

# BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY

by Pearl Cleage

3M, 2W

It is the summer of 1930 in Harlem, New York. The creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance has given way to the harsher realities of the Great Depression. Young Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., is feeding the hungry and preaching an activist gospel at Abyssinian Baptist Church. Black Nationalist visionary, Marcus Garvey, has been discredited and deported. Birth control pioneer, Margaret Sanger, is opening a new family planning clinic on 126th Street, and the doctors at Harlem Hospital are scrambling to care for a population whose most deadly disease is poverty. The play brings together a rich cast of characters who reflect the conflicting currents of the time through their overlapping personalities and politics. Set in the Harlem apartment of Guy, a popular costume designer, and his friend, Angel, a recently fired Cotton Club back-up singer, the cast also includes Sam, a hard-working, jazz-loving doctor at Harlem Hospital; Delia, an equally dedicated member of the staff at the Sanger clinic; and Leland, a recent transplant from Tuskegee, who sees in Angel a memory of lost love and a reminder of those "Alabama skies where the stars are so thick it's bright as day." Invoking the image of African American expatriate extraordinaire, Josephine Baker, as both muse and myth, Cleage's characters struggle, as Guy says, "to look beyond 125th Street" for the fulfillment of their dreams.

Also by Pearl Cleage

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BY  
PEARL CLEAGE



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.

BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY — CLEAGE

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BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY was produced by Alliance Theatre Company (Kenny Leon, Artistic Director; Edith H. Love, Managing Director) in Atlanta, Georgia, in July, 1995. It was directed by Kenny Leon; the set design was by Rochelle Barker; the costume design was by Susan E. Mickey; the lighting design was by Judy Zanotti; the music was composed by Dwight Andrews; the sound design was by Brian Kettler; and the stage manager was Richard Feldman. The cast was as follows:

DELIA ..... Dierdra N. Henry  
SAM ..... Bill Nunn  
ANGEL ..... Phylcia Rashad  
GUY ..... Mark Young  
LELAND ..... Gary Yates

all day talking about opening birth control clinics and then blush when I tell you your pastor sleeps on satin sheets.

DELIA. I just never thought about it.

GUY. *(Suddenly.)* Deal, can I ask you something personal?

DELIA. What if I say no?

GUY. I'll ask you anyway.

DELIA. Then go ahead.

GUY. Are you a virgin?

DELIA. *(Flustered and indignant; she clearly is.)* I'm twenty-five years old!

GUY. That's what I thought! How wonderful! To be present at the awakening of another young fawn!

DELIA. What makes you think I'm awakening?

GUY. You're already drinking French champagne with a notorious homosexual at three o'clock on Sunday morning! What more proof do you need?

DELIA. Just don't tell Angel. She already treats me like I'm her little sister.

GUY. She treats everybody like they're her little sister. Drink up! *(Pours more champagne and raises his glass to the photograph of Josephine Baker.)* To Josephine. Paris has never seen costumes like the ones I'm designing for La Bakaire!

DELIA. Do you ever think you won't go?

GUY. I'm going. Besides I have no choice. The matter is now officially out of my hands. Angel wasn't the only one who got fired last evening.

DELIA. You? Why?

GUY. Well, I couldn't hardly stand by and let Bobby toss her bodily out into the street, could I?

DELIA. What are you going to do?

GUY. I'm going to drive Josephine crazy until she sends for me. She promised she would and I'm going to take her at her word.

DELIA. I've got a little money saved if you need anything.

GUY. Aren't you sweet? *(Kisses her.)* I'm fine for now. I've got a couple of jobs working on the outside, thank God! Do me a favor?

DELIA. Sure.

GUY. Don't tell Angel. I don't want her to panic. I can take care of both of us if I have to. It won't be the first time.

DELIA. I promise.

GUY. Thanks.

DELIA. *(She looks at Angel sleeping soundly.)* Maybe I'll bring that typing chart by after church anyway. She might want to ... try something new.

GUY. Forget the charts. Come by after service and finish this champagne with us.

DELIA. Does it have to be either-or?

GUY. Everything is either-or, Sweetie. Good night.

DELIA. Good night. *(A beat.)* Do you really think I have nerve to spare?

