

**CONGO SQUARE**  
(A Musical)

Original book and lyrics  
by  
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Music  
by  
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Characters

Willy Beau Squire  
Delphine DeMaurier  
Mayor Anderson

Time

The Present.

Place

New Orleans.

In a dimly-lit, warehouse-sized room,  
where cobweb-covered Mardi Gras costumes,  
floats, and costumed Mannequins have been kept for years.

## ***“CONGO SQUARE”***

### ***BLURB***

“I know that you’ve been worryin’  
but you don’t have to worry anymore—  
‘cause I am safe now. . .”

A trap door flies open, a rifle is thrown up onto the stage and Willy Beau, a young Black Man, wearing an R.O.T.C. uniform and carrying a rifle, climbs up into a dimly-lit space, where cobweb-covered Mardi Gras costumes, floats, elaborate masks and costumed mannequins have been stored for years. He's pursued by the Mayor, the police, and an angry mob. Not knowing why they're after him, Willy Beau wildly shoots some rounds out over the mob! In a kind of self-induced, frenzied amnesia, he retreats into musical fantasy worlds with his mannequin friends; fantasies that involve corruption, madness, the heroism of historical or mythical black characters--and Congo Square, where the slaves would dance to release their joy!

A white woman, Delphine, enters, with her own fantasies and, together, the two innocents fall in love; confront a corrupt mayor who gets into the space, and they journey through a minefield of corruption to discover the truth about what brought Willy Beau to this point. Finally -- and often with outrageous humor -- they find the strength to face a violent -- but transcendent -- destiny.

Through powerful, moving music and lyrics, CONGO SQUARE is a musical tour-de-force that takes the audience on a roller coaster ride of audacious theatricality — and into a moving spectacle of shattered, romantic innocence.

**SONG BREAKDOWN AND BOOK SYNOPSIS:**  
**"CONGO SQUARE"**  
*(as featured on CD recording)*

**ACT 1**

The place is New Orleans. The scene is a dimly-lit room where cobweb-covered Mardi Gras costumes, floats, elaborate masks and costumed mannequins have been stored for years. Prominent in the dust is an elaborate Mardi Gras float with a huge puppet hanging from it.

**1. OVERTURE**

At curtain: a trap door flies open, a rifle is thrown up onto the stage and Willy Beau, a young black man, enters wearing an R.O.T.C. uniform and carrying a rifle. He's come to this space often, to quietly live out fantasies with his mannequin friends. Feeling secure, he sings to them while changing into various costumes:

**2. (Song) SAFE NOW (Willy Beau)**

Outside, amplified, Mayor Anderson calls up to Willy Beau to give himself up for killing someone -- a black man. Willy Beau blocks out the shooting incident--wildly shoots out some rounds over the mob--and in a kind of self-induced, frenzied **amnesia**, now retreats into violent fantasies that involve corruption and/or madness of historical or mythical black characters--and also involve a once actual place in New Orleans, called Congo Square, where the slaves were allowed to dance and release their joy!

**(First musical fantasy:**

Willy Beau as the corrupt black boy about to bribe the natives from Congo Square.

**(Songs:)**

**3. CONGO SQUARE ON SUNDAY (Willy Beau)**

**4. DANSE CALINDA (Willy Beau)**

**5. TWO FACE! SPLIT TONGUE! (Willy Beau)**

Pressed further by the amplified Mayor, Willy Beau moves into his

**Second musical fantasy:** as the corrupt, swashbuckling, 19th century mulatto sword master and seducer of white women, Bastille Croquere.

**(Song:)**

**6. I'M BASTILLE CROQUERE (Willy Beau)**

A white woman, Delphine, finds her way into the secret, magical, space. In his fear and confusion he knocks her out and, guilty, retreats to a fantasy where he imagines himself as the tragic black jazz trumpeter, Buddy Bolden

**Third musical fantasy:**

**(Song:)**

**7. MY NAME IS BUDDY BOLDEN (Willy Beau)**

Delphine revives; tells Willy Beau she works as a waitress downstairs in the Chateau Leveau, and has followed him this time to persuade him to give himself up--something that would make all of New Orleans finally see her, "Miss Nonentity." She also claims she knows him. But Willy Beau can't remember--doesn't want to remember; instead, he seduces her into his fantasy worlds.

**4th musical fantasy:**

In drag, Willy Beau becomes a corrupt but generous and elegant Storyville Madam of the Chateau Laveau--and transforms Delphine from frightened loser --into a Star!

**(Songs:)**

**8. WHA, WAH WAH! (Willy Beau)**

**9. ELEGANCE AND GRACE (Willy Beau)**

**10. STAR! (Delphine)**

Overwhelmed at Willy Beau's ability to give her self confidence and totally attracted to him now -- and also secure in his fantasy world-- Delphine fills in more of the jig saw pieces of their lives--and Willy Beau begins to remember; and when Mayor Anderson's amplified voice once again intrudes, Willy Beau recalls more details of some major corrupt enterprise that the Mayor is involved in -- and retreats into an even more brutal

**Fifth musical fantasy:** Willy Beau and Delphine as the infamous butchers of New Orleans: The white Madame DeMaurier and her black butler/lover, Giles; who torture her black slaves, are discovered; but who, like so many of the Mighty, escape retribution.

**Songs:)**

**11. THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET (Willy Beau)**

**12. AND SHE DANCES (Willy Beau)**

**13. YES, THERE WAS THE LIE (Willy Beau)**

**14. AND ONTO THE CARRIAGE (Willy Beau)**

The act ends with Willy Beau and Delphine dancing wildly and knocking over mannequins. Mayor Anderson's amplified voice is heard. "I'm coming up. You and I have got to meet." But the dancers keep dancing . . .

***END OF ACT ONE***

***(Song Breakdown) ACT 2***

The Dancers are still dancing. Mayor Anderson, a Black Man, comes on — he's found a secret entrance into the room — the anus of a horse float. He's captured, but warns Willy Beau that Willy Beau's father is also involved and will be implicated if exposed. Willy Beau agonizes over this

**(Song): 15. WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN CLEAR? (Willy Beau)**

Mayor Anderson urges Willy to give up, take all the blame for killing the black man and not implicate the Mayor of his father or it will lead to Willy Beau's

**(Song)16. DESPAIR! (Mayor Anderson)**

Willy Beau still can't remember killing anyone; but he's close to remembering. . .one more fantasy. . .this time it will be a fantasy with a larger-than-life black hero. And Mayor Anderson is forced to take part -- be the heavy plantation owner in the

**(Sixth musical fantasy:**

Willy Beau as the swamp hero, Bras Coupè.

**(Songs:)**

**17. SWAMP FEVER (Willy Beau and Delphine)**

**18. BRAS COUPE (Willy Beau, Delphine, Mayor Anderson)**

In the fantasy The Mayor, as the Plantation Owner, gets Delphine to betray Bras Coupè. Willy Beau breaks out of the fantasy in despair.

**(Song)19. EVERYTHING ENDS (Willy Beau)**

Mayor Anderson leads the defeated Willy Beau through a reenactment of the event where the black man was killed.

**(Song) 20. MARCHING TO THE FAIR (Willy Beau)!**

In a concluding confrontation, the corrupt mayor is killed and Willy Beau and his Delphine are willing to face all the consequences of their actions now; decide to stay in their magical world and they waltz and waltz and waltz-- as the wrecking ball hits and hits and hits; and the whole world collapses around them. But, through it all, they keep waltzing, waltzing

**(finale) 21. WALTZ TO**

***CURTAIN***

## **Act 1**

*A space, where cobweb-covered  
Mardi Gras costumes and floats have been  
kept for years. Figures are dimly-seen  
standing, leaning, sitting throughout  
the room.*

*AT CURTAIN: Silence.*

*Then a trap door flies open  
and a rifle is thrown up  
onto the stage, followed by  
Willy Beau Squire.  
He's a young black man  
dressed in an ROTC uniform.*

*He slams shut the trap door.  
Some of the figures in the shadows  
move.*

WILLY BEAU

Hey! It's only me! Willy! Willy Beau! I'm back!

(Begins taking off ROTC uniform.

He says the next very "darkie.")

How come all you chil'in are settin' there in the gloomy dark?

(Himself again)

Mama? You forget to pay the light bill again? . . . Now, now, Mama; you know Willy Beau Squire; likes to josh. . . . Buddy. How's your lip? Swelling gone down? Oh, damn! I didn't get that cup mute for you. Wurlein's wasn't open. Sorry, Buddy; I'll get it for you tomorrow. Okay? . . . Buddy? . . . Wow! I can see I'm going to have a rough time with you guys tonight. —Hey! How about you, Marie!!--You're always good for a few laughs> Any new dirt on some of your well-heeled tricks? . . . Nothing. . . .C'mon, all of you; don't be like that. So I've been gone longer than usual this time. But I'm back and everything is going to be all right.

(SINGS; SAFE NOW)

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. SINGS)

I KNOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN WORRYING,  
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ANYMORE;  
'CAUSE I AM SAFE NOW.  
YOU KNOW I COULDN'T STAY AWAY,  
AWAY FROM THIS ENCHANTED PLACE;  
WHERE I AM SAFE NOW.

WE PUT IT ALL TOGETHER HERE  
AND I RAN BACK TO PLAY THE GAMES WE PLAY;  
THE GAMES THAT ONLY WE KNOW HOW TO PLAY.

YOU KNOW WE'VE GOT A LOT TO SHARE,  
AND WE HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD;  
SINCE I AM SAFE NOW.  
FEEL HOW THE JOY IS RUSHING IN;  
FEEL IT EXPLODING,  
NOW THAT I'M BACK HERE--  
SAFE NOW!

HERE WHERE I KNOW I'M AT HOME AGAIN!  
HERE WHERE I KNOW I BELONG AGAIN!  
SAFE TO RELAX AND LET GO, I'M FINALLY SET FREE!  
INSIDE THIS PEACEFUL, PAINLESS PLACE,  
I'M SAFE NOW WITH YOU. . .

AND YOU'RE SAFE HERE WITH ME.

(Willy Beau moves into the shadows  
and brings on some of the figures  
we have seen.

THEY ARE MANNEQUINS!

Willy Beau arranges them around the room  
so that they are clearly visible.)

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

'CAUSE I AM SAFE NOW. . .

WHERE I AM SAFE NOW. . .

WE PUT IT ALL TOGETHER HERE,

WILLY BEAU  
(Continued. SINGS)

AND I RAN BACK TO PLAY THE GAMES WE PLAY;  
THE GAMES THAT ONLY WE KNOW HOW TO PLAY.

(As he lights the room, we see that there  
are other mannequins wearing costumes. Also  
revealed in the room is the remains of a  
huge Mardi Gras Puppet hoisted up a pole)

YOU KNOW WE'VE GOT A LOT TO SHARE,  
AND WE HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD;  
SINCE I AM SAFE NOW.

FEEL HOW THE JOY IS RUSHING IN.  
FEEL IT EXPLODING,  
NOW THAT I'M BACK HERE--  
SAFE NOW!

HERE WHERE I KNOW I'M AT HOME AGAIN!  
HERE WHERE I KNOW I BELONG AGAIN!  
SAFE TO RELAX AND LET GO, I'M FINALLY SET FREE!  
INSIDE THIS PEACEFUL, PAINLESS PLACE,  
I'M SAFE NOW WITH YOU. . .  
AND YOU'RE SAFE HERE WITH ME.

ANDERSON  
(Off. Over AMPLIFIED BULLHORN)  
William! William Beauregard Squire! We tracked you down!

WILLY BEAU  
(Picking up a rifle)  
Everybody stay still! Don't make a sound!

ANDERSON  
(Off)  
Come to the window, William. Talk to me. I'm right across the street from the Chateau  
Laveau. The unarmed man talking into the bullhorn--that's me: Mayor Anderson.

WILLY BEAU  
(Peeking out)  
Will you look at that! There's an army of them down there!

