

Maggie's soaring soprano sweeps us to the heavens; Loudin's deep bass stirs our souls. Ella's playing is sublime. White directs with deep emotional passion; this music is clearly in *his* soul.

They crescendo with earth-shaking power...

"Alex Stephens"
5/22/22

CHOIR

*If you get there before I do,
Coming for to carry me home!
Tell all my friends I'm coming too.
Coming for to carry me home!*

... then melt into silence. Then we hear nothing. Except sniffles.

Lots of sniffles.

Facing the audience, the choir's eyes are wide with disbelief. They motion White to turn around. He does and gasps to see --

AN OCEAN OF FACES WEeping UNCONTROLLABLY.

The house explodes in applause. This singers bow in amazement.

LOBBY - AFTER THE CONCERT

BLESSED PANDEMONIUM - Frenzied fans swamp the choir for autographs. Concert promoters bombard them with business cards.

As White and Ella are off settling accounts, a party of Old World Southerners stagger up to the choir. Bennie is dumbstruck to recognize their leader.

BENNIE

Mr. Stephens!

Scene 1

Start → Alex, please.

STEPHENS

ALEXANDER STEPHENS, (Caucasian, 60), is an austere, craggy-faced scowler with daggered eyes and an executioner's scowl.

Yet he's in a wonder-filled stupor.

BENNIE

This is... uh... quite a surprise.

STEPHENS

Came for the main act, of course. But that music - *whoo mommy!* - I hardly knew what planet I was on. It was as if...

BENNIE

Sir?

STEPHENS

As if heaven herself, and all her light, were shining on us.

Suddenly unnerved, Stephens trades uneasy looks with his men, then goes on.

STEPHENS

How many invitations to perform so far?

MINNIE

Sixteen and counting, in five states.

STEPHENS

That's *paint thinner*. Your calendar's about to choke with ink.

IKE

(sullen, to the choir)

Time's up; Cravath's going to shut us down.

STEPHENS

Milo Cravath - we've crossed swords with that old dog. Trust me, he's gonna choke on his spit when he hears about this. Don't worry about him; you get ready.

TOM

For what?

STEPHENS

Why, to take this country by storm.

(eyes and sniffs them)

You'll need clothes, baths, and a damn sight more songs.

(pats Bennie's back)

Long live Fisk. Godspeed and God bless.

Suddenly stunned at his own benediction, Stephens shoots the choir a suspicious eye as if they've slipped him a mickey. Then he shrugs it off and glides away with his men whistling "Swing Low."

BENNIE

"Our Confederacy rests upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man, that slavery is his natural and normal state." Words of the honorable Alexander H. Stephens - Senator from Georgia, Vice President of the Confederacy... and apparently our newest fan.

The singers are astonished. Suddenly Stephens turns back.

STEPHENS

And for Jezreel's sake, my ass has
got a name!

End

A light goes off in their heads, and we hear --

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, LIVE ON
BROADWAY: THE FISK JUBILEE SINGERS!

-- and SMASH CUT TO:

THE JUBILEE SINGERS CONQUER AMERICA (MONTAGE WITH VIGNETTES)

JUBILEES
THIS IS THE YEAR OF JUBILEE,
MY LORD HAS SET HIS PEOPLE FREE!
I INTEND TO SHOUT AND NEVER STOP,
UNTIL I REACH THE MOUNTAIN TOP!

The Jubilees take America by storm, performing sensational shows to ravished audiences. Their rise to fame is meteoric: marquees blaze, media swarm, barbershops and beauty salons buzz with Jubilee news. Crowds weep and cheer as the spirituals pierce hearts of all races.

JUBILEES
WHEN YOU SEE THE LIGHTNING FLASHIN'
WHEN YOU SEE THE THUNDER CRASHIN'
GOOD NEWS, CHARIOTS COMIN'!

The spirituals slay the hardest of hearts. At --

LOVEJOY CONFEDERATE DINER

-- Ella, White and the choir defiantly dine under a NO COLOREDS sign amidst tables of CONFEDERATE CIVIL WAR REENACTORS. Suddenly the beefy MRS. LOVEJOY barrels in waving a furious MEAT CLEAVER at them.

MRS. LOVEJOY
OUT! OUT OF MY BISTRO! YOU TOO, WHITEY!
(to the Reenactors)
I am soooo sorry, it just hit me they's
real soots! I thought they was minstrels
on break!

Before the choir can react, bony MR. LOVEJOY charges into her face.

MR. LOVEJOY
Missus, let them be! They're the
Jubilees!

MRS. LOVEJOY
Don't Missus me! You put that sign up!