

BY MOUTH | Martin Garrison, Producer
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ROLE: **JOE**

JOE: A black man in his 50's who dreams of re-opening his colored gambling house. The other men amiably call him "white" and while he accepts this sometimes, he becomes enraged when Hickey's preaching causes some of the gang to hurl racial epithets at him. His dream is to open a gambling house catering only to black patrons.

3 takes + pickups = \$375.

IMPORTANT: Looking for ACTIVE, natural, well-paced reads rather than SLOW, self-indulgent "actor-y" ones.

Be mindful of UNDERSCORING for emphasis-- and THROW AWAY non-emphasized words (please no reads emphasising every word).

Don't let the above make you rush or act stilted--simply keep it in mind.

For those who want an edge (casting process will be slow), read the entire SCRIPT before auditioning.

PLEASE READ JOE LINES 629-657

JOE LINES BEGIN ON NEXT PAGE

BESS HOPE: I'm wise to ya. Bejeez, you're a burglar not a barkeep. Laughin' behind my back, tellin' people you throw money up in the air and whatever sticks to the ceilin' is my share! A fine crook you are--you'd steal the pennies off your dead mother's eyes!

ROCKY: Aw, Boss...

BESS HOPE [more drowsily]: I'll fire ya, bejeez, if you think you can play me for an easy mark. No one ever played Bess Hope for a sucker!

ROCKY [aside to Larry]: No one but everybody.

BESS HOPE [eyes shut again--muttered]: Least you could do is keep things quiet--

NARRATOR: Soon, Bess is asleep again.

WILLIE [pleading]: Give me a drink, Rocky--Bess said it was all right.

ROCKY: Den grab it--it's right under your nose.

NARRATOR: With twitching hands, Willie takes the bottle, tilts it to his lips and gulps down the whiskey.

ROCKY [sharply]: When--when! [grabs bottle] I didn't say take a bath!

LARRY: Leave him be, poor devil. A half pint in one swig will fix him for a while--if it doesn't kill him.

ROCKY: Aw right--it ain't my booze.

JOE: Whose booze--gimme some. Where's Hickey? What time's it, Rocky?

ROCKY: Time you begun to sweep up de bar.

JOE: I was dreamin' Hickey come in, crackin' one of his drummer's jokes, wavin' a big bankroll and we was all goin' be drunk for two weeks. [Suddenly his eyes go wide.] Wait a minute--I got an idea--say, Larry, how 'bout dat young guy came to look you up last night and rented a room? Where's he at?

LARRY: In his room--asleep. Anyway, he's broke.

JOE: Dat what he told ya? Me and Rocky knows different. Had a roll--didn't he--when he paid his room rent--I seen it.

ROCKY: Yeah, he flashed it like he forgot and den tried to hide it quick.

LARRY: Huh...

ROCKY: I figgered he don't belong, but he said he was a friend of yours.

LARRY: He's a liar--I wouldn'ta known him if he hadn't told me who he was. His mother and I were friends years ago. [Hesitates--then lowers voice] You've read in the papers about that bombing on the Coast where several people got killed? Well, the one woman they pinched, Rosa Parritt, is his mother. They'll be coming up for trial soon, and they have no chance--she'll get life, I'm sure. I'm telling you this so you'll know why the boy acts a bit strange, and not jump on him. He must be hit hard--he's her only kid.

ROCKY [nods--then thoughtfully]: So why ain't he out dere stickin' by her?

LARRY [frowns]: Maybe there's a good reason.

ROCKY [after a pause, understandingly]: Sure, I get it. [then wonderingly] But, den what kind of sap is he to hang on to his right name?

LARRY [irritably]: I'm tellin' ya I don't know anything and I don't want to know. To hell with the Movement and everybody connected to it!

JOE: If dere's one ting more'n annuder I cares nuttin' about, it's the Movement. [chuckles--reminiscently] Reminds me of an ahgument me and a guy has the udder night. He's drunk and I'm drunker. He says, "Socialist and Anarchist, we ought to shoot dem dead." I says, "Hold on, you talk 's if Anarchists and Socialists was de same." "Dey is," he says. "Dey's both no-good bastards." "No, dey ain't," I says. "De Anarchist drinks but never buys, and if he do get a nickel, he blows it on bombs, and wouldn't give you nothin'. But de Socialist, if he gets ten bucks, he's bound by his religion to split it wid ya fifty-fifty." So don't shoot no Socialists while I'm around. Of course, if dey's broke, den dey's no-good bastards, too.

LARRY: By God, Joe, you've got all the beauty of human nature and the practical wisdom of the world in that one story.

233 ROCKY: Larry ain't de on'y wise guy in dis dump, hey,
234 Joe?

235 [Sound of footsteps]

236 NARRATOR: Rocky turns as Parritt appears from the hall.
237 Glancing around defensively, Parritt sees Larry then
238 comes forward.

239 PARRITT: Hello, Larry.

240 NARRATOR: He nods to Rocky and Joe.

241 PARRITT: Hello.

242 LARRY [without cordiality]: What's up?

243 PARRITT: Couldn't sleep. Thought I might as well see if
244 you were around.

245 LARRY [not friendly]: Sit down and join the bums then.

246 [Parritt sits]

247 PARRITT: I get you--but, hell, I'm just about broke.
248 [Brief pause] Oh, I know you guys saw-- You think I got
249 a roll--well, you're wrong, I'll show ya. [Takes out
250 small wad of dollar bills] It's all ones--and I've got
251 to live on it till I get a job. [Then defensively]
252 You think I fixed up a phony, don't you? Why the hell
253 would I? You don't get rich doing what I've been doing.
254 Ask Larry--you're lucky in the Movement if you have
255 enough to eat.

256 ROCKY: What's de song and dance about--we ain't said
257 nuttin'.

258 PARRITT: Just don't want you to think I'm a tight-wad--
259 I'll buy a drink if you want one.

260 JOE: If? When I don't want a drink, you call de morgue,
261 tell dem come take Joe's body away, 'cause he's sure
262 enuf dead. Gimme de bottle quick, Rocky, before he
263 changes his mind!