ANDERSON

(Off)

William—you should know that there is some sympathy and understanding for what you did. It was visibly clear, after all, that you were trying to protect your father.

WILLY BEAU

FATHER!?

ANDERSON

(Off)

He's all right, William. Just minor shock. He's resting comfortably at your house. —But please try to understand, William: You can't hide behind a father forever; no matter how prominent and beloved he is.

WILLY BEAU

(To a black woman mannequin)

Do you have any idea what he's talking about, Mama?

ANDERSON

(Off)

William, you may think you're safe buried up there somewhere in The Chateau Laveau—

WILLY BEAU

(To the room)

Damned right I'm safe! I'm the only one who knows the trap doors into this secret room!

(To the Mama mannequin)

Isn't that right, Mama?

ANDERSON

(Off)

We can rush the building; tear it apart. Find you. But you *are* armed. And, justified or not, you *did* shoot a man.

WILLY BEAU

Crazy! The man's crazy!

ANDERSON

(Off)

He's still alive, thank God! But, I've got to tell you—it's touch-and-go for that poor old black man you shot.

WILLY BEAU

*Shot?* Never! I mean—Christ! —Mama, I couldn't shoot any— Not the way *you* brought me up! Jesus!!

ANDERSON

(Off)

William! At least show yourself! Make some sign that you understand!

WILLY BEAU

I'd better get out there. Clear this up. A mistake.

(Starts to dress)

ANDERSON

(Off)

Hey! Stop that man! He's going to—For God's sake! Stop him!

(A CANISTER OF GAS CRASHES  
THROUGH THE WINDOW.)

Willy Beau quickly picks up the canister, flings it back out through the window before much gas can fog the room. Then rapidly, as if he's done this before, Willy Beau places and secures boards against windows. He pulls closed dusty old drapes that block out parts of the window —then pulls some levers and creates pools of light)

Crazy! Ugly! Mean! *My place—*

(Then, through some narrower, slit-like stainedglass windows near the door, Willy Beau fires a few rounds out.)

SOUND; Crowd in terror)

That was tear gas, you know. Tear gas, for Christ's sake! You all all right? Marie? Buddy? Mama?

ANDERSON

(Off)

William? The tear gas! That wasn't one of us who fired it! Not the police! —Some "gas-happy"—somebody! —You've got to believe that. Now, I'll try my best to see that that kind of thing doesn't happen again. But you see how they're losing sympathy for you-- how edgy they've become?

WILLY BEAU

You mean how crazy they've become!

ANDERSON

(Off)

And no more bullets from you! Okay, William? Because that won't settle anything *or* make us go away. We tracked you down from Beauregard Square, William. So we're not about to pull back now.

(MUSIC: under)

WILLY BEAU

Hey, Mama—Everybody! We know Beauregard Square, don't we? We've sure used it enough in our games. A hundred years ago it had a different name, though. Congo Square. Congo Square—where all the slaves had the right to dance—let them selves go—GET THEIR JOY! And nobody—NOBODY—could stop them. Congo Square.

(MUSIC: Out)

ANDERSON

(Off)

So I'm offering you the only deal you can take, William. If you come out now, I promise to use all my influence to see that you get treatment—not punishment.

WILLY BEAU

*Always a deal!* Always a goddamned deal! —Hey! Everybody! That's what we've got to do this time! Get ourselves involved in a deal! But this time we've got to make up something *low and dirty* and—

(Holds his head as if he's  
been stabbed over the eyes)

Why? —Why low and dirty? Why do I understand it must be low and dirty? What's going on? Why can't I understand? Anything? —Mama! All of you! You've got to help me to understand—No, no! *I DON'T WANT TO UNDERSTAND!*

ANDERSON

(Off)

William! Treatment! Not punishment!

WILLY BEAU

Okay! A deal! —Yes! —Real low! Real dirty! —That will shut him out! —We'll shut him out!

(He arranges some of his Mannequin friends,  
so that they are the audience he'll be  
playing to)

Now. You all recall when we did Congo Square last--right?

## WILLY BEAU

(Continued)

This happy group . . . *here!*

He arranges some other mannequins  
in a special grouping)

—These were the dancing slaves. Remember? And this one—

(He moves to the huge Mardi Gras Puppet  
on the float)

—This one was the Slave Leader!

(Suddenly Willy Beau confronts the  
Giant Puppet and now speaks to it  
as if in a trance)

Oh, yes, you—you of the greatest joy—just wait! Someday I'll get that joy, too. Must  
get it. . . . Please?

(Willy Beau breaks from the trance and  
talks to his audience of mannequin friends again)

Right! It's 1845 and. . . —Yes! YES! This time we need *HIM!*

(He brings forward a little Black Boy mannequin,  
with white features)

His name is. . . is—Little Beau!

(Willy Beau places his arms around the shoulders  
of the little Black Boy mannequin)

And Little Beau here is. . . is the son of a Creole Gentleman and--and Quadroon Lady! . . .  
Little Beau here is up to his little arse in a very, very corrupt deal. . . YES! In this year of  
1845 in New Orleans, a certain rich man wants the Congo Square property from the city.  
And if Little Beau helps clear out that pack of dancing slaves—bribe them! *If* he has to—  
then Little Beau here makes a packet of money. *His first corruption!* And even at his age,  
Little Beau knows—is beginning to *know—that corruption is the way of the world!*

(SINGS: *CONGO SQUARE ON SUNDAY*)

CONGO SQUARE ON SUNDAY.

THAT'S WHEN ALL THE "DARKIES" DESCEND.

CONGO SQUARE ON SUNDAY,

WATCH THOSE BLUE-BLACK THIGHS SHAKE AND BEND!

(He places arm around the  
Little Beau mannequin again)

WILLY BEAU

(Continued)

SEE THIS KID STANDING HERE IN THE CORNER,  
READY TO LAUGH, READY TO BRIBE.

(Jumps up on float and jiggles the  
pulley rope that holds up the Mardi  
Gras Puppet. The Puppet jiggles)

SEE THIS MAN SWAYING HERE IN THE CENTER.  
READY TO DANCE FOR HIS PALSIED TRIBE.

(Jumps down)

CONGO SQUARE IN SUNDAY.  
THAT'S WHERE ALL THE SIGHTSEERS GO.

WILLY BEAU

(Continued)

CONGO SQUARE THIS SUNDAY.  
THE SIGHT THEY SEE TONIGHT STOPS THE SHOW;

(Goes to Little Beau mannequin.  
Uses it as he becomes Little Beau)

STOP!

(Music continues under)

You see before you a tall, beautiful, strong, eloquent, talented, dashing, wicked-and-clever-beyond-his-years Black Boy who looks on his people with pain and shame because what he sees is the jungle baboon dancing to the tune of the organ grinder for the amusement of the corrupt safari sightseers. You shame me. You shame your brother who has pulled himself out of the jungles of quicksand and hippo dung. You shame all your brothers who see you as holding them back. Because you present an image of the naked savage shaking and pulsating and grinding and stomping out a lascivious spectacle.

(Music: Out)

O, I know that all week long you are locked in after working from sunrise to sunset—and that Sunday is the one day the Massa lets you out to flex your cramped muscles and move your bodies--dance the Calinda. But can't you consider that that Sunday might better be spent for self-learning and contemplation and rest for your weary muscles? I ask you to consider this. Please! Please don't shame this brother and brothers like him any longer. *Give up this spectacle at Congo Square and go home!*

(Willy Beau then moves from the Little Beau Mannequin and jumps up on the float and pulls the pulley-rope, so that the Giant Puppet, the Slave Leader, is hoisted to its full size)

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. SINGS: *DÂNSE CALINDA*)

THEN THAT SLAVE HE STANDS UP AND GLARES.  
RIGHT DOWN THROUGH LITTLE BEAU'S BELLY HAIRS.

(Willy Beau has the Giant Puppet pick up Maraca-like instrument)

AND HE TAKES THAT SHAKER THING IN HIS HAND  
AND HE SHAKES AND SHAKES AND NO ONE MOVES,  
NO ONE EVEN DARES.  
AND IT'S SO STILL, NOT EVEN A BREEZE.  
AS HE FIXES LITTLE BEAU IN A FREEZE.

(As the Slave Leader, points to the Little Beau mannequin)

THAT BLACK BROTHER SO SMART UNDERNEATH,  
SOB OUT HIS PAIN BUT LIE THROUGH HIS WHITE TEETH.  
*DÂNSE CALINDA--BADOUM! BADOUM!*  
*DÂNSE CALINDA--BADOUM!*

THAT BOY SURE TO START A FIRE,  
HIS WHITE SOUL IS OUT FOR HIRE.  
*DÂNSE CALINDA--BADOUM, BADOUM!*  
*DÂNSE CALINDA--BADOUM!*

HE SPIN WORDS AS SWEET AS CIDER.  
BETTER KEEP YOUR DISTANCE  
HE'S A BLACK-WIDOW SPIDER!

*DÂNSE CALINDA: BADOUM, BADOUM!*  
*DÂNSE CALINDA--BADOUM!*

(Willy Beau removes the grotesque head of the giant puppet and places it over his own head. Then he dances around the Little Beau mannequin; teasing it, taunting it, threatening it. Then he takes off the head and holds it under his arms as he continues singing as The Slave Leader)

## WILLY BEAU

(Continues. SINGS)

IF HE COME HERE TO HOODOO US,  
 THEN WE GONNA BE THE ONES TO MAKE A FUSS.  
 DÀNSE CALINDA—BADOUM, BADOUM!  
 DÀNSE CALINDA—BADOUM!

IN CONGO SQUARE WE LET OUT OUR SPLEEN;  
 IF ANYONE STOP US WE CAN TURN MEAN.  
 DÀNSE CALINDA—BADOUM, BADOUM!  
 DÀNSE CALINDA—BADOUM!

DÀNSE CALINDA—BADOUM, BADOUM!  
 DÀNSE CALINDA—*BADOUM!*

*(End of Song)*

(Willy Beau puts head back on  
 The Giant Mardi Gras Puppet,  
 quickly moves in front of  
 The Little Beau mannequin.

Speaks as The Little Beau mannequin)

All right, deny my eloquence—*but* you can't deny my CASH!

(MUSIC: Sting! as he flings a fistful  
 of cash into the air,  
 then moves back to the Giant Puppet.  
 As The Slave Leader, says:)

Nobody dast touch that money.

(Then, with great contempt, he spits  
 out the following to the  
 Little Beau mannequin)

*Two face! Split tongue! Ambition's ladder! Smashed rung! Yeah!*

(Mimes the making of a symbol on the floor.  
 As the Slave Leader, he says)

I will place this vèvè on the ground;  
 and place the power of my curse into the devil's hound;

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. SINGS)

Who will hound you through the decades of your days—  
And bite your ass and back and arms!  
And snuff them out, your black, corrupting ways!

*TWO FACE!*

*SPLIT TONGUE!*

*AMBITION'S LADDER!*

*SMASHED RUNG! YEAH!*

(Speaks)

Go on home and crawl into your bed.  
And dream about the time  
when something crash into your head. YEAH!

(SOUND: A crash way off, followed  
by a slight shaking of everything  
in the room)

ANDERSON

(Off)

William! Do you hear that! —That crash? Now be calm. Just listen and take what I'm about to tell you seriously. Okay? . . . *That's the wrecking ball beginning its job.* That building you're in is part of the whole square block that's set to be demolished. —Everybody knows that—has been prepared for that. Well, William! It's *going* to be demolished! —Do you hear that, William? *Demolished!*

WILLY BEAU

(Trying to hold on to the character  
of Little Beau he's been playing)

So you made that damned vèvè, and now you create thunder from way off and you think you're going to scare me with that?

ANDERSON

(Off)

We're going ahead with my plans, William: To erect a great city for our senior citizens on that property. That's right, William; even though those old—rebels—we're so disgusting to your father—what they did to *all* of us at Beauregard Square—I'm still determined to erect a great Senior City for the rest—for the decent old folks of our community. And your being up there won't stop us. That crash was just the beginning--just a taste of what's in store if you don't come out.

