

Johnny's Blues Heart

By

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The true life story of Grammy award winning blues
ambassador Johnny Clyde Copeland

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1 INT. JOHNNY'S HOME - EVENING 1

A middle aged, charcoal colored Johnny Clyde Copeland sits staring out of his window, softly strumming his guitar. The radio is on in the background, when the radio DJ announces one of Johnny's earlier songs. As he picks up his lit cigarette from an ashtray, takes a drag. There is a blank look on his face as the music takes him back.

DISSOLVE

2 INT. YOUNG JOHNNY'S BEDROOM - MORNING 2

1950, the camera closes in on a handsome young boy the color of midnight. He is zoned in on his guitar. He jumps to attention from the voice of his MOTHER, from another room.

MOTHER

Johnny if you don't get your narrow
ass to school, I'ma come in there.
And you don't wanna know what I'ma
do with that guitar.

3 EXT. OUTSIDE - MORNING 3

Young Johnny is running frantically towards his school bus that pulls off and leaves before he gets there. He slams his school books to the ground.

4 EXT. OUTSIDE - MORNING 4

Young Johnny is walking to school singing at the top of his lungs.

5 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING 5

The teacher is in front of the class teaching her lesson. Young Johnny's head is bobbin back and forth, trying to fight the sleep. He finally succumbs. his neighbor ROBERT reaches over and hits him.

ROBERT

(whispers)

Hey man, you better wake up. You
know she don't play.

Young Johnny lifts and turns his head in anguish, in acknowledgment.

ROBERT

(whispers)

Another late night ha? That guitar
gone kill you. If Mrs. Hathaway
don't do it first.

(CONTINUED)

(quiets and straightens up
when he sees Mrs. Hathaway
stare at him.)

6 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

6

The bell rings and all of the students jump up and begin to exit. Robert and Johnny walk out into the school hallway together.

ROBERT

Man I ain't gone keep saving you
and not get paid for it.

JOHNNY

Who you saving? Man the I'm the
last somebody Mrs. Hathaway gone
give problems to. You hear how she
always tell me how black and
handsome I am.

ROBERT

You right. But, see how handsome
you is in Mr. Drummond class you is
for next period. Without me in
there too, I bet you be in the
principal's office. I could see if
you was Muddy Waters, but you more
like well water.

Johnny and Robert starts to wrestle in the hallway before the bell sounds again and the both run off to their next class.

7 INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

7

Young Johnny's mother and FATHER is sitting with one of Young Johnny's TEACHERS in conference.

TEACHER

Honestly Mr. and Mrs. Copeland
Johnny is one of the most
delightful students I have ever
had, extremely mannerable. It's
just that sometimes, his head seems
to be somewhere else. He is
completely detached from what is
going on.

FATHER

Damn music! I promise you that
won't be a problem after tonight.

(CONTINUED)

MOTHER

(takes a firm grasp to her
husband's arm)

I truly apologize, but Johnny has
had to tend to schoolwork and
chores. I promise you we will have
him prepared and attentive from
this point on.

8

INT. DINNER TABLE - EVENING

8

Young Johnny and his family has their head bowed in prayer.

FATHER

(raises his head)

Pass the chicken babe.

(places a couple of pieces on
his plate and passes the
container)

Johnny what's wrong with you boy?

Johnny looks surprised.

FATHER

You know we went to your school and
sat down with all of your teachers.
I took an evening off from work
just to hear them tell me you some
lazy bum. And you know we can't
afford that.

MOTHER

Jacob!

FATHER

(looks at Young Johnny's
mother intently)

You remember when I let you keep
that God forsaken guitar?

JOHNNY

Yes sir.

FATHER

And what did I tell you?

JOHNNY

That I had better make sure I was a
man about my business.

FATHER

Always! And have you been being a
man about it?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Pops...

FATHER

Yes or no? Have you been being a man about it?

JOHNNY

No sir.

FATHER

A guitar can't feed no family. And don't no woman want a man who can't be a man. Understand?

(before Johnny can even reply)

That guitar is off limits to you. From now on you will spend your evenings after school tending to your lessons and chores. After dinner I want you to sit that guitar in my room and forget bout it. I shouldn't have ever bought it and let you quit boxing.

Johnny looks at his mother and she drops her head.

9

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

9

Johnny is washing dishes, when his mother walks up, places dishes in the sink, and whispers to him.

MOTHER

You know where it'll be. Just make sure you are done and it's put up before your father gets home.

Johnny and his mother looks at each other and share a private laugh.

MOTHER

Besides, I always thought your face was too handsome to be punched on.

She gently kisses his cheek and walks off. Johnny stares at his faint reflection in the window.

10

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - EVENING

10

4 years later the school's gymnasium is packed for a school dance. A group of musicians stop playing music, starts gathering their instruments and exiting stage when a young MC steps on stage.

(CONTINUED)

MC

(responding to the crowd's
cheer's)

Yes, yes. Everyone give it up one
more time for Lover's Lane. One
more time, Lover's Lane!

(As Lover's Lane exit stage
they pass by an anxious Johnny
side stage)

JOHNNY

Man, y'all tore it up!

MC

Now we come to the the time for
what we've all been waiting on. Our
very own local superstar. This boy
gone travel the world and remember
who told you. Jack Yates give it up
for JOHNNY COPELAND! I said JOHNNY
COPELAND!

As the MC and Johnny pass eachother, Johnny whispers in his
ear.

JOHNNY

I told you it was Johnny Clyde.

The young MC just looks at him, frowns, and brushes him off.

Johnny takes center stage, in front of the mic and plugs his
guitar in.

JOHNNY

I'm sure most of you have heard
this before. And I'm sure it's a
favorite. Mine and yours.

(Johnny bursts into a furious
song and the entire crowd
starts dancing.)

11 INT. BACKSTAGE - EVENING

11

Johnny is glowing and energetic. A fellow CLASSMATE
approaches him.

CLASSMATE

Man! you tore it down out there.

JOHNNY

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CLASSMATE

Naw, I probably should thank you.

JOHNNY

Huh?

CLASSMATE

I don't know if you know or not,
but my auntie is Mamie.

JOHNNY

Don't know?! Come on man. You can't
be from 3rd ward and not know who
Mamie is.

CLASSMATE

Oh so you've heard of her? Well,
just so happens she's looking for a
new act to play on her Thursdays.
It's paying little to nothing and
the crowd is a cemetery but I'm
willing to bet with your name and
following all that's gone change
quick, fast, and in a hurry. Show
up tomorrow before noon and tell
her Bandit sent you.

JOHNNY

Man you sure about that? Mamie
ain't about that foolishness.

CLASSMATE

Trust me. You the future of third
ward.

A proud smile overtakes Johnny's face as he nods his head.

12

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - MORNING

12

MAMIE is sitting on a chair going over paperwork with one of
her loyal employees when Johnny walks into her path of
light. A frail looking woman, Mamie looks up with the
arrogance of Satan.

MAMIE

(without looking up)

I don't know who you is but you
must be close to The Almighty.

JOHNNY

(struggling to find his words)

I'm Johnny Clyde.

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE

And.

JOHNNY

Bandit sent me. He said you was looking for somebody to play your Thursdays.

MAMIE

Well you ain't him, Johnny Clyde...

JOHNNY

Copeland.

MAMIE

Copeland? As in Ruthie Lee baby?

JOHNNY

Yes ma'am.

MAMIE

Boyyy, I haven't seen you since you was knee high to a gnat's behind. I tell you what baby, since Ruthie Lee is a good friend, I'll give you the chance to impress me and if you don't I won't kill you for wasting my time.

JOHNNY

(nervously adjusts his necktie)

I appreciate it.

MAMIE

(waves him off while attending to her paperwork and finances)

Mmm-hmmm.

Johnny walks to the stage. He cuts into a ferocious tune. Mamie can't help but lift her head up. She looks at her worker, who is looking at her in disbelief. For a minute they just sit mesmerized at the power of Johnny's gruff and gravel sounding voice. Mamie hops up from her seat and walks toward the stage.

MAMIE

(trying to come across as unbothered)

Ok, ok. That was Alright. I could possibly use you. First off can you be out late?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
(nervously replies)
Yeah...I think...

MAMIE
You think? Either you a man or a
baby that gotta be in the house
before the sun goes down.

Mamie's goon has a hearty chuckle at Johnny's expense.

JOHNNY
(deepens his voice and
responds forcefully)
Yeah I can be out late.

MAMIE
Well, how long could you play
Thursday night.

JOHNNY
As long as you need me.

MAMIE
Alright. Give me ten to twelve and
I'll give you twenty dollars.

JOHNNY
(excited)
Ten to twelve! I'ma give you the
best two hours of music anybody
ever heard.

MAMIE
Yeah ok. Just make sure you're here
by nine. And keep your hands off
the booze. Not on my watch

JOHNNY
I don't drink at all. Well not what
you...
(stops short as Mamie gives
him a piercing stare)

MAMIE
Good. Now is it only you or do you
have a band? Because if I have to
supply the band I'm knocking off
ten dollars.

JOHNNY
No ma'am. I got a band.

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE

Well Thursday. Nine o' clock at the latest.

(turns to walk away as Johnny begins to unhook his guitar)

And Johnny Clyde Copeland...

JOHNNY

Ma'am?

MAMIE

Don't make me have to look for you. Because I won't be the only one.

JOHNNY

No ma'am. Not at all.

13

EXT. JOE GUITAR'S PORCH - AFTERNOON

13

Johnny stands on Joe Guitar's porch, with his guitar and knocks on the door. It swings open to reveal AUBREY'S MOM, a stout middle aged woman.

JOE'S MOM

Now who the hell...? Wait don't I know you? Yeah. You that li'l Copeland boy.

JOHNNY

Yes ma'am.

JOE'S MOM

(eyes Johnny's guitar at his side)

You must be here for Aubrey. Mmm-hmm. He around back, with the rest of them knuckleheads, keeping up all that racket. Can't even enjoy the Lord's day.

JOHNNY

Thank you ma'am.

JOE'S MOM

Yeah ok.

Johnny exits the porch and walks to the backyard.

14

EXT. JOE GUITAR'S BACK YARD - AFTERNOON

14

Joe Guitar stands behind his guitar barking at his bandmates, STEVE and CORNELIUS.

JOE

Cornelius, man you keep falling behind the groove. You gotta keep them drums thumping. And Steve man you just all over the place.

CORNELIUS

Man you just playing too fast. This is where the groove is.
(Cornelius goes hard with a drum pattern.)

Johnny appears from around the corner of the house. He stops at a distance and witnesses Cornelius zoning out.

JOE

(waving his hands at Cornelius)
Alright! Alright! I got you.
(then he brings attention to Johnny)
Well look-a here. Look who's presence we have the pleasure of being blessed with Mr. Johnny Clyde. What brings the high and mighty down off of his mountain.

JOHNNY

Awww man, stop it. If anybody is running the scene around here it's you cool cats.

CORNELIUS

So what brings you by here daddy-o? You wanna sit in on our jam session.

JOHNNY

Something like that.

STEVE

What you got shaking man?

JOHNNY

I got a gig man.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Oh yeah? At what school?

JOHNNY

No school. Mamie's.

There is a brief silence.

CORNELIUS

Mamie's? How you land that?

JOHNNY

Well it's on Thursday night, ten
til twelve.

STEVE

Aww man. Don't nothing be happening
there on no Thursday night.

JOE

How you know?

STEVE

What? You forgot who my brother is.
I know what night jumping at every
spot and Mamie's is dead wood on
Thursday. Everybody be at The Red
Rooster that night.

CORNELIUS

Anyway, why does that bring you by
here brother man?

JOHNNY

First I told her I had a band.

JOE

Wait. I never seen you perform with
a...

(a light bulb goes off in his
head)

Ooooooh!

STEVE

(speaks as if he is a
detective who just solved a
case)

You want us to play with you. Now
why would we do that what's in it
for us?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Five dollars for two hours.

JOE

She's willing to pay us?

CORNELIUS

Man we ain't ever been paid to play.

JOHNNY

Yep. And the way I see it, if Thursday isn't her night and we turn it into her...excuse me OUR night, we might can get paid more than just five dollars.

STEVE

You plan on trying to negotiate with Mamie. This dude must not know who he talking bout.

JOHNNY

Hey! Mamie is a businesswoman first and foremost. She knows when something is good for business and I'm sure she's willing to take care of us, for the sake of good business. So are y'all in?

JOE

Well if we gone be good enough we better put in the work. All we got is four days.

Johnny takes his place in the new quartet.

JOHNNY

(looks over his shoulders)
Three days.

STEVE

Hold up. Thursday is in four days.