264 NARRATOR: Rocky passes him a bottle and glass. Pouring a
265 brimful drink, Joe tosses it down and passes the bottle
266 and glass to Larry.

267 ROCKY: What're you having?

268 PARRITT: Nothing--I'm on the wagon. What's the damage?

269 ROCKY: Fifteen cents.

270 [Makes change from pocket.]

271 PARRITT: Must be some booze!

272 LARRY: It's cyanide cut with carbolic acid to give it a
273 mellow flavor. To luck!

274 NARRATOR: While Larry drinks, Rocky squeezes through the
275 tables and disappears behind the curtain.

276 JOE: Well, dat well run dry. No hope til Bess's birthday
277 party. 'Less Hickey shows up. [to Larry] If Hickey comes
278 Larry, you wake me up if you has to bat me wid a chair.

279 NARRATOR: Joe settles himself and goes back to sleep.

280 PARRITT: Who's Hickey?

281 LARRY: A hardware drummer. Old friend of Bess and the
282 gang. Comes here twice a year on a periodical and blows
283 all his money.

284 PARRITT: Must be hard up for a place to hang out.

285 LARRY: It has it's pluses for him. He never runs into
286 anyone he knows in his business here.

287 PARRITT: Yeah, that's what I want, too--like I told ya
288 last night.

289 LARRY: You did a lot of hinting--you didn't tell me
290 anything.

291 PARRITT: You can't guess? [changing subject abruptly]
292 I've been in some dumps on the Coast but this takes the
293 cake. What kind of joint is this, anyway?

294 LARRY: Why, it's the No Chance Saloon. The Bedrock Bar,
295 The End of the Line Cafe. Don't you notice the beautiful
296 calm of the atmosphere? That's because it's the last
297 harbor--nobody here has to worry about where they're
298 going next, because there's no farther they can go.
299 No, you couldn't find a better place for lyin' low.

300 PARRITT: I'm glad, Larry--I ain't been feelin too good--
301 that business on the Coast--it knocked me off base, and
302 since then it's been no fun dodgin' around the coutry,
303 thinking every guy I see might be a cop.

304 LARRY: Well, you're safe here--the cops ignore this
305 dump--they think it's as harmless as a graveyard--
306 and, by God, they're right.

Enough to wake the dead, Till he heard a damsel [rap, rap, rap], On a window right over his head."

BESS HOPE [with fuming irritation]: Bejeez Rocky--can't you keep that crazy bastard quiet?

WILLIE: "Oh, come up," she cried, "my sailor lad, And you and I'll agree, And I'll show ya the prettiest [rap, rap, rap], That ever you did see."

NARRATOR: Rocky shakes Willie by the shoulder roughly.

ROCKY: What d'yuh tink dis dump is, a dump?

BESS HOPE: Go on--lock him in his room!

ROCKY: Come on, Bum!

WILLIE: No, please, Rocky--I'll go crazy up in that room alone! Please, Bess--let me stay--I'll be quiet!

BESS HOPE [immediately relents--indignantly]: What the hell you doing to him, Rocky? I didn't tell you to beat up the poor guy--leave him alone, long as he's quiet.

WILLIE: Thanks, Bess--you are an esteemed lady.

BESS HOPE [to Ed & Mac]: Leave it to that Dago to keep order and it's like bedlam in a cathouse. [brief pause] And you two barflies are a hell of a help to me, ain't ya? Eat and sleep and get drunk--all you're good for, bejeez! Well, you can take that "I'll-have-the-same" look off your mugs--there ain't gonna to be no more drinks on the house til hell freezes over!

MAC [winking at each other]: Sure, Bess.

ED: That's right.

BESS HOPE: Yeah, grin--wink, bejeez! Fine pair of slobs to have glued on me for life!

THE CAPTAIN: Have I been drinking at the same table with a bloody Kaffir?

JOE [grinning] Hello, Captain--you comin' up for air? Kaffir--who's he?

THE GENERAL: Dot's a nigga, Joe--dot's joke on him. He's still plind drunk, the bloody Limey chentlemen! A great mistake I missed him at the pattle of Modder River. Vit mine rifle I shoot damn fool Limey officers py da

592 dozen, but him I miss. [chuckles] Hey, wake up,
593 you ploody fool--don't you know your old friend, Joe?
594 He's no damned Kaffir--he's white, Joe is!

595 THE CAPTAIN [light dawning--contritely]: My profound
596 apologies, Joseph, old chum. Eyesight a trifle blurry,
597 I'm afraid. Proud to call you my friend--no hard
598 feelings, eh?

599 JOE: I know it's a mistake--youse regular, if you is a
600 Limey. [face hardening] But I don't stand "niggah" from
601 nobody. In de old days, people calls me "niggah" wakes
602 up in de hospital. Us gang of colored boys was tough--
603 and I was de toughest.

604 THE GENERAL [inspired to boastful reminiscence]:
605 Me, I was so tough and strong I grab axle of wagon mit
606 full load and lift like feather.

607 THE CAPTAIN: You, my balmy Boer, we should have taken to
608 the zoo and incarcerated in the baboon's cage.

609 THE GENERAL: To tink, ten better Limey officers, at
610 least, I shoot clean in mittle of forehead and you
611 I miss. I neffer forgive myself!

612 JIMMY [sentimentally]: Come, now, gentleman--Boer and
613 Briton, each fought fairly and played the game until the
614 better man won and then we shook hands. We are all
615 brothers within the Empire upon which the sun never
616 sets. [quoting with great sentiment] "Ship me somewhere
617 east of Suez--"

618 LARRY: By God, you're there already, Jimmy--worst is
619 best, and East is West, and tomorrow is yesterday--
620 what more do you want?

621 JIMMY: You can't deceive me, Larry, old friend.
622 You pretend to be a cynic but in your heart you are the
623 kindest man amongst us.

624 LARRY: The hell I am!

625 JIMMY: Tomorrow, yes--it's high time I straightened out
626 and got down to business again. [brushes his sleeve
627 fastidiously] I must have this suit cleaned and pressed.
628 I can't look like a tramp when I--

629 JOE: Yeah, in de days I was flush, Joe's de only colored
630 man dey allows in de white gamblin' houses. "You're all
631 right, Joe, you're white," dey says. [chuckling] De big

Chief in dem days--he knew I was white. I'd saved my dough so I could start my own gamblin' joint. Folks in de know tells me: you git Bess give you a letter to de Chief. And Bess does--don't you, Bess?

