
 BUT COALHOUSE HAD A BROKEN HEART.

The Good Lord looked down and saw me lonely and
 loveless and He thought to Himself: "Enough is enough.
 I'm putting Sarah in Coalhouse's life."

AND HE DID.

This wasn't a woman. This was an angel, a gift of God.
 Coalhouse loved this woman, but not wisely and not too
 well: She left me without a word or trace. There was
 no pity for me.

SARAH'S FRIEND
 None at all, Coalhouse.

COALHOUSE
 NOW SHE IS HAUNTING ME
 JUST LIKE A MELODY--
 THE ONLY SONG I SEEM TO KNOW.
 SARAH, MY LIFE HAS CHANGED.
 SARAH, I MISS YOU SO.
 SARAH, I DID YOU WRONG.
 SARAH, WHERE DID YOU GO?

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COALHOUSE

And then this morning, the miracle happened. I found out where she is and I'm going to do my damndest to see she takes me back. Ladies and gentlemen, the Gettin' Ready Rag!

(Scene continues on I-29)

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THE GETTIN' READY RAG

ALL
GETTIN' READY RAG...
GETTIN' READY RAG...

(COALHOUSE keeps playing. The dance becomes more joyous, more frenzied. The scene opens out from the dance club to become other parts of Harlem as COALHOUSE re-creates himself.)

ALL
GETTIN', GETTIN', GETTIN' READY RAG.

WOMEN
ANYTHING IT TAKES.

MEN
ANYTHING YOU NEED.

ALL
GOTTA FIND YOUR GIRL, COALHOUSE
AND WIN HER BACK!

(Dance Break)

ALL
GETTIN' READY RAG!

MEN
READY AS YOU'LL EVER GET -

COALHOUSE
NOT YET!

WOMEN
GOTTA WIN THE GIRL, COALHOUSE

COALHOUSE
THINK OF WHAT A BETTER MAN SHE'LL SEE
WHEN MR. HENRY FORD PUTS ME
AT THE WHEEL OF A MODEL T!

(COALHOUSE sees an assembly line in motion and a Model T being built. HENRY FORD appears and sings to COALHOUSE)

(Scene continues on I-29A)

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HENRY FORD

FORD

SEE MY PEOPLE?
WELL, HERE'S MY THEORY
OF WHAT THIS COUNTRY
IS MOVING TOWARD.
EVERY WORKER
A COG IN MOTION.
WELL, THAT'S THE NOTION OF
HENRY FORD!

ONE MAN TIGHTENS.
AND ONE MAN RATCHETS

(Scene continues on I-30)

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AND ONE MAN REACHES
TO PULL ONE CORD.
CAR KEEPS MOVING
IN ONE DIRECTION.

ALL (except HENRY FORD)
A GENUFLECTION TO
HENRY FORD!

HALLELUJAH!
PRAISE THE MAKER
OF THE MODEL T!

FORD
SPEED UP THE BELT.
SPEED UP THE BELT, SAM.

ALL (except HENRY FORD)
HALLELUJAH!

COALHOUSE
HELL, I'LL TAKE HER!

ALL (except HENRY FORD)
SURE AMAZIN'
HOW FAR SOME FELLAS CAN SEE!

FORD
SPEED UP THE BELT.
SPEED UP THE BELT, SAM.
SPEED UP THE BELT.
SPEED UP THE BELT, SAM.

ALL (including HENRY FORD)
SPEED UP THE, SPEED UP THE
SPEED UP THE, SPEED UP THE
BELT.

ALL (except HENRY FORD)
MASS PRODUCTION
WILL SWEEP THE NATION.
A SIMPLE NOTION,
THE WORLD'S REWARD.

FORD
EVEN PEOPLE WHO AIN'T TOO CLEVER
CAN LEARN TO TIGHTEN A NUT FOREVER
ATTACH ONE PEDAL
OR PULL ONE LEVER

f ALL (except HENRY FORD)
FOR HENRY FORD!
HENRY FORD!
HENRY FORD!
HENRY FORD!

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FORD
GRAB YOUR GOGGLES

ALL (including HENRY FORD)
AND CLIMB ABOARD!

COALHOUSE
I'm ready, Lord!

(COALHOUSE drives off in his new car as MOTHER and THE LITTLE BOY appear at their trolley stop in New Rochelle)

MOTHER
You have to wear a tie for the same reason I'm wearing this very unflattering dress. We have to look businesslike if we're going to take care of father's affairs while he's gone.

THE LITTLE BOY
Father says a woman's place is in the home.

MOTHER
Then your father should have stayed home and your uncle shouldn't spend all his nights prowling around New York City looking for God-knows-what.

THE LITTLE BOY
I know what.

MOTHER
I hope not.

(TATEH and THE LITTLE GIRL appear on the opposite side of the trolley tracks. TATEH has put a rope around her arm, which he keeps tied around his own waist. They both carry their belongings. Only the peddler's cart has been jettisoned. As TATEH approaches a TROLLEY CONDUCTOR, MOTHER and THE LITTLE BOY watch, fascinated)

TATEH
Mister, please, where is this?

(Scene continues on I-32)

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CONDUCTOR

You're in New Rochelle.

(TATEH shows him a handful of coins)

TATEH

How much farther can I get on this?

(CONDUCTOR looks at coins)

CONDUCTOR

That should see you and the little girl clear to Boston and environs.

TATEH

What's further than Boston?

CONDUCTOR

Nothing's further than Boston. You can take the rope off her. This ain't the city.

(He laughs, smiles at THE LITTLE GIRL and goes)

THE LITTLE BOY

Mother!

MOTHER

I see! I see! He's afraid of losing her. Immigrants are terrified of losing their children. So are we but just not so conspicuously. Don't stare. It's not polite to stare.

TATEH

He's a rude little boy. Ignore him. People of good breeding do not stare at other people. They acknowledge them politely with a bow. Like this.

(He bows across the platform to MOTHER)

NOTHING LIKE THE CITY

TATEH

GOOD DAY.

MOTHER

GOOD DAY, SIR.

TATEH

SHE CALLED ME SIR.
WITHOUT A DOUBT
WE'RE REALLY OUT
OF NEW YORK CITY.

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MOTHER
FINE WEATHER, ISN'T IT?

TATEH
ISN'T IT?
NOW THAT WE'RE OUT OF THE CITY,
ISN'T IT?

BOTH
NOTHING LIKE THE CITY...

THE LITTLE GIRL
He's still staring.

TATEH
Never mind.

THE LITTLE BOY
MY FATHER'S AT THE NORTH POLE,
WITH ADMIRAL PEARY AND ESKIMOS!
WHERE IS YOUR MOTHER?

THE LITTLE GIRL
DEAD.

MOTHER
Edgar!

THE LITTLE BOY
MY NAME IS EDGAR. WE'RE OFF
TO VISIT OUR FIREWORKS FACTORY.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

THE LITTLE GIRL
NO NAME.

THE LITTLE BOY
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
EVERYONE HAS A NAME.
EVEN THE LITTLE NEGRO BABY
WHO LIVES IN OUR ATTIC...

MOTHER
SSHH. DO NOT BE RUDE.
HE TALKS.

THE LITTLE BOY
I NEVER KNEW ANYONE
WHO STAYED ON A ROPE.
LIKE A PUPPY DOG.
WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

TATEH
I SEE THAT.

THE LITTLE GIRL
SAFE.

MOTHER
HE ALSO STARES.
YOU'D THINK
HE'D NEVER

THE LITTLE BOY
SAFE?

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SEEN SOMEONE
FROM NEW YORK CITY.

THE LITTLE GIRL
YES

THE LITTLE BOY
EVERYONE'S SAFE
IN NEW ROCHELLE.

TATEH
THAT'S CHILDREN,
ISN'T IT?

THE LITTLE GIRL
SAFE?

MOTHER
ISN'T IT?

THE LITTLE BOY
YES.

BOTH
ALWAYS ANOTHER SURPRISE,
ISN'T IT?

CONDUCTOR
Boston Post Road trolley! Boston!

MOTHER
Well.

TATEH
Well.
HAVE A PLEASANT DAY, MA'AM.

MOTHER
HAVE A PLEASANT TRIP, SIR...

MOTHER & TATEH
(to themselves)
NOTHING LIKE THE CITY....

(TATEH and THE LITTLE GIRL depart,
leaving MOTHER and THE LITTLE BOY
looking after them.)

CONDUCTOR
Mamaroneck! All aboard for Mamaroneck!

THE LITTLE BOY
We know those people.

MOTHER
That's ridiculous. They're poor foreigners.

THE LITTLE BOY
Then we're going to know them.

MOTHER
Who put such thoughts in your head?

(MOTHER and THE LITTLE BOY exit to
board the trolley)

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*Eric XS to help
Todd w/ flag hanging*

(COALHOUSE's search for SARAH has taken him past the Emerald Isle firehouse. The FIREMEN and their chief, WILLIE CONKLIN, are outside in their shirtsleeves horsing around. They stop at the sight of COALHOUSE)

*Todd w/ flag
climbs up &
puts it in the
holder*

COALHOUSE

Good day, gentlemen. I'm looking for Broadview Avenue in New Rochelle.

WILLIE CONKLIN

This ain't it. This is the Emerald Isle volunteer firehouse and this is a private road, nigger. Try turning around and going back where you came from.

Scott jumps down w/ wrench

COALHOUSE

I can see that I am not going to receive the courtesy of an answer from you gentlemen. Good day.

(He tips his hat and drives off)

FIREMAN (Todd)

Did you see that, Will? That impudent, cocky, king of the road smirk?

WILLIE CONKLIN

That, gentlemen, is a man to be pitied: A nigger who doesn't know he's a nigger. If he's smart, he won't pass this way again.

(THE FIREMEN exit. The lights come up on SARAH, alone, rocking her baby.)

YOUR DADDY'S SON

SARAH

OOH...

(Scene continues on I-35A)

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DADDY PLAYED PIANO,
PLAYED IT VERY WELL.
MUSIC FROM THOSE HANDS COULD
CATCH YOU LIKE A SPELL.
HE COULD MAKE YOU LOVE HIM,
'FORE THE TUNE WAS DONE.
YOU HAVE YOUR DADDY'S HANDS.
YOU ARE YOUR DADDY'S SON.

OOH...

DADDY NEVER KNEW
THAT YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY.

HE HAD OTHER LADIES,
AND OTHER TUNES TO PLAY.
WHEN HE UP AND LEFT ME.
I JUST UP AND RUN.

(Scene continues on I-36)

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ONLY THING IN MY HEAD--
YOU WERE YOUR DADDY'S SON

COULDN'T HEAR NO MUSIC,
COULDN'T SEE NO LIGHT.
MAMA, SHE WAS FRIGHTENED
CRAZY FROM THE FRIGHT.
TEARS WITHOUT NO COMFORT,
SCREAMS WITHOUT NO SOUND.
ONLY DARKNESS AND PAIN,
THE ANGER AND PAIN,
THE BLOOD AND THE PAIN!
I BURIED MY HEART IN THE
GROUND!
IN THE GROUND.
WHEN I BURIED YOU IN THE
GROUND.

DADDY PLAYED PIANO.
BET HE'S PLAYIN' STILL.
MAMA CAN'T FORGET HIM.
DON'T SUPPOSE I WILL.
GOD WANTS NO EXCUSES.
I HAVE ONLY ONE.
YOU HAD YOUR DADDY'S HANDS.
FORGIVE ME.
YOU WERE YOUR DADDY'S SON

(Mother gently takes the baby from
Sarah)

MOTHER

Sarah, let me take him for awhile. You haven't slept.

(MOTHER takes the baby to the
kitchen and puts him in a small
crib. THE LITTLE BOY is there.
There comes a knock at the screen
door)

MOTHER

Yes?

COALHOUSE

I'm looking for a young woman of color whose name is
Sarah. She is said to reside in one of these houses.

THE LITTLE BOY

She's here. She's living in our attic.

COALHOUSE

Will you tell her, please, that Coalhouse Walker Jr.
desires to speak with her ?

MOTHER

Certainly. Please wait there.

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MOTHER

Edgar?

(MOTHER goes upstairs)

THE LITTLE BOY

This is Sarah's baby. You want a cookie?

(THE LITTLE BOY goes into the
pantry)

MOTHER

Sarah, you have a caller. A Mr. Walker. Will you come
down to the kitchen?

SARAH

No, ma'am. Send him away, please.

(COALHOUSE opens the screen door,
comes into the kitchen and looks
down at his son. He picks him up)

MOTHER

Well, that's the most words you've spoken since you've
been here.

COALHOUSE

HMMM...

(MOTHER comes back into the kitchen
and is surprised to see that
COALHOUSE has presumed to come into
the house and pick up the baby.)

MOTHER

Sarah is unable to see you. Good day.