WILLY BEAU

And do you really think you can destroy my house with your voodoo?  
(Looks around for the next character to play)

ANDERSON

(Off)

I don't know what was in your head when you went up there. But everyone plans to go ahead with the demolition. —The day of coddling a common—home grown—*terrorist* —is over. *DEM-O-LI-TION* William!

WILLY

Not without a fight!

(Starts putting on a costume,  
with rapier attached)

ANDERSON

(Off)

I'm telling you, William! Those crashes were just the beginning. Now, I will try to delay —to hold things off. But they are edgy--I told you that--in no mood to *be* held off!

WILLY

No! I am not some simple-minded savage ready to buy your voodoo mumbo jumbo —

ANDERSON

(Off)

William, you've got to give me some kind of an answer —some sign! Anything!

WILLY

No! I am sharp. I am elegant.

ANDERSON

(Off)

If you don't, I won't be able to stop that wrecking ball!

WILLY

I am ambitious and quick witted!

ANDERSON

(Off)

William, help me to help you!

WILLY

I am dashing!

ANDERSON

(Off)

Don't let it go too far, William!

WILLY

I am grace *and* corruption combined!

ANDERSON

(off)

DON'T LET IT GO TO THE WRECKING BALL!

WILLY

And I laugh at your thunder because—

(SINGS: *I'M BASTILLE CROQUERE*)

I'M BASTILLE CROQUERE, THE GREAT MAITRE D'ARMES;  
I TEACH ALL THE CREOLES MY SKILL.  
I'M THE ONLY MULATTO THE CREOLE'S ALLOW  
TO ENTER THEIR HOUSES AT WILL.

AND SO WHAT IF THE LADIES ADORE ME?  
AND SO WHAT IF THEIR HUSBANDS ALL BORE ME!  
I ALLOW THEM REVENGE FOR AWHILE—  
AS I TEACH THEM TO KILL WITH STYLE.

I'M BASTILLE CROQUERE, THE TAN MAITRE D'ARMES;  
MY SKILL IS FOR RENT AND FOR HIRE.  
WHILE I VALUE MY HONOR, AND VERE TOWARDS WHAT IS RIGHT—  
I'LL TILT TO THE HIGHEST BUYER.

AND SO WHAT IF THE LADIES ADORE ME?  
AND SO WHAT IF THEIR HUSBANDS ALL BORE ME!  
I ALLOW THEM REVENGE FOR AWHILE —  
AS I TEACH THEM TO KILL WITH STYLE.

STYLE, STYLE, STYLE, STYLE!  
THE WHOLE WORLD TO ME IS STYLE!

(MUSIC: Continues under.  
SOUND: Off. Crash of wrecking ball!  
Speaks)

Voodoo thunder again? We will settle the insult here at the Oaks! And this time, instead of carving my monogram on your chest, as is my custom, I will make such a clean and straight hole to your heart, that the wound will heal over in minutes and there will be no trace of what killed you. But killed you will be!

(A whimpering sound is heard from within  
the Giant Puppet. The Puppet begins to move

*on its own!* WILLY BEAU stalks the Puppet!)

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. *Speak/SINGS*)

THE ONLY WAY TO KILL IS TO KILL WITH STYLE.  
NO MATTER THE RAGE OR THE FEAR OR THE GUILE.  
ONE MUST CARRY HEAD HIGH AND DENY THE BILE—  
COOLLY LUNGE AT YOUR INSULT WITH STYLE, STYLE, STYLE!  
AS YOU LUNGE AT YOUR INSULT WITH  
—*STYLE!*

(Willy Beau stabs the Giant Puppet.  
*A WOMAN FALLS OUT!*)

WOMAN

Oh, God! You wounded me! Look! I'm bleeding!

WILLY BEAU

Oh, my G-g-g-god! I d-d-didn't m-m-mean—

WOMAN

No! Don't touch me! You're crazy!

WILLY BEAU

N-n-no. Not crazy. Clumsy. C-C-confused.

ANDERSON

(off)

William! William! Give me an answer! Believe me! They are getting on my back down here!  
Help me help you!

WOMAN

Help!

WILLY BEAU

What are you doing here?

WOMAN

(Shouting out!)

He thinks he's other people! —Stabbed me! Get me out of—!

WILLY BEAU

(Clapping his hand over her mouth)

How did you find me?

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. *Realization*)

The puppet!

(He drags her to the Puppet)

—Another trap? —One I don't know about? This float—!

(Releases her to secure the trap)

WOMAN

(Rushes to the window)

Help!

(Willy Beau rushes to her; Stops her before she gets to the window; claps his hand over her mouth again)

WILLY BEAU

Stop that!

ANDERSON

(Off)

—William! —What's going on up—? William—!!!

(The Woman bites Willy Beau's hand.  
He hits the Woman. She falls)

WILLY BEAU

I'm sorry I hit you. Hey! You all right? Oh, God! I killed her for sure. She's dead.

(MUSIC: Under)

Look. Listen! A funeral carriage! A coffin—! Man, I gotta join that funeral parade!—that Dixieland funeral—!

(Starts putting on a Jazzman's costume)

You can follow me if you like, Ladies. Why, I just hear about a funeral parade shapin' up to progress to the graveyard other side o' town, an' I close up my tonsorial Parlour, grab my cornet—

(Takes cornet hanging from nearest mannequin)

—an' play sad an' low goin' down—that's to show respect for the dead—an' play happy an' snappy comin' back—to show respect an' joy for the *livin'*—An' see!! —See all those kids standin' on the road with their mouths open?! That's 'cause they never heard such a sound! Right! 'Cause I'm the dude—they say—who created the jazz horn—yeah!—an' they are right! It's 1890 an'—

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. (SINGS: *MY NAME IS BUDDY BOLDEN*))

MY NAME IS BUDDY BOLDEN,  
LOOK AT ME GET DOWN.  
I'M THE BARBER THAT ALL THE GAL'S ADORE.  
I HIT THE LOW NOTES; I HIT THE SWEET NOTES.

I HIT ALL THE NOTES IN BETWEEN.  
BUT THE NOTES I LOVE—THE NOTES I LOVE  
ARE THE NOTES THAT START OUT FROM THE FLOOR!

AN' THEY FLY!  
AN' THEY FLY!

THEY HIT SAINT PETER'S GATE—*THEY* FLY SO HIGH.  
THEY BECOME THE LORD'S FRONT BUZZER  
AS HE LETS YOU THROUGH THE LIGHT.  
AN' THEY HANG UP THERE  
AN' THEY BECOME THE STARS IN THE NIGHT.

(Willy Beau dances.  
The Woman revives and looks on.  
Frozen.

Willy Beau is happy, confident in his strut.  
Then something dissonant happens in his head.  
He becomes frightened, confused, disoriented.  
And suddenly, it's not Buddy Bolden singing anymore  
It's Willy Beau Squire trying to sort out  
the threat and feeling of despair)

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. Sings)

BUT IF BUDDY WAS SO HAPPY,  
THEN HOW COME HE WENT MAD?  
'CAUSE HE DID, YOU KNOW,  
THEY SAY THAT HE WAS, OH SO SAD:

HE WAS BLOWIN' A PARADE  
AND HIS GOLDEN CHEEKS TURNED RED,  
AS HE BLEW SO HIGH HE FINALLY BLEW HIS HEAD!

WHY, WHY, WHY?  
WHY BLOW SO HIGH?  
WHY GET SO HOT THAT YOUR BRAINS GOT TO FRY?

WILL BEAU

(Continued. SINGS)

PLAY IT LOWER, BUDDY BOLDEN.  
PLEASE DON'T GIVE THAT HORN A SCOLDIN'.  
AND YOU'LL REACH AN AGE THAT'S GOLDEN. . .  
BY AND BY.

(END OF SONG)

ANDERSON

(Off)

William! Now listen! We have sent for your father.

WILLY BEAU

No! No!

(SINGS)

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN CLEAR?

WILLY BEAU

(continued)

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN SHARP?

(The Woman starts inching toward  
the window)

ANDERSON

(Off)

Do you hear, William?! Your father! We getting him out of his sick bed—even that!  
Anything to get you to see the light! Maybe he ca—?

(Willy Beau gets to the Woman;  
drags her to the window. Without thinking,  
he chokes her while he shouts out:)

WILLY BEAU

Stop talking! And stop calling me "William!" William is weak! William is confused! William is led by the nose! I'm Willy Beau--Willy Beau Squire! Do you hear? And Willy Beau Squire will find his joy!!!

ANDERSON

(Off)

Who is--!? William!! *IS THAT A HOSTAGE!?* William!! —Easy! Easy! —Whoever it is--don't hurt her!!!

(Willy Beau stops choking the Woman)

It's okay, William! We won't do anything! We won't. . .—just don't hurt her!

WILLY BEAU

(Pause. To Woman)

I'm sorry. But you're here and I keep —why? Why did you come up here?

WOMAN

Because I thought I'd be—*noticed*—

(Laughs. Laughter turns to sobs)

WILLY BEAU

Please don't do that? Please. I won't hurt you again. Just don't run.

(She quiets down)

What did you mean—"noticed?"

WOMAN

I mean I wanted--needed--to be *somebody*. To be in just one newspaper headline. For one day. That would have been enough.

WILLY BEAU

That's stupid.

WOMAN

I know. Now. —But I went to them. Said I knew you—that I was the one who could come up here to get you out.

WILLY BEAU

How did you know the way up?

WOMAN

I followed you up here.

WILLY BEAU

When?

WOMAN

A couple of times. I hid.

WILLY BEAU

Why? Why did you follow me? Why did you stay hidden?

WOMAN

I—I knew this was a special--a private place for you. That day, you walked around whispering to each of--your friends. And you finally stopped in front of the mannequin lady you called "Mama." Rested your head on her—you were sad that day, I guess. —But I didn't tell! That time. But today—when you shot—

WILLY BEAU

I didn't shoot! There's some mistake and they blame me! Threw tear gas up here! *Had* to shoot back! But not to hit! Not to hit! Shot straight out! Into the air! And—I mean—I just don't remember—!

WOMAN

Look. I only heard it second hand—about the shooting.

WILLY BEAU

From whom?

WOMAN

A waiter! Then I went to Mayor Anderson and—

WILLY BEAU

That Anderson—he seems to know me.

WOMAN

Mayor Anderson knows everybody—anybody that matters. I don't. Matter. I tried to make him see me. Make me a *somebody*. Said that I'd come up here to try to talk you out. Said I could. Said to have the camera's ready when I walked out with you. Said, too, that I was a friend of the family. He laughed. Said your father would never know someone like the likes of me. I said I meant it—that I could get to you—that I knew you. And I did. I *did* mean it!

WILLY BEAU

You know me?

WOMAN

Not "*know*" exactly. But I was aware of you.

WILLY BEAU

How? Where?

WOMAN

Downstairs. At The Chateau. At the Chateau Laveau Bar.

WILLY BEAU

The Chateau Laveau Bar? What is that?

WOMAN

A bar. With a show. The Chateau Laveau Bar.

WILLY BEAU

What do I do there?

WOMAN

You know.

WILLY BEAU

*I DON'T KNOW THAT, GODDAMNIT!* I don't remember... —things!!

WOMAN

You're a part-time doorman at The Chateau Laveau. I'm a waitress.

WILLY BEAU

Doorman. . .The Chateau Laveau. . .

(He moves to a mannequin with a gown)

WOMAN

We never met. Just did our jobs. Blended into the place. Ignored. But I could see—I really could—that there was an intensity, a fire—a fire? No! —A blaze going on behind your eyes; the same kind of blaze I thought was still flickering in me.

(Willy Beau begins to put on the gown from the mannequin)

WILLY BEAU

*The Chateau Laveau.* Yes.