GUY. No question. *(He kisses her cheek. Delia crosses the hall to her own apartment, removes her shoes and robe and gets back into bed. Guy closes his door. Walks quietly over to check on Angel. Fixes her covers gently as the lights go to black.)*

**Start Here:  
2 Characters**

**Scene 2**

*The apartment is quiet. Angel is still curled up on the sofa. Guy enters carrying a small overnight bag and comes upstairs. He opens the door and sees no sign of life. He sets the bag down and peers at Angel. He goes over and shakes her gently. No activity. He removes his coat and hat, puts on coffee and shakes her again. She groans.*

ANGEL. Go away!

GUY. Rise and shine!

ANGEL. Are you crazy? What time is it?

GUY. Half-past noon, Sweetie.

ANGEL. Are you kidding? God! I feel like hell.

GUY. You look pretty bad, too.

ANGEL. Thanks. What have we got to drink?

GUY. Coffee. *(She glares at him.)* But since you asked so nicely, I'll put some brandy in it for you. *(He does. Hands her the coffee.)*  
ANGEL. Aspirin?  
GUY. We're out. Again.  
ANGEL. Where were we last night anyway?  
GUY. Don't you remember?  
ANGEL. If I remembered I wouldn't be — oh!  
GUY. I thought it might come back to you.  
ANGEL. Did I...?  
GUY. You did.  
ANGEL. Did they...?  
GUY. They did.  
ANGEL. Fired me?  
GUY. Like you stole something.  
ANGEL. They'll take me back though, won't they? I mean, if I go down and talk nice to Bobby, he'll understand. I didn't throw anything, did I?  
GUY. *(A beat. He looks at her. Clearly, she did.)* Drink your coffee before you get yourself all worked up.  
ANGEL. *(Drinks slowly.)* Do you think they'll take me back. Really, I mean.  
GUY. Truth or solace?  
ANGEL. Truth.  
GUY. Not a chance.  
ANGEL. What the hell am I gonna do now?  
GUY. We'll think of something.  
ANGEL. Like what? The Depression has killed all the nightlife in Harlem and nobody's gonna hire me downtown after what I said to Nick.  
GUY. You can always come to Paris with me.  
ANGEL. Sure I can.  
GUY. I'm serious.  
ANGEL. I know you are, but you being serious doesn't pay the rent.  
GUY. Which brings us to my last little piece of good news.  
ANGEL. I can hardly wait.  
GUY. I went to your place.  
ANGEL. This morning?

GUY. I figured Nicky's Catholic, he should be in church on Sunday morning ...  
ANGEL. With his wife.  
GUY. ... So that might be a good time to go get your stuff with a minimum of confusion.  
ANGEL. What kind of confusion?  
GUY. I don't think the details are particularly important except to say that the doorman let me go up for a fast five minutes to get what I convinced him were irreplaceable and exotic medicines which you had to have or die an agonizing and immediate death which would be on his conscience forever, especially if you expired on the Sabbath. *(He hands her the small bag.)* I grabbed what I could.  
ANGEL. This is it?  
GUY. I only had five minutes, Sweetie.  
ANGEL. He told me I could stay there as long as I wanted to. Think of it as your place, that's what he told me!  
GUY. Think of it as your old place. And welcome to your new one.  
ANGEL. I can't stay here. You know last time we tried that we stopped speaking to each other for a month.  
GUY. Okay. *(He waits.)*  
ANGEL. *(Quietly.)* Go to hell.  
GUY. Don't worry about it. It'll be just like old times. Tripping over your stuff on the way to the toilet. Worrying about you wearing all my good clothes. You're over here half the time anyway. What's the big deal?  
ANGEL. Guy ...  
GUY. *(She looks at him without speaking. He sees/senses her fear. They have had this kind of conversation many times before.)* Look, even in your current sorry state, you're better off than most of the Negroes in Harlem. You've got a place to stay and I'm not gonna let you starve to death. We'll figure it out.  
ANGEL. I should be figuring things out for myself.  
GUY. Shoulda, coulda, woulda.  
ANGEL. My head hurts too bad to argue.  
GUY. Have I ever let you down?  
ANGEL. You know you haven't. **Stop here**