JOHNNY

Three days, trust me.
(nonchalantly changes the question)
So do ya'll know Walking My Baby Back Home?

(CONTINUED)

GROUP
(in unison)

Yeah.

JOHNNY
Ok. 1, 2. 1, 2, 3, and.

The band breaks into song.

15 INT. WOLF'S DEPARTMENT STORE - NOON

15

Three days later Johnny is inside of the clothing store, at the epicenter of Third Ward, talking to WOLF, an elderly white man with heavy Jewish features.

WOLF
So you want me to allow you to stand out in front of my spot and perform is what you saying.

JOHNNY
If you don't mind. We are just a young band that's trying to make a name for ourself.

WOLF
And you think standing outside of my store is going to get you the name you look for.

JOHNNY
It is the place where everybody who has a name comes. You gotta be somebody if you come here.

WOLF
(smiles and kind of blushes from the admiration)
You pretty slick kid. I tell you what you got it. Just do me two favors.

JOHNNY
You got it.

WOLF
Don't block my door and when you get that name you're searching for, don't forget where you got it from.

JOHNNY
I promise.

Johnny turns enthusiastically nearly running away. Robert is fantasizing and inspecting all of the clean suits and amenities when Johnny grabs him and pulls him out of the door.

16 EXT. OUTSIDE WOLF'S - NOON 16

Aubrey, Tee, and Kenny is waiting outside with their equipment when Johnny and Robert bounce out of the door.

JOE
(anxiously)
Well what did he say?

JOHNNY
(pretending to be downtrodden)
He said don't block his door.

The entire clique explodes.

17 EXT. OUTSIDE WOLF'S - AFTERNOON 17

The group is off to the side of Wolf's performing with all of their heart. It is a high traffic area people walking by and a constant flow of cars.

Robert is working the streets handing out flyers to different people on the streets and walking into the street stopping cars to hand someone inside a flyer.

Robert especially targets any woman he sees passing by. Occasionally sparking up conversations and getting a few to write their number down on the back of one of the flyers.

After they finish their set and begin to congratulate eachother a voice from across the street calls out to them. They all turn to see a car parked across the street with the DRIVER hanging partly out of the window.

DRIVER
(yells)
Hey fellas, nice job.

JOHNNY
(yells back)
Thanks!

DRIVER
So is this your set up here?

JOHNNY
No sir. We're at Mamie's every
Thursday night from ten to twelve.

(CONTINUED)

DRIVER

Cool. I might have to come y and check y'all out.

JOHNNY

Please do.

DRIVER

So what do you call your band?

JOHNNY

The Dukes of Rhythm.

DRIVER

So when and where you said you would be again.

JOHNNY

(nudges Robert with an aggravated whisper)

Go give him a flyer.

ROBERT

(pushes back)

Hell naw. This my last one and it got all these females numbers on it.

JOHNNY

(yells so that he knows the gentleman retrieves the information)

We'll be at Mamie's on Thursday. We hit stage at ten.

DRIVER

Got ya.

The driver pulls back into his vehicle, puts the car in drive and drives off.

JOE

(with a sense of agitation)

You didn't speak to us about changing the name of the group.

ROBERT

Technically there wasn't a name change because this group never had a name.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Who is you to be speaking on group business?

ROBERT

Who am I? I'm your manager.

STEVE

Manager? I ain't got no manager.

AUBREY

You might be Hollywood's
(suggesting Johnny) manager but you
sho'll not mine.

CORNELIUS

Yeah I didn't agree to give anybody
a cut of my money.

JOHNNY

Everybody calm down. Robert is just
here to help. He's not asking for a
cut of anyone's money.

(Robert gives Johnny a
disturbed look)

And as for the name I didn't think
it would be fair if I just used my
name, just used your name, or said
Johnny Copeland and Lover's Lane.

JOE

At least you could have asked our
input, is all I'm saying.

JOHNNY

Truthfully, when I went to Mamie to
ask her would she get flyers
printed up for us, when she asked
me the name of the band, I froze.
And Dukes Of Rhythm was the first
thing I thought of.

STEVE

So Mamie printed up these flyers
for us.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

STEVE

For free?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Nope.

Joe, Steve, and Cornelius express their disgust.

JOE

So what did we have to give up?

JOHNNY

Y'all didn't have to give up anything. I gave up my five dollars.

CORNELIUS

As long as it ain't coming out my pocket.

JOHNNY

Yes sir. Man I know we gonna hit big. I can feel it.

18 INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

18

Johnny and his posse all stroll into Mamie's front door pass one of her goons. The club is empty except for Mamie and BETTY JEAN, the most beautiful young female Johnny has ever laid his eyes on, who is diligently cleaning.

MAMIE

There go my superstars.
(checks her pocket watch)
Eight - thirty. Now that's what I like to see men that's on time and ready to work. You all are ready to work?

JOHNNY

Yes ma'am we surely are Mamie.
(with his eyes looking over Mamie's shoulder at Betty Jean)
So how you doing this fine evening?

Betty Jean is stealing glances at Johnny and smiling.

MAMIE

Betty Jean go make sure everything is in order in the back.

BETTY JEAN

(scurrying off with a bit of fear)
Yes madea.

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE

(addressing Johnny directly)
Booze ain't the only thing you
better make sure you keep your
hands off of. We clear?

The rest of the band looks partly confused.

JOHNNY

Crystal.
(recenters himself)
Mamie allow me the pleasure to
introduce you to everyone. This is
Joe Guitar Hughes. He plays the
lead.

JOE

How you doing Mamie?

MAMIE

Well. Ain't Kathy your moma?

JOE

Yes ma'am.

MAMIE

And she don't mind you being in
here?

JOE

No ma'am. She said after what she
went through with me and this
guitar, it's bout time it start
paying off.

MAMIE

(enjoys a quick and short
laugh)
Ain't that the truth.

JOHNNY

This is Cornelius. He plays drums.

MAMIE

Corneliu? Cornelius? Where I know
that name from. Oh I know! You used
to play with my grandson Marvin.

CORNELIUS

Marvin! That used to be my best
friend. How has he been. I haven't
heard from him since they moved to
Detroit.

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE

Last I heard he was fine.

JOHNNY

This is Steve. He plays the bass.

MAMIE

I swear to God you look just like this nigga named Silver.

STEVE

(proudly)

That's my older brother.

MAMIE

I hope you ain't nothing like him. He always got some shit going on. I really let his ass make it the other night. Back there slicking them niggas on them dice. I shoulda let em tear his ass from the bone. Don't let me catch you indulging.

STEVE

(earnestly)

No ma'am, not me. I don't indulge at all.

MAMIE

Good. Keep it that way.

JOHNNY

Last but not least, this is our manager Robert T. Turner.

MAMIE

I definitely done seen you before. You be over there by the track with Eagle and Chappie nem.

Robert was a peacock.

MAMIE

So what you think you some kind of pimp in training.

All of the fellas laugh at Robert.

MAMIE

Let me tell you something. In here, you are like my family, which means you are my responsibility and I take that seriously. I just ask you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE (cont'd)
 remain respectful at all times and
 do your job like a professional. If
 you have any request or problem at
 all, just get at one of my people
 and they will assure that you are
 accommodated.

(A healthy gentleman appears
 from the back and signals
 Mamie)

And one more thing. In here you
 have The Lord and the law and their
 both on my side. you understand?

All of the young men agree heartily, making sure Mamie knows
 there is no miscommunication.

MAMIE
 Now you gentlemen must excuse me. I
 have more pressing matters to
 attend to. Make yourself at home.
 (looks at Kenny then squarely
 at Johnny)
 But not too much at home.

Mamie exits her barstool and leaves, when the hulking door
 man quickly makes up her rear.

19

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

19

The Dukes of Rhythm is on stage tuning up with Robert
 sitting right at the front. Betty Jean walks back in and
 stands behind the bar. Her and Johnny lock eyes. Johnny
 stops mid-performance.

JOHNNY
 You know, I could really use a
 drink of water.

STEVE
 (from the background)
 Man that nigga bout to get hisself
 killed.

Johnny unstraps his guitar and exits the stage.

ROBERT
 (as Johnny passes by him he
 squeals)
 What you doing?

Johnny ignores all sensibilities and strolls to the bar.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

What a dude gotta do to get a cold glass of water around here?

BETTY JEAN
(sarcastically)

Ask!

JOHNNY

Oh, that's all? I was sure it took more than that.

BETTY JEAN
Well, the Bible says ask and you shall receive.

JOHNNY

Well what if I ask for more than water? Will I receive?

BETTY JEAN
(gives him an unappreciative look)
You don't even know who I am.

JOHNNY

Yes I do. I've seen you before. I'm just trying to call where exactly.

BETTY JEAN
You really have some nerve.
(as she pushes his drink to him)

JOHNNY

Why such a cold shoulder beautiful?

BETTY JEAN
Maybe because my locker has been right across from yours a full year and you don't know who I am.

JOHNNY

I knew your face was too familiar.
(with an air of confidence)
Betty Jean! Betty Jean Collins!

Betty Jean smiles a sly smile.

BETTY JEAN
Oh so you know me now?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

I been noticed you. But I had given up hope of ever talking to someone as gorgeous as you. Don't you supposed to talk to the varsity quarterback?

BETTY JEAN

(more to herself than anything)

Tuh huh. I really wish that boy stop telling people that.

JOHNNY

What?

BETTY JEAN

Nothing. So you believe everything that you hear?

JOHNNY

Not necessarily. It's just everytime I see you you be surrounded by so many people. You really are the toast of Jack Yates.

BETTY JEAN

Aren't you the one to talk? If I could go a day without all them hens cackling about you in the girl's locker room.

(Betty Jean tries to pull back on her comment but it's too late)

(under her breath)

Especially Ethel desperate ass.

JOHNNY

Hunh?

BETTY JEAN

Nothing. So you like living dangerously.

(her eyes hint to the fact that Mamie could appear from the back at any second.)

Johnny looks over his shoulder then back at Betty Jean with the most confident smile.

JOHNNY

Seems like I'm not the only one. So what must one do to be graced with your presence?

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN
Be worthy?

JOHNNY
Well am I?

BETTY JEAN
We'll see.

Johnny stands there and looks deeply into Betty Jean's eyes.

BETTY JEAN
I said we'll see.

Johnny downs his water and slams the cup back on the counter.

JOHNNY
We sho'll will.

They both give the other one more electric look. Johnny turns and struts off. Betty Jean watches him the entire way. The rest of the band was in a movie theater. Johnny passes by Robert and slides his hand out behind him and Robert slides him five.

ROBERT
My man.

As Johnny gets back on the stage, he straps his guitar on with his eyes focusing on Betty Jean's every move, who nervously pretends to tend to her duties.

JOE
Damn! I gotta piss. where the
restroom at?

JOHNNY
Gotta be back there in the back
somewhere. Hurry back man. We need
to run through these last songs.

JOE
Now you worried about the last
little bit of songs?

Joe unhooks his guitar and bolts off of the stage.

20

INT. BACKSIDE OF MAMIE'S - EVENING

20

Joe is antsy from his necessity to urinate. He is looking at every door intently and talking to himself. He takes a turn and walks up on the unexpected. Mamie's bodyguards is working a gentleman over, nicely.

Joe is appalled and frozen in his tracks, forgetting all about his previous situation, when Mamie notices him.

MAMIE

I would have thought someone would have told you you should always mind your business.

JOE

(struggles to find his words)
I was looking for the restroom. I need to use it.

MAMIE

Does this look like a restroom to you?

JOE

N-n-no ma'am.

MAMIE

Don't you think it would be in your best interest to find it?

Joe doesn't even answer. He just turns so fast, to scurry off, he runs into some unidentified objects and knocks them over. So scared, he doesn't even stop to pick them up. He just takes the path back to the front. Once back at the stage, he snatches his guitar up and cuts into a mean solo, where the rest of the band had already been playing. Everyone just stops and looks at him as he loses his mind on his guitar.

21

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

21

It is right before The Dukes Of Rhythm is set to go on stage. Mamie's is over half packed. she is sitting at the bar with BULL, one of her cronies.

MAMIE

I swear, we never had a Thursday like this before. That little handsome black bastard is a mastermind.

(CONTINUED)

Betty Jean was close enough behind the bar to hear her and stops to think of Johnny. Mamie notices and gives her a threatening look.

MAMIE

Bull, what time is it?

BULL

Nine - fifty - five.

MAMIE

Go to to the back and let them young bucks know their on in five.

BULL

Yes ma'am.

Bull gets up and labors to the back.

22 INT. BACKSIDE OF MAMIE'S - EVENING

22

The group is all partaking in their own preshow rituals, except for Joe. He seems to be in his own world. The all jump when Bull bursts in.