(MUSIC: Whorehouse piano. Under)

. . .Famous Sportin' House from famous Storyville. . .Conspicuous elegance  
 . . .Champagne. . .the most beautiful women in the French Quarter: Quadroons; Mulattos;  
 whites. . .Yeah, Mama, that's another kind of corruption I've got to taste!. . .to *create!*  
 . . .Flesh peddling and elegance. Payoffs and Chic. Depravity and class!

*(He's now completely in drag,  
 as Marie Laveau)*

COME ON IN! STEP RIGHT IN! I'm the Madam and I call myself Marie Laveau. Base myself on the famous Voodoo Queen. Where this house is, the famous Voodoo Parlour of Marie Laveau used to stand. I'm successful and rich and elegant and shrewd and tough and beautiful. And I'm black. So that's an extra kick. And my musicians are the best. It's 1917 and Storyville is the place to be from coast to coast. SO--

(SINGS: *RAMBLE ON DOWN TO THE CHATEAU LAVEAU*)

RAMBLE ON DOWN TO THE CHATEAU LAVEAU, BOYS.  
 WAH,WAHWAH WAH WAH.  
 WHERE ALL OF MY GIRLS WILL GET UP AND GO, BOYS.

WILLY BEAU

(Continues SINGING)

WAH, WAHWAH WAH WAH.

THE DECOR'S HAUTE; THE FURNITURE GRAND.  
I'VE GOT MY PROFESSOR LEADING THE BAND.  
AND IF THAT DON'T GRAB YOU, I'LL TAKE A HAND  
AND WAH, WAHWAH, WAH WAH WAH.  
WAH, WAHWAH, WAH WAH WAH.

HAVE A CIGAR AND TILT THE OLD HAT, BOYS.  
WAH, WAHWAH, WAH WAH.  
LOOSEN THOSE MUSCLES AND LET OUT THE FAT, BOYS.  
WAH. WAHWAH, WAH WAH!

SNAP THOSE SUSPENDERS; SHINE UP YOUR SPATS.  
OPEN YOUR WALLETS TO MY PUSSY CATS.  
AND RAMBLE ON DOWN TO THE CHATEAU LAVEAU  
AND WAH, WAHWAH, WAH WAH WAH  
WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

(The Woman is mesmerized  
and somewhat delighted by Willy Beau's  
carrying on)

WILLY BEAU

(continues as Marie Laveau)

And introducing Marie Laveau's elegant sirens of North Basin Street.

(moves from mannequin to mannequin  
while snares beat out a raunchy beat under)

Flo Meeker, stronger and taller;  
Step right out and floor your man.

Ida Parish, known as "the Mauler;"  
Glide out here and claw your man.

Jeanette Parker, called La Globes;"  
Bounce on out and bump your man.

Lucille Douglas, hot for ear lobes;  
Show your whites and bite your man.

But with elegance, ladies. . .elegance. . .

WILLY BEAU  
(SINGS: *ELEGANCE AND GRACE*)

ELEGANCE AND GRACE,  
DADDY USED TO SAY,  
ARE THE CIVILIZED WAYS THAT PEOPLE HAVE  
TO SHOW YOU THAT THEY ARE LOVING.

ELOQUENCE AND STYLE,  
MEAN THE VERY SAME THING TODAY.  
DON'T GIVE IN TO THE FEW  
WHO TELL YOU  
YOU'RE A FOOL, IF YOU COMPLY.

NEVER DISREGARD  
THE PART OF YOU THAT'S SWEET.  
DENY WHAT IS TENDER IN YOU  
AND KILL ALL FEELING.

NEVER BE A SLAVE  
TO THE THINGS THAT ARE REFINED.  
ON THE OTHER HAND, DON'T IGNORE THEM,  
IF YOU DO YOU'RE LOST FOR SURE.

KINDNESS AND FINESSE.  
DON'T LOSE THE GENTLE WAYS.  
WITHOUT USE THEY'LL PERISH.  
SO CHERISH THEM TODAY.

(MUSIC: under)  
(Speaks)

Oh, God, how I love managing the Chateau Laveau. And how did I do it? How did a black lady pull herself up to the economic heights of her white counterparts? By her twat, that's how! And by the twats of her girls. You see, we're exotic and we're supposed to be much hotter, and diddling with us makes the white gentlemen seem sooooo sinful. And so I thrive; am allowed to thrive. And I make money; lots of money. And I pay my bribes, and I find out information—valuable information—from bouncy, sweaty, pot bellies, and jizemed-soaked mustaches, in the quiet elegance of my red-velvet twat rooms--and/or--wrinkled on my twat-percales. And I sell that information and buy favors and ruin reputations and speculate on land tips and break hearts and balls. In short--you see before you--the best of the bunch! —The top of the heap! —*THE BLACK TWAT QUEEN OF BASIN STREET!*

(SINGS)

NEVER BE A SLAVE  
TO THE THINGS THAT ARE REFINED;  
ON THE OTHER HAND DON'T IGNORE THEM,  
IF YOU DO, YOU'RE LOST FOR SURE.

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. SINGS))

KINDNESS AND FINESSE,  
DON'T LOSE THE GENTLE WAYS.  
WITHOUT USE THEY'LL PERISH,  
SO CHERISH THEM TODAY.

(END OF SONG)

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. Speaks. As Marie Laveau)

But getting to the top is not enough. You gotta stay there. And how do you do that? How do you keep that clout? How do you get people to listen to you? By being a star! Like this new star at The Chateau Laveau. What's your name, honey?

DELPHINE

Delphine. Delphine DeMaurier. But I'm no star.

WILLY BEAU

Of course you are. Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Delphine--

DELPHINE

--who wants to be a star but isn't one. Just a waitress at The Chateau Laveau. Who somehow doesn't have what it takes to melancholy baby on the upright in the solo spotlight or--

WILLY BEAU

Stop that! No sentimentality in my Chateau Laveau. All you lack is the bitchiness, savagery, the taste for blood it takes to be a star. But you have it. I'll prove it to you. Because you are my new star. *Had better be; 'cause you the only one here!* So goddamn it, you better—STAR AWAY!

(Willy Beau takes off star costume from one of the mannequins. Throws the costume to Delphine. Delphine puts on the costume as she sings--tentatively, at first)

DELPHINE

(SINGS: "STAR!")

STAR.

I'M A STAR.

I'M A STAR; IN THE STARRING SPOT.

WHERE I STAR OUT MY HEART PLEASING THE CROWDS.

OH, HOW THEY LOVE ME--

DELPHINE

(Continued. SINGS)  
 CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF ME;  
 AND KEEP MY HEAD UP IN THE CLOUDS.

STAR.  
 I'M A STAR.  
 LIKE THE BIG NAMES ARE--  
 AND I'M JUST AS HOT!

I'VE KICKED AND I'VE CLAWED  
 AND I'VE LEARNED HOW TO MAKE IT;  
 NOW THIS IS MY STAGE,  
 JUST YOU TRY AND TAKE IT--  
 FROM THIS REAL-LIVE TROOPER;  
 THIS GENUINE SUPER--  
 STAR.

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)  
 NOT LONG AGO  
 SHE THOUGHT WHAT PEOPLE SAID SHE WAS--  
 SHE WAS.  
 WHICHEVER THE WAY THE PROGRAM READ SHE WAS--  
 SHE WAS.

BUT I RIPPED UP THAT PRINTOUT  
 AND PROGRAMMED HER BETTER;  
 GAVE HER STAR POWER--WHAT A STAR SETTER!  
 HER STAR IS OUT! SHE'S GOT STAR CLOUT!  
 AND EVERYBODY LISTENS BECAUSE--

SHE'S A STAR. . .  
 SHE'S A STAR. . .  
 SHE'S A STAR  
 IN THE STARRING SPOT—

(Delphine pushes Willy Beau out of the way,  
 takes stage and begins to belt)

DELPHINE

WHERE I STAR OUT MY HEART PLEASING THE CROWD!  
 OH, HOW THEY LOVE ME,  
 CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF ME  
 AND KEEP MY HEAD UP IN THE CLOUDS!

DELPHINE

(Continues singing)

STAR!  
I'M A STAR!  
LIKE THE BIG NAMES ARE  
AND I'M JUST AS HOT!  
I KICKED AND I CLAWED  
AND I LEARNED HOW TO MAKE IT!  
NOW THIS IS MY STAGE,  
JUST YOU TRY TO TAKE IT  
FROM THIS GROOVY AND GLITZY,  
SEQUINED AND TITSY  
STAR!

(END OF SONG)

WILLY BEAU

(Speaks)

Honey, you got it!

TOGETHER

(They SING)

HAVE A CIGAR AND TILT THE OLD HAT, BOYS--  
WAH, WAH WAH, WAH WAH!  
LOOSEN THOSE MUSCLES AND LET OUT THE FAT, BOYS--  
WAH, WAH WAH, WAH WAH!  
SNAP THOSE SUSPENDERS, SHINE THE OLD SPATS;  
OPEN YOUR WALLETS TO MY PUSSYCATS.  
AND RAMBLE ON DOWN TO THE CHATEAU LAVEAU  
AND WAH, WAH WAH, WAH WAH, WAH  
WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

WILLY BEAU

The Chateau Laveau is closed for the night!

(MUSIC: Button. *End of Song*)

DELPHINE

I saw it! I saw everything you wanted me to see! For awhile, your unreal Chateau Laveau was real. I was a real star. Real! And by taking part in a dream! Up until now I've only existed in what was real. I was taught to. Expected to. "—Delphine," my daddy used to say to me, "--Delphine, Baby, the DeMaurier's are nobodies. That's the reality of things for us. And as long as you keep looking that reality in the face, no hidden boxing glove will spring out of nowhere and bash you in the eye." . . . That

## DELPHINE

(Continued)

was life to daddy: Booby traps all over the place that *he* was meant to trip. . . Well, I loved my clumsy daddy. And believed him. —Still, I questioned him: "But I have dreams, daddy! I have blinking Christmas lights in my toes and four belting calling birds in my throat—and that's reality, too!" "No, it ain't, Delphine baby. Like you say; it's dreams. And dreams ain't real." . . . I loved my daddy and believed him. So, what could I do? —Oh, I went on blinking and belting. . . .A reflex, I guess. . . .And, because I loved to, I suppose. . . .I was sort of in a twilight zone. You know? —Like I was the dreamer looking in on my dream of me blinking and belting. . . .Then, in college, I fell in love with Mr. Musical Comedy! And he laid me. And I thought that now the reality would change with his help. But as tender as he was when he laid me, that's how brutal he was when he talked in that—"it's good for you" way—you know, how certain people do when they're being *honest* with you, and deciding, somehow, that *honesty* won't hurt as much—or at all—as the lie. Of course, it kills you and you long for the lie. "Dell, honey," he said, "you lack an inner fantasy life; so it follows that what you project is a life without fantasy. Consequently, there is no grandeur; no arrogance. You are smaller than life. You project nothing more than what you are and *what* you are—must always be—is a chorus girl blending into a chorus backdrop for the one in front who *is* larger than life! For the murderous one! —The one who wills her fantasy life to be real: —*The Star!!!*" "You're a Pro," I said. "Can't *you* give me a fantasy life?" "Hell no, Dell. Nobody can do that. Now, Dell Hon, get on your hands and knees. I want to take you doggie fashion." I laughed at that, although I wanted to cry—but I laughed, because I learned never to show how upset I was. But my body showed it anyway. *It farted on him.* . . .And so it went, my life: *Blinking and belting and farting into the twilight zone.* . . .But not anymore! Oh, Willy Beau, you did it! In this wonderful place, you released the fantasy in me. No more—*tacky* —Chateau Laveau Bar. *No more waitress for me! No more doorman for you!*

## WILLY BEAU

DOORMAN! YES! Before--when you said I was a doorman, I almost remembered--- something--and now. . . Yes, Yes, YES! I *do* remember!

