

SCENE 8

*Lights up on STAGE 1*

AGED RALPH

Well, Jimmie as always was a man of hid word. The S.S. Mohawk pulled into New York Harbor on May 14th and Jimmie was at my office the next morning.

I must admit, I was absolutely stunned when I saw him. He easily looked ten years older than when I last visited and he appeared more drawn and haggard than I had ever seen him before. I told him I would simply not allow him to record a note until he got a couple days rest, so I immediately sent him back to the Manger Hotel.

I had one of my office boys, a fellow named Castro, be on call twenty-four hours a day.

Jimmie told me he'd brought his nurse along, but she wasn't the type to gather up any whiskey or whatnot if needed.

Anyway, Jimmie had no choice but to follow my orders.

Then, on Wednesday the 17th, we starting recording. After two long and strenuous days, we'd managed to record six sides.

It's a wonder he was able to record at all. As we found out later, his chest was filled with pain, his lungs nearly torn to shreds and his body living under the stupor of constant medication.

By the end of the second day, Jimmie was so weak he had to be carried to a cab in order to get him back to his hotel.

My staff stalled Jimmie off for any more recordings until Saturday, but he was only able to complete two sides that entire day.

We insisted he had to take a few days rest if he wanted to record any more. Without much of an argument, he agreed.

Remember I told you before that Jimmie was a smart fellow? Well, I still believe that to this day.

Which means Jimmie most certainly knew was what going on. He had to have known how sick he was. He had to have known what was coming. He had to have known what was about to happen to him.

Maybe as some sort of mental relief, Jimmie decided to travel up to New England and enjoy a few days in the pleasant Cape Cod weather. Accompanied by his nurse, Mrs. Bedell, Jimmie baked a bit in the sunshine, enjoyed the ocean views and got back a bit of his strength.

He had time to think as well.

*Lights down on STAGE 1.*

*Lights up on STAGE 2.*

*JIMMIE is at the beach sitting in a wheelchair, decked out in a street clothes and a straw hat. The sun is beginning to set. The waves are heard gently crashing in the background, along with an occasional seagull. MRS. BEDELL rolls JIMMIE into position so he can see the sunset better and takes her place behind his wheelchair.*

MRS. BEDELL

There, is that better Mr. Rodgers? Can you see that gorgeous sunset. This was certainly worth the trip up here I'd say.

*MRS. BEDELL walks around to the side of JIMMIE'S wheelchair and tucks the blanket across his lap and down around his legs.*

*JIMMIE says nothing, simply waving her off with a weak hand gesture.*

*MRS. BEDELL returns to her position behind JIMMIE'S wheelchair.*

*Music begins to play as JIMMIE sings.*

JIMMIE

(singing)

I'M GROWING TIRED OF THE BIG CITY LIGHTS,  
TIRED OF THE GLAMOR, AND TIRED OF THE SIGHTS,  
IN ALL OF MY DREAMS I AM ROAMING ONCE MORE,  
BACK TO MY HOME ON THAT OLD RIVER SHORE.

I AM SAD AND WEARY, FAR AWAY FROM HOME,  
MISS THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU, DEAR.  
DAYS ARE DARK AND DREARY EVERYWHERE I ROAM,  
MISS THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU.

ROAMING THE WIDE WORLD OVER,  
ALWAYS ALONE AND BLUE, SO BLUE.  
NOTHING SEEMS TO CHEER ME UNDER HEAVEN'S DOME,  
MISS THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU.

*Instrumental interlude begins.*

*MRS. BEDELL begins to dance to the music.*

*MRS. BEDELL stops dancing to the music.*

*Instrumental interlude ends.*

MEMORIES ARE BRINGING HAPPY DAYS OF YORE,  
MISS THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU, DEAR.  
MOCKINGBIRDS ARE SINGING 'ROUND THE CABIN DOOR,  
MISS THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU.

ROAMING THE WIDE WORLD OVER,  
ALWAYS ALONE AND BLUE, SO BLUE.  
LONGING FOR MY HOMELAND, MUDDY WATER SHORE,  
MISS THE MISSISSIPPI AND YOU.

(yodeling)

*Lights down on STAGE 2.*