BULL

I hope y'all ready youngsters. You finna go on and it's a pretty big crowd out here.

With that Bull exits.

JOE

(seemingly out of nowhere)

I hope all of you is ready! Because I'm not taking the heat for anybody who can't hold their own.

The rest look at eachother in the room puzzled. They shrug it off and exits the room one by one.

23 INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

23

Mamie is center stage. I want to thank all of you for coming out and party with me. It's clear you know why you are all here, so I won't drag it out. Without further delay I present to you The Dukes Of Rhythm.

The crowd applauds.

Johnny and his band takes the stage. The cheering subsides. Johnny adjusts his mic.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Wow! I really gotta thank all of you for showing up tonight. As you pretty much know, we are the Dukes of Rhythm and we are here to make sure you have the greatest time of your life.

VOICE

(from back in the back of the crowd)

Alright then.

JOHNNY

Let's get into it.

Johnny and his band rips into their blues set.

FADE

24

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

24

Johnny and his band is finishing up a song. The work is showing on their face through the sweat. The crowd breaks into another applause as they finish.

JOHNNY

Thank you. Thank you. Y'all are way to kind. At this time we wanna ask if anyone in the house has any requests?

From the left side of the stage a voice shouts.

DRIVER

Yeah!

Everyone on stage, and even Robert's, head turns from the familiarity of the voice. When Johnny locates it, he sees it is the driver of the car from the day before.

DRIVER

You got something original?

Johnny pauses and debates briefly with himself.

JOHNNY

Yeah I got something original.

Johnny turns to his band, who's all clearly in disagreement.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
 (strictly to Johnny)
 We didn't practice any original
 material.

JOHNNY
 (johnny mouths without any
 sound really leaving his
 mouth)
 Don't worry about it. Just pick up
 on me.
 (He turns back around to the
 audience and glances over at
 an impatient Mamie.)
 Hold on to your socks.

Johnny breaks into a soulful and bluesy rendition of "Wake
 Up Little Susie" and it isn't long before the rest of the
 band is right in step with him.

25 INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

25

The Dukes of Rhythm finishes their song and the place goes
 wild. Mamie watches with a masterful set of eyes as she
 makes her way to the stage.

JOHNNY
 Thank you all once again. Make sure
 you spread the word. Dukes Of
 Rhythm. Every Thursday. Ten to
 twelve.

By now Mamie is on the stage strong-arming the mic from
 Johnny.

MAMIE
 Correction. That's Dukes Of Rhythm,
 every Thursday to Sunday right here
 at Mamie's! Starting next Thursday!
 All night!

As the crowd explodes into a higher pitch of applause,
 Johnny looks around at the rest of his band members.

26 INT. BACKSIDE OF MAMIE'S - EVENING

26

Mamie is counting out the money to Johnny.

MAMIE
 Thirteen, Fourteen, Fifteen! Looks
 like we gotta long and fruitful
 partnership ahead.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Do we!

Everything becomes quiet and awkward.

MAMIE

And what is that supposed to mean?

Bull studs up behind Mamie but a subtle gesture from her keeps him in place.

JOE

Robert, be cool man.

ROBERT

No disrespect Mamie, but from how I see it, this calls for an entirely new negotiation. The previous agreement was for Thursday, 2 hours, and twenty dollars. Now you are talking about four days.

MAMIE

Ok, that's twenty dollars a day.

ROBERT

From what I see you are looking at us as headliners. We both know Thursdays around her is a ghost town. Your Fridays and Saturdays are pretty much automatic at two dollars a head. But with my group paying, I can imagine the price of everything is about to go up around here because the line is going to be to the back of the building. Then I'm sure the drinks are going to get a little more flowery, if you know what I mean.

MAMIE

You little motherfucker.

ROBERT

Now Mamie, all we all are are business people wanting what we feel we are owed. This isn't a sleight to anyone. I'm just talking fair business. And if anyone can understand that, I would figure it to be you.

(CONTINUED)

Mamie can feel Bull breathing on her neck. She turns and gives him a look of ease. She turns back and peers dead into Robert's eyes. You can all but hear the group behind him bones rattling.

MAMIE

(spinning the ring on her
pinky finger)

So what would you say is fair?

ROBERT

(with no hesitation)

Seventy - five dollars.

MAMIE

Seventy - five...??

ROBERT

A day.

MAMIE

A DAY...?

Bull is a rabid beast waiting on the instructions.

ROBERT

Now Mamie this isn't to say we aren't going to go all the way out for you. This not only guarantees us playing to closing, but it also delivers daily promotions of Mamie's. Flyers to be provided by you at no cost of us of course.

Mamie can't help but to laugh as she turns around to Bull, who begins to laugh himself. Mamie turns back to Robert in all seriousness.

MAMIE

Usually you wouldn't leave this room on two legs. But not only do I like you, I respect anyone who has the balls to stand up for what they feel they are worth. I tell you what. It's a deal.

The group begins to celebrate amongst themselves.

MAMIE

But. You better uphold every end of your bargain. If you or my money begin to slip, Frazier's Funeral Home gone be five coffins short.

(CONTINUED)

Everyone exchanged looks of concern.

MAMIE
Come here boys.

They all bring it in for a hug.

27

EXT. OUTSIDE - MORNING

27

Johnny is walking down the street when MAGIC, the driver of the car, who asked to hear some original material, pulls up on the side of him and drives at the pace of johnny walking.

MAGIC
You sure are a hard man to find.

JOHNNY
Oh yeah? How so?

MAGIC
I waited outside at Mamie's to see you the other night but never did.

JOHNNY
What was you waiting on me for Mr...?

MAGIC
Wand. But everyone calls me Magic.

JOHNNY
(pauses for a second)
Oh! I get it. Like magic wand.
Cool.

A car behind Magic honks it's horn. He waves it by. It swings around and speeds pass.

MAGIC
I was really impressed by your performance.

JOHNNY
I appreciate that. Hopefully you are there on nights to come and spread the word.

MAGIC
How bout I do you one better?

Johnny stops and eyeballs Magic in amazement.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

What do you mean by that?

MAGIC

I'm a record producer. I have my own studio.

JOHNNY

You? A record producer? With your own studio?

(partly laughs)

You don't look like a record producer to me.

MAGIC

Oh yeah, and what does a record producer look like.

JOHNNY

(pondering)

I don't know.

MAGIC

My point exactly. That little original number you done...

JOHNNY

Wake Up Little Susie?

MAGIC

Yeah that one. I'd like to record it and put it on vinyl.

Johnny gives him a look of distrust.

MAGIC

No seriously. I think...excuse me I don't even know your name.

JOHNNY

Johnny Clyde.

MAGIC

Well I think Johnny Clyde is the next big thing.

JOHNNY

Don't you mean The Dukes Of Rhythm?

MAGIC

No I mean Johnny Clyde.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Well I'm sorry to waste your time
sir. There is no Johnny Clyde
without The Dukes Of Rhythm.

Johnny starts to walk off. Magic zooms up to catch him.

MAGIC

Hold up. Hold up. I can respect a
man of integrity and principle. I
tell you what, I have a store at
Scott and Elgin. Why don't you and
The Dukes Of Rhythm meet me there
at five o' clock tomorrow.

JOHNNY

(pauses and looks at Magic)
I'll see if my band is willing.

MAGIC

(looks at Johnny and smirks)
Yeah I'll see you tomorrow.
(drives off singing "Wake Up
Little Susie")

28

INT. MAGIC'S STOREFRONT - EVENING

28

The Dukes Of Rhythm walks into Magic's store. Magic is
sitting with his feet kicked up and WILLIE, a young male
worker, sweeping around the store.

MAGIC

(hops up checking his watch)
Look what we have here. I knew you
would come.

JOE

Doesn't look like you was expecting
anyone to me.

MAGIC

(laughs the comment off and
addresses his worker)
Willie, you know who this is?

Willie looks at the group quickly, shrugs, and goes back to
his chores.

MAGIC

The next superstars. I tell you The
Dukes Of Rhythm will be a household
name after I'm through.

(CONTINUED)

The group looks at each other in disbelief of Magic's enthusiasm.

JOHNNY

So how do you plan on doing that?

MAGIC

How do I plan on doing that? Huh?
By recording that little ditty from
the other night and making sure
it's in every DJ's hand and jukebox
from here to the edge of the
universe.

CORNELIUS

Recording? And how are you supposed
to do that?

JOE

Better yet, who are you? It's only
one person in this city with those
capabilities. And it's definitely
not you.

MAGIC

Oh, is that so? Who, Robey? So you
think he's the only record producer
in town? who you think started him
in the biz?

(voice becomes more
aggressive)

Don Robey this! Don Robey that! Let
me tell you something...

The group's facial expressions were all on high alert when Magic notices.

MAGIC

Never mind. That's better left for
another day. Follow me.

(Magic heads for the back of
his store and the group
follows suit)

Willie tend to the store.

WILLIE

Ok.

The back of the store was dank and dimly lit. Packed with boxes and cobwebs, they weaved until they found the open space at the very back. There was a quaint little set up, with instruments already in place. Since none of the group had ever been in a studio, they really didn't know what they was looking at, but impressed never the least.

MAGIC

You know how I got my name? Because this is where I make the magic happen.

(pauses and recollects)

You are looking at one of the greatest music minds ever, matters what this environment suggests. The reason everyone thinks so highly of your Mr. Don Robey.

JOE

So what is it that you expect of us?

MAGIC

All I nee is for you to perform that song the exact same way you did the other night. And, I'll take care of everything else.

STEVE

Yeah, but what do we get if we do?

MAGIC

Let me ask you something young bloods. What are you all doing this for? Do you even know?

The group looks around waiting on a response from one of their own, but only get silence.

MAGIC

(happily continues)

Well let me tell you what I know and see. There is about to be an explosion. A revolution of some sort. Black people, their culture, and music is about to be at the forefront of America's daily living.

(gives the group a brief moment to digest his suggestions)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MAGIC (cont'd)

Now, here's what I see in you. I've seen my fair share of singers and musicians, but rarely do you see a group as young and as polished as you all are. Now you can use your talent to capitalize and become rich and famous. Or you can keep on playing some little local backwoods juke joint.

STEVE

Yeah, but that still doesn't say what we get out of this right here and now.

MAGIC

What? You think you deserve something? You think you've earned something.

JOHNNY

We must be worth something.

MAGIC

Everything in my store is worth something.

(takes a deep breath)

Look I'm a businessman. I sell products. I'm trying to turn The Dukes Of Rhythm into a product people wanna buy. Now you can have your song all over the radio, you can have fans running out and buying your record, you can be doing shows at all of the biggest and baddest venues, but if you get caught up into thinking small time that's all you'll ever be.

(The group still wasn't buying)

Fuck it! how much does Mamie pay you a night.

CORNELIUS

(blurts out)

Seventy - five dollars a day.

Joe elbows him.

MAGIC

Ok. Since you wanna be that way.
(Magic goes into his pocket and comes out with money)

(CONTINUED)

Seventy - five dollars. For one song!

Steve immediately snatches it and the group runs into place to begin recording. Magic takes a seat behind his equipment and begins to instruct them on the process.

30

EXT. JOHNNY'S PORCH - NOON

30

Johnny sits on his porch eating an orange when Robert pulls up in front of his house with a beautiful girl on the passenger seat. She flashes Johnny a flirtatious smile. Robert exits his car and dusts himself off, before gliding to where Johnny sat.

ROBERT
(while approaching Johnny)
Man what y'all do?

JOHNNY
What you talking Robert T?

ROBERT
I heard you and the group was over at Magic's.

JOHNNY
Yeah, and?

ROBERT
And y'all recorded a record for him!

JOHNNY
So what? He paid us for one song what Mamie give us to play a whole set.

ROBERT
But...

JOHNNY
But nothing. That was the easiest fifty dollars any of us ever made.

ROBERT
Yeah baby but you don't understand what you did.

JOHNNY
And you do?

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Trust me I understand more than you do. Why you even ask me to be your manager if you not gone let me do my job?

JOHNNY

Your job is to make sure I get paid. And it ain't like I can't do that for myself too.

ROBERT

Yeah alright. Don't come crying to me.

(Robert easily shifts gears on the conversation)

How you like my new little prospect?

Johnny looks to the female in the car. He nods as he makes a face of approval.

ROBERT

Her name is Sherryll but I call her Rainbow.

JOHNNY

Rainbow?

ROBERT

Yeah it's gold at the end of it?

They both show a hearty laugh.

ROBERT

Chappie blessed me in last night. Every bitch walking with two legs better beware.

JOHNNY

So that's it?

ROBERT

What?