COALHOUSE

Thank you, ma'am. Tell her I'll come back next Sunday,

(He goes)

GRANDFATHER

(entering) Such was the coming of the colored man in
the car to Broadview Avenue.(YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE LITTLE BOY
join GRANDFATHER in the front
parlor)MOTHER, GRANDFATHER, YOUNGER BROTHER, LITTLE BOY
& ENSEMBLE (Offstage)
EACH SUNDAY, HE'D COME DRIVING.
CURTAINS WOULD PART
NEIGHBOURS WOULD PEEK

(MOTHER opens the door for
COALHOUSE.)

MOTHER
I'm sorry, Mr. Walker. Sarah still will not receive
you.

COALHOUSE
Will you see that she gets these flowers, ma'am.

ALL
WEEK AFTER WEEK
AND AFTER WEEKS OF SUNDAYS,

MOTHER
SENDING HIM OFF SEEMED A CRIME ...

MOTHER
Mr. Walker, it must be a long drive for you. Perhaps
you would like a cup of tea before you go?

ALL
IT WAS THE MUSIC OF SOMETHING BEGINNING...

(COALHOUSE sips his tea without any
embarrassment)

COALHOUSE
I am a professional pianist ma'am. I'm now with the
Jim Europe Clef Club Orchestra. They're quite well
known. It's important for a musician to find a place
that is permanent, a job that requires no travelling.
I am through travelling. I am through going on the
road.

MOTHER
Won't you play something for us, Mr. Walker?

(COALHOUSE tests the piano)

COALHOUSE
This piano is badly in need of a tuning.

MOTHER
Oh yes. We are terrible about that.

(COALHOUSE plays a few more notes)

GRANDFATHER
Do you know any coon songs?

(COALHOUSE stops playing)

COALHOUSE
Coon songs are made for minstrel shows. White men sing
them in black face. This is called Ragtime.

(He resumes, now in earnest)

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YOUNGER BROTHER

Small, clear, chords hung in the air like flowers. The melodies were like bouquets. There seemed to be no other possibilities for life than those delineated by his music.

GRANDFATHER

Ill-tuned or not, the Aeolian had never made such sounds.

ALL (incl. MOTHER, YOUNGER BROTHER)
AND MONTHS FLEW BY IN MOMENTS
HEARING THOSE MELODIES CLIMB...

(FATHER returns from the North Pole. He stands in the front hall, laden with exotic gifts. BRIGIT, the new maid, enters with a dust mop. From the parlor, we can hear COALHOUSE playing)

FATHER

I'm home! Mother! Grandfather!

(BRIGIT screams at the sight of him)

BRIGIT

Who the hell are you?

FATHER

Who in God's name are you?

BRIGIT

I'm Brigit! All right, that's enough, the back door for you, you brazen peddler.

FATHER

This is my home. I live here.

THE LITTLE BOY

Father! Father!

BRIGIT

Oh Holy Mother, it's the master!

(SHE runs out, embarrassed)

FATHER

You were in short pants.

THE LITTLE BOY

Short pants are for little boys!

(MOTHER enters. She has pencils in her hair. She

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carries the baby under one arm and
a ledger book under the other)

MOTHER

Hello. I hope that's you under all that or I am going
to kiss a strange man.

(she kisses FATHER)

MOTHER

It's him! Welcome home. We've missed you terribly.

(she strokes him affectionately)

Did you get all the way to the North Pole?

FATHER

No, only Admiral Peary and Mr. Henson did.

MOTHER

Well, they're professionals.

FATHER

I got to 72 degrees, 46 minutes, a very respectable
way.

MOTHER

I should say so!

FATHER

My left heel kept freezing.

MOTHER

We'll get you into a nice hot tub then. I look a
fright. You weren't expected. You're just in time to
help with the six-months audit. Business is wonderful.
I adore going down there. I think you should pay me a
salary.

FATHER

What are you holding?

MOTHER

Sarah's child.

THE LITTLE BOY

We found him in the garden.

FATHER

Who's Sarah? What is that music?

THE LITTLE BOY

Coalhouse. He's courting Sarah. That's their baby. He
comes every Sunday.

MOTHER

He's hoping Sarah will eventually take pity and come

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down to him.

FATHER

How long has this been going on?

MOTHER

I don't remember.

THE LITTLE BOY

Five months. I've been counting. Coalhouse is teaching me to play the piano.

MOTHER

I think what we are witnessing is, in fact, a courtship of the most stubborn Christian kind.

FATHER

Yes, if you can call a courtship what has already produced a bastard child.

MOTHER

I find that an unkind remark.

FATHER

I find your welcoming of such a situation unfathomable.

MOTHER

There was suffering and now there is penitence. It's very grand and I'm sorry for you that you don't see it. I did not expect you to come home a different man but I had hoped to find you a kinder one. I'll see about your tub.

(She goes. FATHER is alone, confused. He reacts as COALHOUSE strikes up a new tune on the piano in the parlor)

NEW MUSIC

FATHER

WHERE HAVE I BEEN?
HOW DID WE CHANGE,
CAUGHT IN THIS STRANGE
NEW MUSIC?
SAY,
WAS I AWAY TOO LONG?

MOTHER

JUST LIKE THAT TUNE,
SIMPLE AND CLEAR,
I'VE COME TO HEAR
NEW MUSIC.

FATHER

NEW MUSIC.

WHY,
WHY CAN'T YOU HEAR THE SONG?

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YOUNGER BROTHER
 HIS FINGERS STROKE THOSE KEYS,
 AND EVERY NOTE SAYS "PLEASE",
 AND EVERY CHORD SAYS, "TURN MY WAY."

MOTHER, FATHER
 I THOUGHT I KNEW
 WHAT LOVE WAS
 BUT THESE LOVERS PLAY

MOTHER, FATHER, YOUNGER BROTHER
 NEW MUSIC!
 HAUNTING ME,
 AND SOMEHOW TAUNTING ME--
 MY LOVE WAS NEVER HALF AS TRUE.

FATHER
 AND I ASK MYSELF,
 WHY CAN'T I SING IT, TOO.

WORKERS, NEIGHBORS
 HIS FINGERS STROKE THOSE KEYS,
 AND EVERY NOTE SAYS "PLEASE,"
 AND EVERY CHORD SAYS, "TURN MY WAY."

ADD FAMILY
 I THOUGHT I KNEW
 WHAT LOVE WAS,
 BUT THESE LOVERS PLAY
 NEW MUSIC!
 HAUNTING ME
 AND SOMEHOW TAUNTING ME--
 MY LOVE WAS
 NEVER HALF AS TRUE.

COALHOUSE
 SARAH, MY LIFE HAS CHANGED.
 SARAH, YOU'VE GOT TO SEE.
 SARAH, WE'VE GOT A SON!
 SARAH, COME DOWN TO ME...

(SARAH stands upstairs, undecided.
 She slowly moves toward the door)

SARAH	COALHOUSE	ALL
YOU AND YOUR MUSIC,		
SINGING DEEP IN ME,		
MAKING NICE TO ME,		
SAYING SOMETHING SO NEW --	NEW	
CHANGING EVERYTHING,		
MEANING EVERYTHING	MUSIC	
CALLING MY HEART TO YOU...		

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PLAY THAT MELODY
YOUR SWEET MELODY
CALLING MY HEART TO YOU

ALL FOR YOU, GIRL
YOU, SARAH
YOU AHH...

(SARAH comes down the stairs. The FAMILY reacts as she walks into COALHOUSE'S embrace)

ALL (except COALHOUSE and SARAH)
JUST LIKE THAT TUNE,
SIMPLE AND CLEAR,
I'VE COME TO HEAR
NEW MUSIC--
BREAKING MY HEART,
OP'NING A DOOR,
CHANGING THE WORLD!
NEW MUSIC!
I'LL
HEAR IT FOREVERMORE!

(SARAH nods a happy, tearful assent. The music changes into the vamp for "WHEELS OF A DREAM" as we find ourselves on an idyllic hillside in the country. COALHOUSE has been polishing his car. SARAH, amused at his fastidiousness, holds their son)

SARAH

You've been polishing that car so hard there ain't gonna be anything left for us to ride home in!

COALHOUSE

You laugh but you wait, you'll see. This is no ordinary car, Sarah. This car is going to take us to a better day and a better time.

SARAH

Who have you been talking to, Coalhouse?

COALHOUSE

No one, but I've been reading the words of Mr. Booker T. Washington. He's a great man, Sarah.

SARAH

I think you're a great man, Coalhouse.

COALHOUSE

Not like that, Sarah, not like that. Harvard University awarded him a degree. Imagine that. Imagine what this child's life can be.

(Scene continues on I-44)

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(SARAH gives COALHOUSE the baby.)

WHEELS OF A DREAM

COALHOUSE

I SEE HIS FACE.
 I HEAR HIS HEARTBEAT.
 I LOOK IN THOSE EYES.
 HOW WISE THEY SEEM.
 WELL, WHEN HE IS OLD ENOUGH
 I WILL SHOW HIM AMERICA
 AND HE WILL RIDE
 ON THE WHEELS OF A DREAM.

COALHOUSE

WE'LL GO DOWN SOUTH
 AND SEE YOUR PEOPLE.
 WON'T THEY TAKE TO HIM
 LIKE CATS TO CREAM!

SARAH

GO DOWN SOUTH,
 SEE MY FOLKS.
 THEY'LL TAKE TO HIM
 MMM...

COALHOUSE

THEN WE'LL TRAVEL ON FROM THERE.

SARAH

CALIFORNIA OR WHO KNOWS WHERE!

BOTH

AND WE WILL RIDE
 ON THE WHEELS OF A DREAM.

COALHOUSE

YES, THE WHEELS ARE TURNING FOR US, GIRL,
 AND THE TIMES ARE STARTING TO ROLL.
 ANY MAN CAN GET WHERE HE WANTS TO
 IF HE'S GOT SOME FIRE IN HIS SOUL.
 WE'LL SEE JUSTICE, SARAH,
 AND PLENTY OF MEN
 WHO WILL STAND UP
 AND GIVE US OUR DUE,
 OH, SARAH, IT'S MORE THAN PROMISES.
 SARAH, IT MUST BE TRUE.
 A COUNTRY THAT LETS A MAN LIKE ME
 OWN A CAR, RAISE A CHILD, BUILD A LIFE WITH
 YOU....

COALHOUSE

WITH YOU...

SARAH

WITH YOU...

BOTH

BEYOND THAT ROAD
 BEYOND THIS LIFETIME
 THAT CAR FULL OF HOPE
 WILL ALWAYS GLEAM!
 WITH THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS
 AND THE FREEDOM HE'LL LIVE TO KNOW.
 HE'LL TRAVEL WITH HEAD HELD HIGH,
 JUST AS FAR AS HIS HEART CAN GO

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AND HE WILL RIDE
OUR SON WILL RIDE
ON THE WHEELS OF A DREAM.

(The lights come up on TATEH. He is labouring in a mill. EMMA GOLDMAN enters)

EMMA GOLDMAN

I have just returned from Lawrence, Massachusetts. I met an old friend there, an artist, a poet with scissors and paper, but who now stands at a loom sixty four hours a week. His fingers were bleeding. I almost did not recognize him. His pay is six dollars.

TATEH

My daughter is shivering! There is no heat. There are worms in the scraps they feed us.

EMMA

He looked like his own child's grandfather.

TATEH

I will not bow down to these mill owners. I will dine on their coffins, she will dance on their graves.

EMMA

This is not the America he came here for. None of us did. None of us!!

(Strikers enter, shouting, and we see that EMMA GOLDMAN is addressing a rally. YOUNGER BROTHER is in her audience. It snows)

But there is hope, comrades. Eight weeks ago these same workers -- Italians, Poles, Belgians, Russian Jews -- with one voice said "No!" to the millowners and went on strike. They are starving, their children are dying but they are holding firm and we must support them.

THE NIGHT THAT GOLDMAN SPOKE AT UNION SQUARE

YOUNGER BROTHER

IT WAS WINTER IN NEW YORK
AS THE SNOW BEGAN TO FALL.
AND THE WORKMEN'S HALL HAD NOT A SEAT TO
SPARE.
WHEN A YOUNG MAN DUCKED INSIDE
JUST TO WARM HIMSELF, WAS ALL.
THE NIGHT THAT GOLDMAN SPOKE AT UNION SQUARE.

i

EMMA

What is happening in Lawrence is happening everywhere. Let us at last make this the land of opportunity for all people and not just the owners. The land of opportunity for Tateh and his little girl. We cannot rest!

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YOUNGER BROTHER
SHE WAS SPEAKING LOUD AND FAST
THROUGH A HAZE OF NOISE AND HEAT
AND THE SMELL OF SWEAT AND ANGER IN THE AIR.
THE POLICE WERE STANDING BY
BUT THE CROWD WAS ON ITS FEET
THE NIGHT THAT GOLDMAN SPOKE AT UNION SQUARE.

