

MISS FIRECRACKER CONTEST:

CARNELLE AND POPEYE AUDITION SIDE

POPEYE: Maybe I should go on and get your measurements off you right now if ya don't mind.

CARNELLE: Oh, no, no. Fine. Go ahead. All right.

POPEYE: I just need a few.

CARNELLE: Take all you want. I'll just stand here. *[Strikes a pose]* Just natural. Is this okay with you? This stance right here?

POPEYE: Sure.

CARNELLE: My, I feel like a model or something. Very elegant. Of course, that's exactly what I should be doing. Modeling, that is. People have told me that. They say, "Carnelle, why do you keep slaving away at Slater's Jewelry Shop? You should be up in Memphis working as a model. You really should."

POPEYE: You can just relax.

CARNELLE: What? Oh, I'm fine. Just fine.

POPEYE: Alright.

CARNELLE: You know you do this very well. Expertly, in fact. Of course, you come highly recommended to me from Miss Celia Lily. She says you've done some really fine work in her shop. She says you seem really experienced to her.

POPEYE: Well, I'm that for sure. See, I been making clothes practically all my life. Started out when I was four years old.

CARNELLE: Oh, really?

POPEYE: Used to make little outfits for the bullfrogs that lived out around our yard.

CARNELLE: Bullfrogs! Yuck!

POPEYE: They was funny looking creatures.

CARNELLE: But why didn't you design clothes for your dolls?

POPEYE: We din't have no dolls.

CARNELLE: Oh, how sad.

POPEYE: Them frogs was okay.

CARNELLE: But what kind of clothes could you design for a frog? They'd look ugly in anything.

POPEYE: Well...one thing was a nurse's suit. Oh, and I remember a queen's robe and a cape of leaves. Different things.

CARNELLE: Well, I certainly hope you don't think of me as any bullfrog.

POPEYE: Huh?

CARNELLE: I mean, think I'm ugly like one of those dumb bullfrogs a yours.

POPEYE: Oh, I don't.

CARNELLE: Well, of course, you don't. I was just joking.

POPEYE: Oh.

CARNELLE: Are you about done?

POPEYE: Mostly. This here's all I need. There. Done.

MAC SAM AND CARNELLE AUDITION SIDE

MAC SAM: Hey! Red! Where ya going?

CARNELLE: Mac Sam! Dammit! I didn't want anyone to see me.

MAC SAM: Well, I saw ya. How ya been ?

CARNELLE: Oh, alright.

MAC SAM: Hey, you sure blew up this afternoon.

CARNELLE: I know it.

MAC SAM: Well, you really did explode.

CARNELLE: I know. I'd never been so mad as I was. And I spit out at everyone. I just spit at them. Oh! That's so awful it's almost funny!

MAC SAM: Hell, it was the best part of it!

CARNELLE: Oh, I don't know. I better get my stuff out of here.

MAC SAM: You know, I went looking for you after the parade. Where'd you get off to?

CARNELLE: Oh, nowhere. Just out walking by the railroad tracks.

MAC SAM: What were you doing down there?

CARNELLE: Kicking rocks. Thinking. I thought maybe I was a victim of broken dreams but then I thought maybe I wasn't. I was trying so hard t'belong all my life and I don't know. Oh, looks like Elaine came for her red dress. Anyway, I just don't know what you can, well, reasonably hope for in life.

MAC SAM: Not much, baby, not too damn much.

CARNELLE: But something-

MAC SAM: Sure. There's always eternal grace.

CARNELE: It'd be nice. Look, here, my frog's gone.

MAC SAM: Yeah. That Popeye set it loose.

CARNELLE: Oh well, I still have the suit.

MAC SAM: God, you're beautiful. I wouldn't trade those times we had together. Not for anything.

CARNELLE: Really?

MAC SAM: Not for a golden monkey.

CARNELLE: But how about—I mean—I gave you—

MAC SAM: Oh, the syph. Hell, I've got T.B., alcoholic's disease, rotting gut. I tell ya, I'm having fun taking bets on which part of me'll decay first: the liver, the lungs, the stomach, or the brain.

CARNELLE: It's getting late. I gotta go.

MAC SAM: Hey, listen, you want to go to the fireworks with ole, Mac Sam? We could spend a fine night together.

CARNELLE: No. I—I just need some rest. You'd be tiring me out awful fast.

MAC SAM: Yeah.

CARNELLE: I gotta get this out to the car. Goodbye, Mac Sam. Goodnight.

MAC SAM: Goodbye, baby. I'll always remember you as the one who could take it on the chin. Ah, well, on to the wisteria trees.

ELAIN AND CARNELLE AUDITION SIDE

ELAIN: I'm not myself—I'm just not myself. *[The phone rings]* If it's for me—say—say I'm resting.

CARNELLE: Hello...Oh, hello, Franklin...Yes, she's here...well, I think she decided not to stop by there...no, she's asleep now. She's gone to sleep...Well, wait just a minute, I'll go see. He wants me to go wake you up.

ELAIN: He what! Oh, how inconsiderate can he be! Why, I've been driving all day long in this blazing heat and he doesn't even care if I get my rest. You tell him I'm out dead with exhaustion and you absolutely cannot wake me.

CARNELLE: Franklin...I absolutely cannot wake her. She's out dead with exhaustion...Alright, I'll tell her. Bye, be. He says for you to please call him when you wake up.