JOHNNY

I guess it was good we did take the money.

ROBERT

I'm still your manager. I'm just managing her too. Hey man this is going to be a plus for us trust me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT (cont'd)

You just can't go to making moves without me man. These streets is cutthroat and I'm the only one out here in 'em with your best interest in mind. Ya dig?

JOHNNY

Yeah I'm hip.

ROBERT

Well I gotta go turn a couple corners and make some things happen. All of y'all need to get on your toes and make sure you blow the roof off of the place tonight.

JOHNNY

That goes without saying.

ROBERT

I always gotta say it.

Robert and Johnny slide the other five and Robert walks off with the meanest strut. Johnny shakes his head, laughs, and pop a piece of his orange in his mouth.

31 EXT. MAMIE'S - NIGHT

31

Mamie's has a line all the way around the building. DON ROBEY, a dapper extremely light skinned black man walks pass the line with a beautiful woman, matching his appearance, under each arm and three intimidating "gentleman" following closely. An inebriated MAN IN LINE with his FRIEND doesn't appreciate the fact that Don Robey just walks to the front of the line.

MAN IN LINE

And where this privileged nigga think he going.

FRIEND

(trying to restrain his friend)

(with a semi-whisper)

Man, that's Don Robie.

MAN IN LINE

Nigga I don't give a fuck who it is, as long as we been standing out here in this line.

One of Don's goons jump but Don signals him to stay back.

(CONTINUED)

FRIEND

It really ain't been that long Mr. Robie. Please forgive my friend. He's a little out his head.

DON ROBEY

Well mabe this ain't the place for him. If you was really his fried you'd probably would take him home.

FRIEND

You know what you right.
(goes to struggling, fighting, and arguing with his friend to get him out of line)

DON ROBEY

(looking as the friend pulls the man off)
Peasant.
(continues into Mamie's)

32 INT. MAMIE'S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

32

Mamie sits right by the entrance watching as one of her "employees" take the money of her patrons. Don Robey and his crew steps in.

DON ROBEY

How you this beautiful night Mamie?

MAMIE

I'm good. And yourself Don?

DON ROBEY

I'm well.

MAMIE

That's good. I don't have to check any of your boys now do I?

DON ROBEY

You know I know better than any of that foolishness Mamie.

MAMIE

Because I'd hate for us to have to go there. I can excuse the last time you was here. As a matter fact, I apologize on behalf of my customer.

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY

No thang Mamie. You know it always gotta be one.

MAMIE

Well we won't be having any of that tonight.

(Mamie looks inside of her club and signals for Bull and he appears)

Bull I want you to clear that back part of the club over there for nothing but Don and his party and put Cannon on security for them. Tell him not to leave that post all night. Let Betty Jean know their first round is on me.

DON ROBEY

As classy as ever.

(shows the way for his two females into the club and turns to acknowledge for two of his me to accompany them. Don takes time to stop and whisper in Mamie's ear.)

I hear you hurting everybody else's books right now. You got the whole weekend now. I stopped over by the Playhouse before here and when their Sundays is dead...Let's just say they not happy at all with this secret weapon of yours.

Mamie turn's her head and looks Don in his eyes.

MAMIE

You know it be's like that sometimes.

DON ROBEY

(with a sly smile)

It sho'll do, don't it.

33

INT. MAMIE'S - NIGHT

33

Johnny is in mid song when he sees Don Robey walk in and strolls to the back of the club. Johnny briefly forgets the words to his song when he sees Don. Joe saves him by cutting into a wicked solo and easing over and bumping him.

A super clean Robert is sitting in his normal spot, accompanied by Rainbow, when he observes Johnny and follows

(CONTINUED)

his eyes to Don Robey. Robert leans in and whispers in Rainbow's ear. They both raise from their seats. She follows a meandering Robert through the thick crowd. Johnny watches them all of the way.

Robert makes his way to Don's section, where he is headed off by Don's welcoming committee. One of Don's guards looks to Don for approval. Don waves Robert and his girl through.

With seeing this, it is like Johnny is invigorated. The delivery of his music goes to another level, that everyone in and outside of the club notices. So much so that the line becomes hostile with trying to push their way in.

Robert takes a seat next to Don and they begin conversing. Each leaning towards the other when they felt the need to speak.

34

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - NIGHT

34

It is two o' clock and The Dukes of Rhythm Is finished. The crowd is screaming for more but Mamie is assuring everyone that is it. To the people's dismay they begin to exit. As the band begins to relieve themselves Robert gives Johnny a signal. Johnny climbs off of the stage and goes to where Robert is.

ROBERT

You showed out tonight.

JOHNNY

Naw, you the one who showed out. You was all in Don Robey's section all night. Why didn't you tell me you knew him?

ROBERT

For what?

JOHNNY

For what? So you could have introduced me.

ROBERT

Look at him.

(Robert calls Johnny's attention to Don Robey, where he is poised, smoking a cigar, watching everyone else file out of the club)

Does he look like the type you introduce yourself to. He introduces himself to you. Ya dig?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

(takes a real good look at Don Robey and his company)

Yeah.

ROBERT

Luckily for you, he wants to meet you.

JOHNNY

Damn, what we waiting on...

ROBERT

Slow down, low down. He wants to meet you at his office. Tomorrow.

JOHNNY

His office? Where's that?

ROBERT

Fifth Ward. 2809 Erastus Street.

Johnny gives a certain type of look.

ROBERT

You not scared ha?

JOHNNY

Come on man, you know me.

(his level of excitement raises)

Wait til I tell the band we got a meeting with Don Robey.

ROBERT

No band. He wants a meeting with you. You only. What about...

ROBERT

Not even me.

Johnny frowns at Robert. Then, he looks directly at Don who smiles directly at him as if he was part of him and Robert's conversation.

ROBERT

Hey man! This is it. Make sure you are there at two o' clock on the dot. You mess this off, you don't have to worry about ever playing anywhere but here the rest of your life. This is the opportunity you've been waiting on.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
(looking back over his
shoulder at the rest of the
band, reluctantly
Yeah, the opportunity I've been
waiting on.

35 EXT. DON ROBIE'S OFFICE/STUDIO - AFTERNOON.

35

Johnny stands outside of Don Robey's office looking and contemplating. He finally makes his mind up to knock on the door. A small slot in the door opens and he hears a BARITONE VOICE.

BARITONE VOICE
What you want?

JOHNNY
Johnny clyde here to see Mr. Robey.

BARITONE VOICE
Hold on.

The slot closes forcefully. After some seconds it opens again.

BARITONE VOICE
Come on in. He's been expecting
you.

From the outside Johnny hears the trouble the Guard has to go through to unlock the door. When it is finally open and entrance is granted, not knowing what to expect, Johnny is impressed with how immaculate everything is.

BARITONE VOICE
Follow me.

Johnny sees that the scary voice belongs to an equally scary man. Johnny walks in step with him until they come to an office door and the guard knocks on it.

BARITONE VOICE
Boss. He's here.

DON ROBIEY
(from the other side of the
door)
Show him in.

The guard opens the door, allows Johnny in, and closes it behind him. Johnny is statuesque at the sight of Don Robey behind a grand wooden desk. He is sitting on a throne of a chair, with one of his heroic body guards to his immediate right. The entire energy of it is somewhat threatening.

DON ROBEY

Have a seat.

Johnny inches over to the chair sitting in front of Don Robey's desk. He cautiously sits down.

DON ROBEY

Johnny Clyde Copeland! I've been hearing so much about you for a couple of years now.

JOHNNY

It's just Johnny Clyde.

DON ROBEY

I like the full name it has a better ring to it. I thought you was some kind of an urban legend. A musical prodigy and songwriting genius. Your name has been ringing for a while now.

JOHNNY

I don't know why that would be. For the most part I've only played at Jack Yates and school parties.

DON ROBEY

Johnny lemme ask you something, if you don't mind.

JOHNNY

Go ahead, shoot.

DON ROBEY

What is the biggest responsibility of a businessman? In any industry?

JOHNNY

(puzzled)

I don't know.

DON ROBEY

To know what lies ahead.

(CONTINUED)

Don looks at Johnny to see if he caught the gist of his statement. When he sees the confusion on Johnny's face he continues.

DON ROBEY

Any good businessman is able to anticipate what the people will want. But, the most successful businessmen are able to TELL the people what they need and get them to buy into it. It's called staying ahead. Thing is, I have a special gift. I'm able to see the future. Believe it or not I can tell you your future.

JOHNNY

(boldly)

Now can you?

DON ROBEY

I can. The thing about it, everyone comes to a crossroad in life and whether you know it or not, you are at yours. On one hand your future has you living out your dreams. Going places you've never even dreamed of and living the life most could only hope for. and, on the other hand, the other has you dying on these Third Ward streets cold, bitter, and broke because you didn't make the first come true.

Johnny's disposition was one of intrigue.

DON ROBEY

See, I'm your fork in the road. I'm here to help you become a legend, an icon. One thing you and I both know, there aren't many opportunities for black musicians. Major ones anyway. And here you are, sitting in the office of the most prominent, the first, the one and only fully owned and operated black owned record label. I have worked with everyone from Big Mama Thornton to Ray Charles. Now I'm trying to make you a part of this Peacock Records legacy.

(Don leans comfortably back in his king sized chair.)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY (cont'd)

So what do you think?

JOHNNY

First, I think that it's a blessing for anyone to just be able to sit down in the presence of you. But, I have to be honest me and my band have been recording with someone else.

Don Robey has a laugh, from his gut, that fills the room.

DON ROBEY

Let me guess. Magic? Do you think him and his little rinky dink operation can match anything I'm offering. What did he sign you to?

JOHNNY

Sign?

DON ROBEY

Yeah sign. Hold up! He didn't even sign you to any kind of contract?

JOHNNY

Contract? No. He just paid us to record a song.

Don has an even heavier laugh.

DON ROBEY

That's probably gonna come back and bite you in the ass. If you didn't sign any paperwork with him you are still a free man Johnny Clyde Copeland. What I'm offering you is some stability, some longevity. A place where you don't have to guess who and what you are.

JOHNNY

So you wanna sign The Dukes Of Rhythm to Peacock?

DON ROBEY

I wanna sign Johnny Clyde Copeland to Peacock.

JOHNNY

I need my band! And, if you want me you need them too.

(CONTINUED)

Don Robey turns to KILLER COX, his bodyguard at his immediate right.

DON ROBEY

Killer Cox, what do I always say about these youngsters of today.

KILLER COX

They have a problem telling the difference between need and want.

DON ROBEY

(turns back to Johnny)

See Johnny there's nothing I need as far as you and I are concerned. Just take a look around. If you leave out of here without signing to me, who will be more hurt. My life will go on and I will find someone to fill your shoes. See there comes a time in every man's life where he has to make boss decisions. I am trying to be in the Johnny Clyde Copeland business. Now, the band is your responsibility, not mine. What you can do is be the leader you was born to be or let being too loyal hold you back from fulfilling your destiny.

Johnny drops his head in the palms of his hands.

JOHNNY

But those are my friends.

DON ROBEY

If they are really your friends, they would understand. They wouldn't hold you back. They wouldn't hold themselves back. Tell me what better shot do they have than what I am offering you right now?

There is an awkward silence.

DON ROBEY

I'll tell you what, Killer Cox tell Bruiser he's Mr. Copeland's personal security for the whole day. Tell him to take the black droptop and take Johnny to Wolf's and get him fitted.

(CONTINUED)

(Don opens his desk.)
 Here's one thousand dollars. Go out
 and enjoy self. When you get back
 if you don't want to sign with me,
 we'll both shake hands and go our
 own way. No problem at all. What
 you say?

(Don slides the stack of bills
 in Johnny's face)

JOHNNY

Only a fool would pass a deal up
 like that. And my moma didn't raise
 no fool.

(reaches over and takes the
 money graciously)

Don gives the most Satanic look.

37

EXT. JOE GUITAR'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

37

Cannon pulls up in front of Joe's house with Johnny in the
 backseat, top down, enjoying the beautiful Houston weather.
 Johnny looks like he belongs. Joe's mother is on the porch.
 After she adjusts her vision, she just leans in her chair to
 scream merrily through her screen door.

JOE'S MOM

Joe! Johnny just pulled up.
 (more to herself)
 And boy did he pull up.
 (yells out to the street)
 Hey Johnny!

JOHNNY

How you doing Mrs. Hughes? Is Joe
 home?

JOE'S MOM

Yeah. He on his way out.

JOHNNY

Ok.
 (instructs Cannon)
 Let me out please sir.

Joe steps out on his porch in time to see the chaffeur, he
 instantly recognizes as one of the men who is security for
 Don Robey, open the door, move the front seat forward, and
 give Johnny access.