GUY. I know I haven't, but I'm asking you.  
ANGEL. *(A beat. He waits.)* No, you have never let me down.  
GUY. You think I'm gonna start now?  
ANGEL. No, I don't think you're gonna start now.  
GUY. Then stop worrying and pull yourself together. Big Daddy's gonna keep everything fine and mellow. Just like always.  
ANGEL. But I'm so broke. I owe everybody ...  
GUY. Just ... like ... always. Okay?  
ANGEL. I love you.  
GUY. I love you too, Sweetie. *(Delia enters from church and knocks loudly on their door. Angel groans and falls back, holding her head. Delia pokes her head in.)*  
DELIA. How is she?  
GUY. She's alive.  
DELIA. How are you feeling?  
ANGEL. How do I look?  
DELIA. Well ...  
ANGEL. Never mind. Do you have any aspirin?  
DELIA. I think I've got some across the hall. I've got something else to show you, too, but I'll wait until you're feeling better. *(She winks conspiratorially at Guy and goes to get the aspirin. During the dialogue that follows, she looks around for aspirin, but finds none. On her way out, she picks up the typing chart and book and takes them back across the hall with her.)*  
ANGEL. I can hardly wait. What is she talking about?  
GUY. She wants to teach you how to use a typewriter.  
ANGEL. What? *(Throughout this scene Guy works at his sewing while participating fully in the conversation. This is his habit and his friends are all used to it.)*  
GUY. Since you said you couldn't sing anymore because of your broken heart, Deal thought you might want to take advantage of the growing opportunities in the secretarial pool.  
ANGEL. Tell me it hasn't come to that.  
GUY. It hasn't come to that.  
ANGEL. Swear it.  
GUY. I swear it.  
ANGEL. My head is killing me. Where is that child with the aspirin?

GUY. Sam's coming by this afternoon. He'll have some.  
ANGEL. When did you see Sam?  
GUY. We saw him. Last night at Small's.  
ANGEL. God! I don't even remember being at Small's? Was I already drunk?  
GUY. Let's just say, the question was already beside the point.  
ANGEL. *(Remembering vaguely.)* Did he walk home with us?  
GUY. No. We left him at the club. He delivered five babies yesterday. He was celebrating their arrival.  
ANGEL. I thought there was somebody else ...  
GUY. A brother walked with us part of the way from 125<sup>th</sup> Street. Saw a damsel in distress and offered his assistance. A real Southern gentleman from the accent. Beautiful silk suit, too.  
ANGEL. A silk suit? I thought you said he was Southern.  
GUY. I didn't say Southern bumpkin.  
ANGEL. Who was he?  
GUY. I never saw him around before.  
ANGEL. Didn't you ask him?  
GUY. I was a little preoccupied. *(Delia returns to the apartment.)*  
DELIA. I'm sorry. I guess I'm out too.  
ANGEL. *(Groans.)* Well, let's pray for Sam. *(She lies down and closes her eyes.)*  
DELIA. Is Sam coming?  
GUY. Any minute now.  
DELIA. Oh, well. I'll go on then.  
GUY. Why? Doc's family.  
DELIA. He's just so ...  
GUY. What?  
DELIA. Sometimes he doesn't seem like a doctor. He's out as much as you and Angel.  
GUY. Are we now the standard of dissipation?  
DELIA. No, but he's a doctor.  
GUY. Doctors can't like jazz?  
DELIA. It's not the music. It's the way he acts. Whoever heard of a doctor going around hollering ...  
GUY. "Let the good times roll!" And he doesn't holler. He speaks with conviction.  
DELIA. Does that sound like a serious physician to you?

GUY. Relax, Sweetie. Sam's the best doctor in New York City. He'll work his magic on Angel and we'll all go out to eat.

ANGEL. Don't talk about food!

DELIA. Angel? *(No response.)* Can I show you something?

ANGEL. No!

DELIA. Oh, well. *(A beat. She decides to plow ahead anyway. She lays out the typing chart and book.)* I can just leave it for you, then. You can look at it later. Whenever you feel like it. I don't need it back right away or anything. *(A beat.)* I just thought maybe you ... last night ... you sounded like ... you might want to try something new ... and there are expanding opportunities in the secretarial pool. *(Angel groans loudly.)*

GUY. Your timing is lousy, Deal. Come tell me what the good Reverend Powell was up to this morning.