(Paces)

He found out about it! —My father! —We had it out! "It's a disgrace!" he told me—the black Dean told me! "Cheap! Undignified! For the son of a prominent man to work at a disgusting Sporting House!" "Not a real Sportin' House," I said. "A bar. That's all." "*DON'T I KNOW WHAT THAT PLACE IS?*" He's *shouting* at me now. "The University is the owner of that goddamned eyesore! Which, I am delighted to say, I got them to sell—and which—I hear—is going to be demolished!" I get panicky. "No! Don't let them! *I need that place!*"

(Music: Whorehouse piano)

"You see, daddy, there's a feeling as doorman in the replica of a Sportin' House—a good feeling of opening and closing and passing the patrons through to the energy of the past—when the saints came marchin' in and the blues were at St. James Infirmary—OH! —I don't get the kind of energy those slaves used to get when they stomped out their joy in Congo Square—but I do get *a glimpse of it* at the Chateau Laveau Bar—yeah! —And sometimes, daddy, I even see myself as '*The Professor*'—Oh! Not the kind of

WILLY BEAU

(Continued)

professor *you* are—and want me to be. No! The piano player—that's the '*Professor*' in a Sportin' House."

DELPHINE

Like Leroy.

(Whorehouse music: Out)

WILLY BEAU

Leroy?

DELPHINE

Old Leroy. The piano player downstairs. I used to see him talk to you all the time. He used to be a "Professor." Didn't you know that? Oh, yes, Leroy used to be in competition with the likes of Jelly Roll Morton. YES! Still great funky energy in those Leroy fingers! And that old Leroy—he understands!

ANDERSON

(Off)

Now listen carefully. That black man you shot: He died.

DELPHINE

Oh, God, Willy Beau!

WILLY BEAU

(Rushing to the window)

THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WILLY BEAU!

DELPHINE

Willy Beau! Come away from that window!

ANDERSON

(Off)

What was that, Willy? —Now, don't panic! Don't panic!!

DELPHINE

(Pulling at him)

Willy Beau! Please!

ANDERSON

(Off)

—Don't worry—the circumstances that drove you to do it—they'll be taken into account. There will be sympathy—justice for you. I guarantee it.

WILLY BEAU

YES! THAT'S RIGHT! —GUARANTEE—YOU. . .THE GUARANTEE *YOU* SIGNED. . .  
THE GUARANTEE TO *THIS* LAND. . .YOU SOLD THEM OUT! THE WHOLE CROWD DOWN  
THERE! THIS WHOLE CITY. . .YOU GUARANTEED THE SALE, MR. MAYOR  
. . .AND THAT SHOOTING. . .THAT OLD MAN. . .*YOU*— . . .SOMETHING. . .

DELPHINE

(Dragging him away from the window)

Willy Beau. . .you're right. . .that man. . .a liar. . .corrupt. . .Everybody knows it. But come  
away from this window.

ANDERSON

(Off)

All right. That's all crazy nonsense, William. But it has to be dealt with. And it has to be  
me.

(Anderson apparently covers bullhorn  
but we hear some garbled conversation  
coming through)

DELPHINE

What you dragged me into before. . .that's what we need; that kind of  
fantasy.

WILLY BEAU

I know what I'm talking about.

ANDERSON

(Off. On bullhorn again. Clear)

It has to be dealt with. We have to meet. Face to face.

DELPHINE

A fantasy. It wiped out my despair. Now's the time to make up a new one, Willy Beau;  
and wipe out yours.

(Delphine begins to look for a costume  
as she gets out of her "Star" costume)

WILLY BEAU

Right. Right! Fantasy! Anything to wipe out the pain and--

DELPHINE

I know! I'll play your Mama. And I'll protect you and you can put your he on my shoulder  
and—

WILLY BEAU

NO! NO MORE MAMA! Something else. Something to get. . . revenge.  
Yes! REVENGE! --All right! Then blot out the "now." Keep making our own "now."

(As he talks, Willy Beau puts on  
the costume of a butler)

We're the ones in charge. The ones on top. The beautiful ones. The  
powerful ones. The refined, corrupt ones. The ones who can use people anyway we want.  
Who can be gracious, elegant. . .

(MUSIC: *HAUNTED HOUSE* intro. Under)

. . .and/or bestial and evil. The ones who can snap the whip and make the bodies dance.  
. .Why--none other than the handsome, elegant Butler Giles and his waltzing mistress:  
Madame La Laurie.

DELPHINE

. . .Yes. . .Madam La Laurie—

WILLY BEAU

The monster!

(MUSIC: as Willy Beau picks up candelabra,  
stands close to Delphine, who sways about the  
room, using manikins as guests or partners)

(SINGS: *THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET*)

THEY'RE STILL PARTYING TONIGHT  
AT THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET.  
THAT'S TEN DAYS IN A ROW  
AND YOU CAN'T SEE THE END IN SIGHT.

HOW THE CHAMPAGNE STILL FLOWS  
AT THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET.  
AND FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS  
NEW ORLEANS REEKS AND STAYS AS HIGH AS A KITE.

THERE'S THE GRANDEST MADAME  
AT THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET.  
SEE HER BLOODY TIARA BLIND ALL THE FACES,  
THE BLOOD IS SO BRIGHT.

HOW SHE BLESSES HER COURT  
AT THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET.  
AND CLOSES HER EARS  
TO THE WHISPERS SHE HEARS;  
WHISPERS THAT CAUSE SO MUCH FRIGHT.

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. SINGING)

HAUNTED HOUSE,  
HOW CAN YOU LOOK SO GRAND?  
HAUNTED WOMAN,  
YOUR MADNESS BRINGS HORRORS--  
HORRORS TOO HORRIBLE TO STAND.

THERE'S A MEDICAL MAN  
AT THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET.  
HE'S MARRIED TO HER,  
THIS WOMAN WHOSE TEETH ARE SO SHARP AND SO WHITE.

BUT HE SITS ON THE STAIRS  
AT THE BIG HOUSE ON ROYAL STREET.  
LIKE A CHILD IN HIS PLACE,  
LOOKS DOWN ON THE FACE  
OF HIS LADY WHO LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT.

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. "Oooh's" the "Haunted House" Section)

AND SHE DANCES,  
THIS BEAUTIFUL LADY,  
SHE DANCES ALL NIGHT.  
YES, SHE DANCES;  
THIS LAUGH-FLOATING QUEEN,  
AS HER HANDSOME,  
HER DASHING,  
HER STEEL-MUSCLED BUTLER,  
FOLLOWS ALONG WITH HIS DANCING LIGHT.

(MUSIC; Under)

DELPHINE

(As she dances from Manikin to Manikin)

Now, now, my naughty Monsieur, you mustn't suggest such naughty temptations. You know I am disgustingly faithful to my husband, the Doctor. . . .Cruel to him? To allow my husband, the Doctor, to look down on all this from the stairs? While all *this* goes on? But that's what he does best. Oversees. Oversees the results of his fortune and how his wife spends it.

(Delphine dances to another manikin)

## DELPHINE

(Continued)

What's this? *That* rumor again! I do not "*maltreat*" my servants. Does my Butler here look "*maltreated?*" Rumor! My enemies! !! I? Madame Delphine La Laurie? Who leaves loaves of bread at the Orphanage? and money in the poor boxes? --and gives her hardly-used, discarded clothes and those of her husband, the Overseer, to her servants? I, "*maltreat*" —?—Rumor! Rumor!

## WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

YES, THERE WAS THE LIE THAT THE NEIGHBOR TOLD  
 WHEN HE SAID HE WAS STARTLED ONE DAY,  
 BY THE BONE-CHILLING SCREAMS OF MADAME'S BLACK MAID  
 BEING CHASED THROUGH THE COURTYARD ACROSS THE WAY.

WHEN HE LOOKED--  
 WHEN HE LOOKED--  
 WHAT HE SAW WAS THE BLACK GIRL,  
 NOTHING BUT BONES,  
 STUMBLING ALONG THE TILES,  
 BEING CHASED BY HER MISTRESS,  
 SWINGING A WHIP,  
 AND EGGING HER ON, THE BUTLER,  
 THE MAN CALLED "GILES."

"BEAT HER! BEAT THAT DAMNED LITTLE NIGGER!  
 SHOW HER SHE CAN'T SPIT AT ME," SAYS GILES.  
 "MAKE HER REGRET THAT SHE EVER DARED  
 TO CURSE OUT THIS BLACK PRINCE--  
 WHOSE POWER INCREASES EACH NIGHT AND EACH DAY,  
 OVER THE BEAUTIFUL, ELEGANT, RAUNCHY  
 MADAME DELPHINE LALAURIE!"

(Speaks)

Beat her! There at the edge of the roof! Anyone can beat a Nigger inside or on the street. But there against God's crimson sky and at the edge of the abyss—Jesus, what grandeur, Delphine! What power! Beat her! I command you!

(MUSIC: Out)

DELPHINE

(Breaking out of fantasy character)

Willy! She jumped! I don't like this fantasy. It's not like the other one. I don't want to know where this one will lead.

WILLY BEAU

To cruelty, Delphine. That's where this one leads. And that's another kind of corruption I've got to touch—we've got to touch. Or we'll never understand.

(Holds his head in pain)

How do I know that?

(Head pain subsides)

Please. . .

(Takes Delphine in his arms.

Kisses her gently)

Please, Delphine.

(Delphine slowly breaks away  
from him, reenters fantasy)

DELPHINE

Giles! Giles! She jumped! I'm scared! We've gone too far! Don't let me give in to these—these desires in me any longer. And don't—don't use me to act out those fierce needs in you. I can't—

WILLY BEAU

You *can!* I'm only a black Prince in this shitty world! But you—you're a great white lady. You can dump on the world. I can't. But I have needs to dump, too. *What else is there?*

DELPHINE

But—but—this one has died. It's different now. They'll punish me.

WILLY BEAU

Never! No one ever really punishes the powerful. And you *are* powerful, Delphine. Believe it.

(Long kiss. Then he releases her)

DELPHINE

(Now in the dock; facing the judge)

Goaded that sweet darlin' to her death? Never, your honor. I was like a white Mammy to that little girl. My neighbor was wrong. Yes, I ran after my maid. To stop her. She had a fit!. Said she found a gris-gris—was being Hoodooed! I chased her to stop her . But she Was possessed. *Possessed!* I swear. And I—I was too late. . .

(She breaks down. Sobs)

WILLY BEAU

(As the judge)

Now, now, my dear Madame La Laurie. There is no need for that in front of this bar of justice. It is, after all, your word against your neighbor's--and we all know he does taste of the grape now and again. But you should not have put up such resistance when the police investigated. I know you demand your privacy; still, for that disturbance, I'll have to fine you \$25. And as to the other charges, I hereby dismiss them. And to your good husband, the doctor, my warmest regards.

(Delphine waltzes again)

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

AND SHE DANCES,  
THIS BEAUTIFUL LADY,  
SHE DANCES ALL NIGHT.  
YES, SHE DANCES;  
THIS LAUGH-FLOATING QUEEN,  
AS HER HANDSOME,  
HER DASHING,  
HER STEEL-MUSCLED BUTLER,  
FOLLOWS ALONG WITH HIS DANCING LIGHT.

(Delphine screams)

DELPHINE

*Fire!*—Giles! The attic—!

WILLY BEAU

(As Giles)

Forget about that black trash in the attic. Get to the safe, Delphine! Your jewels! I'll do the rest! . . . Don't panic! No danger here! You, Sir, won't you please help me save the bronze? You—all of you—the paintings. Ladies—the brocade! The rest of you, the furniture. —No! The slaves are in no danger, I assure you. I said, "*I assure you!!!*" The slaves are safe!" No! Don't go up to the attic, Sir! It would be better if you did not meddle into other people's affairs

(Flat. As Willy Beau. Reportage)

!—But he had to meddle. . . has to. . . And the sight is so horrible that he can scarce look on it. The slaves in that room are mutilated, starved, bound down with chains. One of the creatures has a large hole in his head filled with worms. His body, from head to foot, is covered with scars. One woman, chained for so long and in such a twisted position that she cannot walk and never will—! Says *she* started the fire—to die, rather than to submit any longer to the beatings inflicted daily by the good Madame and her butler.