Johnny takes the coolest steps towards Joe, who is meeting
 him halfway.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
What's this?

JOHNNY
What does it look like?

JOE
It looks like we're about to be in
some trouble with our label?

JOHNNY
What label?

JOE
So you forgot all about Magic?

JOHNNY
He's not my label. Did you sign any
paperwork with him I don't know
about?

JOE
(thoughtfully)
Nooo. So what Don Robey...

JOHNNY
How did you know it was Don Robey?

JOE
That's Bigfoot from the other
night.
(Joe says this a little louder
than he imagined, which
prompted Cannon, who's
standing real solder like next
to the car, to give him a
menacing scowl. Joe jumps and
corrected his tone)
Like I was saying, Don Robey gave
us a new droptop Cadillac and
chaffeur?

JOHNNY
Not quite. It's just a test drive.

JOE
So what's the word?

JOHNNY
He called me for a meeting at his
office.

(CONTINUED)

JOE
When did this happen?

JOHNNY
Last night.

JOE
(with a hint of disdain)
That is what Robert being all in his ear was all about? So why didn't you two inform the rest of the group?

JOHNNY
That's what I'm here to talk to you about.

JOE
(shifts and his disposition is telling)
Hold up, let me take a shot at it. He only wants to sign you. Why ain't I surprised? You know for a minute I thought you was a stand up kinda guy.

JOHNNY
What's that supposed to mean?

JOE
You know what it means. You used us to get your shot and as soon as the door opened up, you walked through and slammed it behind you.

JOHNNY
Joe you got it all wrong.

JOE
Naw, I got it right.

JOHNNY
Look man. Nothing has changed.

JOE
Lemme ask you this then. What is supposed to be the name on the records.

JOHNNY
(hesitantly)
Well...mine...I guess.

(CONTINUED)

JOE

Nothing has changed huh?

JOHNNY

(digging in his pocket)
Check it out a thousand dollars
baby.

(Johnny is close enough for
Joe's mom to hear and see
clearly. She leans in so hard,
she nearly falls from her
chair.)

I told you nothing has changed. We
still splitting the money down
equally.

JOE

It ain't got nothing to do with
money. It's about integrity and
principle. All of this came from a
Dukes Of Rhythm thang. But it's
clear it was all about you along.

JOHNNY

(attempts his best Don Robey
impression)
Joe there comes a time in every
man's life he has to make a boss
decisions.

JOE

Save it man. You got it. It's all
Johnny Clyde's because Joe Guitar
Hughes don't play backup to
anybody.

Joe's hurt shows in his eyes as he turns and walks away.
Johnny just stands there and watch him.

JOE'S MOM

(as Joe passes by her)
Boy what the hell wrong with you?
You done lost your goddamn mind?

Joe doesn't answer. He disappears in the house and lets the
screen door slam behind him.

Johnny drops his head, turns and walks back to the car.

38

INT. WOLF'S DEPARTMENT STORE - AFTERNOON

38

Johnny is standing in a full length mirror being fitted for a suit by Wolf. His face is blank as he barely recognizes himself.

WOLF
(jokingly)
I must say, for someone trying to make a name for himself, you done so in record time.

When Johnny doesn't give any kind of a response, Wolf glances over at Cannon in the background, then goes back about his business.

WOLF
For someone on his way, you seem pretty unmoved.

JOHNNY
(stoic)
On my way to where though?

WOLF
(in a grandfatherly tone)
Well that is clearly up to you. Every man has complete control of his destiny and surroundings. One thing I've learned in my sixty plus years, no one can make you do anything you don't want to.
(Wolf adjusts Johnny to get a proper inseam measurement)
So where are the rest of your band members? It would be alot more fitting if all of you had new suits up on that stage.

WOLF
(pauses)
Oooh!
(Looks up into Johnny's eyes)
I see.
(pulls up from his work)
Look here son. Not everything is meant for everybody. Everyone has a position to play in life. Many times we may not like it. That's just how things are. The best piece of advice I could give you at this time is never diminish what others see in you for anyone's happiness,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WOLF (cont'd)

but your own. Because, at the end of the day, your well being is placed solely on your shoulders. There are hundreds of people, places, and things that are going to come and go in the course of your lifetime.

(leans back into his work)

And the things you are meant to hold on to, you'll know. Because, they won't let go of you.

Johnny's facial features relax and he even musters up a smile.

39

EXT. DROPTOP CADILLAC - EVENING

39

Johnny is in the back of the Cadillac, watching his neighborhood go by. He looks forward and sees Betty Jean and a young boy and girl walking up the street.

JOHNNY

Cannon pull over by her.
(pointing over the seat)

Cannon pulls the car over to the side of the street.

JOHNNY

Can I offer a pretty lady a ride?

BETTY JEAN

(smiles)

I don't get in cars I don't know with strangers.

JOHNNY

Oh, so now I'm a stranger?

BETTY JEAN

Strange enough.

They both enjoy a laugh.

JOHNNY

Where you on the way to beautiful?

BETTY JEAN

To take my little brother and sister to the store. So you the man now?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
I'm just trying it out.

BETTY JEAN
Well it looks good on you.

JOHNNY
So you impressed?

Betty Jean leans on the car towards Johnny, seductively

BETTY JEAN
Is that what you think?

JOHNNY
I'm just asking.

Betty Jean leans in even further until he can feel her breath in his ear.

BETTY JEAN
(purrs in his ear)
I been impressed.
(kisses his cheek)

Johnny nearly turns purple. Betty Jean's brother and sister starts oooing and ahhing.

BETTY JEAN
(grabbing her brother and
sister's hands)
Shut up and mind y'all business.

Betty Jean pulls them off but makes sure to look over her shoulder and give Johnny a flirty look.

CANNON
(looking at Johnny in the
rearview mirror)
Lucky you.

40 INT. DON ROBEY'S OFFICE - EVENING

40

Don Robey takes a short pull of his stogie, leans back in his chair and exhales.

DON ROBEY
Are you a member of the Peacock
family or not?

JOHNNY
I'd be a fool not to be.

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY
 (presenting Johnny with a
 golden pen to sign the
 contract in front of him)
 And your moma didn't raise no fool.

Johnny doesn't even consider reading anything about the contract before he signs. Don smiles devilishly, as he leans back again puffing away.

DON ROBEY
 (waits for Johnny to raise up)
 How did you like the feel of that
 Cadillac?

JOHNNY
 Aw man! It was a cloud.

DON ROBEY
 It's yours. Peacock keeps our
 family looking good at all times.
 Anywhere you go, just tell them to
 put it on my account. And if I
 don't have one call me and I'll get
 em to start one.

Johnny stood speechless and amazed.

DON ROBEY
 (animated and over
 exaggerated)
 Welcome to being a star.

41 EXT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

41

Johnny pulls up in front of his house and lets the top up. He sees his father peep out of the window. Johnny steps out of his vehicle and is greeted by his disgruntled father in the yard. His mother stands in the doorway.

FATHER
 And what the hell is this supposed
 to be?

JOHNNY
 A Cadillac.

FATHER
 And what you doing with it at my
 house?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

It's mine.

FATHER

It's yours? So one of them lazy lowlifes you be around just gave you a brand new Cadillac. I don't need any of that around here at my house. You get it out of my yard and don't bring it back.

JOHNNY

I didn't get it from any lowlife. I got it from Don Robey for signing to his label.

(with extra bass in his voice)
And I'm keeping it!

FATHER

You say what?!

JOHNNY

You heard me I'm keeping it!

FATHER

Boy you must done lost your mind. Telling me what you gone do at my house. Oh, so you a man now? Yeah you a man. Well every man need his own.

MOTHER

(screaming from the door)
Jacob, no!

FATHER

Stay out of it Ruthie!
(throws his hand back without taking his eyes off of Johnny)
This is between two men. And since you a man you can find you somewhere else to stay. And don't you ever come back to my house until you learn some respect.

JOHNNY

Let me go in and get my guitar.

FATHER

You not stepping one foot across my threshold. Everything in there is mine.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

That guitar ain't yours. It
belonged to my real father.

FATHER

Well if you feel you bad enough, go
through me and get it then.

Johnny looks at his weeping mother.

FATHER

I don't know what you looking at
her for. She can't let you play
before I get home from work this
time.

Johnny has a look of surprise.

FATHER

Yeah.

Johnny backs away to the door of his car, opens it and
starts to get in.

FATHER

Son...

JOHNNY

I ain't no son of yours.

FATHER

Be that as it may, you do know you
can never live under my roof again.

Johnny stares his step-father down, takes one last look at
his mother, gets in his car and speeds off.

42 INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

42

Johnny drives around, until he finds himself on the track.
He pulls up and a WOMAN approaches the car.

WOMAN

Hey daddy! Yoou looking for a good
time?

JOHNNY

Naw, I'm looking for Rob T.

ROBERT

(from behind the woman)
Who looking for Rob T?

(CONTINUED)

The woman turns quickly, sees that it's Robert, drops her head and all but runs away.

Robert leans into the window of the Cadillac.

JOHNNY

Damn man! What you do to her?

ROBERT

It's what I'm gone do to that ho if she look at me long enough.

(rubs his hand along the door)

Look at you! Big man in a big ride. I take it you and Robey came to an understanding.

JOHNNY

Something like that.

ROBERT

And the terms?

JOHNNY

Terms? What terms? Man get in.

ROBERT

(yells across the car to a female standing on the other side of the street)

Hey bitch you need to get on your job. Just standing there. Let one more motherfucking John pull up and you not at his ass...

(Robert slides in Johnny's car)

These bitches will put you in the poor house if you let em.

(Robert looks at the astonished look on Johnny's face)

So what's up man? You on my time.

JOHNNY

My old man tripped out.

ROBERT

Again? What's new?

JOHNNY

For real this time. He kicked me out and told me I couldn't ever come back. Wouldn't even let me go in and get my guitar.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
(shifts and puts his back to
the door)
So what you gone do?

JOHNNY
Don't know. I guess get me a room
for the night and go to Robey's
tomorrow and see if he can help me
out.

ROBERT
Hold up man. You don't wanna go to
leaning on him like that. Trust me.
I got you.
(digs in his pocket and
retrieves keys)
I got a little hideaway in the
Cuney, apartment one-fifteen. You
can stay there and we'll figure
something out.

JOHNNY
You don't know how much...

ROBERT
Save all that. We family. Ain't
nothing in there to eat though.
I'll shoot by with something from
Alfreda's in the morning. Let me
get back out here. You gotta keep
your foot on these bitches necks.

JOHNNY
Be careful.

ROBERT
Naw, these bitches better be
careful.
(gets out of the car)

JOHNNY
Rob T.

ROBERT
(sticks his head back in
window)
Yeah.

JOHNNY
Thanks for everything.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
You going soft on me? Apartment...

JOHNNY
One-fifteen. I heard you the first
time.

ROBERT
Alright, tomorrow then.

Robert stands up and goes to barking at his two women.
Johnny watches him as he passes in front of his car to cross
the street.

43

EXT. CUNEY HOMES - MORNING

43

Johnny pulls a chair out on the apartment porch and takes a
seat. It's fairly warm already. He watches the young
children at play in the early summer morning. He is equipped
with a pen and pad. He hums to himself, working out the
melody for a song. Then he drops his head and begins to jot
down words, singing them out as he writes.

Robert comes up the sidewalk, with a bag of food and a
guitar, and sees Johnny writing.

ROBERT
It better be a hit too.

Johnny looks up and hops to his feet before he knows it. He
attacks Robert. Robert tries to offer him the food but
Johnny relieves him of the guitar instead.

JOHNNY
Man, look at her she's a beauty.

ROBERT
You don't wanna eat?

JOHNNY
Just sit it in there. I'll get it
later.

ROBERT
Well, I'm finna lay down for a
spell. Let me know when you leave
for practice.

JOHNNY
I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

What? Why not? You all need to be sharper than ever.

JOHNNY

Ain't no more band? I was meaning to tell you that last night also, but it slipped my mind. Robey only wanted me. He said the band is my responsibility. I went by Joe's yesterday...

ROBERT

And he got mad when you told him.
(expresses his disgust)
Now we gotta find a new band.

JOHNNY

Fast!
(pauses as he watches Robert contemplate)
I tried to tell him we'd still split the money. I tried to give him his cut but he didn't want it.

ROBERT

Give him his cut? Why you ain't try to give me my cut? How much money he give you.

JOHNNY

A thousand.

ROBERT

You do know my managerial fee is ten percent.

JOHNNY

Man I got your money.

Johnny reaches for his pocket.