BESS HOPE [preoccupied with her own thoughts] Eh? Sure. Big Bill was a good friend of mine. I had plenty of friends high up in those days. Still could have if I wanted to go out and see 'em. Sure, I gave ya a letter--what the hell of it?

JOE: I went to de Chief, see, shakin' in my boots, and dere he is sittin' behind a big desk, looking as big as a freight train. He don't look up--keeps me waitin' and waitin'. Den after 'bout an hour, seems to me, he says slow and quiet-like "You want to open a gamblin' joint, does you, Joe?" But he don't give me no time to answer. He pounds his fist like a ham on de desk and he shouts, "You black son of a bitch--Bess says you're white and you better be white or dere's a little room up de river waitin' for ya!" Den he sits down and says quiet again, "All right--you can open. Now git the hell outa here!" [chuckles with pride] Dem old days! Many's de night I come in here. Dis was a first-class hangout in dem days. Good whiskey, fifteen cents--two for two bits. I t'rows down a fifty-dolla bill like it was trash paper and says "Drink it up, boys, I don't want no change." Ain't dat right, Bess?

BESS HOPE [caustically]: Yes, and bejeez, if I ever seen you throw fifty cents on the bar now, I'd know I was delirious! You've told that story ten million times and if I have to hear it again, it'll give me the DT's for certain!

THE CAPTAIN: Thank you, Bess, my dear, I will have that drink, now you mention it, seeing it's so near your birthday.

JOE/THE GENERAL/JIMMY TOMORROW [laugh]:

BESS HOPE [puts hand to ear--angrily]: What's that--I can't hear you.

THE CAPTAIN: I fancied you wouldn't.

BESS HOPE: I don't have to hear, bejeez! Booze is the only thing you ever talk about.

MAC: Why it's the prime of life--

ED: And the wonderful thing about you, Bess, you keep young as you ever was.

JIMMY: Get my things from my laundry--they must still have them. Clean collar and shirt--socks, too--I want to make a good appearance. I met Dick Trumbull on the street a year or two ago--he said, "Jimmy, the publicity department's never been the same since you got--resigned. It's dead as hell." I said, "I know--I've heard management is at their wit's end and would only be too glad to have me run it again for them." He said, "Sure, they would, Jimmy--only take my advice and wait a while until business conditions are better--then you can strike 'em for a bigger salary than you got before, don't you see?" I said, "Yes, I do see, Dick, and many thanks for the tip." Well, conditions must be better by this time--all I have to do is get fixed up with a decent front tomorrow, and it's as good as done.

BESS HOPE: Poor Jimmy's off in the land of tomorrow again. Bejeez, he takes the cake!

LARRY [guffaws sardonically]:

THE CAPTAIN: I'm sorry, General, we had to postpone our trip again this year. We'll make it next year, even if we have to work and earn our passage money, eh? England in April! I want you to see that.

THE GENERAL: And I vil enjoy it, Captain. But de veldt! Py Gott, dere is space to be free, the air like vine is, you need no booze to be drunk! My relations vill so surprised be. Dey vil not know me, it is so many years. Dey vil be so glad I haf come home at last.

JOE: I'll make my stake and get my new gamblin' joint open before you boys leave. You got to come to the openin'. If you're broke, I'll stake you to any game you chooses. If you wins, dat's velvet for ya. If you loses, it don't count.

BESS HOPE: Jimmy's got them smoking the same hop.

NARRATOR: But soon the three are asleep again.

LARRY: By God, this bughouse will drive me stark, raving loony!

BESS HOPE: What? What d'you say?

1098 ROCKY: Dat's what we was wonderin'.

1099 CORA: He ought to be here--me and Chuck seen him.

1100 ROCKY [excited]: You seen Hickey? [nudges Bess]
1101 Hey, Boss, come to--Cora's seen Hickey.

1102 NARRATOR: Bess is instantly awake and everyone--except
1103 Hugo and Parritt--begins to rouse hopefully.

1104 BESS HOPE: Where'd you see him, Cora?

1105 CORA: On de next corner--he was standin' dere. I kidded
1106 him, "How's de iceman, Hickey--how's he doing at your
1107 house?" He laughs and says, "Fine." And he says, "Tell
1108 de gang I'll be along in a minute--I'm just figurin' out
1109 de best way to save dem and bring dem pease."

1110 BESS HOPE [chuckles]: Bejeez he's thought up a new gag!
1111 It's a wonder he didn't borrow a Salvation Army uniform
1112 and show up in that! Go out and get him, Rocky--tell him
1113 we're waitin' to be saved!

1114 NARRATOR: Rocky goes out, grinning.

1115 CORA: Yeah, Bess, he was only kiddin'--but he
1116 was...different somehow.

1117 CHUCK: Sure, he was sober, Baby--we ain't never seen him
1118 when he wasn't on a drunk.

1119 CORA [uncertain] Sure. Gee, ain't I dumb?

1120 BESS HOPE: Sober? That's funny--he's always lapped up a
1121 good starter on his way here. Well, bejeez, he won't be
1122 sober long--he'll be good and ripe for my birthday party
1123 tonight at twelve. [chuckles with anticipation; to all]
1124 Listen--he's fixed some new gag to pull on us--we'll
1125 pretend to let him kid us, see--and we'll kid the pants
1126 off him.

1127 ED: Sure, Bess!

1128 MAC: Righto!

1129 JOE: Dat's de stuff!

1130 JIMMY: We'll fix him!

1131 THE CAPTAIN: You bet your life!

1132 THE GENERAL: O' course!

NARRATOR: Rocky appears in the rear doorway, his arm around Hickey.

ROCKY: Here's the old son of a gun!

NARRATOR: They all stand and greet him.

JIMMY: Hello, Hickey!

ED: If it ain't...

JOE: It sho is.

MAC: Hickey!

WILLIE: My boy!

THE CAPTAIN: How goes it old chum?