DELPHINE

Giles! There are thousands of them out there. You can hear them talk about me: "Why hasn't the she-beast been arrested?"

WILLY BEAU

(As Giles)

I've locked the gates and I've got the carriage ready.

DELPHINE

They'll break through! They'll break through! This time they'll hang me! Those slaves will talk! And not only about the beatings. They'll tell about you and me.

WILLY BEAU

Listen to me, Delphine! I'll get us through. The difference between me and them is my imagination and my audacity. But I can't go alone. I need someone like you to give me respectability. And you will. If I have to drag you by the hair, you will come with me.

(Willy Beau pulls her to him by the hair  
and kisses her. Then he holds her to him  
and they mime the following while

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS: *"AND ONTO THE CARRIAGE"*)

AND ONTO THE CARRIAGE  
AND UNLOCK THE GATE  
AND WAIT FOR THE MOB  
TO PUSH OPEN THE GATE.

AND THEN WHEN THEY DO  
AND ARE STUNNED FOR AWHILE,  
YOU HORSEWHIP THE HORSES  
AND FLY!

YES, YOU FLY THROUGH THE CROWD  
AND YOU LASH OUT  
AND HOPE THAT YOUR WHIP WILL DRAW BLOOD.

AND THAT RABBLE,  
SO STUNNED,  
WHEN THEY REALIZE YOU'VE SLIPPED BY;  
THEY RUSH IN THE HOUSE  
AND THEY RIP  
AND THEY BREAK  
AND THEY STOMP AND THEY SMASH  
AND THEY PULL DOWN A WALL

WILLY BEAU

(Continues SINGING)

AND THEY FIND IN THE SHEETS  
 THAT THE DOCTOR IS HIDING  
 AND THEY DRAG HIM OUT  
 AND THEY RIP  
 AND THEY BREAK  
 AND THEY STOMP AND THEY SMASH  
 AND THEY PULL HIM APART. . .

WHILE WE TWO  
 SAIL TO FRANCE  
 AND WE LIVE OUT OUR LIVES  
 IN A DANCE.

WILLY BEAU/DELPHINE

(Sing together)

AND THEY'RE DANCING, THESE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE.  
 GOD PARDONED THEM BOTH.  
 FOR THE MIGHTY WILL ALWAYS BE PARDONED,  
 IF THEY'RE CORRUPT ENOUGH,  
 AND CRUEL ENOUGH;  
 WITH GUTS ENOUGH  
 TO STAY OFF THE SIDELINES  
 AND JUMP ON THE DANCE FLOOR  
 AND STOMP ON THE SCURRYING ANTS. . .

WHILE WE TWO  
 SAIL TO FRANCE  
 AND WE LIVE OUT OUR LIVES  
 IN A DANCE.

(They dance wildly. They are exhilarated  
 and closer together now because they have  
 shared the overwhelming ecstasy of doing  
 evil and getting away with it)

ANDERSON

(Off. Over music and dancing)

William. We found some old blueprints of the Chateau Laveau. I know the way up there. Do you hear me, William! I know the way up into that secret room and I'm coming up. Do you understand, William? You and I are going to meet! William! . . .William! . . .

(But the dancers don't hear.  
Willy Beau and Delphine, lost in the  
swirl of each other and in the fantasy,  
keep dancing

wild. . .Wilder. . .WILDER. . .

and keep dancing even as the  
CURTAIN FALLS!

***END—ACT ONE***

## ACT 2

*The same. Not long  
after the close of  
Act 1.*

*Willy Beau and Delphine  
are still dancing wildly.  
Suddenly, a hissing sound  
is heard. Somewhere on the float  
a horse inflates to twice horse size.*

*Delphine screams.  
Willy Beau and Delphine stop dancing.  
Willy Beau gets his rifle.*

*A man's head  
breaks through the  
anus of the horse.*

DELPHINE

Willy Beau—it's Anderson!  
(Willy Beau and Delphine look on  
transfixed, somewhat in a state of  
shock through the following)

ANDERSON'S HEAD

So this is it! I'd always heard rumors about it, of course. *Kate Townsend's Fun-Hideaway Room*. Constructed by that famous lady, when she owned this building back in—nineteen one and five, I believe. Right! And there was a float that Kate used in the final *Whore's Parade* when the Navy closed down Storyville. This must be the very float. And—yes! On this float an obscene horse inflated. Yes! *Scandal!* Because the face of the Secretary of the Navy popped through. And all along the parade route, that rear Admiral's face was pelted with horse dung. Yes! This must be that very horse.

WILLY BEAU

*HOW DID YOU GET IN THERE?!*

ANDERSON

(Struggling to get out)  
*HOW THE HELL DO I KNOW?* I was crawling between the floorboards, following the old blueprint—!

WILLY BEAU

Blueprint?

ANDERSON

My hand touched a—I don't know—a chain—something—and whoosh!  
I was sucked up into the pneumatic colon of Old Stretch here!

WILLY BEAU

*WHAT BLUEPRINT?!* Wait a minute—there's something—  
(Detaches bayonet)  
Delphine! Here. Stab that horse!

ANDERSON

No! Wait! Please! Don't—

(Willy Beau holds gun on Anderson  
as Delphine stabs the horse. Hissssssssss!  
Horse deflates. Willy Beau moves in—  
drags Anderson out with free hand)

DELPHINE

Willy, there's no blueprint!

WILLY BEAU

Did you come up here alone?

ANDERSON

Yes!

WILLY BEAU

If there was a blueprint, someone else—others held it! That's why he  
kept talking, Delphine! —A diversion!

(Anderson grabs for Willy Beau's rifle.  
*Struggle!* Willy Beau reclaims the rifle)

DELPHINE

Willy! Look!

(A Mannequin falls over and a trap door under it  
begins to rise.

Willy Beau fires a shot in the  
direction of the opening trap door.  
The trap door slams shut again.

Willy Beau grabs Anderson, drags him over to the window,  
holding the rifle barrel under Anderson's chin)

WILLY BEAU

(In the glare of the floodlights; shouting  
down to the crowd)

GET THEM OUT OF HERE—WHOEVER THEY ARE—CRAWLING BETWEEN THE FLOORS! GET  
THEM OUT OR MAYOR ANDERSON GETS HURT! I'VE GOT HIM NOW! SEE?

ANDERSON

(Croaks it out)

*Do what he says! For God's sake!*

(Crowd reacts outside. Pause. Then,  
scurrying bodies are heard retreating under  
the floor boards.

Willy Beau pulls Anderson back into the room.  
Leaves him, shaking, where they can keep him  
in sight.

Willy Beau and Delphine place a heavy  
object over the trap door and look again for  
other entrances. Delphine holds the bayonet, which  
she will keep with her or always within reach  
from now on.)

ANDERSON

I *wanted* to come up alone. They insisted on trying that. But I knew it  
wouldn't work.

WILLY BEAU

(While still looking for additional entrances)

But if that "*Ambush Squad*" did happen to shoot me dead—so much the better—huh?

ANDERSON

Look at me—I'm shaking! I've never taken part in violence. I insisted  
they not hurt you. I swear! —And they're the last people in the world I wanted to come  
along with me!

DELPHINE

I'll just bet!

ANDERSON

Hel-lo! Ms Hostage, I presume. . . .Yes. You came to us—offered us a  
deal. You'd come up here to try to get William out. In return for  
something. . . —Ah, yes! Money! Did you know that, William?

DELPHINE

Liar! Willy, he's lying! You son-of-a-bitch!

ANDERSON

Careful, William. People willing to wheel-and-deal once, will wheel-and-deal again. That's been my experience.

DELPHINE

Willy, please! You know I could never—

WILLY BEAU

(To Anderson)

Even with that Ambush Squad backing you up, you took a risk coming up here. Why? —Wait a minute! Before. There was something I shouted down to you. Something—Yes! About a "*guarantee*." Couldn't afford for me to blurt out anything else. Right? Right. You had to come up here to find out how much I do know.

DELPHINE

Willy Beau knows plenty! Everything!

WILLY BEAU

I *don't* know! I mean—I *do* know—but can't remember. —But now, you're here, Mayor Anderson. You'll fill me in.

DELPHINE

Willy Beau, he's here to trick you! Us! Don't listen to anything he—

WILLY BEAU

Delphine! Shut up! I know what I want and don't want to hear!

(Holding his head)

That "*guarantee*," Mayor Anderson. What about that?

(Threatens Anderson with gun)

*WHAT ABOUT THAT?*

ANDERSON

ALL RIGHT!

(MUSIC: Intro to, "*WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN CLEAR?*")

It's only a matter of time before you remember everything. And that "everything" does involve me. And when you do finally remember and give yourself up--and you must, William, because that's the only way this can end--when you do give yourself up, you may *think* you can plea bargain your way out of things by spilling out "*everything*." So, perhaps, it's best that you know what that "*everything*" includes—*whom* else it includes. Guess "*whom*," William?

WILLY BEAU

My father. Goddamnit! Always that father!

ANDERSON

Yes. The great black Dean. About to be the first black Chancellor of the entire University system in this State! Your father!

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN CLEAR?

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN SHARP?

WHY CAN'T I GET TO BELIEVE THAT THIS DEAN IS MY FATHER?

ANDERSON

(Sprechgesang, as MUSIC continues under)

I'll bring him in clear for you.

I led him into a deal,

one that would benefit both of us,

give us the power we want.

He gets the University

to knock this building down.

I guarantee private business

will get this land.

I announce, I announce

a city-of-progress will be built--

a city-of-hope

for our agèd to live in and grow.

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN CLEAR?

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN SHARP?

ANDERSON

(Sprechgesang, as MUSIC continues under)

Then when sometime goes by--

when sometime goes by--

we'll discover we couldn't raise funds for that project

but could for something else--

a new Shopping Mall--a new Shopping Mall--

All the money we'd need for a Shopping Mall.

So we shook on it--

we shook hands on it.

ANDERSON

(Continued)

Your father got us the land from the University.  
And we cut him in--Mr. Upright and pure--  
to pull off a scheme that is the deal-of-all-deals  
in the annals of all dealing.

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

WHY CAN'T I GET TO BELIEVE THAT THIS DEAN IS MY FATHER?

ANDERSON/WILLY BEAU

(SING)

THANKS TO THE DEAN--  
THANKS TO THAT GOOD MAN,  
THAT FINE MAN,  
(YOUR) (MY) FATHER, THE DEAN

WILLY BEAU

Good man!—Fine Man!—FATHER!

(Grabs Anderson around the throat)

*Why do you need deals?* My God, you're a black man and you're going to be Chancellor!  
You've reached the top! Isn't that enough?

DELPHINE

Willy Beau! —That's not your father!

ANDERSON

William, I'm not your father!

(Willy Beau pulls back)

But use me—use me to remember. *WHAT DID YOUR FATHER SAY WHEN YOU GRABBED HIM  
BY THE THROAT?*

(Willy Beau stares hard at Anderson; slowly places his hands  
around the Mayor's throat again)

WILLY BEAU

He said. . .He said. . .

(Becomes his father. Releases Anderson)

"No! —It's not enough, son—to reach *'that'* top.  
That *'top'* is the top of a *'token'* heap they're allowing me to reach.  
Well, I want more than 'allow.' More than "*token,*" too.

*I WANT THE RIGHT TO BE AS CORRUPT  
AS ANY WHITE MAN IS!"*

ANDERSON

All because of a deal—

WILLY BEAU

"All because of this guaranteed deal!"

(As himself)

No! My father! We didn't have that scene. No! My father? Corrupt?

No! No! No!

(SINGS)

IT KEEPS EATING ME UP!

IT KEEPS WIPING ME OUT!

THE CONSTANT FRUSTRATION OF NEVER BEING ABLE TO SEE--

THE CONSTANT FRUSTRATION OF NEVER BEING ABLE TO KNOW!

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN SHARP?

WHY CAN'T I BRING HIM IN CLEAR?

*(End of Number)*

DELPHINE

Oh, Willy Beau.