ROBERT

Freeze on that.
(looks around in a paranoid manner)
We'll take care of that later.

Johnny's head follows Robert's eyes around.

JOHNNY

(naively)
Oh, yeah, ok. You sho'll right.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

I'm gone in. Wake me up in four
hours exactly. We gotta find you
some new musicians. Today!

Robert walks up and opens his door but takes the time to look back at Johnny take a seat and start strumming at his new toy, ignoring Robert altogether. Johnny begins to belt out a song from his soul, calling the attention of all the kids in his vicinity, who stopped what they were doing and started to make their way to where Johnny was. Robert smiled, shook, his head and walked in the house.

44

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

44

Johnny is pacing back and forth in the club, checking his watch. Betty Jean is putting things in their place cutting her eyes at Johnny.

BETTY JEAN

(with concern)

Is everything alright?

JOHNNY

(talking to the air)

I told them before nine. Before
nine!

BETTY JEAN

Who?

JOHNNY

My new band?

BETTY JEAN

What happen to the fellas you
always play with?

JOHNNY

Long story.

Betty Jean and Johnny make sure there is an adequate distance between them when they hear Mamie's voice coming. The deceptively small lady pops out of the back.

MAMIE

What's going on in here?

JOHNNY

(guiltily)

Wha... Huh?

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE

The rest of the band. Why aren't they here.

JOHNNY

Well Mamie I...

Johnny hears a voice he instantly recognizes as THEO's.

THEO

(loud and boisterous)

Let the show begin!

Johnny looks up to see Theo, LEROY, and DO NO GOOD. They clearly had been drinking, which didn't get pass Mamie.

MAMIE

Hold up! Who are these drunk bums.

THEO

Who she calling a bum? I ain't no bum.

DO NO GOOD

(comedically)

But you is drunk.

The band members have a good laugh.

JOHNNY

Man what y'all doing, trying to get me and you killed. I told you to be professional.

LEROY

(acts as if he straightens himself up and "attempts" to speak properly)

You can't tell I am a professional.

DO NO GOOD

A professional jick.

They all bust out laughing again and start stumbling towards the stage. Mamie and Johnny watches in aggravation. Betty Jean is in the back trying to keep her composure and not crack up laughing.

MAMIE

Baby I've come to like you. Now I don't know what you got going on but it's not looking too good for you.

(CONTINUED)

(looks at the barely coherent band)

But I am gonna have me a good show on that stage tonight. Right?

Out of nowhere the men on stage goes to playing even better than Johnny remembers them practicing.

JOHNNY

On for the ages.

MAMIE

Keep them winos away from my bar.

Mamie had her back to the stage but Johnny had his eyes on the band. He sees Theo pull a flask from his pocket and take a swig, then pass it to Leroy.

JOHNNY

Oh, I don't think that'll be a problem at all Mamie.

45 INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - EVENING

45

Mamie's is packed to capacity. There are beautiful women all vying for Johnny's attention. The finishes a song.

JOHNNY

How y'all feeling tonight?
 (the crowd responds)
 I can't hear y'all I say how y'all feeling tonight?
 (the crowd responds back louder.)
 Yeah that's what I'm talking bout. For all y'all that don't know I'm Third Ward's own Johnny Clyde Copeland.

FEMALE VOICE

(from the crowd)

I love you Johnny!

Betty Jean pauses from serving drinks.

JOHNNY

I love you too baby. It's so many lovely ladies in the house tonight. I was just wandering if y'all mind if I slowed it down one time?
 (the ladies scream.)
 So y'all don't mind?
 (the ladies scream again)
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY (cont'd)

Well this is something new I wrote,
for a special little someone.

FEMALE AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE

For me!

JOHNNY

Oh? You say it's for you? If you
want it to be.

Betty Jean fumbles with the bottle in her hand. Johnny starts with a slow and seductive guitar melody, as his band eases in.

JOHNNY

The name of this is "Hold My
Baby..."

(gets all the way up on the
microphone and drops his voice
as low as he possibly can, in
octave and volume)

"...All Night Long".

He begins to tease every woman in the place with his melodic and physical suggestions. There is none more under his spell than Betty Jean and Johnny makes sure to let his eyes let her know he knows.

46

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - LATE NIGHT

46

Johnny and his band was wrapping things up. All of Mamie's waitresses were cleaning up but Johnny's eyes was on Betty Jean straightening things up behind the bar.

THEO

(in the background)

Do No Good you think it's alright
if we have a drink now?

DO NO GOOD

I don't know. Look like the bar
closed.

LEROY

So we gotta go to the backdoor like
everybody else.

THEO

Boy Mamie is as heartless as they
come.

Johnny, totally oblivious, hops off of the stage and goes to the bar.

(CONTINUED)

LEROY

Johnny you finna look out for us
baby?

Betty Jean pretends not to see him. He just stands there and
watch.

BETTY JEAN

(never looks up)
You trying to get me in trouble.

JOHNNY

What I can't come and get a cup of
water?

BETTY JEAN

You don't want no water.

JOHNNY

Yes I do. I want your water.

Betty Jean stops and looks up.

JOHNNY

I want you to come see me.

BETTY JEAN

When?

JOHNNY

Tonight.

BETTY JEAN

And how am I supposed to do that?

JOHNNY

I'm sure you can figure it out.

BETTY JEAN

I don't even know where you stay.

JOHNNY

The same place you stay.

BETTY JEAN

You don't stay in the Cuney.

JOHNNY

As of right now I do.

BETTY JEAN

(in disbelief)
Where?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
Apartment one-fifteen.

BETTY JEAN
I'll think about it.

JOHNNY
I'm sure you will.

CUT

47 INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

47

Johnny throws Betty jean against a wall. They are at it hot and heavy kissing?

BETTY JEAN
(talking through kissing and making out)
What are we doing?

JOHNNY
(talking through kissing and making out)
You serving me your water.
(helping Betty Jean out of her clothes)

BETTY JEAN
(talking through kissing and making out)
I...you...we shouldn't be...

JOHNNY
(talking through kissing and making out)
But we are.

BETTY JEAN
(talking through kissing and making out)
I never...

Johnny pauses and looks at Jean in her bra and panties.

JOHNNY
You mean...?

BETTY JEAN
(looks away embarrassed)
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

(turns her head back to him)
 Hey. Un-unh. That's special. And
 I'ma make sure you feel that way.

Johnny falls down to his needs and begins to pleasure Betty Jean. She moves and moans uncontrollably.

48

INT. ROBERT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

48

Johnny and Betty Jean is laying on the couch. He has his arms around her. Betty Jean hops up.

BETTY JEAN

(gasps)

I gotta go.

(starts grabbing her clothes)

If my moma wake up and I'm not there. I had to sneak out. Climbed out of my bedroom window. Uuugh! What was I thinking?

JOHNNY

(attempts to calm her)

Baby, everything gonna be alright.

BETTY JEAN

If you knew anything about grandmother, you wouldn't be so calm. My moma tell Mamie I was sneaking in the house, we both dead!

Johnny's face changes and he hops up to help Betty Jean.

49

INT. DON ROBEY'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

49

Johnny and Robert sits in Don's office when he walks in flanked by his usual crew of guards.

DON ROBEY

(sits at his desk)

Apologies fellows. I had someone that needed my immediate attention. Some people you gotta be hands on with.

(laughs devilishly and reaches for the box on his desk to retrieve a cigar)

Cigar gentlemen?

(turns box to Johnny and Robert)

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

I'm good.

JOHNNY

Don't smoke.

DON ROBEY

(turns it back and closes it)

I like that. Johnny you don't smoke or drink do you? So what's your vice? Every man has one.

JOHNNY

(answers dryly)

Music.

Don fires up his cigar, leans back, and makes a peculiar face.

DON ROBEY

Well everybody has to fall short.

(changes subjects)

I know you gentlemen wanna know why I called this meeting. I think it's time for Johnny to grow. I didn't sign you to continue playing backwood hole in the walls. That don't make us no money. That don't make me no money.

ROBERT

So what do you suggest?

DON ROBEY

Robert don't get me wrong. I think you are the man for the job. I do. I just think if you showed the same attention to his career like you do them bitches, we could take over the world.

JOHNNY

So, what are you trying to say Don?

DON ROBEY

I'm saying it's time for you to spread your wings. Mamie's is cool, but I've had other associates to inquire about your services. We got a whole bunch of leverage right now and it's time to use it.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

But, I got an agreement with Mamie.

DON ROBEY

An agreement! But you got a contract with me. You understand the difference? An exclusive contract!

ROBERT

So these associates of yours, what are they proposing. We're definitely here to capitalize.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I don't know bout all that. We got a good thing going on.

DON ROBEY

Yeah but it can always be better. Never forget that.

ROBERT

So what type of money are they talking about Robey.

DON ROBEY

The possibilities are limitless. Who tells you how much one of your girls is worth? Johnny how much do you think you're worth?

Johnny and Robert gives eachother a side-eye.

DON ROBEY

(leans forward and places a finger to each of his temples)
Now y'all finally getting it. I also need you in the studio. It's time to go to work. I need as much music as you can churn out.

(pauses)

You think you can handle that?

JOHNNY

What? Turn me loose on that studio!

DON ROBEY

Go talk to Pearl in the front and she'll let you know what times the studio will be available for you.

Johnny and Robert raise up.

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY

Robert I want you stay for a minute.

Robert and Johnny look at eachother. Then Robert looks around at Don's goons.

DON ROBEY

(laughs and leans back)

Come on now, you think that little of me?

Robert relaxes and sits back down. Don waits for Johnny to close the door behind him.

DON ROBEY

Rob T! You know what I see when I look at you.

ROBERT

What would that be?

DON ROBEY

You possibly could be one of the greatest managers ever. You for sure have the ambition. And you are a bonafide player. It's been a while since I've seen someone step out on the strip and make as much noise as you have. I wanna do you a solid.

Robert shifts his head out of curiosity.

DON ROBEY

I'm gonna enlighten you to all of the ins and outs of this business. And I'ma be truthful. I need you. I need you to be Johnny's eyes and ears at all times. He shouldn't eat a sandwich without asking you what he should get on it. I know he has the music part covered. It's everything else that's gonna determine his success though. And I don't think he cares about any of that at all.

ROBERT

Yeah, you put a guitar in his hand and a microphone in front of his face and the world disappears.

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY

That's alright. That's what we need from him. I love those type of artists. But you know what I need from you?

ROBERT

I'm sure you're going to tell me.

DON ROBEY

Use them females for more than just street purposes. They'll help you to get way further in this world when they sell possibility and fantasy. You dig?

(puffs his cigar and watches as Robert processes)

You know Bird-O?

ROBERT

Over there at Playhouse? Yeah.

DON ROBEY

He been trying to solicit Johnny's talents. He also soft behind women.

(Don literally sees a light bulb go off in Robert's head. He leans back and has a hearty laugh)

You know Rob T, you gone be alright.

50

EXT. PLAYHOUSE - AFTERNOON

50

Robert pulls up to Playhouse in his car with two females. He shuts the car off and waits for the both of them to get out and come open his door. Bird-O is sitting in front of his club watching as workers clean and pick up around his establishment. Bird-O admires Robert and all of his theatrics.

ROBERT

(walks up with both of his girls walking closely behind him)

Bird-O what's up my man?

BIRD-O

What's happening with you youngblood?

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
I come to talk business with you.

BIRD-O
And what business would that be.

ROBERT
Well Robey...
(Bird-O perks up at the
mention of Robey)
...was telling me that you was
interested in my artist.

BIRD-O
Your artist? What...? You manage
Copeland?

ROBERT
Yeah, amongst others.
(Robert turns slightly to
acknowledge his ladies.)

BIRD-O
Yeah man I would love to get him up
in here. He the hottest thing
going.

ROBERT
Well you know that ain't that easy.

BIRD-O
I'm willing to do what it takes to
make it easy.

ROBERT
Oh, are you now?

BIRD-O
Surely. What's your terms?

ROBERT
What day you talking bout?

BIRD-O
How bout Friday?

ROBERT
(pretends to be contemplating
and thinking about it deeply)
I can get Johnny in here on Friday
for...let's say four hundred
dollars.

(CONTINUED)

BIRD-O
(takes a drink and nearly
chokes)
FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS?!!!

ROBERT
One hour!

BIRD-O
Man if you gone rob me at least
pull your pistol first!

ROBERT
And...

BIRD-O
AND?!!!

ROBERT
Promotions.

BIRD-O
Promotions?!

ROBERT
Yeah. Commercials on KCOH.

BIRD-O
Hold up, hold up, hold up!
Obviously we started off on the
wrong foot or something. This is
way too much.

