

Bobbie Gentry, Fancy

"Well, I remember it all very well lookin' back
It was the summer that I turned eighteen.
We lived in a one-room, run down shack
on the outskirts of New Orleans.
We didn't have money for food or rent
to say the least we was hard-pressed
when Momma spent every last penny we had
to buy me a dancin' dress.
Well, Momma washed and combed and curled my hair,
then she painted my eyes and lips.
Then I stepped into the satin dancin' dress.
It had a split in the side clean up to my hips.
It was red, velvet-trimmed, and it fit me good
and standin' back from the lookin' glass
was a woman
where a half grown kid had stood.
She said, "Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down!
Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down.
God forgive me for what I do,
but if you want out girl it's up to you.
Now get on out, you better start sleepin' uptown."
Momma dabbed a little bit of perfume
on my neck and she kissed my cheek
Then I saw the tears welling up
in her troubled eyes as she started to speak
She looked at our pitiful shack and then
she looked at me and took a ragged breath
She said, Your Pa's runned off, and I'm real sick
and the baby's gonna starve to death.
She handed me a heart-shaped locket that said
"To thine own self be true"
and I shivered as I watched a roach crawl across
the toe of my high-healed shoe
It sounded like somebody else was talkin'
askin', "Momma what do I do?"
She said, "Just be nice to the gentlemen, Fancy.
They'll be nice to you."
She said, "Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down!
Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down.
God forgive me for what I do,
But if you want out girl it's up to you
Now don't let me down,
now get on out, you better start sleepin' uptown."
That was the last time I saw my momma
when I left that rickety shack
The welfare people came and took the baby.
Momma died and I ain't been back.
But the wheels of fate had started to turn
and for me there was no other way out.
It wasn't very long after that I knew exactly
what my momma was talkin' 'bout.
I knew what I had to do.
Then I made myself this solemn vow:
I's gonna to be a lady someday
though I didn't know when or how.
But I couldn't see spendin' the rest of my life
with my head hung down in shame.
You know I mighta been born just plain [W]hite trash.
but Fancy was my name.
She said, "Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down!
Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down.
God forgive me for what I do,
but if you want out girl it's up to you.
Now get on out, you better start sleepin' uptown."

Wasn't long after that a benevolent man
took me in off the streets
One week later I was pourin' his tea
in a five roomed penthouse suite.
Since then I've charmed a king, a congressman
and an occasional aristocrat
and I got me an elegant Georgia mansion
and a New York townhouse flat.
Now I ain't done bad
Now in this world there's a lot of self-righteous
hypocrites who call me bad.
They criticize Momma for turning me out
No matter how little we had.
But I haven't had to worry 'bout nothin'
now for nigh on fifteen years
But I can still hear the desperation
in my poor mommas voice ringin' in my ears.
"Here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down!
Oh, here's your last chance, Fancy, don't let me down.
God forgive me for what I do,
but if you want out girl it's up to you.
Now get on out, you better start sleepin' uptown."