ELAIN: Oh, he does, does he? Well, he can just sit and wait, cause I'm not calling him—not ever.

CARNELLE: Why not?

ELAIN: Listen Carnation, I think you should know something—I'm not just here on a visit.

CARNELLE: You're not?

ELAIN: No. I've left Franklin.

CARNELLE: What?!

ELAIN: Now, remember, it's a sworn secret and not a living soul is to find out.

CARNELLE: I won't say a word to anyone. I swear.

ELAIN: You see, I haven't told Franklin yet and he actually still believes everything is—bearable between us.

CARNELLE: I just can't believe all this. You were so in love. It seemed like Franklin loved you so much. I thought I wanted a man to love me that much.

ELAIN: yes; he did love me. But it just caused him to follow me around asking, "Do you love me? How much do you love me? Tell me how you love me," till I could shake him till he rattled.

CARNELLE: Then you don't love him anymore?

ELAIN: No. He makes me ill.

CARNELLE: How awful.

ELAIN: Yes.

CARNELLE: But what about your two little boys. They need a mother.

ELAIN: Oh, children manage in this world. Don't ask me about them.

CARNELLE: Gosh, Aunt Ronelle said you had it all up there in Natchez; everything—just like a queen in a castle.

ELAIN: I know. I did. I only hope I can stand to give it all up. We had such beautiful clocks. I must have a bath.

CARNELLE: Elain, what was it like—when you had it all?

ELAIN: Ah, Carnation! The abundance of treasures merely serves to underline the desperate futility of life.

CARNELLE: Oh—Tell me more—Please! Tell me more!

TESSY AND CARNELLE AUDITION SIDE

CARNELLE: Wheew! Brother. Thanks very much for the help.

TESSY: Sure. It's what I'm here for.

CARNELLE: Oh, look! Is this my dressing room? Is this mine?

TESSY: Uh huh. It's the only one left. The good ones have all been taken. You're running late, you know.

CARNELLE: Yes, I know. I was sewing on my dress. Things aren't going smoothly at all today. Oh, look! Now my hair piece is falling out. I worked all morning on that. So, is your sister nervous?

TESSY: Not really. I guess she knows she doesn't have a chance.

CARNELLE: What makes you say that?

TESSY: Well, she's not at all attractive. I'm amazed she ever got in the contest. I'm sure it's just cause the judges think she's some sort of concert pianist. But she just knows that one opus by Johann Sebastian Bach. I swear that's all she knows.

CARNELLE: Hmm, I suppose that talent part of the contest will count quite a bit.

TESSY: Well, she looks like a tank in her swim suit.

CARNELLE: She does?

TESSY: She's hump shouldered from practicing that one Johann Sebastian Bach opus on our piano all day long.

CARNELLE: What a shame.

TESSY: This is strictly confidential, but the word is out that the only real contenders for the Miss Firecracker crown are you and Caroline Jeffers.

CARNELLE: Oh, gosh, I don't know—

TESSY: It's the truth. Everyone's saying it. We're all agreed.

CARNELLE: Of course Caroline's really a lovely girl...

TESSY: Yeah, except for those yellow teeth.

CARNELLE: Well, I hear she took medicine for seizures that she had as a child and it scraped off most of her tooth enamel.

TESSY: I heard that too, but it doesn't matter.

CARNELLE: It doesn't?

TESSY: I really don't think the judges are interested in sentimentality—just the teeth themselves. That's a beautiful red dress. It's really very fine.

CARNELLE: Yes, it's beautiful. I'm just a little worried though. It just arrived from Natchez yesterday and, well, it didn't seem to fit me exactly right.

TESSY: What's wrong with the fit?

CARNELLE: Well, the waist was a little snug. But I worked on it this morning and added in this extra bit of material.

TESSY: Oh. Well. It looks a little funny. Well, I'd better go let Miss Blue know you're checked in. Oh. Mind if I borrow some of your hairspray?

CARNELLE: No, go ahead.

TESSY: Thanks. I, ah, hear your cousin Delmount's back in town.

CARNELLE: Yes, he's back.

TESSY: Well, you can tell him for me that I've forgiven him. I understand now that some men just don't have any self control. Just none at all. Think that'll hold?

CARNELLE: Uh huh.

TESSY: Anyway, tell him my Uncle Ferd's given us a new litter of Siamese kittens if he wants to drop b and see them. I know he always enjoyed animals.

CARNELLE: I'll tell him.

TESSY: Well, good luck. I'll be standing backstage running the contest. Let me know if any emergencies arrive.

CARNELLE: Alright.

TESSY: Give em H.

CARNELLE AUDITION SIDE

CARNELLE: I—don't—want—to—hear--it!! I wanted to win that contest. I cared about it. It was important to me. And I don't care how stupid and meaningless you think it was!! And what are you looking at? You never wanted me to win! You think I'm ugly. That's why you told me to wear that stupid mask over my face! I can't believe I ever wanted to be like you or that mean old monkey either! And why don't you get well!?! You make me *sick* you're so *sick*!! You look like shit!!! I tell you, I'm so mad I could spit! There! There, I spit! Look, if you come in last, you follow the float. I took a chance and I came is last; so, by God, I'm gonna follow that float!!