ROBERT
Is it? How your business been doing
since Johnny been playing at
Mamie's?

BIRD-O
My business? Funny. You gone ask me
about my business. My business is
always solid.

ROBERT
You sure bout that? Bird-O let's
stop playing kiddie games. Mamie
been knocking a dent in everybody's
head. her parking lot be having
more people in it than your's have
inside. We both know this. Now you
can listen to me and make more
money in one night than you've
probably made in your best month.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT (cont'd)
 Or I can take these two beautiful
 muufuckas with me, get in my car,
 and get over here to Nightlife.
 Because you said it your self
 Johnny the hottest thing out and
 everybody ringing my phone.

Bird-0 stares Robert down.

ROBERT
 Welp.
 (turns and begins to walk off)
 Come on ladies.

BIRD-0
 (watches Robert for a few
 seconds)
 (yells aggravatedly)
 He better pack the house too!

Robert doesn't even turn. He keeps walking with the slickest
 smile on his face. He gets to his door and his ladies open
 it for him. He stands in the door.

ROBERT
 Don't you own all that land right
 there?

BIRD-0
 Yeah. And?

ROBERT
 Make sure you cut the grass. You
 gone need it for parking.

Robert laughs out loud and gets in his car. As he backs out,
 Bird-0 looks at him and has to laugh himself.

51 INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - NIGHT

51

Johnny and Betty Jean is parked somewhere secluded in his
 front seat. They are kissing.

JOHNNY
 (pulls away)
 I got something to tell you?

BETTY JEAN
 (a little confused)
 What?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

(searches for his words)
Well, lately...things been really taking off. And...and. You know I really appreciate what Your grandmother done for me. I mean I love playing there. Seeing you and thangs...

BETTY JEAN

(getting irritated)
Johnny what are you trying to say?

JOHNNY

I got some better offers to play at other clubs.

The car is quiet besides the soft music. Betty looks hard at Johnny.

BETTY JEAN

I take it you haven't told Mamie yet?

JOHNNY

Naw. I wanted you to know first. I don't wanna go but...

BETTY JEAN

You know Mamie not gonna pay you one cent more.

JOHNNY

That and I got this feeling that if I don't start seeing what the outside of Third Ward has to offer, I'll be trapped here forever.

BETTY JEAN

Is that so bad? I'm in Third Ward.

JOHNNY

Betty...
(looks deep in her eyes)
I want more.

BETTY JEAN

More? So I ain't enough.

JOHNNY

Not more; like you. I mean more; like this.
(Johnny escorts his hands around his surroundings.)

(CONTINUED)

Haven't you ever dreamed pass
downtown?

BETTY JEAN

(warms up to Johnny)

Honestly I never gave it much
thought.

JOHNNY

Well, I have. And I want to see the
world.

(grabs Betty's hand)

I want my woman to see the world.

Betty takes Johnny's hand and places it on her belly.

BETTY JEAN

Your baby?

Johnny's face frowns in oblivion. The car again goes silent.
He jerks his hand back.

JOHNNY

My baby? What you talking bout?

BETTY JEAN

Yeah. Well, at least I think so.

JOHNNY

(in total rejection)

No! No! No! This can't be. What
makes you think...

BETTY JEAN

Well...

JOHNNY

Who else you been with?

BETTY JEAN

Been With?! I'm not that kind of
girl!

JOHNNY

You the kind of girl that's here
with me right now! How I know what
kind of girl you are?

Betty Jeans falls against the passenger door in shock and
begins to weep. Johnny can't help it he softens up and tries
to offer her consoling. Betty explodes.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY JEAN
 (throwing wild punches and
 crying)
 Don't touch me. Don't you put your
 sorry hands on me.

Johnny pulls back and watches as Betty struggles with the door.

BETTY JEAN
 Don't you worry bout me. And if I
 am pregnant don't you worry bout MY
 baby. I just want you to know, you
 ain't no man. You less than a man.
 Now take that with you around the
 world.

Betty exits and slams the door behind her.

JOHNNY
 Damn.
 (drops his head)

52 INT. STUDIO - EVENING

52

Johnny is sitting inside the booth, on a stoop with his guitar across him, staring into nothingness. The rest of the band is sitting outside, in the studio, watching him through the glass. Robert walks in and scans the room.

ROBERT
 What's going on?

LEROY
 Hey! What's up Rob T? Man I don't
 know ol' Clyde been sitting in
 there since we got here just like
 that.

DO NO GOOD
 Boy ain't moved. I don't even think
 he blinked once.

ROBERT
 How long y'all been here.

THEO
 Bout five or ten minutes.

ROBERT
 Man lemme go in here and see what's
 shaking.

Robert walks into the booth. Johnny still doesn't move.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Man what the hell wrong with you?
Sitting in here like one of them
dummies in Wolf's.

Johnny doesn't answer but he does breaks his stillness to go in his pocket and get a cigarette. He lights it and goes back comatose. Robert walks right in front of him.

ROBERT

Oh so you igging me now nigga? What
got you all shook up man. First
time I ever seen you like this.

Johnny drops his head and takes a drag of his cigarette. He lifts his head and exhales.

JOHNNY

Man, I think Betty Jean pregnant.

ROBERT

Wait, wait, hold up! What the hell
I miss.

JOHNNY

Yeah man.

ROBERT

And it's yours?

JOHNNY

Don't you think I already asked her
that?

ROBERT

And what she say?

JOHNNY

Went up side my head.

Robert fights back a laugh. Johnny cocks his head and frowns harshly at Robert.

ROBERT

So what you gone tell her to do?

JOHNNY

What you mean?

ROBERT

(shifts his body to a more
offensive stance)
Nigga what you gone tell her to do?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

(picks up on Robert's
insinuation)
(shakes his head)

Man I don't know.

ROBERT

Well you better figure something
out. Quick, fast, and in a hurry.
Get your head back on what's going
on. Because I don't think Robey
will care about any of that as much
as he will about you messing off
his money. Dig?!

JOHNNY

Yeah, I dig it.

ROBERT

Alright then. Let's get to work.
And it better be a hit.
(Robert turns and walks to the
door. Right before he opens
it.)
And Johnny...

JOHNNY

Yeah?

ROBERT

Ma everything gone be alright.
Trust me.

Robert takes his exit. Johnny hears him instructing the
band.

ROBERT

Off your ass and on your feet
soldiers. Y'all done already wasted
enough of Robey's money and my
time.

The band erupts in friendly banter as they stand and make
way to the booth.

53

INT. DON ROBEY'S OFFICE - EVENING

53

Johnny, Robert, Don, and his usual goon (in his usual
position) all are in Robey's office. Robey presses stop on
his reel to reel playback.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
(anxiously)
So what you think?

DON ROBEY
(takes his time for dramatic effect.)
(drags himself to his desk and sits, retrieves a cigar, and allows his goon to light it for him)
You know, I like it. It's good.
But...it's not great. You can do better.

JOHNNY
(his sensitivity and passion is in his voice)
What you mean it's not great.
That's a hit!

Don pulls his cigar from his lips and gives Johnny a domineering look. Robert places his forearm across Johnny's chest to calm him and instructing him to sit back.

ROBERT
So what is it that you are looking for Robey?

DON ROBEY
(With a flare for the dramatic)
I need him to WOW me! You gotta remember this is going to be the first time the world is going to hear you. I need them to be asking "Who is that"! If they aren't ringing the phones off of the hook to hear it again, you failed as an artist and I failed as record producer and label. And failure is just not an option. So It's up to you. Do you wanna be local or a legend.

(Don examines his cigar, sits back in his chair and puffs away as he observes Johnny's body language, smiling devilishly)

Johnny walks into Mamie's with his guitar case. Mamie is sitting inside the club, by the bar.

MAMIE
(excitedly)
We gonna kill em this weekend,
ain't we baby?

Betty Jean stops her domestic duties.

JOHNNY
(stops in his tracks and takes
a pause)
About that Mamie.

MAMIE
(shifts in her seat and voice
takes an entirely different
tone)
About what?

JOHNNY
I wanted to get here early so I
could tell you...
(takes a heavy breath)
This is my last night here.

Betty Jean turns her head to gather herself, which doesn't go unnoticed by Mamie?

MAMIE
What you mean it's your last night

JOHNNY
Well, I've got much much better
offers for my service and I don't
reckon...

MAMIE
Boy, you might wanna think real
hard about your next words.

Johnny pauses and looks at Betty Jean. Betty Jean shakes her head to let him know their secret is safe. Johnny breathes a sigh of relief.

JOHNNY
(courageously)
Well Mamie, I don't reckon you
wanna match the other offers. I
mean you been real generous...

(CONTINUED)

MAMIE

Generous?! Generous?! You hear this negro. You know the greatest thing anyone can have?

(pauses briefly)

Loyalty. I gave you the opportunity to come into my house, get on my stage, and what you do as soon as you feel something better comes along. You high tail it outta here so fast.

Mamie raising her voice prompts her main goon to enter from the back. He looks around frantically and is confused when he sees no one but Johnny.

MAMIE

One thing I can give to you is you are way smarter than you look. If you think I'm gonna give you one penny more. And since this is your last performance here, and you don't need my money anymore, you gone play for free.

JOHNNY

Now come on Mamie that ain't fair. I can't ask my band...

MAMIE

Ask?! Tuh-huh! That sounded like a request? Life ain't fair. You better get used to it.

The monotony is broken up by Johnny's bandmates walking in with their usual fanfare.

55

INT. MAMIE'S CLUB - NIGHT

55

Mamie sits by the front door of her club, half-heartedly greeting people as they walk in and move around. Her eyes is more fixated on Johnny on stage. He is giving his usual stellar performance with women flocking the stage as always. Mamie's eyes catch a glimpse of Betty Jean who is supposed to waitressing, yet clearly fuming from all of the feminine attention Johnny is receiving.

56

INT. MAMIE'S STAGE - NIGHT

56

Johnny finishes up a song to a raucous round of applause and screams.

JOHNNY

(moves his guitar and adjust
his microphone)

Thank y'all. Thank y'all. You're
much too kind. If you don't mind I
wanna sing something new for y'all.

VOICE

We don't mind.

ANOTHER VOICE

(from the back)

Go head baby.

JOHNNY

The name of this is "Lying On Me".
I hope you enjoy it.

Johnny and his band cuts into a soulful bluesy ballad. Betty Jean stops in her tracks. Halfway through the chorus, she realizes the song is about her and Johnny's disbelief of her pregnancy. Before she knows it she rushes the stage, interrupting his performance, and starts beating him with the tray she had.

MAMIE

(to herself more or less)

Mmm-hmm.

(points to one of her goons)

Go get her crazy ass.

Mamie's goon dashes to the stage and struggles to pull a punching, kicking, and cursing Betty Jean Off of Johnny. An embarrassed Johnny is at a loss as everyone looks on.

DO NO GOOD

(from the background)

Goddamn, she got on that nigga ass.

JOHNNY

Y'all have a good night.
(exits stage immediately)

57 INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

57

The disc jockey HAROLD THE HITMAKER walks into the radio station and stops by the front desk and talks to JEN, the receptionist.

HAROLD THE HITMAKER

Hey what's up Jen? Any mail for me today?

JEN

No. But, you did receive a call from a one Mr. Don Robey, for the third time. He said it was imperative that you contacted him. It sounded important.

HAROLD THE HITMAKER

Oh yeah? For who?

(changes subject)

So when you gonna let me take you out on the town foxy lady?

58 EXT OUTSIDE DON ROBEY'S OFFICE/STUDIO - DAY

58

Don Robey is sitting in the backseat of his car with a carload of his "boys" in a vehicle behind him. After assessing the scene Robert walks up to Robey's vehicle and sticks his head in the window.

ROBERT

What's going on Robey?

DON ROBEY

Get in. I want you to ride with me.

ROBERT

Everything alright?

DON ROBEY

It will be.

59 INT. BACKSEAT - DAY - MOVING

59

Don and Robert is in his backseat as Don puffs on his signature cigar.

DON ROBEY

You know Rob T. it's alot you gotta learn about this industry. The first being, it's always about the money. Rarely does anyone do anything just because. It's either

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY (cont'd)

a motive or money behind every action. And you know I can respect that. I can appreciate a man that let's me know straight up what his going rate for his service is. It's up to me to either pay that or not. Depending on the terms and how beneficial it is to me I give it a serious amount of consideration. Once I determine what it will take for me to come out on top, I usually partake in it.

(Don Robey sees the expression on Robert's face is one of trying to figure out where all of this is going.)

You know, I know what they say about me in the streets. Trust me I know what you have heard. Some true.