EMMA

You!

YOUNGER BROTHER
HE THOUGHT HE HEARD HER SAY

EMMA

What brings you here today?

EMMA, RALLYERS
POOR YOUNG RICH BOY!

EMMA

YOUNGER BROTHER

MASTURBATES FOR A VAUDEVILLE TART!
WHAT A WASTE OF A FIERY HEART
DEAR!

HE THOUGHT SHE SAID:

EMMA, RALLYERS

POOR YOUNG BOURGEOIS!

EMMA

YOUNGER BROTHER

THERE ARE THINGS THAT YOU'VE NEVER THOUGHT,
COME TO EMMA AND YOU'LL BE TAUGHT,
HERE

HIS HEAD WAS
SPINNING!

EMMA, RALLYERS

PEOPLE FEATHERED AND TARRED, MY FRIEND.
UNIONS BROKEN, AND WHY FOR?
CHILDREN LABORING, WOMEN STILL ENSLAVED!
LEAVE YOUR LITTLE BACK YARD, MY FRIEND,
THERE ARE CAUSES TO DIE FOR.

RALLYERS

STRIKE!

YOUNGER BROTHER

IN THE GUTTERS OF THE CITY
I HAVE TRIED TO FIND SOME MEANING.

RALLYERS

STRIKE!

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YOUNGER BROTHER
IN THE ARMS OF FALLEN WOMEN.
IN THE THOUGHT OF SUICIDE.

RALLYERS

STRIKE!

YOUNGER BROTHER EMMA
LIKE A FIREWORK UNEXPLODED,
WANTING LIFE BUT NEVER
KNOWING HOW...

MY BROTHER,
LIFE HAS MEANING

RALLYERS

STRIKE!

I'LL SHOW YOU HOW!

YOUNGER BROTHER
TILL NOW!

MY BROTHER, YOU ARE
WITH US NOW!

HE WAS CALLING OUT HER NAME
SHOUTING WHAT, HE DID NOT KNOW
AND HE FOUND THAT HE WAS STANDING ON A CHAIR
WITH A HEART AS CLEAN AND NEW
AS THE FRESHLY FALLEN SNOW
THE NIGHT THAT GOLDMAN SPOKE

EMMA

I've been waiting for you.

YOUNGER BROTHER
AT UNION SQUARE.

WORKERS

STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE!

(EMMA is being arrested. YOUNGER BROTHER
picks up the challenge. We are now in
Lawrence, M.A. Men with rifles assemble.
STRIKE ORGANIZERS try to calm the
STRIKERS)

YOUNGER BROTHER

The strike in Lawrence became famous. The press called
it the Children's Crusade. Public indignation grew.
The mill owners were not slow in calling in the militia
to protect their property.

VARIOUS ORGANIZERS
(to Tateh)

Take the bread. It's not charity. Your bosses want
you weak.

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WORKERS
STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE!

(TATEH and THE LITTLE GIRL are in their room, getting ready for her departure)

TATEH

This is a wise plan. It's too dangerous here. You're going to a nice Jewish home in Philadelphia. Kosher. I made certain. These are your mittens. See? I put a string, so you don't lose them. Your Tateh thinks of everything.

(train whistle)

ORGANIZER

Put the children on the train! Get them out of here!

TATEH

Mrs. Wittstein will be on the train with you children. I'll come for you soon. Now hurry! You'll miss the train!

(Scene continues on I-47)

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(TATEH gives the LITTLE GIRL to a woman boarding the train.)

(MILITIAMEN raise their rifles. WOMEN scream. Suddenly, violence is everywhere. Another WOMAN runs near TATEH, she is struck down by a militiaman and falls to the ground. TATEH bends to help her.)

TATEH

I hate you, goddamned America!

(A POLICEMAN cracks him on the head with his nightstick.

TATEH stumbles away. He is dazed and nearly vanquished. The platform

(Scene continues on I-48)

around him is crowded with bloodied
bodies and victims. We hear the
sound of the train beginning to
move off)

THE LITTLE GIRL

Tateh! Tateh!

(TATEH is suddenly aware of what is
happening. He begins to run in the
direction of the train)

(further off)

Tateh! Tateh!

(almost inaudible)

Tateh! Tateh!

(TATEH jumps on to the back of the
train. He climbs onto the caboose
and holds the LITTLE GIRL.)

TATEH

Don't cry. Don't be afraid. I'm here. We're together.
Ssshh. Ssshhh. Look what I've made for you. (HE shows
her a small handmade book)

GLIDING

SEE THE SILHOUETTES.
IT'S A LITTLE BOOK OF SILHOUETTES.
WHEN YOU FLIP THE PAGES, THEY MOVE.
LOOK HOW NICE!
THIS IS YOU ON SKATES.
TURNING PRETTY FIGURE EIGHTS
ON THE SMOOTH, COOL ICE...

WE ARE GLIDING
GLIDING ON A POND.
CLOSE YOUR EYES.
CLOSE YOUR EYES.
WE ARE GLIDING,
GLIDING FAR BEYOND.
CLOSE YOUR EYES,
CLOSE YOUR EYES.
FEEL THE WIND
AS YOU PIROUETTE
ARE YOU HAPPY YET?
ARE YOU HAPPY YET?

YOUR MAMEH WOULD TELL YOU:
IMAGINE YOU'RE FEARLESS.
IMAGINE YOU'RE FEARLESS
AND SOON, YOU WON'T FEAR!
WHEN I AM AFRAID,
I IMAGINE YOUR MAMEH.
SHE SKATES JUST AHEAD.

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CAN YOU SEE HER?
SHE'S HERE!
AND WE'RE

GLIDING,
GLIDING FAR AWAY.
PIROUETTES,
FIGURE EIGHTS,
SILVER SKATES
JUST DOWN THE TRACK.

(Scene continues on I-49)

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GLIDE WITH ME, LITTLE ONE.
GLIDE WITH YOUR TATEH
WE'LL NEVER
LOOK BACK!

(The train comes to a stop and A
CONDUCTOR enters onto the platform
to announce their station)

CONDUCTOR
Philadelphia! Last stop, Philadelphia! (calling to an
unseen engineer) All clear!

(TATEH & THE LITTLE GIRL disembark
from the train. THE CONDUCTOR
notices the book she is flipping
through)

CONDUCTOR
My kid would like that. How much?

TATEH
It's not for...A dollar?

CONDUCTOR
It's a deal. What do you call it?

TATEH
I...

CONDUCTOR
It's gotta have a name. I'm not paying this much for
something without a name.

TATEH
They move. I call them movie books.

(CONDUCTOR goes)

Your father is a smart man. With this money, we'll get
a clean bed and a hot bath, and tomorrow we'll make
more of these and we will sell them for two dollars.
Tateh's movie books! Everyone will want them. They
just don't know that yet!

TATEH
WE ARE
GLIDING,
GLIDING FAR AWAY.
PIROUETTES,
FIGURE EIGHTS,
SILVER SKATES
JUST DOWN THE TRACK.
GLIDE WITH ME, LITTLE ONE.
GLIDE WITH YOUR TATEH
WE'LL NEVER
LOOK BACK!

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(lights come up on BOOKER T.
WASHINGTON, making a speech)

BOOKER T.

And I say to you, gentlemen, that every race or nation that has ever got upon its feet has done so through struggle and persecution; and out of this very resistance to wrong, out of the struggle against odds, they have gained strength.

(COALHOUSE, SARAH and the baby are returning to New Rochelle in the Model T.

WILLIE CONKLIN and his MEN appear, goofing off in front of the firehouse. We hear the familiar sound of a Model T coming toward us. The MEN begin to fan out. COALHOUSE and SARAH find their way barred by WILLIE CONKLIN and the EMERALD ISLE FIREMEN. Nastiness hangs in the air.)

COALHOUSE

Sarah. Go down the road and wait.

SARAH

I'm not going to leave you--.

COALHOUSE

Do it, Sarah.

SARAH

Stubborn, righteous man.

(SARAH hurries off with THE BABY)

COALHOUSE

Let me pass.

WILLIE

Gladly. That will be twenty-five dollars. This is a private toll road.

COALHOUSE

Since when?

WILLIE

Since some high-falutin' nigger and his whore and his whore's baby thought they could drive that goddamn car of theirs any place they pleased, that's since when.

(COALHOUSE gets out of the car)

Running away, nigger?

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COALHOUSE

I am going to find a policeman. If anyone touches my car before I return, he will answer to Coalhouse.

CONKLIN

Tell him Fire Chief Will Conklin sends his regards!

(The FIREMEN laugh as COALHOUSE walks away.)

Todd flips out with fire!

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

We must exhibit patience.

(They descend on the car and destroy it.)

Todd rips top of car

Stephen smashes headlight

Self-control. ↓ Forbearance. ↓ And dwell above hatred and acts of cruelty.

Scott smashes windshield

Eric pops tire w/axle

(BOOKER T. WASHINGTON disappears)

Stephen scrapes side of car

COALHOUSE

Coalhouse found a policeman but he refused to help. When he returned to his car, the Model T was spattered with mud. There was a twenty-inch tear in the custom pantasote top. The tires had been slashed and all the windows broken. Deposited on the seat was a mound of fresh human excrement.



CONKLIN (laugh)

Come on, fellas, let's roll her into the pond and see if she floats!

(CONKLIN and the FIREMEN exit, laughing and pushing COALHOUSE'S car as SARAH returns)

SARAH

Come on, Coalhouse. It doesn't matter.

COALHOUSE

WE'LL SEE JUSTICE, SARAH
AND PLENTY OF MEN
WHO WILL STAND UP AND GIVE US OUR DUE!

TOWN HALL BUREAUCRAT

Well you can sign another complaint, Mr. Walker, but volunteer firemen are not municipal employees and therefore do not come under the jurisdiction of the city. I'm sorry.

(Scene continues on I-51A)

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SECOND BUREAUCRAT

I'm still tracing your first complaint, Mr. Walker. Are you sure you filed it with this office? Let me look again.

COALHOUSE

JUSTICE, SARAH.
THIS IS AMERICA.

MOTHER

I am ashamed that our community is represented in his mind by that bunch of toughs.

FATHER

Let me talk to my lawyer.

YOUNGER BROTHER

That's all it will be: talk, talk, talk!

COALHOUSE

THE LAW'S THE LAW.
THE LAW'S BEEN BROKEN.
WHY SHOULD I TURN THE OTHER CHEEK?
WHAT ABOUT JUSTICE!

PEOPLE OF HARLEM

THE BUREAUCRATS AND BUNGLERS,
THE ATTORNEYS WHO SMILED

(Scene continues on I-52)

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WHITE ATTORNEY

My advice, recover your car and forget the whole matter.

PEOPLE OF HARLEM
THE CLERKS AND THE OFFICIALS
AND THE FORMS THAT WERE FILED

A CLERK

This to get a place on the court calendar. This for change of venue...

PEOPLE OF HARLEM
SO MANY ROADS TO JUSTICE
AROUND THE BEND.

BLACK LAWYER

I want justice for our people so bad I can taste it. But I won't waste my time on a mere case of vandalism when I have real injustices to take to the courts!

PEOPLE OF HARLEM
AND EVERY ROAD A NEW DEAD END...

COALHOUSE

I WILL NOT MOVE
FROM WHERE I'M STANDING
TILL WHAT'S MINE IS RESTORED TO ME.
I'M NOT A FOOL.
I'M NOT THEIR NIGGER!
I WILL HAVE WHAT'S FAIRLY OWED ME!
AND TILL THEN,
I WILL NOT MARRY...

(MOTHER approaches SARAH.)

MOTHER

We understand Mr. Walker's outrage. We share it. All decent people do.

SARAH

HE SAID, "WHEELS ARE TURNING FOR US, GIRL."

MOTHER

But I'm sure there's a way to settle this affair without calling off the wedding.

SARAH

HE SAID "TIMES ARE STARTING TO ROLL."

MOTHER

To be so close to the happiness you both deserve and have it come to this!

(SARAH moves away from MOTHER)

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SARAH

WELL, I KNOW HE'LL GET WHERE HE WANTS TO
 CAUSE HE'S GOT THAT FIRE IN HIS SOUL.
 SAID, "THERE'S JUSTICE, SARAH,
 AND PLENTY OF MEN
 WHO WILL STAND UP AND GIVE US OUR DUE..."
 WELL, YOU'LL HAVE YOUR DUE
 COALHOUSE,
 YES, YOU'LL HAVE YOUR DUE.

MOTHER'S YOUNGER BROTHER

The Republican vice-presidential candidate was to be in the city that evening to attend a rally. The Secret Service was at the ready. The recent assassination of President McKinley had been a lesson well learned. Guns were going off everywhere.

(The Vice Presidential campaign enters. Posters, banners, a marching band, the incumbent candidate waving. He poses for photographs with MORGAN on the back of a train.

