

see. I wrote that damn song for her an' it always make me think of her, and that night just happen to be the same date as the day she died an' I flat-ass couldn't sing it. In this country you better move on your pocket book instead of on your feelin's sweetheart or you're gonna find yourself way up shit's creek without no paddle. I sung in a club in Harlem once for six or seven hours and they told me my drinks was all they was payin' me. But that was right after I come out of prison. An' that wasn't even a white man did that. That's why it's so nice singin' at Emerson's. Em's home to me. We're ol' drinkin' buddies, ain't we, Em? He married the sweetest bitch I ever met. Next to the Duchess. That was my Mom.

(PIANO PLAYER starts playing "CRAZY HE CALLS ME."
BILLIE begins singing almost automatically, but stops after singing only the following.)

[MUSIC # 6: CRAZY HE CALLS ME]

BILLIE. (singing)
I SAY I'LL MOVE THE MOUNTAIN AND I'LL MOVE
THE MOUNTAIN IF HE WANTS IT OUT OF THE WAY.
CRAZY HE CALLS ME. SURE I'M CRAZY. CRAZY
IN LOVE I'D SAY.

(Though SHE stops singing, PIANO PLAYER continues playing for a time, thinking SHE might re-join him.)

BILLIE. I'm not supposed to tell it, but Jimmy an' me is goin' to get married. As soon as my next divorce comes through. Ain't we, Jimmy? But he don't want me tellin' anybody. See, all I ever wanted was a beautiful home and some kids. Even just the kids. I love kids an' I never had any. Not even one.

BILLIE. (singing)
LIKE THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BOUGH, HE
MOVES ME WITH A SMILE
THE DIFFICULT I'D DO RIGHT NOW. THE
IMPOSSIBLE WILL TAKE A LITTLE WHILE.

I SAY I'LL CARE FOREVER AND I MEAN FOREVER
IF I HAVE TO HOLD UP THE SKY
CRAZY HE CALLS ME—SURE I'M CRAZY, CRAZY
IN LOVE AM I.

BILLIE. An' I want lots an' lots of kids. If I only coulda had me some kids I . . . I never would have . . . I'd never have got into no trouble. I'm sure of it. It's what I used to tell Sonny. Sonny Monroe, my first love. He wasn't my best, but he was my first. He was the worst one I ever had too. We was married but he didn't want no kids. Crazy he called me. But Sonny don't know Emerson's, do you, Sonny? I mean, Jimmy. He don't know, does he, Em? They used to be hangin' from the rafters in this place to see me in those days. I was hot shit. See, the disc jockey's say I'm not the same Lady Day, but what they don't know is you can only get to where you're at by the way of where you been. It don't matter if it's good or bad, you wouldn't be what or who you are now if you hadn't been whatever you was way back when. See, I KNOW who I am now is because of who I was THEN. What I am an' what I was come from wantin' Louis' feelin' and Bessie Smith's big sound. For the longest time imaginable that's all I was, was that longin' walkin' round on two legs. (laughs) When I was a stupid-ass kid in Baltimore I scrubbed the steps to the local fancy house run by a big ass woman named Alice Dean. She wore these humongus red velvet hats with bird-of-paradise feathers, see, so I wanted to buy one of those hats for the Duchess. That was my Mom. I didn't know those hats was kind of a walking advertisement for bitches who was sellin' it. (laughs) Mom didn't know that either. She wasn't too much older'n me an' she wasn't a hell of a lot smarter neither. She never did get more'n five feet tall and weighed eighty pounds while I was over 200 pounds by the time I was twelve. So we was pals like I was her sister. But at Alice Dean's house, see, I got to play these records till I practically wore them all out. Also that damn ol' wind-up victrola which was the only kind they had anywhere's in those days. That was about 1922 or three or so. See, at Miss Dean's Parlor and Entertainment Establishment the girls there was half colored. Whore houses or sportin' houses as they was called was the only place white folks and coloreds could meet. They sure wasn't allowed to meet in no church. And all those bitches at Miss Dean's cat house had all these damn Louis Armstrong records and Bessie Smith records and I was gassin' my fat ass out playin' 'em. That's when I started to sing. Was listenin' to those records. Especially listenin' to Pops. That's what we all called Louis Armstrong was Pops. He had this one song called "West Side Blues" and he'd go, "oh bee doh, oh bee doh-ee-doh," and I'd wonder why he didn't sing any words, and he'd have the most beautiful feelin' and I wanted that feelin'. And I also wanted Bessie's big sound, but my voice wasn't big like

that, so between the two of them I sort of got Billie Holiday. But Pops Armstrong and Bessie Smith on the victrola was sort of Mom and Pop to me.