THE GENERAL: Velcome, Hickey.

NARRATOR: Even Hugo raises his head and blinks through his glasses.

HICKEY [jovially]: Hello, Gang! [He immediately puts on on entrance act.] "It's always fair weather, when good fellas get together!" [changing to bass and another tune] "And another little drink won't do us any harm!" [The gang cheers.]

NARRATOR: Rocky grins and goes to get drinks. Hickey comes forward and doffs his cap affectionately to Bess.

HICKEY [smiling]: Hickey, at your service, fine lady.

BESS HOPE [blushing]: Bejeez Hickey, you old bastard, it's good to see you!

NARRATOR: As Hickey shakes hands with the gang, Rocky sets out whiskey glasses and a bottle on every table.

BESS HOPE: Sit down, Hickey--sit down.

[Hickey sits.]

BESS HOPE: Bejeez Hickey, it seems natural as rain to see your grinnin' mug. This dumb broad here was tryin' to tell us you'd changed, but you ain't changed a bit. How you been doin'? Bejeez you look like a million bucks.

ROCKY: Here's your key, Hickey--same old room.

1166 HICKEY: Thanks, Rocky--I'm going up in a little while to
1167 grab a snooze--haven't been able to sleep lately an' I'm
1168 tired as hell--a couple of hours will fix me.

1169 BESS HOPE: First time I ever heard you worry about
1170 sleep. Bejeez, you never would go to bed (cackles
1171 suggestively) Get a few slugs in ya and you'll forget
1172 sleepin'. Here's mud in your eye, Hickey.

1173 WILLIE: To Hickey!

1174 ED: Hickey!

1175 JOE: To you, suh!

1176 MAC: Bottoms up!

1177 JIMMY: To your health!

1178 THE CAPTAIN: Cheers!

1179 THE GENERAL: Vat's right!

1180 HICKEY: Drink hearty, boys and girls!

1181 NARRATOR: All drink but Hickey.

1182 BESS HOPE: Bejeez is that a new stunt, not drinkin'?

1183 HICKEY: No, I forgot to tell Rocky--you'll have to
1184 excuse me, boys and girls, but I'm off the stuff.
1185 For keeps.

1186 BESS HOPE: What the hell-- [then choosing to play along]
1187 Sure! Joined the Salvation Army, did ya? Take that
1188 bottle away from him, Rocky--we wouldn't want to tempt
1189 him into sin. [chuckles]

1190 [The gang laughs.]

1191 HICKEY: No, honest, Bess, I know it's hard to believe
1192 but--[pauses then simply] Cora was right--I've changed.
1193 I mean, about booze. I don't need it anymore.

1194 NARRATOR: They all stare a bit uneasily.

1195 BESS HOPE [her kidding's a bit forced]: Yeah, go ahead,
1196 kid the pants off us, bejeez! Cora said you was coming
1197 to save us--well, go on--start the service--sing a
1198 God-damned hymn if you like--we'll all join in the
1199 chorus.

1200 HICKEY [grinning]: Oh, hell--you don't think I'd come
1201 around here peddling some brand of temperance bunk,

ROCKY [preoccupied]: I know what's goin' to happen if he don't watch his step. I told him, "I'll take a lot from you, Hickey, like everyone else in dis dump, because yuh've always been a standup guy. But dere's tings I don't take from nobody, see? Remember dat, or you'll wake up in a hospital--or maybe worse, wid your wife and de iceman walkin' slow behind yuh."

CORA [excitedly]: D'yuh suppose dat he did catch his wife cheatin'? I don't mean wid no iceman, but wid some guy.

ROCKY: Naw dat's bunk--he ain't pulled dat gag or showed her photo 'round cuz he ain't drunk. And if he'd caught her cheatin' he'd be drunk, wouldn't he? He'd a beat her up and den gone on de woist drunk he'd evah pulled--like any other guy'd do.

CHUCK: Dat's right--he'd be paralyzed.

NARRATOR: Joe enters from the hall. There's a noticeable change in him--he walks with a tough, truculent swagger and his good-natured face is set in sullen suspicion.

JOE [to Rocky--defiantly]: I's stood tellin' folks dis dump is closed for de night all I's goin' to. Let de Boss hire a doorman--pay him wages--if she wants one.

ROCKY [scowling]: Yeah? De Boss's pretty damned good to ya.

JOE [shamefaced]: Sure she is--I don't mean dat. Anyways, it's all right--I told de cop we's closed for de party--he'll keep folks away. [aggressively again] I want a big drink, dat's what!

CHUCK: Who's stoppin' yuh? Yuh can have all yuh want on Hickey.

NARRATOR: Joe's hand is on a bottle when Hickey's name is mentioned. After drawing his hand back, he grabs it defiantly.

[Joe pours a big drink.]

JOE: Aw right, I's earned all de drinks on him I could drink in a year for listenin' to his crazy bull. And here's hopin' he gets de lockjaw! [He drinks and pours out another.] I drinks on 'im but I don't drink wid him. No, suh, never no more!

1741 ROCKY: Aw, Hickey's aw right--what's he done to you?

1742 JOE [sullenly]: Dat's my business--I ain't buttin' in
1743 yours, is I? [bitterly] Sure, you think he's all right--
1744 he's a white man, ain't he? [His tone becomes
1745 aggressive.] Listen to me, white boys! Don't you get it
1746 into your heads I's pretendin' to be what I ain't--or
1747 dat I ain't proud to be what I is--get me? Or we's goin'
1748 to have trouble!

1749 NARRATOR: Picking up his drink, he walks as far from
1750 them as he can get and slumps down on the piano stool.

1751 MARGIE [in a low angry tone]: What a noive! Just because
1752 we act nice to him, he gets a swelled nut--if dat ain't
1753 a coon all over!

1754 CHUCK: Talkin' fight talk, huh--I'll moider de dinge!

1755 JOE [speaks up shamefacedly]: Listen, boys, I's sorry--
1756 I didn't mean dat--you been good friends to me--I's
1757 nuts, I guess. Dat Hickey, he gets my head all mixed up
1758 wit' craziness.