DELIA. He was wonderful! He got so worked up at the end of his sermon, he came out of the pulpit, walked straight down the middle aisle and right up Seventh Avenue. His robe was billowing out around him like wings ...

GUY. That Negro ought to quit preaching and go on into full-time show business.

DELIA. By the time he turned around and came back he had picked up twenty new members and the choir was still singing the invitational hymn. And guess what else?

GUY. A dove landed on his shoulder and a voice said ...

DELIA. I talked to him about the clinic.

GUY. You did?

DELIA. And I wasn't even nervous. I was in line to shake his hand after service and he said he was happy to see I had decided to make Abyssinian my church home. And I said I was proud to be a part of a church that had a sense of responsibility to the masses.

GUY. Not those Negroes again.

DELIA. *(A little defensive.)* He knew what I meant! The people of Harlem. The women who need ...

ANGEL. *(Groans.)* Please don't get her all worked up! I can't take the history of the downtrodden without some aspirin!

GUY. Our apologies, madam. We forgot the presence of the infirm in our midst. *(To Delia.)* Go on.

DELIA. So then I said I was working with Margaret Sanger to open a family planning clinic right here in Harlem.

GUY. You said "family planning" in the fellowship line at Abyssinian? *(Laughs.)* I hope none of those high-tones from Sugar Hill heard you.

DELIA. Then Reverend Powell said it sounded like a very interesting idea and to come by the church office on Monday so I could tell him more about it.

GUY. Well, all-reet! You hear that, Angel?

ANGEL. *(Groaning.)* I want Sam! *(Sam has entered from the street and comes in their open door.)*

SAM. Ask and ye shall receive! It's a boy!

GUY. My favorite Harlem healer! Come on in, Doc.

DELIA. How's the mother?

SAM. You didn't let me finish. It's also a girl.

DELIA. Twins?

SAM. Mother and babies are doing fine.

ANGEL. Just what Harlem needs. Two more mouths to feed.

GUY. Don't listen to the cynic. Congratulations!

SAM. Thank you on behalf of all concerned. Especially the proud father who also happens to be a successful bootlegger. *(Pulls a bottle from his coat pocket.)*

GUY. *(Going to get glasses or cups for everybody.)* I'm liking this family more all the time.

SAM. *(To Angel.)* How're you feeling?

ANGEL. Tell me you have aspirin or shoot me.

SAM. Here try this. *(Hands her some pills from his pocket.)*

ANGEL. What is it?

SAM. Just aspirin. Hospital-strength. I've found it to be very effective in treating the Harlem hangover. *(He hands her a glass of the bootleg liquor and she swallows it with the pills.)*

DELIA. *(As Sam pours for the others.)* Is it really safe for us to drink it?

GUY. Just enough to toast the new arrivals.

DELIA. Aren't you afraid we'll go blind or something?

SAM. Don't worry. I'm a doctor. *(Holds up glass.)* To the two newest citizens of Harlem! Long life, good health, and let the good times roll!

GUY. Amen! *(They drink.)*  
SAM. Feeling anything yet?  
ANGEL. Not yet.  
SAM. It just takes a minute. I promise. *(He drains his glass.)*  
Seven babies in two days. I think it's a record. Even for me!  
GUY. Then you deserve another drink.  
SAM. Thank you, kind sir. *(Pouring another for himself and for Guy.)* You know, that woman almost didn't make it.  
DELIA. The mother?  
SAM. They didn't even know she was carrying twins and one of them was coming breech. When I let her husband know what the risks were, he broke down and cried. He kept saying, "That's the best woman in the world in there, Doc. That's the best woman in the world."  
DELIA. If she's so precious to him, why didn't he take her to the doctor?  
SAM. He did. He just took her a little late, that's all.  
GUY. Why didn't she take herself? If she's old enough to have two babies at one time, she ought to be able to figure out how to catch the subway.  
ANGEL. *(Suddenly.)* It worked!  
SAM. I told you.  
ANGEL. It's a miracle! You're a genius, Sam! They ought to put you in charge of Harlem Hospital.  
SAM. That's not my reward, is it?  
GUY. No. Your reward is you get to take us all out for Sunday dinner. Can you come, Deal?  
DELIA. Well, I ...  
SAM. *(Interrupting her quickly before she can refuse.)* Great idea! What do you think, Angel? Ready for solid food yet?  
ANGEL. Not a chance. You all go on though. I'll be fine.  
DELIA. Want us to bring you back a plate?  
GUY. If you think I'm going to join the Sunday promenade carrying a plate of leftover collard greens, you could not be more wrong!  
SAM. Let's go. Now that you said food, I'm starving.  
DELIA. Give me five minutes.  
GUY. Take ten. I need to freshen up myself.

