

Andrée obliges.

RENÉ MARAN

Well, for example, I was worried in writing Batouala that I am not African.

ALAIN LOCKE

But you served there?

RENÉ MARAN

As a Frenchman. My parents are from Guyana. I'm from Martinique. That I lived in central Africa for 15 years is a responsibility, a privilege, not an identity.

JANE NARDAL

Oh, but René, you do yourself disservice. The novel makes clear your loyalties.

Andrée re-enters, somewhat speechless.

PAULETTE NARDAL

Andrée?

Josephine Baker walks in. In daily life, she is as civilized as in character she mimes savagery. With a knee-length skirt and matching geometric coat and hat, she could be anyone's patron.

The room is quiet.

PAULETTE NARDAL

Miss Baker. We've haven't had the pleasure. Take off your things.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

I won't stay.

Alain rises.

ALAIN LOCKE

No, it's an honor.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

You're not French.

ALAIN LOCKE
(smiles)

No.

JANE NARDAL
Just as I would have expected.

JOSEPHINE BAKER
You must be Jane.

JANE NARDAL
And you must be here for me.
Andrée, give her some Pâté Creole.
She likes bananas so much; perhaps
she should try the real thing.

Andrée starts towards Josephine.
Josephine shakes her head.

ANDRÉE NARDAL
I love your music.

Josephine looks around. She takes a step towards the
upright piano, nodding at Alice, who nods back.
Josephine touches a fern; the room is becoming her stage.

JOSEPHINE BAKER
I'd heard you grew up well in
Martinique, that your home was
always full of music.
(beat)
Is that true?

René looks at Paulette.

PAULETTE NARDAL
Thank you. Yes, our parents built
a beautiful life.

JOSEPHINE BAKER
I didn't grow up that way.

JANE NARDAL
Josephine, I won't apologize for
my writing. You indulge every
possible stereotype.

Paulette puts her hand on Jane, who softens.

JANE NARDAL (CONT'D)

My sister is a peacemaker. I, of course, meant nothing personal.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

Well, here I am: a person.
Yes, I fulfill some fantasies. But I'm paid well.

Jane scoffs.

Alain tries to interject.

Josephine puts him off.

JOSEPHINE BAKER (CONT'D)

I'm going to embrace this, even if it's... compromising.

ALAIN LOCKE

Surely your description does your work disservice.

PAULETTE NARDAL

I think your work quite complex. It marries the modern with the savage, and uses the libido as a lure.

Josephine was not expecting support.

JANE NARDAL

Look, you know I prefer the Bal negre, Josephine. You know I think it champions black expression. It's a space for the distinct voice of the Antilles.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

And perhaps you're lucky to know that environment as authentic, but guess what? Whites look on there too, and they see the savage still, only now they can pretend they've visited a natural habitat.

Paulette has had time to collect herself.

PAULETTE NARDAL

Josephine, we appreciate you.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

Paulette, I know you're not your
sister. I know you bring together
all sorts of minds.

PAULETTE NARDAL

My sister's included.

JANE NARDAL

You won't divide our family,
especially not in our home.

JOSEPHINE BAKER

And I don't mean to!
I mean to say...
White audiences will essentialize
us all. I think it's important for
us, as black people, and as women,
to support each other.

ALAIN LOCKE

Here Here.

He gets up and pours Josephine a cup of tea.
René gets up too and refills others' cups.

RENÉ MARAN

Indeed. What is it you're always
saying, Paulette?

She stands to toast.

PAULETTE NARDAL

And never has it been more true.

Josephine looks confused.

JANE NARDAL

"Black is beautiful", she says,
Josephine. All the time.

PAULETTE NARDAL

Black is beautiful.

They drink.

JANE NARDAL

People will remember you, Josephine.

PAULETTE NARDAL

And despite our best efforts, who
knows if we'll touch them as do
you.

CUT TO:

16. INT. PAYOT OFFICES - DAY

A BELL rings as Paulette opens the door of the publisher
Payot, the light streaming in from the street onto walls of
books and notices. She carries with her a manuscript.

The room is empty, and she fingers a book on a table:
Hemingway's *THE SUN ALSO RISES* has just come out.

Next to it is Yevgeny Zamyatin's book, *WE*, in English.

PAYOT (V.O.)

Careful with that.

Paulette looks up.

Payot is an aging Frenchman, approaching her now from the
back.

PAYOT

Too bad it hasn't been published
yet in his own Russian, but...

He shrugs.

They kiss cheeks.

PAYOT (CONT'D)

What have you brought me?

She reveals her manuscript and Locke's book.

PAULETTE NARDAL

The New Negro, my translation.

PAYOT

Ah, you are amazing. All those
voices.

He takes the English version from her to
look at.