1759 CORA: Aw, dat's aw right, Joe--de boys wasn't takin' yuh
1760 serious. [then to the others, forcing a laugh] Jeez,
1761 what'd I say: Hickey ain't overlookin' no bets--even
1762 Joe. [She pauses--then adds puzzledly] De funny ting is:
1763 yuh can't stay sore at de bum when he's around. When he
1764 forgets de preachin', and quits tellin' yuh where yuh
1765 get off, he's de same old Hickey. Yuh can't help likin'
1766 de louse. And yuh got to admit he's got de right dope--
1767 [She adds hastily] I mean, on some of de bums here.

1768 MARGIE [with a sneering look at Rocky]: Yeah, he's
1769 coitinly got one guy I know sized up right--huh, Poil?

1770 PEARL: He coitinly has!

1771 ROCKY: Cut it out, I told yuh!

1772 LARRY [more to himself than to them] I have a feeling
1773 he's dying to tell us--but he's afraid. He's like that
1774 damned kid--it's strange the way he seemed to recognize
1775 him. If he's afraid, it explains why he's off booze--
1776 like that damned kid again--afraid if he got drunk,
1777 he'd spill his [guts]--

1778 NARRATOR: Hickey appears in the rear doorway--arms piled
1779 with packages, beaming like a little boy.

NARRATOR: Catching his excitement, Chuck and Rocky go out, grinning expectantly. The girls gather around Hickey, full of thrilled curiosity.

PEARL: Jeez, yuh got us all heated up--what is it?

HICKEY: I got it as a treat for the three of ya more than anyone. I thought to myself: I'll bet this is what'll please those whores more than anything.

NARRATOR: Before they have a chance to be angry...

HICKEY [affectionately]: I said to myself: I don't care how much it costs, they're worth it--they're the best little scouts in the world, and they've been damned kind to me when I was down and out--nothing's too good for them. [earnestly] I mean every word of that, too--and then some! [jubilantly]: Look--here it comes!

NARRATOR: Chuck and Rocky enter carrying a huge wicker basket full of champagne.

PEARL [with childish excitement]: Look Mahgie--it's dat wine wid bubbles! Jeez, Hickey, you is a sport!

NARRATOR: She gives him a hug, forgetting all animosity, as do the other girls.

MARGIE: I never been soused on dis kinda wine--let's get stinko, Poil.

PEARL: You betcha--de bot' of us!

NARRATOR: A holiday spirit has seized them all. Even Joe stands up to grin at the champagne--and Hugo raises his head to blink at it.

JOE: You sure is hittin' de high spots, Hickey. [boastfully] Man, when I runs my gamblin' joint, I'm gonna drink dat old bubbly water in steins! [He stops guiltily--then with defiance] I's goin' to drink it dat way, too, Hickey--soon's I make my stake! And dat ain't no pipe dream, neider!

ROCKY: What'll we drink it outa--we ain't got no wine glasses.

HICKEY [enthusiastically]: Joe has the right idea--schooners! That's the spirit for Bess's birthday!

HUGO [with his silly giggle]: Ve vill trink vine beneath the villow trees!

2296 like, I can't spend my life sitting here with you,
2297 ruining my stomach with rotgut. I'm tapering off, and in
2298 the morning I'll be fresh as a daisy. I'll have me a
2299 private chat with the Commissioner. [with forced
2300 enthusiasm] Man alive, from what the boys tell me,
2301 there's sugar galore these days, and I'll soon be
2302 ridin' around in a big red automobile--

2303 ED [derisively--in a Chinese accent]: One Lung Hop put
2304 fresh peanut oil in lamp and cook Lieutenant nice fine
2305 poppy! It Lieutenant night off!

2306 MAC [stung--pulls back a fist threateningly]:
2307 One more crack like that and I'll [knock your]--!

2308 ED [putting up his fists]: Yeah? You start it--!

2309 ROCKY: Hey--are you guys nuts--it's de Boss's boithday
2310 party--sit down and behave!

2311 ED [grumpily]: All right--only tell him to lay off me.

2312 MAC [grumpily]: And tell him to lay off me.

2313 NARRATOR: Hickey bursts in from the hall, excited.

2314 HICKEY: Everything all set? Fine--half a minute to go--
2315 Bess's starting down with Jimmy. I had a hard time
2316 getting them to move--they'd rather stay hiding up
2317 there, kidding each other along. [He chuckles.]
2318 Bess don't even wanna remember it's her birthday now!
2319 [There's a noise from the stairs.] Here they come!
2320 [urgently] Light the candles! Get ready to play, Cora!
2321 Stand up, everybody! Get that champagne ready, boys!

2322 NARRATOR: Rocky and Chuck go behind the bar. Margie and
2323 Pearl light the candles on the cake. Cora puts her hands
2324 over the piano keys. Everybody at the table stands up--
2325 Hugo the last, suddenly coming to and scrambling to his
2326 feet. Bess and Jimmy appear from the hall, and Hickey
2327 looks up from his watch.

2328 HICKEY: On the dot--it's twelve! [like a cheerleader]
2329 Come on now, everybody:

2330 HICKEY/WILLIE/PEARL/MAGGIE/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK/JOE/
2331 THE CAPTAIN/THE GENERAL [spiritless except Hickey]:
2332 Happy Birthday, Bess!

2333 [Cora begins playing.]

2490 [He grabs his schooner and takes a greedy gulp--
2491 then sets it back down on the table.]

2492 HUGO [in an arrogantly disdainful tone, as if he were
2493 rebuking a butler]: Dis vine is unfit to trink--it has
2494 not been properly iced!

2495 HICKEY [amusedly]: Always a high-toned swell at heart,
2496 eh, Hugo? God help us poor bums if you ever get to
2497 telling us where to get off! You'd be drinking our blood
2498 beneath those willow trees! [chuckles--then as he goes
2499 on he becomes more moved and obviously sincere] A toast,
2500 Ladies and Gents! To Bess Hope, who's been a friend in
2501 need to every one of us! Here's to the old gal, the
2502 best sport and the kindest, biggest-hearted gal in the
2503 whole world! Here's wishin' ya all the luck there is,
2504 and long life and happiness! Come on, everybody!
2505 To Bess! Bottoms up!