SAM. Good. I'll take a quick nap. *(Delia exits to her apartment. Guy to the bedroom. Sam sits slumped in his chair with his eyes closed. Angel watches him. He speaks without opening his eyes.)* So how is it, Angel Eyes?  
ANGEL. It's been better.  
SAM. Well, look on the bright side.  
ANGEL. What bright side is that?  
SAM. I met a bootlegger and found a cure for hangover in the same week.  
ANGEL. Nice work if you can get it. *(Angel is pacing around restlessly. Sam opens his eyes and watches her.)*  
SAM. Why don't you sing me some Sunday morning blues?  
ANGEL. Didn't your momma teach you not to sing no blues on the Lord's day?  
SAM. *(Leans back and closes his eyes again wearily.)* My momma taught me that man was the beginning and end of his own misery and that calling on God to fix it once you broke it was a comfort we were not allowed.  
ANGEL. *(Sitting beside him and stroking his forehead maternally.)* Your momma said a mouthful to answer a simple question, huh?  
SAM. The curse of the Negro intellectual.  
ANGEL. *(A beat.)* You look like hell.  
SAM. *(Eyes still closed.)* The pot calling the kettle ...  
ANGEL. But you're supposed to be respectable.  
SAM. Our recent population explosion didn't leave me much time to get my suit pressed. I don't look that bad, do I?  
ANGEL. Terrible. You need somebody to take care of you, Doc. I'm looking for a job. Let's get married.  
SAM. Wait 'til I tell you what my mother said about marriage.  
ANGEL. Too bad. I'd be a great wife. You'd come home from a hard day's work, and I'd be there with a hot, home-cooked meal on the table and your slippers by the fire.  
SAM. Can't you be there in a red satin shimmy singing "St. Louis Blues" and drinking bathtub gin?  
ANGEL. That's not the wife! That's the girlfriend.  
SAM. Okay. Lose the shimmy. Lose the gin. Keep the blues.  
ANGEL. *(A beat.)* Why didn't we ever get together?  
SAM. Because you deserve better.

ANGEL. *(A beat. She is moved by the directness of his response, but then she laughs as if he was only teasing.)* All right, smooth talker! If I go to hell, it's on your conscience. *(She begins to sing a song like "St. Louis Blues."\** Delia reenters. Angel sings her way over to Delia and begins dancing with her as she sings. Delia is shy, but delighted. Sam watches them affectionately.)

SAM. I didn't realize your revolution left a space for dancing.

ANGEL. *(Still dancing.)* All revolutions leave a space for dancing. They just like to pretend they don't.

DELIA. *(Stops dancing; defensive.)* I'm not trying to make a revolution. I'm just trying to give women in Harlem the chance to plan their families.

SAM. From what I hear, your Mrs. Sanger said that's where the whole thing begins. Women's bodies out of their control. Sickly kids and sorry men everywhere you look. *(Delia is becoming more agitated. She doesn't know Sam well and she's never sure when he is teasing her.)* And she's right, of course! *(He raises a glass, still teasing.)* Here's to victory for your side.

GUY. *(Reenters dressed to go out.)* I leave for five minutes and you all are choosing up sides. What did you do, Angel?

ANGEL. Me? I didn't do anything. I sang "St. Louis Blues" for Doc and ...

GUY. Well, there you go. What did your momma tell you about singing those low-down blues on Sunday morning?

ANGEL. *(To Sam.)* I warned you!

GUY. Change your mind and come with us.