But it's all slightly surreal, as filtered through SARAH'S consciousness)

PRESIDENT

SARAH

I'll tell him...

PRESIDENT,
 I AM COMING TO YOU
 ON BEHALF OF COALHOUSE WALKER.
 HE DON'T KNOW I'M HERE.
 HE'S MUCH TOO PROUD!
 AND I AIN'T MUCH OF A TALKER.
 BUT PRESIDENT,
 HE NEEDS YOUR HELP.
 SIR, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE.
 'CAUSE COALHOUSE, HE WON'T MARRY ME
 TILL THIS THING IS DONE.
 AND PRESIDENT,
 WE GOT A SON!

(The march music is suddenly very loud, very real. SARAH breaks through the police barricade and rushes towards him, her arm outstretched to him)

SARAH

President! Mr. President!!

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She's got a gun!

MORGAN

(The police officers club SARAH with their nightsticks. She falls to the ground.)

4 hits for Sar.
1 - Stephen grabs arm + hits stone

I saw a gun!

MORGAN

(The CROWD, MORGAN, THE CANDIDATE and POLICEMEN disappear. COALHOUSE enters and rushes to Sarah's lifeless body.)

2 - Eric grabs other arm + hits back of head

Noooo!!!

COALHOUSE

(he sobs)

(People lift SARAH up. The dirge begins.)

3 - Stephen hits side of head

4 - Eric supports her fall + then hits face w/ backhand

TILL WE REACH THAT DAY

MOURNERS (offstage)

OH...
OH...
OH...

(We are now at Sarah's funeral. To the slow rhythm of a drum, a processional enters bearing SARAH'S coffin)

SARAH'S FRIEND

THERE'S A DAY OF HOPE
MAY I LIVE TO SEE,
WHEN OUR HEARTS ARE HAPPY,
AND OUR SOULS ARE FREE.
LET THE NEW DAY DAWN,
OH, LORD, I PRAY.
WE'LL NEVER GET TO HEAVEN
TILL WE REACH THAT DAY.

SARAH'S FRIEND & PEOPLE OF HARLEM
IT'S A DAY OF PEACE.
A DAY OF PRIDE.
A DAY OF JUSTICE
WE HAVE BEEN DENIED.
WHEN A MAN CAN LIVE,
AND A CHILD CAN PLAY,
WE'LL NEVER GET TO HEAVEN
TILL WE REACH THAT DAY.

(Scene continues on I-54A)

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COALHOUSE

WHAT THEY DID TO HER,
WHAT THEY TOOK FROM HER.
SHE HAD LIFE IN HER,
LORD, SHE HAD MY BABY!
LOOK WHAT THEY LEFT OF HER,
LEFT OF HER,
LEFT OF MY GIRL!

(In other parts of the city, others
sing.)

(Scene continues on I-55)

EMMA
SHE WAS NOTHING
TO THEM,
SHE WAS A WOMAN.

COALHOUSE

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MY GIRL.

MOTHER
NOTHING AND NO ONE TO THEM,

EMMA, MOTHER & COALHOUSE
SO THEY BEAT HER
AND BEAT HER AND BEAT HER AND...

MOURNERS (FULL ENSEMBLE)
A DAY OF PEACE

COALHOUSE
THERE WAS BLOOD ON THE
GROUND

A DAY OF PRIDE

COALHOUSE, EMMA, MOTHER, TATEH
SHE WAS ONLY A GIRL

A DAY OF JUSTICE

COALHOUSE, EMMA, M'S YB,
MOTHER, TATEH
IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN

WE HAVE BEEN DENIED

ABOVE, PLUS OTHER
IMMIGRANTS, HARLEM
IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN
AND AGAIN
AND AGAIN

LET THE NEW DAY DAWN
OH, LORD....

TATEH
WHY DOES NOBODY CARE?

YOUNGER BROTHER, EMMA
THERE IS BLOOD IN THE AIR!

HARLEM WOMEN
WE HAVE VOICES AND SOULS!

MOTHER, EMMA, YOUNGER BROTHER, TATEH
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS COUNTRY?

IMMIGRANTS
SHE WAS SOMEBODY'S CHILD!

HARLEM MEN
THERE ARE NEGROES OUT THERE!

IMMIGRANTS, HARLEM, MOTHER, YOUNGER BROTHER,
LITTLE BOY, WOMEN with EMMA (shouting over)
THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE!

MORE PEOPLE
GIVE THE PEOPLE

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ALL (except FATHER & GRANDFATHER)
A DAY OF PEACE.
A DAY OF PRIDE.
A DAY OF JUSTICE
WE HAVE BEEN DENIED.
LET THE NEW DAY DAWN,
OH, LORD, I PRAY...

WE'LL NEVER GET TO HEAVEN
TILL WE REACH THAT DAY.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

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(We see a large poster of HOUDINI. It glows. As the music plays, the lights come up on THE LITTLE BOY in bed, having a nightmare. He sits up and sings)

THE LITTLE BOY
HARRY HOUDINI,
MASTER ESCAPIST,
MASTER OF GETTING FREE...

(the poster rises to reveal HOUDINI, ready for his next trick)

HOUDINI
Good people of New Rochelle, now for my final escape of the evening. It was put to me by your city's finest --the volunteer firemen of the Emerald Isle Fire Department and their splendid chief, Mr. Willie Conklin.

(WILLIE and other FIREMEN appear on stage)

WILLIE CONKLIN
Let's crate this immigrant up, boys, and ship him back to the old country! Let's see you get out of this one, you goddamn Bohunk bastard.

LITTLE BOY
Wait! You forgot the dynamite!

(A FIREMAN produces a timebomb, tosses it to CONKLIN who puts it in the box. THE FIREMEN start closing up HOUDINI'S box)

CONKLIN
You've got thirty seconds to get out of there before it blows!

LITTLE BOY
He can't do it in thirty seconds! Nobody can! Not even the great Houdini!

CONKLIN
That's too bad!

(Box lid slams. Music changes; Ominous.)

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CONKLIN

All right, hoist away. Toodle-oo, Houdini!

LITTLE BOY

No! Don't!

HOUDINI

(From inside the crate)

I'm O.K. sonny!

(The box is lifted high above the stage.)

HARRY HOUDINI
 MASTER ESCAPIST
 MASTER OF GETTING FREE

HOLDING HIS BREATH
 HE DANCES WITH DEATH
 AS DARING AS HE CAN BE

(The box breaks. The FIREMEN react.)

LITTLE BOY

Stop the trick! Something's gone wrong! He can't get out of there! It's going to explode! Stop the trick! Somebody do something. He can't escape! He's going to die! I'm sorry they put the dynamite in!

(There is an enormous explosion. The box flies open. It is empty. Pandemonium on stage as WILLIE and the FIREMEN rush off.

HOUDINI appears at the conductor's podium in the pit and goes onstage)

HOUDINI

ENTER THE MASTER
 SAVED FROM DISASTER
 MAKING THE PEOPLE GAPE.
 HARRY HOUDINI,
 SNAPPING THE CUFFS FOR YOU,
 DROPPING THE CHAINS FOR YOU,
 SLIPPING THE ROPE FOR YOU
 HARRY HOUDINI,
 MASTER OF HOPE
 MAKING THE GREAT ESCAPE.

(The LITTLE BOY wakes up)

(Scene continues on II-3)

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THE LITTLE BOY

Mother! Mother!

(MOTHER rushes in. She is in her nightdress)

MOTHER

Edgar, what is it? What are you doing out of bed? Shhh. You had a nightmare.

THE LITTLE BOY

Something terrible is going to happen! An explosion. People are going to die.

(MOTHER and THE LITTLE BOY exit. COALHOUSE has entered and stands alone.)

COALHOUSE

SAY GOODBYE TO MUSIC
 SAY GOODBYE TO LIGHT.
 ANYTHING I CARE FOR
 TAKE IT FROM MY SIGHT.
 LET ME SEE NO FUTURE
 LET ME HEAR NO SOUND.
 ONLY DARKNESS AND PAIN
 THE ANGER AND PAIN
 THE BLOOD AND THE PAIN
 THEY BURIED MY HEART IN THE GROUND.
 IN THE GROUND.
 WHEN THEY BURIED YOU IN THE GROUND.

I SEE YOUR FACE
 AND WE WILL RIDE
 ON THE WHEELS OF A NEW DREAM,
 SARAH,
 A NEW TIME, SARAH,
 NOW,
 I'LL PLAY THEM THE MUSIC
 OF SOMETHING BEGINNING,
 AN ERA EXPLODING,
 A CENTURY SPINNING --
 MY LAW AND MY JUSTICE
 IN RHYTHM AND RHYME!
 LISTEN TO THAT RAGTIME!

(Three gun shots are fired --
 "Three Firemen Dead".)

NEWSBOY #1

Extra! Arsonist destroys Emerald Isle Engine Company!

NEWSBOY #2

Negro gunman shoots three dead!

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NEWSBOY #3

Extra! Terror stalks New Rochelle! Murderer's demands revealed!

COALHOUSE

One - that my car be returned to me in its original condition. Two - that the white excrescence known as Fire Chief Will Conklin, the one who instigated this crime, be turned over to me for my justice. Nothing less, nothing more.

COALHOUSE DEMANDS

(All over the city, people react to the news)

ALL

SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY
THERE'S A MADMAN WAITING,
STANDING IN THE SHADOWS
WITH A GUN IN HIS HANDS.
A MAN OF COLOR
WHO IS CALMLY STATING:
COALHOUSE DEMANDS!
COALHOUSE DEMANDS!

NEW ROCHELLE MEN, WOMEN
HE DEMANDS!

HARLEM MEN, WOMEN
HE DEMANDS!
COALHOUSE DEMANDS!

NEW ROCHELLE MEN
WHO IS HE TO DEMAND?

HARLEM MEN, WOMEN
HE DEMANDS!

NEW ROCHELLE WOMEN, MEN & NEWSBOYS
HE DEMANDS!

NEWSBOYS (shouting)
KILLER NEGRO DEMANDS!

HARLEM MEN, WOMEN
ABOUT TIME A BLACK MAN DEMANDED!

ALL
HE CALLS CONKLIN THE WHITE EXCRESCENCE ...

THE LITTLE BOY
WHAT'S EXCRESCENCE?

FATHER

Edgar, go to your room!

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(MOTHER is greatly agitated. GRANDFATHER
and SARAH'S FRIEND are with her. THE
LITTLE BOY does not leave)

MOTHER

Three firemen were killed. One of them was Mrs.
Gallagher's nephew. Six more were badly injured when
the boiler exploded.

THE LITTLE BOY

And one of them will be dead by tonight. It was
Coalhouse, wasn't it?

FATHER

I said, go to your room.

MOTHER

Edgar.

(MOTHER and THE LITTLE BOY leave
together)

GRANDFATHER

I told you we hadn't heard the last of that Negro.

ALL

COALHOUSE DEMANDS

COALHOUSE'S GANG, ~~YOUNGER BROTHER~~
IT'S AN EYE FOR AN EYE
CALL IT JUSTICE FRIEND.

HARLEM WOMEN, ~~SARAH'S FRIEND~~
PEOPLE'S LIVES FOR A CAR
AIN'T JUSTICE.
AN EYE FOR AN EYE, THAT AIN'T.

FIREMEN

HE WANTS WILLIE CONKLIN

CONKLIN

WILLIE CONKLIN
HE EVEN MISPELLED MY NAME.
WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT!
WITH A "K"

(he laughs but it is a hollow laugh)

HE CAN'T TAKE A JOKE, NOW CAN HE.
SENSITIVE, AIN'T HE? (Another laugh)
DOES HE THINK ONLY NIGGERS GET SHIT?
WE IRISH HAD TO GET USED TO IT!

FIREMAN

You goddamned, gutless Mick, look what you got us into!

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(WILLIE is shocked and confused that people are turning their backs on him and are angry)

WILLIE
 YOU'RE GONNA PROTECT ME, AIN'T YA?
 HIDE ME, AIN'T YA?

FIREMAN
 Get out of town, Will, before they kill us all!

(COALHOUSE'S MEN surround him. They stand in solidarity)

COALHOUSE'S MEN
 WHAT THEY DID TO YOU,
 WHAT THEY TOOK FROM YOU,
 WE ARE ONE WITH YOU.
 NOW THE WORLD WILL KNOW
 THERE ARE NEGROES OUT THERE
 TO MAKE THEM LISTEN!
 WE'RE ALL COALHOUSE!

(They don matching bowler hats and brandish their guns)

(BOOKER T. WASHINGTON is surrounded by reporters)

REPORTER #1
 Do you have a statement for us, Mr. Washington?

REPORTER #2
 What do you think of these Negro renegades, Mr. Washington?

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
 FOR THE SUM OF MY LIFE
 I HAVE LIVED IN HOPE
 WE MIGHT ALL BE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS
 I HAVE WORKED TO PERSUADE
 EVERY WHITE-SKINNED MAN
 THAT HE NEED NOT FEAR OUR RACE.