2506 MAC/ED/WILLIE/JOE/JIMMY/PEARL/MARGIE/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK
2507 [they've caught his enthusiasm]: **To Bess!**

2508 [They drain their drinks down.]

2509 HOPE [deeply moved--her voice husky] Thanks, all of ya.
2510 Bejeez, Hickey you old son of a gun, that's good of ya!
2511 Bejeez, I know you meant it, too.

2512 HICKEY [moved]: Of course I meant it! And I mean it when
2513 I say I hope today will be the best day of your life,
2514 and in the lives of everyone here, the beginning of a
2515 new life of peace and happiness where no pipe dreams can
2516 ever nag at you again. Here's to that, Bess!

2517 NARRATOR: But this time he drinks alone--in an instant,
2518 the attitude of the gang has become uneasy and
2519 defensive.

2520 ROCKY [growls]: Aw, forget dat bughouse line of bull for
2521 a minute, can't yuh?

2522 HICKEY [sitting--good-naturedly]: No, you're right--it's
2523 Bess we want to hear from. Come on, Bess! [He pounds his
2524 schooner on the table.] Speech! Speech!

2525 [The gang raps their schooners on the table.]

2526 BESS HOPE [lamely]: Bejeez, I'm no good at speeches.
2527 All I can say is--thanks to everybody for remembering me
2528 on my birthday. [bitterness coming out] Only don't think
2529 because I'm sixty I'll be a bigger damned fool easy mark

2616 MAC [spitefully]: Yes!

2617 ED [spitefully]: That's right!

2618 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, you've hit it, Larry! I've noticed he
2619 hasn't shown her picture around this time!

2620 ED: He hasn't got it--the iceman took it away from him!

2621 MARGIE: Jeez, look at him--who could blame her?

2622 PEARL: She must be hard up to fall for an iceman!

2623 CORA: Imagine a sap like him advisin' me and Chuck to
2624 git married!

2625 CHUCK: Yeah he done so good wid it!

2626 JIMMY: Least I can say my Mary chose an officer and a
2627 gentleman.

2628 THE CAPTAIN: Look at him, chaps, he's sprouted horns
2629 like a bloody antelope!

2630 THE GENERAL: Pigger, py Gott--like water buffalo!

2631 WILLIE [sings his Sailor Lad tune]: "Come up," she
2632 cried, "my iceman lad, And you and I'll agree--"

2633 WILLIE/ED/JOE/THE CAPTAIN/THE GENERAL/MAC/
2634 PEARL/MARGIE/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK "And I'll show ya the
2635 prettiest [rap, rap, rap] That ever you did see!"
2636 [A roar of derisive, dirty laughter]

2637 HICKEY [joining in the laughter--enjoying the joke at
2638 his expense]: Well, boys and girls, I'm glad to see you
2639 in good spirits for Bess's party, even if the joke's
2640 on me. I admit I asked for it by always pulling that
2641 iceman gag in the old days. [w good-natured generosity]
2642 So laugh all you like.

2643 NARRATOR: But this time they don't laugh--they only
2644 stare at him with baffled uneasiness.

2645 HICKEY: Well, this forces my hand--your bringing up the
2646 subject of Evelyn. I didn't want to tell you--not yet--
2647 I wanted to wait until the party was over. But you're
2648 getting the wrong idea about poor Evelyn--and I've got
2649 to stop that.

2650 NARRATOR: As he pauses, there's a tense stillness in the
2651 room.

2933 JOE: Hey you two--cut it out! You's ole friends--don't
2934 let dat Hickey make you crazy!

2935 CHUCK [turns on him]: Keep out of it, yuh black bastard!

2936 ROCKY: Stay where yuh belong, yuh doity dinge!

2937 NARRATOR: Joe springs from behind the counter--
2938 bread knife in his hand.

2939 JOE [snarling with rage]: You white sons of bitches--
2940 I'll rip your guts out!

2941 NARRATOR: As Chuck raises a bottle above his head--and
2942 Rocky jerks a small revolver from his pocket--Larry
2943 pounds hard with his fist on the table.

2944 LARRY: That's it--murder each other, you damned loons!
2945 With Hickey's blessing! Didn't I tell you he's brought
2946 death with him?

2947 NARRATOR: Startled by his interruption, their fury melts
2948 and they look deflated and sheepish.

2949 ROCKY: Aw right...

2950 CHUCK: Yeah...

2951 JOE: Okay...

2952 HUGO [giggles foolishly]: Hello, leedle peoples!
2953 Naffer mind--soon you will eat hot dogs beneath the
2954 willow trees. [abruptly in a haughty fastidious tone]
2955 But the champagner vas not properly iced. [with guttural
2956 anger] Gottamned liar, Hickey! Does zat prove I vant to
2957 be aristocrat? I love only the proletariat! I will
2958 lead them! I vill be like a Gott to zem! They will be my
2959 slaves! [He stops in bewildered self-amazement] I am
2960 very trunk, no, Larry? I talk foolish--I am so trunk,
2961 Larry, old friend--I do not know vhat I say?

2962 LARRY [pityingly]: You're raving drunk, Hugo--I've never
2963 seen you so paralyzed--lay your head down now and
2964 sleep it off.

2965 HUGO [gratefully]: Yes, I will sleep--I am too crazy
2966 trunk.

2967 JOE [behind the lunch counter--brooding]: You's right,
2968 Larry--bad luck come in de door when Hickey come.
2969 I's an ole gamblin' man and I knows bad luck when I
2970 feels it! [then defiantly] But it's white man's

bad luck--it can't jinx me! [pause--clears his throat--
then stiffly]: De bread's cut, Rocky and I's finished my
job. Do I get de drink I's earned?

NARRATOR: Rocky gives him a hostile look but shoves a
bottle and glass at him.

[Joe pours a drink.]

JOE [sullenly]: I's finished wid dis dump for keeps.
[takes a key from his pocket and slaps it on the bar]
Here's de key to my room--I ain't comin' back--I's goin'
to my own folks where I belong--I don't stay where
I's not wanted--I's sick and tired of messin' round
wid white men.