ANGEL. Where are you going?

GUY. Probably down to Ike Hines'.

ANGEL. Chinese food?

SAM. I have the feeling Delia's changing her mind about going anywhere with me.

DELIA. It's just not funny to me, that's all. Woman are dying ...

GUY. Don't pay Sam any mind. He can't help it. *(To Angel.)* Coming?

ANGEL. It's too early in the day for chop suey.

GUY. Well, try to behave yourself until we get back. Everybody ready?

\*See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

SAM. *(To Delia.)* It's not funny to me either. I apologize. I was just teasing because I didn't know how to tell the two of you how beautiful you looked dancing in the sunlight. It won't happen again. *(He extends his arm and after a slight hesitation, she takes it.)*

GUY. Well, la dee dah! Now can we eat?

DELIA. I'm starving. *(The rest of the conversation takes place as they exit.)* Do you want to go by the reading at the "Y" afterwards?

GUY. Not unless Langston is going to be there.

SAM. Langston's not back yet, is he?

GUY. There's your answer! *(They exit. Angel watches them go from the window. She walks absentmindedly around the apartment. She looks at the typing chart and open typing book. She holds her hands over the chart as if preparing to type. She shudders and moves away. She picks up a fan and fans herself languidly. When she passes the window, she leans out, still fanning, hoping for something to catch her eye.)*

*Leland enters. He is well dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and tie. She sees him as he sees her, but she does not remember him from last night. He looks at her without embarrassment. She smiles at him, intrigued, fanning seductively.)*

ANGEL. Hot enough for you?

LELAND. Yes, ma'am.

ANGEL. *(She is amused by his formality.)* You're not from around here, huh?

LELAND. I'm from Alabama.

ANGEL. You a long way from home, Alabama.

LELAND. My name is Leland.

ANGEL. First or last?

LELAND. I beg your pardon?

ANGEL. Leland your first name or your last one?

LELAND. First one. Leland Cunningham's my full Christian name.

ANGEL. And are you a Christian, Mr. Leland Cunningham?

LELAND. I try to be.

ANGEL. Good for you. *(A beat.)* I'm Angel. You looking for somebody, or you just looking.

LELAND. I was looking for you.

ANGEL. I think you've got me confused with somebody else.

LELAND. Last night. *(A beat.)* With your ... friend. He was taking you home and I ...

ANGEL. You're not my Southern gentlemen, are you?

LELAND. I guess I am ...

ANGEL. Well, thank you for your assistance. *(A beat.)* But what are you doing here today?

LELAND. I just wanted to see if you were feeling all right.

ANGEL. I'm feeling fine. Just fine ... thanks.

LELAND. Well, good. I just wanted to be sure everything was ... that you were okay.

ANGEL. *(A beat. She watches him, fanning herself slowly.)* So how hot does it get in Alabama?

LELAND. It's pretty near always this hot down there. One way or another.

ANGEL. Well, it's not always this hot in Harlem, but today it is. *(A beat.)* Do you know what I mean?

LELAND. I'm not sure that I do.

ANGEL. What I mean is, it's a little too hot today for a lady to take a stroll with a gentlemen friend even if the idea presented itself to her.

LELAND. *(He looks at her. A beat. He wants this to be the right answer.)* It's supposed to be a lot cooler by the weekend.

ANGEL. You keep up with the weather, do you?

LELAND. I grew up on a farm. Old habits are hard to break.

ANGEL. All right, Alabama, why don't you come by next Sunday evening and we'll take us an old-fashioned Southern stroll.

LELAND. Around seven?

ANGEL. Apartment Two.

LELAND. I won't be late.

ANGEL. I know you won't, Alabama. It's not in your nature.

LELAND. Call me Leland.