I deplore Mr. Walker's actions, and the irreparable harm he has done to my people.

AND I WISH THAT I MIGHT TELL HIM
 FACE TO FACE.

HARLEM WOMEN (Group 1)	HARLEM WOMEN (Group 2)
NOT ONE OF OURS	NOT ONE OF OURS
NEVER HEARD OF HIM	NEVER HEARD OF HIM
WE DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE	DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE
NOT ONE OF OURS	NOT ONE OF OURS

JAN 18 1998

ALL HARLEM WOMEN
 DON'T KNOW ANYTHING
 (to each other)
 AND I WOULDN'T TELL
 THOSE PECKERWOODS
 EVEN IF I DID

GROUP 1	CONKLIN, OTHERS
NO ONE KNOWS WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE	SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY
NO ONE KNOWS WHERE HE IS	WAITING IN THE DARK
NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO STOP HIM...	STOP HIM!

GROUP 1	CONKLIN, GROUP 2
SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY	SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY
THERE'S A MADMAN WAITING	
STANDING IN THE SHADOWS	STANDING IN THE SHADOWS
WITH A GUN IN HIS HANDS	

ALL
 A MAN OF COLOR
 WHO IS CALMLY STATING
 COALHOUSE DEMANDS
 SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY
 COALHOUSE!

COALHOUSE & HIS MEN
 WE'LL PLAY THEM THE MUSIC
 OF SOMETHING BEGINNING!
 AN ERA EXPLODING, A CENTURY
 SPINNING----
 LISTEN TO THAT RAGTIME!

(They fire their guns. People react.)

MOTHER and YOUNGER BROTHER are sitting
 around a table. MOTHER has SARAH'S BABY
 with her. FATHER stands with a pistol.
 THE LITTLE BOY watches)

FATHER
 We are suffering a tragedy that should not have been
 ours. What in God's name possessed you? You took that
 woman in without sufficient thought. And she brought
 Coalhouse into our lives. You have victimized us all
 with your foolish female sentimentality.

YOUNGER BROTHER
 Are you going out to find him and shoot him?

FATHER
 I'm protecting my home. If Mr. Walker makes the mistake
 of coming to my door I will deal with him.

(The BABY begins to cry. SARAH'S FRIEND
 enters)

YOUNGER BROTHER
 Why should he come here? We did not desecrate his car.

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FATHER

I went to the police. I told them this murdering madman was a guest in my home. I told them we are keeping his bastard child. I told them everything I knew. They were very grateful.

YOUNGER BROTHER

Did you tell them he's the same black man whose car they destroyed? The same negro maniac who went to them for justice but whose every legal complaint they ignored? The same crazed Negro killer who followed the coffin of a woman they murdered? Were they grateful for the truth?

FATHER

I hope I misunderstand you. Would you defend this savage? Does he have anyone but himself to blame for Sarah's death? Anything but his damnable nigger pride? Nothing under heaven can excuse the killing of men and the destruction of property in this manner.

YOUNGER BROTHER

I did not hear such a eulogy at Sarah's funeral. I did not hear you say then that death and the destruction of property were inexcusable.

FATHER

Must I endure this?

YOUNGER BROTHER

You are a complacent man with no thought of history. You have travelled everywhere and learned nothing. I despise you.

(HE exits, slamming the door)

FATHER

He'll be back.

MOTHER

I don't think so.

THE LITTLE BOY

Why is uncle angry? Why is everyone so angry?

MOTHER

Ask your father.

LITTLE BOY

It's because of Coalhouse isn't it?

(Scene continues on II-8A)

JAN 18 1998

MOTHER

Why don't you explain this to your son. He is confused.
Why don't you ever talk to him?

(There is a silence)

FATHER

How would you like to see a game of baseball tomorrow?

*Sandy please
learn*
←

THE LITTLE BOY

I think I would like that, sir.

(Scene continues on II-9)

JAN 18 1998

FATHER

I've been neglecting you. The Giants are at the Polo Grounds. Mother, I am taking the boy to see a game of baseball.

MOTHER

You fool.

FATHER

You'll like baseball. It's a civilized pastime.

IN A WORLD GONE MAD,
THERE IS COMFORT TO BE HAD
IN THE GAME FATHER PLAYED
AT SCHOOL.
MEN OF CLASS,
COMPETING ON THE GRASS,
WHERE SPORTSMANSHIP
AND FELLOWSHIP
AND COURTESY
ARE THE RULE.

UMPIRE

Play ball!

(The Polo Grounds. A game is in progress. The stands are packed with FANS from all walks of life. FATHER and THE LITTLE BOY are conspicuous. So is FATHER's uneasiness in the noisy, sweaty, raucous people around him. They are not FATHER's kind at all. In the excitement, one FAN even throws one arm around FATHER's shoulder.)

WHAT A GAME

A GROUP
AIN'T THIS THE KIND O' WEATHER

A GROUP
FOR SMACKIN' LEATHER,

A GROUP
FOR PLAYIN' BASEBALL!

ALL
THE KIND O' WEATHER MAKES A MAN
HIT LIKE HELL

(HOCK, SPIT)

1
LET'S GO, YOU SONS O' BITCHES!

2
LET'S SEE SOME PITCHES

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ALL
LET'S PLAY SOME BASEBALL!

3
THE KRAUT IS STRIKIN' OUT AGAIN!

4
SCHMIDT, YA SMELL!

(HOCK, SPIT)

A GROUP
THE GIANTS HAVEN'T GOT A PRAYER.

ANOTHER GROUP
AAH, YER UNDERWEAR!

FIRST GROUP
UP YER ALLEY!

BOTH GROUPS
GO BACK TO WHERE YER MOTHER ONCE CAME!

(All make some rude gestures)

ALL
HIT THAT BALL!

1
RUN, YOU BASTARD!

ALL
HIT THAT BALL!

2
KILL THE KRAUT!

ALL
WHAT A GAME!

(HOCK, SPIT)

FAN
(calling to field)
Hey, Schnabel! Take your head out of your ass!

(to THE LITTLE BOY)

I guess that's telling him.

(Scene continues on II-11)

JAN 18 1998

THE LITTLE BOY
 Hey, Schnabel! Take your head out of your --!

(FATHER firmly clamps his hand over THE
 LITTLE BOY'S mouth)

FATHER

AT HARVARD,
 WE WERE GENTLEMEN.
 MEN WERE GENTLEMEN.

EVERYONE ELSE

SO'S YER SISTER!

FATHER

WE CALLED EACH OTHER MISTER, AND...

A GROUP

DOYLE, YA SUCK!

FATHER

DON'T LISTEN!
 OUR GAMES WERE VERY QUIET,
 WE'D NEVER RIOT, WE'D...

A GROUP

EAT THAT BASEBALL!

FATHER

THE WORST WE EVER SAID WOULD BE...

A GROUP (HEAVY ACCENT)

RUN, YA SCHMUCK!

FATHER

DON'T LISTEN!

NOW HERE'S THIS NOISY RABBLE
 THIS FOREIGN BABBLE.
 WHO LET THIS HAPPEN?!
 THERE'S HARDLY ONE AMERICAN NAME!

MAN from A GROUP (HEAVY ACCENT)

YAH, HERZOG!

ALL

HIT THAT BALL!

(Scene continues on II-12)

JAN 18 1998

1

STUPID POLLACK!

ALL

HIT THAT BALL!

2

KILL THE KIKE!

ALL

WHAT A GAME!
(HOCK, SPIT)

ALL

IT'S
BRAVES AND GIANTS
TWO TO TWO.
THE
PITCHER'S NAME IS
HUB PURDUE.
JACK MURRAY'S NOW
UP AT BAT... (BALL CRACK)(THE LITTLE BOY stands up. He knows what
will happen next. FATHER realizes with a
start the ball is coming right at them.
THE LITTLE BOY holds up his hand and
catches it)

ALL

MY GOD, WOULD SOMEBODY LOOK AT THAT!

ALL (in stands)

AIN'T THIS THE KIND OF WEATHER
TO GET TOGETHER AND

1

BASH HIS TEETH IN!

ALL

THE KIND O' WEATHER MAKES A MAN
HIT LIKE HELL!

(The FANS fight)

ALL

A FINE, UPLIFTIN' ATMOSPHERE.
BRING YER CHILDREN HERE.
TEACH THEM BASEBALL.
THE GAME ALL TRUE AMERICANS
DO DAMN WELL.IT'S LIKE THE CONSTITUTION
THE INSTITUTION
OF DEAR OL' BASEBALL,
WHERE EVERY MAN IS TREATED THE SAME!

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1
KILL THAT MICK!

2
RUN, YOU POLLACK!

3
STRIKE THE KIKE!

4
KILL THE KRAUT!

ALL
WHAT A... WHAT A... WHAT A...

THE LITTLE BOY

Up yer alley!

FATHER

Sshh, Edgar!

ALL

GAME!

(We hear gunfire, and see the headlines of COALHOUSE'S latest act and his photograph. It seems as if the city is on fire. The gang is setting firehouses ablaze. WILLIE CONKLIN leaves town in terror.)

COALHOUSE

Until my demands are met, I will continue to burn down firehouses. I will destroy the entire city if need be. Let the rules of war prevail. Coalhouse Walker Jr., president of the provisional American government.

(The family is under siege. From outside the door of their home, we hear REPORTERS and see the flash of cameras)

REPORTER

Can I get one picture?

FATHER

You're trampling the dahlias!

(FATHER slams the door on the reporters. In the living room, a WELFARE OFFICIAL is reading the riot act to MOTHER)

Every day now, I come home to a zoo!

WELFARE OFFICIAL

Will you explain to your wife that the child is illegitimate.

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MOTHER

He is not illegitimate.

WELFARE OFFICIAL

...and must be given over to one of the excellent facilities that care for these unwanted infants.

MOTHER

And he is not unwanted.

FATHER

That's enough. Get out of my house.

(FATHER shows HER to the door. REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS try to come in.)

FATHER

All of you. Get off my property!

(FATHER slams the door)

This is insufferable. Mr. Walker is one thing but his child's welfare is not our concern. There are limits to even the most limitless compassion. We've done enough for his child.

MOTHER

No one will ever do enough for this child.

(EVELYN NESBIT appears)

EVELYN

Whee!
LET'S RUN AWAY TO ATLANTIC CITY .
LET'S FEEL THE WIND IN OUR HAIR...

(EVELYN pantomimes her act)

FATHER

Atlantic City is only a temporary answer, Mother, but I can't think of a better one. They can't take the child away from you if we're in residence down there and it's close enough for me to come and go as business dictates.

EVELYN

SHARING A GRAND AND ROMANTIC CITY,

(HARRY HOUDINI appears, wrapped in chains.)

HOUDINI

SEA AND SALTY AIR.

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FATHER

Besides, the change of air will do everyone good. Did you pack my razor?

MOTHER

Yes.

FATHER

I hope you reserved us a parlor car?

(Scene continues on II-15)

JAN 18 1998

I did.

MOTHER

EVELYN

TRAIN'S GONNA TAKE US TO THE SUNNIEST
HIDEAWAY.

HOUDINI

TROUBLES WILL SLIDE AWAY

EVELYN & HOUDINI

JUST A RIDE AWAY...

(GRANDFATHER and SARAH'S FRIEND
exit. MOTHER, FATHER and THE
LITTLE BOY remain)

FATHER

It was clear to Father that the crisis was driving the
spirit from their lives. He had always felt secretly
that as a family they were touched by an extra light.
He felt it going now.

(to MOTHER)

Mother. I.

(Sound of taxi horn)

MOTHER

There's the cab.

(MOTHER exits)

FATHER

WHERE HAVE I BEEN?
HOW DID WE CHANGE,
CAUGHT IN THIS STRANGE NEW MUSIC.
SAY, WAS I AWAY TOO LONG?
SAY, WHEN DID THEY CHANGE THE SONG?

(FATHER exits. Atlantic City is now
revealed. Through THE LITTLE BOY'S
eyes, we see elegant couples on the
boardwalk, a strong contrast to the
frightened city we have just left.)

(Scene continues on II-15A)

JAN 18 1998

LET'S RUN AWAY TO ATLANTIC CITY

VACATIONERS &
 HARLEM ENSEMBLE (offstage)
 LET'S RUN AWAY TO ATLANTIC CITY
 LET'S FEEL THE WIND IN OUR HAIR. LET'S FEEL THE WIND
 SHARING A GRAND AND ROMANTIC CITY, IN OUR HAIR
 SEA AND SALTY AIR. SEA AND SALTY AIR
 TRAIN'S GONNA TAKE US
 TO THE SUNNIEST HIDEAWAY
 TROUBLES WILL SLIDE AWAY

WOMEN VACATIONERS
 JUST A RIDE AWAY.