NARRATOR: Gulping down his drink, he looks around
defiantly then smashes his whiskey glass on the floor.

[Smashing glass.]

ROCKY: What de hell--!

JOE [with a sneering dignity]: I's on'y savin' you de
trouble, White Boy. Now you don't have to break it,
soon as my back's turned, so's no white man complains
about drinkin' from de same glass.

NARRATOR: Walking stiffly to the street door, he turns
for a parting shot.

JOE [boastfully]: I's tired of loafin' 'round wid a lot
of bums--I's a gamblin' man--I's gonna get in a big
crap game and win me a big bankroll. Den I'll open up my
gamblin' joint for colored men. Den maybe I comes back
here sometime to see de bums--maybe I throw a hundred
dolla bill on de bar and say, "Drink it up," and listen
when dey all pat me on de back and say, "Joe, you sure
is white." But I'll say, "No, I'm black and my dough is
black man's dough, and you's proud to drink wid me or
you don't get no drink!" Or maybe I just says, "You can
all go to hell--I don't lower myself drinkin' wid no
white trash!" [Joe opens the door and turns back around]
And dat ain't no pipe dream! I'll git de money for my
stake, somehow, somewheres--if I has to get me a gun and
stick up some white man, I gets it--you wait and see!

[He swaggers out through the swinging doors.]

but didn't have de noive, I figgah'd. Jeez, dere ain't enough guts left in de whole gang to swat a mosquita!

CHUCK: To hell wid 'em--who cares--gimme a drink.

[Rocky pushes a bottle toward him.]

CHUCK: I see you been hittin' de redeye too.

ROCKY: Yeah--but it don't do no good.

[Chuck drinks.]

JOE [mumbles in his sleep]:

CHUCK [resentfully]: Dis doity dinge was able to get his snootful and pass out. Jeez, even Hickey can't faze a dinge! He ain't got no business in here after hours--why don't yuh chuck him out?

ROCKY [apathetically]: Aw, to hell wid it--who cares?

CHUCK [lapsing into the same mood]: Yeah, I don't.

JOE [suddenly lunges to his feet dazedly--mumbles in humbled apology]: Scuse me, White Boys--scuse me for livin'--I don't want to be where I's not wanted.

[He walks away.]

CHUCK [in a callous, brutal tone]: I'm gonna collect de dough from Cora I wouldn't take dis mornin', like a suckah--before she blows it.

ROCKY: I'm comin', too--I'm trough woikin' as a lousy bahtender.

NARRATOR: As they approach Cora, Joe flops down next to The Captain.

JOE [servilely apologetic]: If ya objects to my sittin' here, Captain, just tell me and I pulls my freight.

THE CAPTAIN: No apology required, old chap--I should feel honored a bloody Kaffir would lower himself to sit beside me.

CHUCK [his voice hard]: I'm waitin', Baby--dig!

CORA [with apathetic obedience]: Sure. I been expectin' yuh--I got it right here.

NARRATOR: Without looking at him, she passes him a roll of bills.

4069 everybody? Sorry I had to leave you for a while.
 4070 But there was something I had to get settled--it's all
 4071 fixed now.

4072 BESS HOPE [mechanically voicing a hopeless complaint]:
 4073 When are you going to do something about this booze,
 4074 Hickey--bejeez, we all know you did something to take
 4075 the life out of it--it's like drinking dishwater--
 4076 we can't pass out--and you promised us peace.

4077 WILLIE/ED/JOE/THE CAPTAIN/THE
 4078 GENERAL/JIMMY/MAC/CHUCK/CORA: Yeah!

4079 HICKEY [bursts into resentful exasperation]: For God's
 4080 sake, are you still harpin' on that damned nonsense!
 4081 You've kept it up all afternoon and night--and you've
 4082 got everybody else singing the same crazy tune--I've had
 4083 about all I can stand--that's why I phoned-- [He gets
 4084 control of himself.] Excuse me, boys and girls--I don't
 4085 mean that--I'm just worried about you, when you play
 4086 dead on me like this. I was hoping by the time I got
 4087 back you'd be like you ought to be! Figured you were
 4088 deliberately holding back, while I was around, because
 4089 you didn't want to give me the satisfaction of showin'
 4090 me I had the right dope--and I did! I know from my own
 4091 experience. [exasperatedly] But I've explained that a
 4092 million times--by rights you should be happy now,
 4093 without a single damned hope or dream left to torment
 4094 ya! But here you are, actin' like a lot of stiffs
 4095 cheatin' the undertaker! [He looks around accusingly.]
 4096 I can't figure it--unless it's just pigheaded
 4097 stubbornness. [He breaks--miserably] Hell, you shouldn't
 4098 act this way with me--you're my old pals, the only
 4099 friends I've got. You know the one thing I want is to
 4100 see you all happy before I go--[rousing himself to his
 4101 old brisk, master-of-ceremonies self] And there's damned
 4102 little time left--I've made a date for two o'clock--
 4103 we've got to get busy right away and find out what's
 4104 wrong. [There's a long silence. He goes on
 4105 exasperatedly.] Can't you appreciate what you've got,
 4106 for God's sake--don't you know you're now free to be
 4107 yourselves, without having to feel remorse or guilt, or
 4108 lie to yourselves about reforming tomorrow? Can't you
 4109 see there is no tomorrow, now--you're rid of it forever--
 4110 you've killed it--you don't have to care a damn about
 4111 anything any more--you've finally got the game of life
 4112 licked, don't you see that? [angrily exhorting] Then why

the hell don't you get pie-eyed and celebrate--why don't you laugh and sing "Sweet Adeline"? [with bitterly hurt accusation] The only reason I can think is, you're putting on this rotten half-dead act just to spite me--because ya hate my guts! [He breaks again.] God, don't do that, gang--it makes me feel like hell to think you hate me--it makes me feel you suspect I must hate you--but that's a lie! Oh, I know I used to hate everyone who wasn't as rotten a bastard as I was! But that was before I faced the truth and saw the one possible way to free poor Evelyn and give her the peace she'd always dreamed of.

NARRATOR: He pauses and everyone in the group stirs with awakening dread--tense on their chairs.