ANDERSON

But it is clear. I've made it very clear now. Your father is in it right up to those distinguished gray sideburns of his!

(Pause)

WILLY BEAU

Is he out there? Now?

ANDERSON

No. After the shooting—in all that confusion—he disappeared. But we found him—finally. And do you know where we found him, William? At the University. In his office. Behind his great desk. Swiveled to the wall. He's ready to crack. Expose me and you expose him. But go out, give yourself up, confess what you did, take all the blame on yourself and that residue of sympathy that still exists for you—

DELPHINE

What "sympathy?" For a terrorist? Because to them, that's what Willy Beau is.

ANDERSON

Sympathy for trying to protect his father! We all saw that at the shooting!

WILLY BEAU

No! No shooting! —If I found out I did shoot someone—Christ! I couldn't live with that!

DELPHINE

Willy, please! Please let it go! It's his mouth! All because of his goddamned mouth! He's getting you all--funny! Please! Again! Once more! A fantasy. Not even a new one. The waltz! We never finished the waltz. Madame La Laurie and her lover Giles. C'mon Willy Beau—

ANDERSON

What fantasy? What new craziness are you—?

WILLY BEAU

Shut that goddamned mouth! She's right. Yes. Another fantasy. To decide—but not that one, Delphine. *No more corrupt ones!* —Now, how do I know that? —Yes. *Now* —a hero . . . pure. . . mon-u-men-tal!

(Takes off his butler jacket. Places jacket on a nearby Manikin. Starts looking around the room for the character he's going to use. He finds it.

SINGS:)

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE ONE-ARMED GIANT!

DELPHINE            WILLY BEAU  
(SING)

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

ANDERSON

Bras Coupè? The folk "hero?"

DELPHINE

Yes. A hero!

(Runs immediately to a Mannequin for her costume)

WILLY BEAU

And you'll play with us, Mayor Anderson.

ANDERSON

What?!

WILLY BEAU

You're in it. Somewhere. That guarantee. My father. You're in all that. Maybe that shooting, too--

ANDERSON

No!

WILLY BEAU

I've got to find out! Got to bring everything in clear. I need you to get it clear!

ANDERSON

Are you crazy! No! ! !

DELPHINE

(Putting costume on)

Yes!

ANDERSON

I don't play games! Not with crazy people! I will not allow myself to get into unreal situations--any situation where I'm not in control--absolute control of myself. And--oh--listen! . . .Yes! —they're trying to say something! Outside!

Delphine

(Still dressing)

No one's talking out there, Willy Beau.

ANDERSON

They must be. It stands to reason. They're not going to wait out your fantasies or--

WILLY BEAU

They'll wait forever. As long as you're here. Alive. Delphine, get me that jacket. . .Oh, yes, Mayor Anderson, you will play!

(Delphine hands Willy Beau a jacket she has just taken from a Mannequin. Willy Beau throws jacket to Anderson)

Here. Put this on.

ANDERSON

Think, William. Think.

(MUSIC: Intro to, "Despair")

If you waste time with this silly game, you and Ms Hostage here may float secure in a dream, but I'll stay anchored to the ground. So think, think. . .

ANDERSON

(Continued. SINGS)

YOU THINK I'M SCARED TO GO OFF ON YOUR JOURNEY;  
USING YOUR RULES, GETTING TRAPPED IN YOUR LAIR.  
BUT WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH YOU, YOU'LL DISCOVER--  
DESPAIR, DESPAIR.

YOU THINK BECAUSE YOU CAN PINPOINT CORRUPTION;  
YOU WILL TRANSCEND IT AND FIND WHAT IS FAIR.  
YOU THINK THAT CHOOSING A HERO WILL DO IT.  
YOU'LL FIND THAT *THAT* HERO IS DESPAIR.

DESPAIR! BECAUSE GOODNESS WON'T MEAN A DAMNED THING.  
BECAUSE EVIL IS ONE OF HIS FRIENDS.  
DESPAIR! WHEN YOU FIND OUT YOU'RE NOT BLAMELESS.  
DESPAIR! BECAUSE EVERYTHING ENDS.

YOU THINK THIS WOMAN WILL HELP YOU TO FIND IT.  
BECAUSE IN YOUR DREAMS YOU'RE A BEAUTIFUL PAIR.  
BUT WHEN I GET HER TO CUT OFF YOUR HAIR  
AND YOUR STRENGTH DISAPPEARS,  
ALL ALONE AND QUITE BARE,  
YOU'LL WAIL AND YOU'LL MOAN  
AN INDIFFERENT AIR.

THAT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD!  
THE WAY OF THE WORLD!  
THE WAAAAY OF THE WORLD. . .  
DESPAIR.

(END OF SONG)

DELPHINE

Betray Willy Beau? Here? Never.

ANDERSON

So think, William.

WILLY BEAU

And you'll try to get my gun again. I know that.

ANDERSON

If I can. To lead you out. Force you to do the inevitable.

WILLY BEAU

No. You want that gun to kill us.

ANDERSON

NO!

WILLY BEAU

Please! You could never take the chance of my "plea bargaining," as you put it! Forget it! You will not get this gun! And you will play! Until it's all clear, sharp! NOW--GET DRESSED!

(Pause. Then MUSIC. Intro to "SWAMP FEVER." Under)

The scene. . .What scene. . .Ah. . .yes. . .

(And while Willy Beau speaks, Anderson undresses. Neatly puts his street clothes on a nearby mannequin. Delphine also finishes dressing)

And the fog is a cloud on the ground. And the cloud cuts off your own feet. And soon the whole world is a fog. And soon the whole world is cut off. But then the fog lifts here and there; and you find you're not where you belong. And the things that loom up are so strange. . .And the things that loom up are so strange.

(MUSIC; Mood change. Under)

DELPHINE

(Speaks as if in a trance while Willy Beau takes off his clothes)

I saw a man come out of the fog and the slime of the swamp once. I, Delphine Squeer, wife of the wealthiest plantation owner who lives in the grandest plantation on the edge of the Bayou--I saw him in the midst of one of my fevers, burning up my head so hot that I needed the cool dampness of the live oaks; and I floated under the puffy curls of the hanging Spanish moss; and only stopped when I had stumbled into the swamp, and found the water so urine-warm that I cried and found my feet had stuck to the mud and I was being dragged down and I knew I was going to die.

(SINGS: "Swamp Fever")

SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.  
HALF-DROWNED TREES  
AND ALLIGATOR BIRDS. . .SWAMP FEVER.

THINGS THAT ENTWINE YOU,  
BUGS THAT WON'T DIE.  
GIANT SLUGS AND LEECHES  
THAT SUCK YOU DRY. . .  
SWAMP FEVER.

DELPHINE

(Continued. SINGS)

SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.  
 ALL NIGHT SCREECHES  
 AND BAT WINGS THAT FLAP.  
 SWAMP FEVER--SWAMP FEVER.

SOON YOU'LL SEE DRAGONS  
 THEN FROGS TEN-FEET TALL.  
 SOME SAY THEY'VE SEEN MEN  
 WALKING THROUGH IT ALL!

SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.

(MUSIC: Under. Speaks)

No, I didn't die. Because I saw this specter of a mountain-of-a-man splash out of the fog and slime and in my fever I fancied that he threw off snakes that wrapped themselves around him and bit into him and he'd swat bats and other flying things away; and I even fancied he kicked alligators aside with his bare feet. I cried for help--and fainted.

ANDERSON

(SINGS)

SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.  
 FRAGILE WIFE  
 IN A SAVAGE GIANTS' ARMS.  
 SWAMP FEVER.

(Speaks)

Yes, I took after my fragile Delphine with my slaves and my blood hounds and when I saw that--that huge, near-naked monstrosity carrying the body of my pale wife--when I saw him with one hand on her forehead--when I heard him chant that--that pagan, lascivious chant--I had my wife wrenched from his arms--and while twenty of my slaves held him down, I set my dogs on the arm that dared to touch the brow of my wife.

(Willy Beau mimes being held down  
 with one hand outstretched)

DELPHINE

No! Stop them! His magic cured my fever!

ANDERSON

Too late! The dogs chewed that arm right off!

(Delphine screams. Willy Beau places one  
 arm behind his back so that he appears to have only  
 one arm)

## DELPHINE

(Falls to her knees)

Oh, God! This giant Magic Man tried to save me and my husband set the dogs on his arm! He'll put a curse on me now! Make me barren! Oh, God, now I'll never have children! And my neighbors' wives will stop having children and maybe now a terrible disease will come to our crops and the crops of our neighbors who took part in this mutilation of the Magic Giant. Oh, God! Oh, God!

## ANDERSON

Now, now, my good friends--neighbors! You mustn't get frightened. Mustn't look at me that way with such fear and--what--anger?! You know me. I'm not a small man. No. I recognize my errors. And when I do, I make amends. Look! I'll show you! I will take this black giant on as a special servant. Mend him. Teach him to read. To shoot. Teach him morality; and he'll be a good man. And my worthy deed will negate any curse.

(MUSIC: Out)

(Drums. Slow. Distant at first)

## DELPHINE

And my husband keeps his promise. And I watch. And I get as close to that magnificent man as I can get. And he learns. And he grows more beautiful every day. And to all the rest, he is a good slave; a model slave.

(Drums. Faster. Closer. Louder)

But on Sundays he'd race up to Congo Square! And I'd follow him and would feel great pride in him when he'd get out of his civilized clothes and that mob of black flesh would part and watch in awe as he danced the Bamboula! And when he danced, it was an earthquake!

(Willy Beau dances The Bamboula)

Then. . .one day. . .a mean Massa found one of his run-away slaves in the crowd at Congo Square and proceeded to whip that slave on the spot.

(Drums and dancing, out)

## WILLY BEAU

Stop whipping that human man!

(Willy Beau grabs a nearby mannequin  
by the throat and chokes)

## DELPHINE

And with one iron hand, he choked the evil man to death.

(The mannequin's neck is crushed  
and Willy Beau throws the Mannequin to the floor)

DELPHINE

(Continued. Very grand, flinging the next into  
the teeth of Anderson)

AND BORN THAT DAY, WAS THE OUTLAW--BRAS COUPE!

(SONG: "Bras Coupè")

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

A ONE-ARMED GIANT KILLED A MAN.  
THEY CHASED HIM THROUGH THE BAYOU LAND.  
HE SUNK BACK TO THE SWAMP WHERE HE BEGAN.  
HE MOBILIZED THE GATORS AND THE SNAKES AND THE FROGS;  
THE SKEETERS AND THE SPIDERS AND THE RAZOR-BACK HOGS.  
AND WHEN THE TYRANTS SAW THEM,  
LORDY, HOW THEY RAN!

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE  
THE ONE-ARMED GIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
HE STAND DEFIANT.  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

(Dance)

ONCE HE SEES THEY CANNOT BLEED HIM,  
SINCE HE FOUND A SENSE OF FREEDOM;  
WHY, HE'LL FIGHT THE TYRANTS  
ANYWAY HE CAN.

AND HE FIGHTS (HOW HE FIGHTS!);  
AND HE FIGHTS (DOES HE FIGHT!);  
HE PURSUES THE EVIL TO ITS VERY DEN.  
WITH THE FURY OF AN ARMY,  
AND ARTILLERY TO SPARE,  
THEY THINK COUPE IS FIFTY THOUSAND MEN!

(MUSIC; Under)

ANDERSON

Impossible! This Bras Coupè must be stopped! Frees slaves! Steals food and money and gives it to the poor--even to the white poor! Gives his people hope! He's made all the slave buyers fearful to even set foot at the slave auctions. And, what is worse: He's taken on the aspect of a myth!

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE ONE-ARMED GIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
HE STAND DEFIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

WILLY BEAU/DELPHINE

(SING)

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE ONE-ARMED GIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

WILLY BEAU

(SINGS)

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
HE STAND DEFIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

WILLY BEAU/DELPHINE/ANDERSON

(SING)

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE ONE-ARMED GIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
HE STAND DEFIANT!  
BRAS COUPE, BRAS COUPE,  
THE GIANT MAN!