VACATIONERS
 SO LET'S RUN AWAY TO ATLANTIC CITY
 NO ONE WILL FIND US THERE.

(A RAGTIME BAND enters, dancing and
 playing)

VACATIONERS
 DOWN ON THE SAND
 THERE'S A RAGTIME BAND

BAND MEMBERS
 WITH A BRAND-NEW
 RAGTIME TUNE.

ALL
 AND UP IN THE SKY
 THERE'S A GRAND NEW
 JERSEY MOON!
 LET'S GO THERE SOON...

(The VACATIONERS exit, following the
 RAGTIME BAND, as the Million Dollar Pier
 appears with HARRY HOUDINI and EVELYN
 NESBIT. THE LITTLE BOY quietly observes)

CRIME OF THE CENTURY/
 HARRY HOUDINI, MASTER ESCAPIST (reprise)

EVELYN
 Whee!!!
 I WAS ONCE THE LADY FRIEND OF STANFORD WHITE.
 MADE ME A CELEBRITY OVERNIGHT!
 WELL, OVERNIGHT, THINGS CHANGE I GUESS.
 I'M IN NEW JERSEY--WEARING EVEN LESS!

LADIES, THERE'S A LESSON IN MY TAWDRY TALE.
 BEWARE THE PATH YOU CHOOSE.
 OH! OH! JUSTICE IS NEVER FAIR.
 BANG! BANG! THERE GOES YOUR MILLIONAIRE!
 BOO HOO! NO MONEY, NO RING.

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AND YOU COULD END UP ON A SWING.

AND IT'S A CRIME...

HARRY
HARRY HOUDINI,
MASTER ESCAPIST,
BURIED AND CHAINED
AND TIED.

EVELYN

OH, JUSTICE CAN
BE SO UNFAIR!

REACHING TOWARD DANGER,
DARKER AND STRANGER
NOW THAT HIS MAMA'S
DIED.

AND BANG! THERE
GOES YOUR
MILLIONAIRE!

CONQUERING FEAR
IN HOPES HE WILL HEAR
A VOICE FROM THE OTHER SIDE...

WHEE!

HARRY
COME SEE HOUDINI'S DARING DISPLAY.

EVELYN
COME SEE MISS NESBIT DO FOUR SHOWS A DAY.

EVELYN & HARRY
THRILLING THE CROWD AND MAKIN' 'EM SAY.

~~EVELYN~~
~~HOUDINI~~
LET'S RUN AWAY
LET'S RUN
AWAY

HOUDINI
EVELYN
LET'S RUN AWAY
LET'S RUN AWAY
AWAY...

ALL
LET'S RUN AWAY TO
ATLANTIC CITY
LET'S RUN AWAY
MY HONEY...

ALL
LET'S RUN AWAY
LET'S RUN AWAY
MY HONEY...

(HARRY and EVELYN stay onstage, and
continue to perform. HARRY does
sleight-of-hand while EVELYN sings and
dances. They are now both part of
TATEH's movie)

EVELYN, HARRY, ALL
WHY SHOULD WE STAY
IN THE FRANTIC CITY
LADEN WITH WORRY AND CARE?

JAN 18 1998

OH, LET'S RUN AWAY
TO ATLANTIC CITY

NO ONE WILL FIND US

WOMEN
NO ONE WILL FIND US

ALL
NO ONE WILL FIND US...

EVELYN
FIND...
Find Us!

(Scene continues II-16)

(THE BARON ASHKENAZY and THE LITTLE GIRL arrive on a camera dolly filming the scene. THE BARON wears jodhpurs and a white silk shirt. Around his neck on a chain, he wears a rectangular glass framed in metal. THE LITTLE GIRL has grown exquisitely beautiful).

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BARON ASHKENAZY

Cut! That was wonderful, Mr. Houdini. It is a dream come true to work with an artist of your magnitude. Danke.

HOUDINI

Danke, yourself Baron.

BARON ASHKENAZY

And it will be even more wonderful when Miss Nesbit stops looking at the camera.

EVELYN

I'm not an actress.

BARON ASHKENAZY

I am reeling with this revelation!

EVELYN

I'm a personalilty!

BARON ASHKENAZY

Take five, ladies and gentlemen, while your director has a nervous breakdown!

(HE turns out and we recognize the BARON as TATEH)

THE BARON'S ASSISTANT

Baron. Here's the schedule for tomorrow. And your leading lady is unhappy with her lines.

TATEH

Tell our leading lady no one is going to hear her lines! This is a silent movie! Actors! Where is Mary Pickford when I need her?

NOTHING LIKE THE CITY (reprise)

TATEH

GOOD DAY...

MOTHER

GOOD DAY, SIR...

(TATEH begins to frame her with the viewing lens he wears around his neck. FATHER and THE LITTLE BOY enter)

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THE LITTLE BOY

Father, that man--.

FATHER

I see.

THE LITTLE BOY

What's he doing?

FATHER

It's damn impertinent, whatever it is.

(Scene continues on II-17)

JAN 18 1998

TATEH

A million humble and abject apologies. The lovely lady had such a pensive expression I only wished to capture it for a moment in my viewing lens. I am the Baron Ashkenazy.

(he bows deeply)

I make moving pictures, sir, and this glass rectangle is a tool of the trade. I am always conjuring up new adventures, new faces, new thrills for my audience. If the lady were an actress, I would offer her a contract on the spot.

FATHER

My wife does not work.

TATEH

I meant it as a compliment, sir. No offense.

MOTHER

I took it as such, sir. No offense.

TATEH

I can see that my famous name has not preceded me. Have you seen "His First Mistake"? No? "A Daughter's Innocence"? No? Don't embarrass. They are my first two picture plays. One reelers. I made them for five hundred dollars and each has brought ten thousand dollars in receipts. Yes, it is true! But here, this is not impossible. Anyone can get lucky in America. I remind myself of this every day.

BUFFALO NICKEL PHOTOPLAY, INC.

THE FIRST NICKEL I EVER EARNED,
I KEEP IN A LITTLE SILVER FRAME.
IT'S HOW I GAVE MY COMPANY A NAME,
REMINDING ME HOW VERY FAR I CAME!

I WAS A
MAKER OF THE SILHOUETTES
WHO MADE A SMALL IMPROVEMENT--
A LITTLE BOOK OF SILHOUETTES
THAT SIMULATED MOVEMENT!
WELL, PEOPLE SEEMED TO LIKE IT.
SOON THE MONEY'S GOING CLINK!
AND I'M BUFFALO NICKEL PHOTOPLAY INC.!

I GO FROM
SILHOUETTES TO PHOTOS.
I INVENT A SMALL PROJECTOR,
AND SOON, I'M MAKING MOVIES
AND THEY'RE CALLING ME DIRECTOR!
AN INDUSTRY IS DAWNING
AND I'M STANDING ON THE BRINK
MISTER BUFFALO NICKEL PHOTOPLAY INC.!

JAN 18 1998

LIFE SHINES FROM THE SHADOW SCREEN
 COMICAL, YET INFINITELY TRUE.
 PEOPLE LOVE TO SEE WHAT PEOPLE DO,
 HERE WHERE EVERYONE IS SOMEONE NEW!

SUCH TALES FROM THE SHADOW SCREEN!
 LITTLE MEN WHO NEVER GET THE BREAKS,
 FIGHTING ON TILL SOMETHING FIN'LLY TAKES--
 WHAT A LOVELY MOVIE IT ALL MAKES!

WELL, BUSINESS IS BOOMING
 I'M HAPPY TO SAY.
 I JUST MADE A CONTRACT
 TO FILM FOR PATHE
 A SERIES OF CHAPTERS
 THAT END IN SUSPENSE
 EACH WEEK, SEE WHAT'S NEXT
 FOR ANOTHER FIVE CENTS!

AND I AM
 WAKING EVERY MORNING
 FILLED WITH SUCH ANTICIPATION!
 I FRAME THE SEA,
 I FRAME THE SKY,
 AND THIS IS MY VACATION!
 I SHAKE YOUR HAND,
 I KISS YOUR HAND,
 I BUY YOU ALL A DRINK!
 AND MAYBE IF YOU CHANCE TO SEE
 A MOVIE THAT WAS MADE BY ME
 REMEMBER WHEN MY NAME GOES BY
 (THAT'S ASH-K-E-N-A-Z-Y)
 THE BARON, NOW AMERICAN,
 WHO HAPPENED ONCE TO THINK
 OF SILHOUETTE
 AND FLICKER BOOK
 AND MOVIES AS THEY'RE
 MEANT TO LOOK
 AND BUFFALO NICKEL, BUFFALO NICKEL,
 PHOTOPLAY INC.!
 Action!

(The BARON and THE LITTLE GIRL roll
 offstage on the dolly, continuing to
 film the movie. THE VACATIONERS enter
 to be "filmed", and MOTHER & FATHER rush
 out of their way and exit. THE LITTLE
 BOY remains onstage as the film cast
 exits in fast motion. A VERY TALL LADY
 with balloons crosses the stage.
 HOUDINI appears with a suitcase. THE
 LITTLE BOY dances with the TALL LADY.
 HOUDINI waves to her.)

JAN 18 1998

HOUDINI
(to the TALL LADY)

So long, Mildred.

(THE LITTLE BOY runs up to HOUDINI)

LITTLE BOY
Mr. Houdini! Can I have your autograph please?

HOUDINI
Not now, kinde. I'm catching a train. Here!

(HE "finds" a silver dollar behind THE
LITTLE BOY'S right ear)

Treat yourself to a ride on the roller coaster. I'll
send you a postcard from Sarajevo.

(THE LITTLE BOY turns his head suddenly,
remembering)

LITTLE BOY
Warn... the... Duke!

HOUDINI
What did you say?

LITTLE BOY
(to HOUDINI)
Warn the Duke!

(THE LITTLE BOY runs off)

HOUDINI
(chasing him)
What Duke? I don't know any Dukes! Who are you? Come
back here! I've... seen you before somewhere.

(THE LITTLE BOY is gone. HOUDINI exits
as the BARON and his SECRETARY enter on
the boardwalk above)

TATEH
So, the young woman, forced into a marriage she does
not want, decides to elope with the butcher she loves.
Nonsense! People don't spend good money to see young
women elope with butchers.

(THE LITTLE GIRL and THE LITTLE BOY
; enter down on the beach)

MOTHER
Good morning, Baron. I see our children are playing
again. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

JAN 18 1998

TATEH

Please. I need interruption. Always working, always working. It's a curse.

(a RAGTIME band playing a rag crosses the boardwalk. THE LITTLE GIRL runs off followed by THE LITTLE BOY)

TATEH

I know what this is. It's called rag. I like this music. It makes me want to turn a cartwheel. But I won't. Not today. What's wrong?

MOTHER

I am thinking of someone I miss very badly. No, two men. My brother and a Negro man who played that kind of music on our piano in New Rochelle. We never know when our feelings will creep up on us and go "boo!" and startle us, do we?

TATEH

(looking right at her)

No. Never.

MOTHER

Well.

THE BARON'S ASSISTANT

Baron, you promised the studio....

TATEH

No rest for the wicked! I leave you with this question, madam: Would a woman leave her husband for a butcher?

MOTHER

If he were a kind butcher, a thoughtful man who wondered what she thought about, yes, she would.

TATEH

That's the title I've been searching for. "The Thoughtful Butcher". I am forever in your debt.

MOTHER

Well.

(There is an awkward moment for MOTHER. She is relieved to see the children on the beach below them)

MOTHER

Look, down there on the beach. The children.

TATEH

(calling to THE LITTLE GIRL)

Not too fast!

JAN 18 1998

(then to MOTHER)
 She doesn't hear me. No, she hears me but she doesn't
 listen.

MOTHER
 All children are like that.

TATEH
 What is their hurry?

MOTHER
 I'm very glad ours have become such friends.

OUR CHILDREN

MOTHER
 HOW THEY PLAY,
 FINDING TREASURE IN THE SAND.
 THEY'RE FOREVER HAND IN HAND,
 OUR CHILDREN.

TATEH
 HOW THEY LAUGH.
 SHE HAS NEVER LAUGHED LIKE THIS.

MOTHER
 EVERY WAKING MOMENT BLISS.

BOTH
 OUR CHILDREN.

TATEH
 SEE THEM RUNNING DOWN THE BEACH.
 CHILDREN RUN SO FAST.

MOTHER
 TOWARD THE FUTURE.

TATEH
 FROM THE PAST.

MOTHER
 HOW THEY DANCE,
 UNEMBARRASSED AND ALONE.

BOTH
 HEARING MUSIC OF THEIR OWN,
 OUR CHILDREN.

TATEH
 ONE SO FAIR,

MOTHER
 AND THE OTHER, LITHE AND DARK.

JAN 18 1998

BOTH
SOLEMN JOY AND SUDDEN SPARK.
OUR CHILDREN.