CHUCK [with dull, resentful viciousness] Aw, put a cork in it--to hell wid Evelyn--what if she was cheatin'--an' who cares what yuh did to her--dat's your funeral--we don't give a damn, see?

CORA: Yeah!

ED: That's right!

MAC: We don't give a damn!

JOE: Xactly!

CHUCK [dully]: All we want outa you is ta keep de hell away from us and give us a rest.

[The gang grunts in agreement.]

HICKEY [as if he hadn't heard this]: The one possible way to make up to her for all I'd made her go through--and to rid 'er of me so I couldn't make her suffer any more--and she wouldn't have to forgive me any more! I saw I couldn't do it by killin' myself--like I wanted to for a long time--that would have been the last straw for her--she'd have died of a broken heart--she'd have blamed herself for it, too--and I couldn't just run away--she'd have died of grief and humiliation if I'd done that. She'd a thought I'd stopped loving her. [He adds with a strange simplicity] You see, Evelyn loved me--and I loved her--that was the trouble. It would have been easy to find a way out if she hadn't loved me so much--or if I hadn't loved her. But as it was, there was only one possible way. [He pauses--then adds simply] I had to kill her.

4735 was a goner. [Assuming the old kidding tone of the gang,
4736 but hesitantly, as if still a little afraid.] On de woid
4737 of a honest bahtender!

4738 BESS HOPE [her old self]: Huh! Bar-robber is more
4739 like it. You and Chuck ought to have cards in the
4740 Burglars' Union!

4741 [The gang laughs eagerly]

4742 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, it's good to hear someone
4743 laugh again! All the time that bastard--I mean--poor old
4744 Hickey was here, I didn't have the heart--Bejeez, I'm
4745 getting drunk and glad of it! [She cackles. Bottle being
4746 picked up.] Come on, gang--it's on the house.

4747 [Many drinks are poured.]

4748 BESS HOPE [sentimental]: Poor old Hickey--we mustn't
4749 hold him responsible for anything he's done--we'll
4750 forget that--and only remember him the way he was before
4751 --the kindest, biggest-hearted drummer who ever wore
4752 shoe leather.

4753 CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK: Dat's right, Bess!

4754 THE GENERAL: Vhat's all!

4755 JIMMY/THE CAPTAIN/WILLIE: Finest drummer!

4756 ED/MAC/JOE: Best scout!

4757 BESS HOPE: Good luck to you in Matteawan, Hickey!
4758 Come on, bottoms up!

4759 [They all drink.]

4760 NARRATOR: At his table--his hands tensely gripping the
4761 edge--sits Larry, listening intently.

4762 LARRY [cannot hold back an anguished exclamation]:
4763 Christ! Why don't he [jump for god's sake]--!

4764 HUGO [beginning to be drunk again--peers at him]:
4765 Vhy don't he what? Don't be a fool--Hickey's gone--
4766 he vas crazy. Have a trink. [then as he receives no
4767 reply--with vague uneasiness] What's matter with you?
4768 You look funny. What you listen for, Larry?

4769 CORA [tipsily]: Well, I thank Gawd me and Chuck did all
4770 we could to humor de poor nut. Jeez, imagine us goin'
4771 off like we really meant to git married, when we ain't
4772 even picked out a farm yet!

CHUCK [eagerly]: Sure ting, Baby--we kidded him we was serious.

JIMMY [confidently--with a gentle, drunken zeal]:
I may as well say I detected his condition almost at once. All that talk of his about tomorrow, for example. He had the fixed idea of the insane. It only makes them worse to cross them.

WILLIE [eagerly]: Same with me, Jimmy--only I spent the day in the park--I wasn't such a damned fool as to [try to]--

THE CAPTAIN [getting jauntily drunk]: Picture my predicament had gone to the Consulate. The pal of mine there is a humorous blighter. He would have got me a job out of pure spite. Instead I strolled about and finally came to roost in the park. [He grins with affectionate kidding at The General] And lo and behold, who was on the neighboring bench but my old battlefield companion, the Boer that walks like a man--who, if the British Government had taken my advice, would have been removed from his fetid pen on the veldt straight to the baboon's cage at the London Zoo, and little children would now be asking their nurses: "Tell me, Nana, is that the Boer General, the one with the blue behind?"

[The gang laughs uproariously.]

THE CAPTAIN: No offense meant, old chap.

THE GENERAL [beaming]: No offense taken, you tanned Limey! [going on--grinningly] About a job--I felt de same as de Limey here.

HUGO [with uneasy insistence]: What's matter, Larry--you look scared--vhat you listen for out zere?

JOE [with drunken self-assurance]: No, suh, I wasn't fool enough to git in no crap game--not while Hickey's around--crazy people puts a jinx on you.

MAC [with drunken earnestness]: You saw how it was--no good trying to explain to a crazy guy that it ain't the right time--you know how getting reinstated is.

ED: Sure, the same with the circus. The boys tell me the rubes are spendin' all their money buying food and times was never so hard. And I never was one to cheat for chicken feed.

4922 BESS HOPE [calls effusively] Hey there, Larry! Come over
4923 and get paralyzed! What the hell you douin', just sittin'
4924 there?

4925 NARRATOR: But Larry doesn't reply. Almost immediately,
4926 she forgets him and turns back to the gang.

4927 BESS HOPE: Bejeez, let's sing! Let's celebrate. It's my
4928 birrthday party! Bejeez, I'm oreyeyed!

4929 HUGO [singing]: Dansons la Carmagnole! Vive le son! Vive
4930 le son! Dansons la Carmagnole! Vive le son des canons!

4931 [The gang howls derisively.]

4932 HUGO: Capitalist svine! Stupid bourgeois monkeys!
4933 [declaiming] "The days grow hot, O Babylon!"

4934 WILLIE/ED/JOE/THE CAPTAIN/THE
4935 GENERAL/JIMMY/MAC/CORA/ROCKY/CHUCK [taking it up]:
4936 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!

4937 [They pound their glasses on the table.]

4938 NARRATOR: In his chair--staring straight ahead--
4939 oblivious to all the racket, sits Larry.

4940 [The gang roars with boisterous laughter.]

4941 HUGO [giggles]:

4942 THE END