BRAS COUPE!

(END OF SONG)

ANDERSON

Delphine. Delphine! They are saying that bullets won't stop Bras Coupè. Then *you* must. You are a loyal wife, Delphine. I command you to be Delilah to this black Samson.

(MUSIC; In and under)

DELPHINE

Bras Coupè. I am supposed to seduce you, then betray you. I will seduce you; but I will not betray you. I will join you in the Bayou. Then I will make love to you.

(She SINGS)

SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.  
I WAS HIS,  
NOW MAKING LOVE TO YOU HAS FREED ME.

DELPHINE

(continues SINGING)

LORD WHEN YOU TOUCH ME,  
SO GENTLE, SO TENDER.  
I FORGET THE NIGHTMARES  
AND I WILLINGLY SURRENDER TO YOUR LOVE.

(Willy Beau and Delphine move into  
a sensuous, love-making dance)

ANDERSON

My Delphine has betrayed me. They say. She has joined Bras Coupè. They say. Is now the black man's lover. They say. . . . They say that the snakes and alligators got together and arranged themselves as springs under a mattress of dazzling giant water lilies. And that when Delphine and Bras Coupè made love on it, the lilies, they say, undulated to the Lover's rhythm. They also say that giant cranes and other brilliant birds stood by, looking away discreetly, and slowly moved their wings, to create the softest of breezes. And all was still.

DELPHINE

(SINGS)

SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.  
TELL ME THERE'S NO NEED TO BE AFRAID,  
SWAMP FEVER, SWAMP FEVER--  
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER?  
YOU KNOW WHAT TO SAY.  
IF YOU REALLY HEAR ME—DON'T TURN AND MOVE AWAY!  
SWAMP FEVER. SWAMP FEVER.  
SWAMP FEVER.

WILLY BEAU

What moved? What is it that moved out there in the blackness?

DELPHINE

Nothing. I see nothing.

ANDERSON

Yes. They are saying now that Bras Coupè grows jumpy!

WILLY BEAU

Enemies! Out there! Closing in! I know it!

DELPHINE

Just the Bayou animals. That's all, Bras Coupè.

WILLY BEAU

And I know there are enemies in my own camp. My own people--

ANDERSON

Yes. Yes! They say his rivals are beginning to act against him.

(Pushes mannequin with the Giles butler jacket on it toward Bras Coupè.  
The mannequin, on casters, rolls.  
Delphine screams! Bras Coupè crushes the mannequin's chest with the butt of his rifle)

WILLY BEAU

(Hugging Delphine ferociously)

See! See! I am not a myth! Just a man! An outlaw man at that! So I must run! From your husband! Yet, I can never feel secure within my own camp! Within me! But keep on running anyway. Keep running deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper into the Bayou. . .

(Releases Delphine)

But even the Bayou has to end. Everything ends.

ANDERSON

(As he moves the Buddy Bolden and Little Beau mannequins closer to Delphine and Willy Beau)

His enemies within now are on my side. And they put pressure on my wife. Whenever they get a chance, get close to her, they say:

(Behind the manikins. Stage whisper.)

Delphine! Do you really believe that "everything ends" nonsense? —No!

A man turns away from a woman because he's lost interest in her. Simple. Uncomplicated.

And you are uncomplicated, Delphine. You are losing him. To whom? I'll make a guess.

Those bouncing black ladies—those rebel gypsies, joining Bras Coupè everyday. Where are they, Delphine? Not visible. No. But they are out there. Bivouacking close by in the swamp.

Waiting for him. . .That mist? That's the collective passion-breaths from juicy black hero worshippers. . .Listen, Delphine!—

—That swamp bird! Or is it a bird? —A signal? From the

Poontang bird? calling Bras Coupè to its water lily arms? --Yes, that's what it is. --See? He's

ANDERSON

(Continued)

going. —Disappearing into the mist. —His own kind. . . .You've lost him and you know it. And you can't bare his being with others. *So what must you do?*

DELPHINE

(Wails)

Hounds! Hounds! Bring the hounds here!

WILLY BEAU

No! Delphine!

DELPHINE

He's here! Bras Coupè is here!

ANDERSON

There! That's the hero! Chain him! Then put those weights on him and drown him in the swamp!

(Silence)

DELPHINE

I betrayed him. I did betray him.

(To Anderson)

You! You even corrupted out fantasies.

ANDERSON

You betrayed him, Delphine. Not I. You corrupted your own fantasies. See? There's no hiding place from hateful things. And you, Willy. . .you've reached your despair. But you can ease it for yourself. By allowing me to lead you out. By your giving yourself up. By your admitting and taking the entire blame for killing a man. Then, if you feel out of some principle that you must expose your father and bring him down--so be it. And if you feel you must expose me. . .then so be that. Because I am tired, William. Because you're right, William. Everything does end. Wheeling and dealing ends. Ambition ends. The whole thing ends. But if you let me lead you out—and if we tell all—if we tell them we're all through with all this—why, then, maybe something will eventually begin for all of us. So give me that gun, William. Let me lead you out. That will show them you mean no harm. That will show them you're ready—we're ready—to begin.

WILLY BEAU

Yes. Yes.

(SINGS; *"Everything Ends."*)

EVERYTHING ENDS.  
I SEE THAT NOW.  
EVEN THE SUN, THEY SAY,  
WILL BURN OUT,  
JUST GIVE IT TIME.

EVERYTHING ENDS.  
I SEE THE LIE.  
I SEE THAT WATER LILIES DAZZLE,  
THEN LOSE THEIR BOUQUET  
THEN WILT AND THEN DRY.

EVERYTHING GLOWS, EVERYTHING FADES.  
EVERYTHING FLOATS THEN DOWN IT CASCADES.  
EVERYTHING LOVES. EVERYTHING HATES.  
EVERYTHING MOVES THEN EVERYTHING WAITS.

I TELL YOU--  
EVERYONE STARTS!  
AND FIGHTS LIKE HELL FOR THE TOP!  
NEVER CONTENT THAT HE'S GOT TO WELCOME  
WHAT FORTUNE SENDS!  
EVERYTHING GRABS AT LIFE! ! !  
--THEN EVERYTHING ENDS.

(In a daze, Willy Beau moves toward Anderson.  
Ready to give him the gun)

DELPHINE

No!

(She takes the gun away from the dazed Willy Beau)  
Make me betray Bras Coupé, huh!

ANDERSON

William, she's crazy. She'll do it! Stop her! If she kills me the wrecking ball kills you both.

DELPHINE

Good. Then Willy Beau and I will be together. Forever.

ANDERSON

(Thinking fast. to Willy Beau)

But then, William, you'll never know--for sure--if you really killed that black man! You said you wanted to know, you needed to know--

WILLY BEAU

(Breaking from the paralysis and moving  
in front of Delphine and the gun)

Yes. Yes. Delphine, I do need to know that.

ANDERSON

And I'll help you to find out. To dig!

DELPHINE

You! Do you know anything? A corrupt liar!

ANDERSON

I was there!

(Drum and percussion in  
and build under)

Where they honored your father, William: That's where to begin. . .a large crowd on folding chairs in Beauregard Square. . .magnolia trees and ladies in big floppy hats. . .men in double knits. . .a neat, neat crowd. . .and on the platform are all us servants of the people. . .the governor, the senator, and me. . .and, of course, the man of the hour--the next chancellor--

WILLY BEAU

My father.

ANDERSON

Who I'm lauding to the sky. . ."selfless servant". . ."pride of his race". . .and standing at attention behind him. . .a company of ROTC.

WILLY BEAU

I'm with them. . .no matter what I know about the "deal," he forces me to honor him. Forces me to stand at attention. And when the time comes we will shoot our rounds to glorify the dean--the next chancellor.

(Marching drums)

And then they come marching in. A hundred at a time spill out to join the crowd.

(SINGS)

MARCHING TO THE SQUARE.

MARCHING IN, ADVANCING LIKE AN ARMY.

WILLY BEAU

(Contained. SINGS))  
 HUNDREDS OF OLD PEOPLE  
 MARCHING, MARCHING  
 EVERYWHERE,  
 YOU CAN HEAR THE BEAT;  
 THE MARCHING FEET OF OLD PEOPLE IN THE SQUARE.

AND THEY COME, AND THEY COME,  
 EVERYONE IS MARCHING!  
 CHRIST, HOW THEY COME!  
 MILITARY MARCHING!  
 MY BLOOD IS RUNNING COLD!  
 'CAUSE EVERYONE IS OLD.

ANDERSON

Then a spokesman from that old crowd steps out.

WILLY BEAU

Boney old man. . .lanky old man. . .funky old man. . .LEROY!. . .Sweet LEROY, the piano  
 "Professor" from the Chateau Laveau.  
 . . ."You ain't honest. . .It's all a lie. . .there ain't ever gonna be a Senior City for us old folks.  
 . . .We knows about it; oh, yeah! How we'll be flim-flammed, thas right!. . .So we ain't leavin';  
 us old folks are stayin' right here. And we ain't gonna mess aroun' with no committees,  
 uh,uh!. . .So you can go on with your speeches 'til you promise. We ain't movin' 'till then, no  
 Siree!. . .And don't mind us. We gonna take oursev's a bite or two or three. . .Ain't much.  
 But you see, your honors, it's all we can afford.

ANDERSON

And what's that stuff they take out, William?

WILLY BEAU

Dog food! They carry cans of dog food. Begin to eat from them--ugh! They eat! They eat  
 the stuff! Christ, can't somebody give an order to dismiss us? I've got to throw up!--  
 Another cue from Leroy. . .He climbs onto the platform and offers everybody there the dog  
 food. . .The thing gets ugly. . .The dean--the father--the chancellor-to-be screams, "Get  
 that man off! Get that crazy man off!" . . .Gutsy Leroy shoves the turd chunks right smack  
 in my father's face!. . .What cajones Leroy's got! He won't take no crap! And then I hear it!  
 Drums beginning in my head. Yes! Leroy's guts set off the drums from. . .from. . .Congo  
 Square! They're getting louder. I want to jump out of my head! I want to dance! And in my  
 head I do!

WILLY BEAU

(Continued. While dancing)

My father is pleading with his eyes: "Do something, son. My life's in danger! You've got to save me!" And someone orders "shoot!" And yes--YES! It is you--the mayor--Anderson--who orders us to shoot! I see that now.

DELPHINE

Willy Beau! If Anderson gave the order, then maybe he shot Leroy.

ANDERSON

I didn't, William. I didn't. Keep digging.

WILLY BEAU

And I aim. But the dancing jogs my aim and I think I'm going to shoot my father, so I dance my aim away from him and instead I--I--

ANDERSON

What do you do, William? WHAT DO YOU DO?

WILLY BEAU

I shoot Leroy!

(Drums out)

(Beat)

I shot Leroy.

DELPHINE

(Pity. Off guard, she lowers the gun;  
moves to Willy Beau)

Oh, Willy Beau.

(ANDERSON grabs for the gun. Struggle.  
Delphine pulls gun away and shoots him.  
Anderson falls against window; dead)

(Beat)

DELPHINE

(Goes to window. Shouts out)

Mayor Anderson is dead! See?! And I'm not a hostage! And if you come after us we'll shoot out! So do whatever you have to do with that damn wrecking ball! We're not leaving here! Willy Beau and I have found our joy! Here! And we will be together! Here! Forever!

DELPHINE

(Continued. To Willy Beau)

Won't we, Willy? Won't we be together? . . . Forever?

(Beat)

(Willy Beau reaches out for Delphine.)

MUSIC: Waltz. "And She Dances."

Delphine takes Willy Beau's hand.  
They hold each other.  
They waltz.

The wrecking ball hits. . .  
it hits again. . .  
and again. . .  
and again. . .

and the whole world begins to collapse  
around them.

But Willy Beau  
and his Delphine  
keep waltzing,

waltzing,

waltzing. . .

*CURTAIN*