SEE THEM RUNNING DOWN THE BEACH.
CHILDREN RUN SO FAST
TOWARD THE FUTURE
FROM THE PAST.

THERE THEY STAND,
MAKING FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND,
AND FOREVER, HAND IN HAND,
OUR CHILDREN.
TWO SMALL LIVES,
SILHOUETTED BY THE BLUE,
ONE LIKE ME
AND ONE LIKE YOU.
OUR CHILDREN.
OUR CHILDREN.

MOTHER

Well.

TATEH

You say that often. "Well".

MOTHER

It's because I don't know what to say, Baron.

TATEH

I'm not a baron, of course. I'm a poor immigrant, a Jew, who points a camera so that his child can dress as beautifully as a princess. I want to drive from her memory every tenement stench and filthy immigrant street. I will buy her light and sun and clean wind of the ocean for the rest of her life. Now you know me. Now you understand. I am no baron. I am Tateh.

MOTHER

Now I know even less what to say.

TATEH

Now it's my turn: Well.

MOTHER

Thank you for your confidence. I shall keep it here.

(MOTHER puts her hand to her heart.)

SHE goes. TATEH follows her with his eyes. He is smiling.

The music, lights and set segue to a street in Harlem, late at night)

JAN 18 1998

HARLEM WOMAN

MMM...

HARLEM MAN

MMM...

(YOUNGER BROTHER arrives.
Everything stops at the sight of
him)

HARLEM MAN

Here he comes again - that cracker who doesn't know
he's a cracker. We should have kicked his ass the
first time he came looking for Coalhouse.

HARLEM WOMAN

They must think we're fools.

YOUNGER BROTHER

Good evening. I would still very much like to talk to
Mr. Coalhouse Walker, Jr.

HARLEM WOMAN

This is still Harlem and this is still a private
thoroughfare, cracker.

YOUNGER BROTHER

I told you: I shall come here every evening until he is
satisfied that it is safe to receive me.

HARLEM MAN

And that time will be never!

YOUNGER BROTHER

But Mr. Walker knows me. I'm his friend

HARLEM WOMAN

Try that pestilent pond where they sank his car.

YOUNGER BROTHER

I've been there.

HARLEM WOMAN

Try that cemetery where he buried his Sarah like a
queen.

YOUNGER BROTHER

I've been there, too.

HARLEM MAN

Then try the Gates of Justice where they are deaf to
his misery and anger.

JAN 18 1998

YOUNGER BROTHER

I understand how you feel.

(His remark is met with much hostility. YOUNGER BROTHER stands his ground. Finally, a well dressed young Negro approaches him. We will recognize him by his bowler hat as one of COALHOUSE'S MEN.)

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER

You got a dime?

(YOUNGER BROTHER obliges)

You seem to have a lot of change there. Could you manage a quarter?

(YOUNGER BROTHER obliges)

What about a silver dollar?

(COALHOUSE FOLLOWER goes. YOUNGER BROTHER impulsively follows him.)

Transition. We hear the sounds of a rag piano coming out of a club. Carefree men come out onto the street. They are laughing, dancing, One stays behind, joined by a young woman.

A figure hiding in the shadows reveals himself as COALHOUSE. He watches the young couple dance a romantic PAS DE DEUX and go off into the warm night. After a moment, COALHOUSE'S thoughts come to life in the embodiment of SARAH. HE is remembering the night they first met.)

COALHOUSE

What's your name?

SARAH

Sarah.

COALHOUSE

I'm Coalhouse.

SARAH

I know.

JAN 18 1998

SARAH BROWN EYES

COALHOUSE

THERE WAS NO MUSIC
 IN MY HEART TONIGHT.
 MELODIES KEPT REFUSIN' TO FLOW.
 ONE LOOK AT YOU,
 NOW EVERY NOTE FEELS RIGHT,
 COMIN' OUT ALL SWEET AND SLOW.

SARAH

YOU TELL STORIES
 LIKE YOUR HANDS PLAY TUNES

COALHOUSE

SWEETEST TUNE I KNOW
 IS SARAH BROWN EYES.
 DON'T BE SHY, NOW.
 SARAH BROWN EYES
 OUGHTA TAKE A CHANCE.
 THE STARS ARE
 SILVER NOTES
 ACROSS THAT SKY NOW.
 SARAH BROWN EYES,
 COME, LET'S DANCE

SARAH

I NEVER HEARD NO MUSIC
 QUITE LIKE YOURS.
 WHERE'D YOU LEARN
 HOW TO PLAY IT THAT WAY?
 WAS I SMART,
 I'D WALK RIGHT OUT THOSE DOORS.

COALHOUSE

THEN I'VE GOT TO MAKE YOU STAY.

BOTH

NOTHIN' FOR IT BUT A RAGTIME TUNE
 ON THAT PIANO...

SARAH BROWN EYES,
 DON'T BE SHY NOW
 SARAH BROWN EYES,
 OUGHTA TAKE A CHANCE.
 THE STARS ARE
 SILVER NOTES
 ACROSS THAT SKY NOW.
 SARAH BROWN EYES,
 COME, LET'S DANCE

(they dance without touching)

JAN 18 1998

BOTH

SILVER NOTES
ACROSS THAT SKY NOW
SARAH BROWN EYES,
COME LET'S

SARAH

DANCE.

(SARAH disappears. The sound of the L train overhead. We are at COALHOUSE'S hideout. COALHOUSE sits behind a table. With him are his MEN. Everyone is well-dressed in starched shirts with stick pins and ties. Silence. They all seem to be waiting for something. One of the FOLLOWERS begins to whistle)

COALHOUSE

I said, no music.

(The FOLLOWER that YOUNGER BROTHER followed enters)

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER

He's here.

COALHOUSE

Bring him in.

(YOUNGER BROTHER is led in, blindfolded. The blindfold is removed).

COALHOUSE

What is it you want?

YOUNGER BROTHER
(flustered, there is so much he wants to say)

HE WANTED TO SAY

I... I...I want to...I know that if...

(Lights come up suddenly, magically on EMMA at the side of the stage)

EMMA GOLDMAN

HE WANTED TO SAY
I AM HERE BECAUSE I HAVE TO BE.
HE WANTED TO SAY
I AM HERE FOR WHAT IS RIGHT.
EVERY DAY I WAKE UP KNOWING
WHAT YOU'VE LOST AND WHAT IS OWING.

JAN 18 1998

I WOULD SHED THIS SKIN IF I COULD
TO STAND WITH YOU AND FIGHT.

HE WANTED TO SAY

YOUNGER BROTHER
I AM NOT WHO I APPEAR TO BE.

EMMA GOLDMAN
HE WANTED TO SAY

YOUNGER BROTHER
DO NOT BLAME ME FOR MY PAST.

BOTH
WE HAVE DIFFERENT LIVES AND FACES
BUT OUR HEARTS HAVE COMMON PLACES.
THIS WAS DEEP INSIDE ME
AND YOU HELPED ME FIND IT AT LAST...

EMMA GOLDMAN
TWO MEN MEETING
FOR A MOMENT IN THE DARKNESS

COALHOUSE
ONE TURNING FROM

YOUNGER BROTHER
ONE WAKING TO

ALL THREE
AMERICA
TWO MEN FINDING
FOR A MOMENT IN THE DARKNESS

YOUNGER BROTHER & COALHOUSE
THEY'RE THE SAME

EMMA GOLDMAN (overlapping)
THEY'RE THE SAME

COALHOUSE'S MEN
HE WANTED TO SAY

COALHOUSE
HOW I ENVY YOU YOUR INNOCENCE.

EMMA GOLDMAN & COALHOUSE'S MEN
HE WANTED TO SAY

f
YOUNGER BROTHER
BY YOUR SIDE, I COULD BE BRAVE.
IF THERE'S SUCH A THING AS JUSTICE
LET ME HELP YOU FIND YOUR JUSTICE.

JAN 18 1998

THIS I DO FOR YOU AND FOR SARAH
WHO LIES IN HER GRAVE...

EMMA GOLDMAN & MEN
BUT ALL HE SAID WAS...

YOUNGER BROTHER
I know how to blow things up.

EMMA, COALHOUSE'S MEN
TWO MEN MEETING
FOR A MOMENT
IN THE DARKNESS
FOR A MOMENT
IN THE DARKNESS

(There is an enormous explosion, very present, very terrifying, visceral. The theatre should shake).

(Lights come up on BOOKER T. WASHINGTON)

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
Coalhouse Walker's strategy of vengeance seemed to some the final proof of his insanity. Only a madman would shift the focus of his rage from Willie Conklin, a common bigot, to J.P. Morgan, the most uncommon and powerful man of his time.

(Scene continues on II-31)

JAN 18 1998

(Thunder. We are back on the beach in Atlantic City. MOTHER is carrying the CHILD. She is barefoot. Her hair is loose. THE LITTLE BOY is with her. FATHER enters hurriedly. He is dressed in travelling clothes)

MOTHER

You missed the storm. It was thrilling! I thought the wind was going to pick us up and carry us away. What's wrong?

FATHER

I've been called to New York City. It seems that Mr. Walker and his followers have taken over the Morgan library and are threatening to blow it and themselves up.

MOTHER

What does that have to do with you?

FATHER

Because I know him, they think I might be helpful as a negotiator or hostage.

MOTHER

Then you must go.

FATHER

Of course I must. I've reserved a place on this afternoon's Cannonball.

MOTHER

Are you afraid?

FATHER

A little.

MOTHER

Would you like me to come with you?

(Scene continues on II-32)

JAN 18 1998

FATHER

There's no need. Mr. Walker has gone too far this time. They'll put an end to it now. He'll get what he deserves.

MOTHER

And what is that?

FATHER
(flaring)

I'm sure I don't know anymore! And must you always be holding that damn child of his? Every time I look at you! It's become an appendage.

(MOTHER gives the baby to SARAH'S FRIEND)

MOTHER

I'll be right along.

THE LITTLE BOY

Goodbye, Father.

FATHER

Goodbye.

(THE LITTLE BOY and SARAH'S FRIEND
exit with the baby)

I'm sorry. It's not you I'm angry with, Mother. When I return and this affair is forgotten, we will find a suitable place for the child and everything will be like it was.

MOTHER

Things will never be the same.

FATHER

I meant the same as before, when we were happy.

MOTHER

I will not give up the child to anyone except Mr. Walker.

(FATHER kisses her)

FATHER

I love you.

MOTHER

Be safe.

FATHER

Everything will be fine, Mother.

JAN 18 1998

BACK TO BEFORE

MOTHER

THERE WAS A TIME
 OUR HAPPINESS SEEMED NEVERENDING.
 I WAS SO SURE
 THAT WHERE WE WERE HEADING WAS RIGHT.
 LIFE WAS A ROAD
 SO CERTAIN AND STRAIGHT AND UNBENDING.
 OUR LITTLE ROAD
 WITH NEVER A CROSSROAD IN SIGHT.
 BACK IN THE DAYS
 WHEN WE SPOKE IN CIVILIZED VOICES--
 WOMEN IN WHITE
 AND STURDY YOUNG MEN AT THE OAR.
 BACK IN THE DAYS
 WHEN I LET YOU MAKE ALL MY CHOICES
 WE CAN NEVER GO BACK TO BEFORE.

THERE WAS A TIME
 MY FEET WERE SO SOLIDLY PLANTED
 YOU'D SAIL AWAY
 WHILE I TURNED MY BACK TO THE SEA
 I WAS CONTENT
 A PRINCESS ASLEEP AND ENCHANTED.
 IF I HAD DREAMS,
 THEN I LET YOU DREAM THEM FOR ME.
 BACK IN THE DAYS
 WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMED SO MUCH CLEARER.
 WOMEN IN WHITE
 WHO KNEW WHAT THEIR LIVES HELD IN STORE.
 WHERE ARE THEY NOW,
 THOSE WOMEN WHO STARED FROM THE MIRROR?
 WE CAN NEVER GO BACK TO BEFORE.

WOMEN
 AAAH....

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE
 UNAFRAID OF REVEALING
 THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE A FEELING,
 OR THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN WRONG.
 THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE
 UNAFRAID TO FEEL SORROW,
 UNAFRAID OF TOMORROW,
 UNAFRAID TO BE WEAK...
 UNAFRAID TO BE STRONG
 THERE WAS A TIME
 WHEN YOU WERE THE PERSON IN MOTION.
 I WAS YOUR WIFE.
 IT NEVER OCCURRED TO WANT MORE.
 YOU WERE MY SKY.
 MY MOON AND MY STARS AND MY OCEAN.
 WE CAN NEVER GO BACK TO BEFORE.
 WE CAN NEVER GO BACK TO BEFORE.

JAN 18 1998

(We see a vigil of HARLEM WOMEN
with candles)

WOMEN AT VIGIL

A DAY OF PEACE.
A DAY OF PRIDE.
A DAY OF JUSTICE.
WE HAVE BEEN DENIED.
LET THE NEW DAY DAWN.
OH, LORD I PRAY!