Stop

(PIANO PLAYER plays lead-in to "CRAZY HE CALLS ME.")

BILLIE. Aw, come on, Jimmy. Don't pull that shit. These is my friends. (PIANO PLAYER stops immediately.) Jimmy's afraid I'm gonna get on a cryin' jag or somethin'. I'm not, Jimmy. I'm happy. (singing:) "Ooo, Ooo, Ooo. What a little moonlight can dooooo!" Relax, Jimmy. I'm okay. But I'm gonna be needin' a little moonlight before too long, so don't get your hopes up! That's what has Jimmy so upset. He worries about me. He gets so pissed with me. You know why? He has this notion that I'm better'n he is. Cause I'm the star, see. And that I oughta behave in some kinda unnatural ways. Or ways that is naturally superior. Shit. I know that ain't so. I told him that. I didn't travel through the South for nothin!. I know nobody's better'n anybody else. Less you're colored. Then you're better'n everybody. (laughs) No, I'm only kiddin'. I knew a nice white person. Once! (laughs) No. They're just like us. Only meaner. I'm kiddin'. Listen, honey. We all put on our drawers the same way: one leg at a time. There's only one main difference between the ofays and us colored. All our black's on the OUTside. (laughs) Somebody sayin' they're better than you don't make it so. No way, José! Nobody's better'n you are 'less you THINK they are. I been through all that shit. Shit. Ever fuckin' nigger who's ever been called a Nigger knows that. (laughs) Shit. I been through that shit. (to PIANO PLAYER:) How come you sit over there in the dark? How can you play in that dark? I can't. I need light. I want light. Music is light to me. Come on, Jimmy. Give us a Bessie number. Give us a little "PIG'S FOOT."

[MUSIC # 7: PIGS FOOT]

BILLIE. (singing)
 UP IN HARLEM EVER SATURDAY NIGHT
 WHEN THE Highbrows GET TOGETHER IT'S
 JUST TOO BRIGHT
 THEY ALL CONGREGATE AN' ALL-NIGHT HOP
 AND WHAT THEY DO IS BOP-A-DOP.
 OL' HANNAH BROWN FROM WAY CROSS TOWN

GETS FULL OF CORN
 AND STARTS BRINGIN 'EM DOWN
 AND AT THE BREAK OF DAY YOU CAN HEAR OL'
 HANNAH SAY:

GIVE ME A PIG'S FOOT AND A BOTTLE OF BEER
 SEND ME JAKE, I DON'T CARE
 I FEEL JUST LIKE I WANNA CLOWN
 GIVE THE PIANA PLAYER A DRINK BECAUSE HE'S
 BRINGIN' ME DOWN.
 HE'S GOT RHYTHM—YEAH—WHEN HE STOMPS
 HIS FEET
 HE SENDS ME RIGHT OFF TO SLEEP
 CHECK ALL YOUR RAZORS AND YOUR GUN
 WE'RE GONNA BE ARRESTED WHEN THE WAGON
 COMES
 GIVE ME A PIG'S FOOT AND A BOTTLE OF BEER
 SEND ME CAUSE I DON'T CARE.

GIVE ME A PIG'S FOOT AND A BOTTLE OF BEER
 SEND ME JAKE, I DON'T CARE
 I FEEL JUST LIKE A WANTA CLOWN
 GIVE THE PIANA PLAYER A DRINK BECAUSE HE'S
 BRINGIN' ME DOWN.
 HE'S GOT RHYTHM—YEAH—WHEN HE STOMPS
 HIS FEET

HE MOVE ME RIGHT OFF TO SLEEP
 CHECK ALL YOUR RAZORS AND YOUR GUN
 WE'RE GONNA BE ARRESTED WHEN THE WAGON
 COMES
 GIVE ME A PIG'S FOOT AND A BOTTLE OF BEER
 SEND ME CAUSE I DON'T CARE
 SEND ME CAUSE I DON'T CARE.

(BILLIE begins talking even though the song is not over and PIANO PLAYER continues playing through the end of the number.)

BILLIE. I love those damn pig's feet, an' I cook 'em good, too. I boil 'em and then bake 'em in a real hot oven 'til they crisp as potato chips, an' then put barbeque sauce on 'em. Umm. Them and red beans is my favorite. My Mom, the Duchess, taught me