ANGEL. Leland. *(He tips his hat and exits. She smiles after him as the lights go to black.)*

### Scene 3

*Delia is unwrapping a box that has arrived in the mail. On top of the tissue paper inside is a note in a small envelope. Delia reads the note, smiles and puts it aside. She folds back the tissue paper and pulls out a dress. It is a bright color and very different from the plain suits Delia usually wears. She looks at it, holds it up against herself and smiles. She even twirls a little, imagining herself in the dress. She lays it carefully aside and returns to the table where she was working earlier. She picks up her pen and begins to work. She stops suddenly, looks up at the dress, smiles again and focuses completely on her work.*

*Angel enters downstairs, walking slowly. She kicks off her shoes and drops her hat as soon as she enters the apartment door. Guy is not home and the apartment is empty. She is wearing a fairly dressy suit. She sighs and then begins looking around for something. She looks under cushions, chair, in drawers, etc. She does not look in Guy's sewing station. Not finding what she is looking for, she stops in frustration, looks around the room. She thinks hard as she looks at the sewing corner, listens, looks out the window to see who might be coming. Seeing no one, she moves swiftly to the sewing area, opens a drawer; nothing. She listens again. Opens another drawer. Victory! She holds up a bottle of liquor with guilty relief. She really wants a drink. She grabs a glass, pours a shot and gulps it, eyes closed. She relaxes a little. She pours another drink. Carefully, she puts the bottle back. She sits down and holds the drink close to her. Guy enters downstairs. She hears him on the steps, gulps down her drink and puts the glass under the chair.*

*Guy enters with several bolts of fabric. He is pleased to see Angel who stands guiltily holding her hat.*

GUY. Well, hey, Sweetie! *(Kisses her on both cheeks.)* *Commet ça va?* You just walk in the door?

ANGEL. Just this minute. Where've you been?

GUY. Over at the Hole in the Wall measuring these chubby little chorus girls who keep trying to lie about their weight when I'm sitting right there with a tape measure.

ANGEL. Why are you working at that dive? What's Bobby gonna say?

GUY. The money was too good to turn it down. I sound like a whore, don't I?

ANGEL. Not yet.

GUY. Thanks for the vote of confidence. And how was your day?

ANGEL. Terrible, thanks.

GUY. No luck, huh?

ANGEL. There are no singing jobs in Harlem. Period.

GUY. Well, it's not too late to take Deal up on her offer to teach you typing.

ANGEL. That isn't funny. I've been all over Harlem and nobody will even give me the time of day. There aren't any jobs doing anything, especially singing for your supper. Whole families sitting on the sidewalk with their stuff set out besides them. No place to sleep. No place to wash. Walking all day.

GUY. Listen, Sweetie ... I saw Nick.

ANGEL. You spoke to him?

GUY. He asked me where you were working and I had to confess you were between engagements.

ANGEL. It's all his fault, the sorry bastard.

GUY. He said he felt bad about what had happened and he gave me a number for you to call about an audition. A club downtown.

ANGEL. Really? Which one?

GUY. Here. *(Guy pulls paper from his pocket and hands it to Angel. She reads it, face falls for a minute, then she regroups and looks on the bright side.)*

ANGEL. I know this guy. He's a friend of Nick's. You know Tony T.

GUY. I've seen him around ...

ANGEL. Why'd you say it like that?

GUY. I just don't think he's looking for a singer.

ANGEL. *(A beat. She looks stunned.)* Nick wouldn't do that. *(Guy*

*is silent.)* He said an audition, right?

GUY. *(A beat.)* You can't make it real just because you want it to be.

ANGEL. Are you really going to Paris?

GUY. It's not the same thing.

ANGEL. Why isn't it? Because you're some kind of genius with a dream and I'm just a colored woman out of a job?

GUY. Is that your dream? Singing for gangsters? And then what?

ANGEL. Then I'll have to figure out something else. Isn't that what you always tell me? "One step at a time."

GUY. Okay. One step at a time. Audition. Sing your heart out and if he acts a fool, me and Sam will cut his heart out for him.

ANGEL. It's a deal.

GUY. Just don't ask me to make you anything to wear. I don't have time and I can't make time. You're on your own.

ANGEL. You can make twelve outfits for those Hole in the Wall floozies and not one little dress for me?

GUY. They're not floozies and their boss is paying enough to get me halfway to Paris.

ANGEL. How long can it take to run up one little dress?

GUY. Wear your suit. It still looks great on you.

ANGEL. Everybody's already seen it!

GUY. You're not going to let me say no, are you?

ANGEL. Not if I can help it.

GUY. I'll alter the suit ... slightly! And I'll make you a hat. That's my final offer.