(We are outside the Morgan Library.
It is an impressive facade. 36th
and 37th Streets have been cordoned
off from Madison Avenue to Park.

There is a cluster of POLICE and
REPORTERS.

J.P. MORGAN is trying to impress a
flustered DISTRICT ATTORNEY CHARLES
S. WHITMAN of the gravity of the
situation. Also present is a
thoroughly wretched WILLIE CONKLIN
who is being made to repair
COALHOUSE WALKER'S car and FATHER)

WHITMAN

(Raises a megaphone)

Mr. Walker. This is District Attorney Charles S.
Whitman. Do you hear me? I have Fire Chief Willie
Conklin with me. He is restoring your car. Will you
come out, sir?

WILLIE CONKLIN

You gonna let me be a martyr!

WHITMAN

Mr. Conklin will receive due process. You both will.

(Scene continues on II-35)

JAN 18 1998

MORGAN

How much longer are you going to stand for this? Give him his car and then hang the savage!

WHITMAN

I'm doing my best, Mr. Morgan.

CONKLIN

This is a conspiracy of nigger lovers, that's all it is.

FATHER

Sir, if I might suggest.

WHITMAN

Who the hell are you?

FATHER

You sent for me. I know Mr. Walker and I believe there's one man he will listen to. Mr. Booker T. Washington.

VIGIL WOMEN

JUSTICE! AH!

(the focus now goes to WASHINGTON, as the people on the street move away. It should seem as if he has been admitted to the library, and is now addressing COALHOUSE directly)

LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
FOR THE SUM OF MY LIFE
I HAVE LIVED IN HOPE
WE MIGHT ALL BE CHRISTIAN
BROTHERS.

I HAVE WORKED TO PERSUADE
EVERY WHITE-SKINNED MAN
THAT HE NEED NOT FEAR OUR RACE.

WHAT HAS YOUR SELFISH
RECKLESSNESS
COST US,
WE WHO WORK SO HARD TO STILL
THE WHITE MAN'S HATE.
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE

VIGIL WOMEN

DAY OF PEACE...

DAY OF PRIDE...

JUSTICE!

JUSTICE!

JAN 18 1998

(as the conversation continues, and escalates, the lights dim on the library and come up on the people outside. Over the following, the VIGIL WOMEN continue to hum)

WHITMAN

You are surrounded by militia. They are cutting off your water even as I speak.

J.P. MORGAN

Four Shakespeare folios! A Gutenberg bible on vellum. The treasures of civilization are at stake!

EMMA GOLDMAN

I deplore the taking of human life, but I applaud Mr. Walker's capture of the Morgan Library. His actions speak for all oppressed people. It is the cry of revolution.

WILLIE CONKLIN

White people should be grateful for what I done!

J.P. MORGAN

You've got to do something!

VIGIL WOMEN

JUSTICE!

(lights come up inside the library)

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

With guns and dynamite, you are destroying everything I have fought for, sir.

COALHOUSE

Despite the respect I have for you Mr. Washington, you have come in vain.

(Scene continues on II-37)

JAN 18 1998

WASHINGTON

Had you been ignorant of the tragic struggle of our people, I could have pitied you this adventure. But you are a trained musician, an educated man.

COALHOUSE

It is true, sir. But I hope this might suggest to you the solemn calculation of my mind. We are both men of color who insist on the truth of our manhood, and the respect it demands!

(lights come up outside the library)

MEN, FATHER

HOURS PASSING BY AND
NOT A SIGN FROM COALHOUSE!
HOURS PASSING BY,
THE SITUATION HOPELESS!

HOURS PASSING BY...
HOURS PASSING BY...

WOMEN

HOURS PASSING BY AND
NOT A SIGN FROM COALHOUSE!
HOURS PASSING BY,
THE SITUATION HOPELESS!

HOURS PASSING BY...

(lights dim on the chaos outside the library, and come up inside again. It is apparent that time has passed. They are tired. They are disheveled. The guns have been lowered)

WASHINGTON

Your situation is hopeless. You will be responsible for the deaths of these young men.

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #1

Don't listen to him, Coalhouse.

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #2

They're using him to get to you.

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #3

We're not giving up.

WASHINGTON

AND YOU DARE TO TEACH YOUR LESSONS
TO THESE WILD, UNTHINKING YOUTHS.
YET YOUR OWN SON,
YOU ABANDON
TO BE RAISED ON WHITE MEN'S TRUTHS.
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE.
THINK OF YOUR SON.

(COALHOUSE reacts to this blow. All at once he hears SARAH'S VOICE, humming "YOUR DADDY'S SON")

SARAH

OOOH...

JAN 18 1998

WASHINGTON

Is this the legacy you would bestow on him? Are these the shoulders you would have him stand upon? Let him be the son of a man who had the courage to tell the truth in a court of law. Make your case, and if the verdict is death, go to it proudly knowing you have been heard. The truth is all. If you do this, you will have the thanks and respect of every decent man of color and all those children of our race whose way is hard and whose journey is long.

WASHINGTON

THINK OF YOUR SON.

COALHOUSE

I would need a hostage and safe passage for my men.

WASHINGTON

It is done.

YOUNGER BROTHER

You can't change your demands. You are betraying us. You said we would all go free or we would all die!

COALHOUSE

And the promise of a fair trial.

YOUNGER BROTHER

No!

WASHINGTON

You have my word. I am their mediator, sir, not their fool.

COALHOUSE

Then they will see me come out with my hands raised, and no further harm will come to any man from Coalhouse Walker, Jr.

WASHINGTON

God bless you sir.

(WASHINGTON & COALHOUSE shake hands.
WASHINGTON exits. The FOLLOWERS and
YOUNGER BROTHER surround COALHOUSE in
furious agitation.)

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #1

You said we'd fight to the finish.

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #2

You can go out there, man. We ain't.

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #3

We're all ready to die as Coalhouse.

JAN 18 1998

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER #4

Push the plunger! Blow it all up!

COALHOUSE

I will not trade your precious lives for anything in this world.

YOUNGER BROTHER

Is your goddamn Model T your justice then?

COALHOUSE

Is your execution yours?

(We hear FATHER from outside the library)

FATHER

Coalhouse. Mr. Coalhouse Walker Jr. It is I, sir, the hostage you demanded.

(YOUNGER BROTHER recognizes the voice. YOUNGER BROTHER unbolts the door and admits FATHER.)

FATHER

Your car is ready, Mr. Walker. I think you will be satisfied.

(FATHER recognizes YOUNGER BROTHER)

FATHER

You!

YOUNGER BROTHER

Yes.

FATHER

I myself require nothing from you. But don't you feel your sister deserves an explanation?

YOUNGER BROTHER

You may tell my sister that she will always be in my thoughts.

(with difficulty)

You may tell her I have always loved and admired her.

COALHOUSE

Are you ready?

(Scene continues on II-40)

JAN 18 1998

COALHOUSE FOLLOWER

We're not going. You've lost, Coalhouse. We've all lost.

COALHOUSE

I don't believe that.

MAKE THEM HEAR YOU

GO OUT AND TELL OUR STORY
LET IT ECHO FAR AND WIDE.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU,
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU.

HOW JUSTICE WAS OUR BATTLE
AND HOW JUSTICE WAS DENIED.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU.

AND SAY TO THOSE WHO BLAME US
FOR THE WAY WE CHOSE TO FIGHT
THAT SOMETIMES THERE ARE BATTLES
THAT ARE MORE THAN BLACK OR WHITE.

AND I COULD NOT PUT DOWN MY SWORD
WHEN JUSTICE WAS MY RIGHT.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU.

GO OUT AND TELL THE STORY
TO YOUR DAUGHTERS AND YOUR SONS.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU,
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU.

AND TELL THEM, IN OUR STRUGGLE,
WE WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU,
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU.

YOUR SWORD CAN BE A SERMON
OR THE POWER OF THE PEN.
TEACH EVERY CHILD TO RAISE HIS VOICE
AND THEN, MY BROTHERS, THEN
WILL JUSTICE BE DEMANDED
BY TEN MILLION RIGHTEOUS MEN.
MAKE THEM HEAR YOU,
WHEN THEY HEAR YOU,
I'LL BE NEAR YOU
AGAIN.

(the; MEN embrace COALHOUSE and move toward
the door. FATHER goes, too, but is stopped by
COALHOUSE)

FATHER

Am I not to go with them?

JAN 18 1998

COALHOUSE

Here is our hostage. One white face looks just like another.

(COALHOUSE takes FATHER'S hat and places it on YOUNGER BROTHER'S head. YOUNGER BROTHER replaces FATHER as the "hostage" and they all exit. A silence.)

COALHOUSE

Tell me about my son.

FATHER

What do you want to know?

COALHOUSE

Is he walking? Has he said any words yet? Anything you can think of.

(A car sputters to a start and begins to drive off. Silence)

COALHOUSE

Are they going to kill me?

FATHER

Of course not. They're decent men. I would not have come here if I did not believe that.

WHITMAN (off)

Mr. Walker, your men have gone. Will you come out now?

(COALHOUSE has put on his bowler hat and houndstooth jacket. Impeccably dressed and groomed as usual, he is now ready to leave the library)

COALHOUSE

Thank you for your kindness to my family.

FATHER

You're welcome. He's a fine boy.

(COALHOUSE and FATHER shake hands. COALHOUSE goes to the door, opens it and walks out into the glare of lights)

At once we hear a volley of gun shots.)

FATHER

Nooo!

CHORUS

OOHH!!!

JAN 18 1998

(We hear a slow rag begin. THE LITTLE BOY appears next to a small manual projector.)

LITTLE BOY

The era of Ragtime had run out, as if history were no more than a tune on a player piano. But we did not know that then.

(HE turns the projector as a slow parade begins--a ghostly march of time, people of the past, people of the future)

(Scene continues on II-42)

JAN 18 1998

(EPILOGUE)

YOUNGER BROTHER

After Coalhouse Walker's death, Younger Brother drove south to Mexico, where he joined the great peasant revolutionary, Emiliano Zapata.

(YOUNGER BROTHER rejoins the parade, and now, one by one, others step forth)

ALL

LA LA LA LA LA

EMMA GOLDMAN

The signs of the coming world war were everywhere. The anarchist Emma Goldman was arrested again, of course, but this time she would be deported, as well.

ALL

OOH OOH...

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute became, in time, the capital of black America. When he died, flags were flown at half-mast. President and Mrs. Wilson attended his funeral.

ALL

LA LA LA LA LA

GRANDFATHER

Grandfather resided now in a cemetery. At last, peace and quiet!

EVELYN NESBIT

The passionate and beautiful Evelyn Nesbit would lose her looks and fall into obscurity. Whee!

HOUDINI

Harry Houdini was hanging upside down high over Times Square when the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo.

THE LITTLE BOY

Warn the Duke!

HOUDINI

A little boy's words suddenly rang clear to the great illusionist. It was the one genuine mystical experience of his life. But it was too late. The world was already at war.

JAN 18 1998

FATHER

When the LUSITANIA was torpedoed by a U-boat off the Southwest coast of Ireland, twelve hundred men, women and children lost their lives and among them, Father.

(MOTHER enters)

MOTHER

Mother wore black for a year. At the end of this time, Tateh proposed and she accepted. She adored him.

THE LITTLE BOY

They moved to California.

THE LITTLE GIRL

They were now a family.

THE LITTLE BOY

They felt blessed.

MOTHER

Coalhouse!

(A very small black child runs into her arms. HE is COALHOUSE WALKER III. THE CHILDREN run around, playing, leaping, shouting. TATEH and MOTHER have their hands full with this brood.)

TATEH

One afternoon, watching his children play, Tateh had an idea for a movie: a bunch of children, white, black, Christian, Jew, rich, poor -- all kinds -- a gang, a crazy gang getting into trouble, getting out of trouble, but together despite their differences. He was sure it would make a wonderful movie - a dream of what this country could be. He would be first in line to see it.

(TATEH moves to MOTHER.)

COALHOUSE and SARAH enter upstage, on opposite sides of the stage)

COALHOUSE

I SEE HIS FACE

SARAH

I HEAR HIS HEARTBEAT

BOTH

I LOOK IN THOSE EYES
HOW WISE THEY SEEM

(TATEH picks up LITTLE COALHOUSE)

JAN 18 1998

MOTHER, TATEH, COALHOUSE, SARAH,
& ALL (offstage except LITTLE BOY & LITTLE GIRL)

WELL, WHEN HE IS OLD ENOUGH
I WILL SHOW HIM AMERICA
AND HE WILL RIDE
OUR SON WILL RIDE
ON THE WHEELS OF A DREAM

(COALHOUSE and SARAH watch as the
FAMILY walks off into the future.)

(BOWS)

CURTAIN