ANGEL. I swear I will never ask you for anything again!

GUY. Let's have a drink before you make any more promises you can't possibly keep.

ANGEL. *(Innocently.)* Do we have anything? I thought we drank the last of that.

GUY. *(He goes to the bottle Angel has recently restashed. He squints at the level of the alcohol.)* Well, we didn't, but we're working on it. *(Pours two drinks. Hands one to Angel.)*

ANGEL. You know everywhere I went this week there were 20 people in line ahead of me. I've never seen things this bad all over. Nobody's working and nobody's got prospects.

GUY. For prospects, you gotta look past 125<sup>th</sup> Street. No law says we gotta live and die in Harlem, USA, just 'cause we happened to wind up here when we finally blew out of Savannah. The world is a big place!

ANGEL. Getting smaller every day.

GUY. No it isn't. I can look out of this very window and see us walking arm in arm down the Champs Élysées.

ANGEL. Remember how you used to take those old broke-up binoculars whenever we'd go to the beach at home? The only Negro in the world ever tried to see Paris from the coast of Georgia.

GUY. I am not! Langston said he used to ... oh, my God! I almost forgot! He's back!

ANGEL. Langston? Since when?

GUY. Since last Saturday. I ran into Bruce Nugent and he said the group is gathering at his place later for a welcome home. Everybody is going to be there. Want to go preen?

ANGEL. Can I wear your tux?

GUY. I'm wearing my tux! Why don't you go very femme? You'll probably be the only lady at this affair. Show them what they're missing.

ANGEL. I hate being the only girl. You always abandon me the first time some sweet young thing flutters his eyelashes at you, then I'm stuck the rest of the night making small talk with guys who are still pretending not to know why they came there.

GUY. Okay. Let's take Deal.

ANGEL. *(Laughing.)* Deal's not ready for one of Bruce's parties and you know it.

GUY. Well, it's time she got ready. Go ask her. We all deserve a night out!

ANGEL. I can return her chart, too, thank God!

GUY. I'm going to take a quick nap since Bruce's parties require one to be both ravishing and alert. Wake me at seven if you don't hear me up, will you? Dinner's at eight.

ANGEL. Dinner? How rich is Bruce's new lover?

GUY. It's just buffet, darling. He may have long money but he's not going to try and feed the entire Negro demimonde!

ANGEL. I'll wake you in plenty of time. *(She crosses the hall to knock on Delia's apartment door. Guy goes into the bedroom for his nap.)*

*Delia is working. She answers the door reluctantly.)*

ANGEL. Are you busy?

DELIA. Well, I'm working on some stuff for Reverend Powell.

ANGEL. But don't you want to hear the news? *(Delia pauses.)* It's good news.

DELIA. All right.

ANGEL. I'm not going to learn how to type. *(She hands the chart back to Delia.)* Want to know why?

DELIA. Why?

ANGEL. I got an audition!

DELIA. That's wonderful! Where?

ANGEL. A place downtown. The owner's a friend of Nick's. He's always wanted me to sing there so I think the audition is pretty much just for show.

DELIA. You should do that song you were singing on Sunday.

ANGEL. Those Italians don't care nothin' about no blues. They like hotsy-totsy girls, grinnin' and shakin' and singin' all at the same damn time. *(A beat.)* Can I tell you something?

DELIA. Sure ...

ANGEL. Guy got fired.

DELIA. How do you know?

ANGEL. I went to the club today to beg Bobby for my job back.

DELIA. What did he say?

ANGEL. They fired him the same night they did me!

DELIA. I mean about your old job.

ANGEL. Not a chance. Of course, he let me beg for a while before he said no. *(A beat.)* I couldn't figure out why Guy was taking work from dives like The Hole in the Wall, but he hasn't got any choice.

DELIA. He says it won't be for long. Just until ...

ANGEL. Don't say it! The myth of the magical Josephine. She practically lives with us but so far I haven't seen her share of the rent money!

DELIA. Guy says he expects to hear from her by the end of the month.

ANGEL. Guy says, Guy says! He's been sending her sketches for a year but have you seen a return cable? A letter? A postcard of the Eiffel Tower? Nothing! Nothing but that damn picture