(quick bragging laugh)

A lot of it. One thing you never hear though, is I'm a fair and generous man. And I am. I'm also a man of my word. A man standing by his word means more to me than anything on earth. And in this music world you'll find that there are liars, thieves, and crooks around every corner. Leeches. Every now and then, your manhood is tested. If you let it go once, they start to come out of the wood works. Next thing you know respect becomes a foreign concept when it comes to your business.

(the car comes to a stop and

Don peers out of his window)

Oh. We here.

Robert looks around trying to identify where here is. Don's chauffeur/guard opens the door for him.

DON ROBEY

Come on.

60

EXT. OUTSIDE - DAY

60

Harold The Hitmaker is sitting in his car when he sees Don and his entourage walking his way. He nervously tries to light his cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD THE HITMAKER
(voice quivering but he tries
to sound genuine)
Hey Don! How you doing boss?

DON ROBEY
Now see Rob T. this what I was
talking bout. A dishonorable leech.

HAROLD THE HITMAKER
What you talking bout baby?

DON ROBEY
Oh now you don't know what I'm
talking bout? How many times I
gotta call?

HAROLD THE HITMAKER
Called? When? Where? Nobody told
me. I woulda been got at you.

DON ROBEY
Whole thing is, if you woulda been
doing what I paid you to do I
wouldn't have had to call.

HAROLD THE HITMAKER
Aww come on. You know how it go.
You know I got you.

DON ROBEY
All I know is you took my money and
ain't done what we agreed upon.

Don steps to the side and one of his goons punches Harold through his car window, then snatches him out through it. Don's other associates quickly join in, beating Harold bloody and senseless.

DON ROBEY
(talking to Robert)
Look at the business we in. It
could all be so simple if people
didn't think they was so slick.
(yells to his squad)
Ok y'all, that's enough. I don't
need y'all to kill him. He still
gotta play my records.
(walks over and leans down
over a beaten Harold)
(pulls a handkerchief out of
his pocket)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY (cont'd)

Don't make me have to come back
because it's gonna get much worse
if I do.

(points back at Robert)

Take a good look at that face right
there. He's gonna be paying you a
visit real soon. Treat him with the
same respect you would treat me.
Put it on my tab. Have some class.
Clean yourself up.

(throws handkerchief in
Harold's face)

61 EXT. TSU CAMPUS - AFTERNOON 61

Johnny sits on the campus of Texas Southern University during their band practice. He is in a zone as the band displays their full glory. The fullness of the sound and spectacle of it all hypnotizes him.

62 EXT. CUNEY HOMES - MORNING 62

Johnny is sitting out on the porch still in somewhat of a zone. Robert walks up.

ROBERT

What's wrong with you? You sitting
out here like you lost your best
friend.

JOHNNY

(answers robotically)
I want a band.

ROBERT

What? Man you got a band.

JOHNNY

Naw, a real band.

ROBERT

Clyde what you talking bout? Where
the hell all this coming from?

JOHNNY

I wanna put on a show.

ROBERT

What's wrong with the show you got
right now.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

It's average. I want to put on a spectacle. Have a revue. You know with back up singers, dancers, horn, the whole sha-bang.

ROBERT

And how do you plan on pulling this off?

JOHNNY

I don't know but I'mma make it happen.

ROBERT

You know what kind of budget something like that calls for? Where you expect to get that kind of money?

Johnny lifts his head up to Robert and gives him a shifty look.

ROBERT

What? I don't know what you thinking but it can't be good.

JOHNNY

It's just time for us to go to work.

(Johnny gets up and starts to walk inside)

FOR REAL!

ROBERT

(trails Johnny)

Us? What you think I been doing this for fake.

63

INT. STUDIO - EVENING

63

Johnny and his band is in the studio recording when Don walks in. Don stands there and takes the song in for a second.

DON ROBEY

(addressing Robert)

Wooh! Now this is what I'm talking bout! I can walk this into any station in America and make some noise.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
(bobbing his head)
Yeah, he in a zone. This his third
one. This ain't nothing. You should
hear the other ones.

DON ROBEY
Third one? How long he been in
here?

ROBERT
Going on a hour.

DON ROBEY
(looks at his watch)
A hour? He got three songs done?
And you say the other two just as
good?

ROBERT
Yep.

DON ROBEY
What got into him?

ROBERT
Whatever it is I hope it stay in
him.

DON ROBEY
(more to himself than
anything)
Me too.

ROBERT
Huh?

DON ROBEY
Nothing.

64 INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - NIGHT - MOVING

64

Johnny is driving with his radio on when the radio
personality, STAN THE TOP FORTY MAN, starts to speak.

STAN THE TOP FORTY MAN
You're tuned into Houston's number
one station ninety-four point five
with Stan The Top Forty Man. And
I'm about to bring to you one of
the hottest songs in the country.
It keeps our phone line ringing off
the hook. Here's Wake Up Little
Susie by The Everly Brothers.

Johnny forcefully turns his radio off as the poppy sounding tune comes on.

65

INT. STUDIO - EVENING

65

Johnny walks into the studio, where he is greeted by Don Robey and a few of his soldiers. He looks into the booth and sees Bobby Blue Band, who gives him a nod. When Johnny recognizes Bobby is recording his song he becomes a little irate.

JOHNNY
(frustrated)
What's this?!

DON ROBEY
Excuse me?

JOHNNY
That's my song?

DON ROBEY
Excuse me? Every song recorded in here is my song.

JOHNNY
Hell naw. I wrote that.

Johnny lunges for the boards but Don's goons stop him.

DON ROBEY
(dangerously calm)
See now that was your first mistake. But being the man I am I'm willing to overlook that because I know you are naive and a little emotional. Now you better make your next move your best move.

Johnny shakes himself free of Don's detail (really they allow it).

DON ROBEY
See Johnny, I'm all about exclusivity. Now you may not know what that mean. But nothing comes in or out of here without my say so. And everything that transpires within these walls, and beyond in conjunction with my business, is under my domain. Simply put, I own your black ass and everything you do. Now this is not to say that you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DON ROBEY (cont'd)
 won't be compensated for all of
 your efforts. It's just Bobby's
 last song was hot and he needs a
 follow up. And my ear says that
 this song compliments him better
 than it does you.

You can all but see the steam coming from Johnny's head.

DON ROBEY
 Now this is the moment of truth.
 Either you can take this and view
 it as the win it is for you or you
 can leave here with more than just
 your pride hurt.

Johnny scans the room, focuses on Bobby singing his song,
 then turns and storms out aggressively.

DON ROBEY
 (as Johnny is leaving)
 Smart man.

66 INT ROBERT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

66

Robert enters into his apartment all of the lights are off.
 It's pitch black and totally quiet. He is startled when he
 cuts on the lights and Johnny is sitting there.

ROBERT
 Nigga you scared the shit outta me.
 What you just sitting in total
 darkness for?

Johnny refuses to answer in his sunken state.

ROBERT
 What's eating you?

JOHNNY
 I ain't no punk!

ROBERT
 I know you ain't no punk. I ain't
 said that. Who said that?

JOHNNY
 (tearfully)
 Them white boys singing my song on
 the radio. Then I go to the studio
 and Robey done took my song and
 gave it to Bobby and said that it's
 his.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Damn!

(switches to tough love)

First of all, don't you ever let me see you drop your head in defeat, like you giving up. Hey man this is the game. Now you can sit there and cry about it or realize that you making music so good that people gotta steal it. That should tell you something!

JOHNNY

(menacing)

What that tell me?! Except, people think they can treat me like some lame!

ROBERT

What it should tell you is you're destined for greatness. You on your way man and everybody knows it. That song them white boys and Bobby stole, that's your best material?

JOHNNY

(studs up)

Far from it!

ROBERT

Alright then! What you crying for? In this world everybody has to give something sometimes to get more in the end

JOHNNY

You ever let your girls give something?

ROBERT

(pauses)

Now that's different.

The friends look at eachother and share a laugh.

67

INT. RADIO STATION - NIGHT

67

Robert is inside the station with Harold The Hitmaker dropping off Johnny's record. As the song The Hitmaker currently plays begin to fade, he goes into his spiel.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLD THE HITMAKER

Ladies and gentleman I got something new to get you grooving and moving. It's guaranteed to put a glide in your slide and a dip in your hip. Third Ward's very own Johnny Clyde Copeland with his very first megahit. And I promise you it's a doozy that's gonna make you woozy. So let's get into it Johnny Clyde Copeland with "Rock N Roll Lily". Remember who brought it to you first HAROLD THE HITMAKER.

(Harold finishes his delivery and moves his mic from in front of his face.)

Rob T. I really appreciate this Daddy-O.

(reaches out to shake Robert's hand)

ROBERT

(shakes Harold's hand)

I appreciate you.

68 INT. RADIO STATION(S) - DAY 68

Disc Jockeys are shown city to city, locally, introducing and playing Johnny's hit song "Rock N Roll Lily".

69 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY 69

1971, MICHAEL stumbles into MRS. CARROLL'S music class. She takes one look at him and becomes irate.

MRS. CARROLL

Un-unh! Get out! Right now! I told you about coming to my class high and drunk.

MICHAEL

I ain't going nowhere!

MRS. CARROLL

Oh yeah, today you is!

MICHAEL

You better act like you know who you talking to. Johnny Clyde Copeland my daddy.

(CONTINUED)

MRS. CARROLL
Johnny is not your father.

MICHAEL
And why not?

MRS. CARROLL
Because he's my brother in law.

MICHAEL
I tell you what take my number off
that enrollment card and call him
then and see.

MRS. CARROLL
I definitely will. You still
getting up out of here though.

CUT

70 EXT. OUTSIDE - AFTERNOON

70

Michael is walking up into his yard, where he is greeted by
a more mature Betty Jean sitting at a concrete table. She is
unusually ecstatic.

BETTY JEAN
There's a number in there for you
by the phone.

MICHAEL
Oh yeah? Who?

BETTY JEAN
Go see.

71 INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

71

Michael walks in and stops at the phone. He sees the piece
of paper with the foreign number on it and picks it up and
look at it. He starts to dial the rotary phone. It rings
and then a gravelly voice speaks.

JOHNNY
Hello.

MICHAEL
Hello.

JOHNNY
Who is this?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
Michael, who is this?

JOHNNY
This your old man! You wanna go to
a gig with me this weekend?

MICHAEL
A gig? What's that?

JOHNNY
Do you want me to come pick you up
so you can see me play?

MICHAEL
Yeah! When?

JOHNNY
I'll come after you get out of
school Friday. You stay in Acres
Homes now don't you?

MICHAEL
Yeah.

JOHNNY
Where at?

MICHAEL
On Lucky. You exit Forty-five at
Little York and make a left. Pass
Shepherd. When you get to Banjo
make a right and Lucky is the first
street.

JOHNNY
Ok then. I'll be there around five.

MICHAEL
All right see you then.

JOHNNY
Cool.

Michael hangs up the phone and just stands there.

72

INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - EVENING - MOVING

72

Johnny and Michael are riding, uncomfortably, both intent on not saying much. The radio is playing when Stevie Wonder comes on the radio. Michael starts humming but it isn't long before he is singing. Johnny has to do a double take from the richness of Michael's voice.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
So you like Stevie ha?

MICHAEL
(breaks his tune to answer quickly)
My favorite.
(picks the song back up without missing a beat)

JOHNNY
Yeah, he's one of my favorites too.
(joins his son in song)
Michael eyes his father, surprised by how good he sounds. They both smile at each other and sing even harder as they ride down the street.

DEFOCUS TRANSITION

73

INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - EVENING - MOVING

73

Johnny and Michael are back riding in their own awkwardness. Johnny takes advantage of getting caught by a red light and turns the radio down.

JOHNNY
(apologetically)
Look man. I know I haven't been in your life. And honestly, it's my fault that I haven't. I could never make up the time I missed. I mean...if I could change the past...I... Hey I can understand if you never forgive me but if you give me the chance, we can start over right here and now.

MICHAEL
(continues to look out of his window to hide his tears and answers as unbothered and dry as he could)
We good.
(wipes his eyes)

JOHNNY
(looks sorrowfully at his son)
Yeah. Understood.
(responds to the sound of a horn being honked behind him)

74 INT. JOHNNY'S CAR - EVENING

74

Johnny pulls up in front of a cafe in Third Ward.

JOHNNY
(starts to exit his vehicle)
You wanna come in?

MICHAEL
I'm good.

Johnny gives a perplexed look and gets out of the car. Michael's eyes follow him all of the way into the club. When Johnny disappears he turns the radio up.

It isn't long before Johnny exits with a miniature version of himself. Michael instantly sees the resemblance. His eyes widen, more from whom he knows to be his brother's outfit. Dawrence stands next to Johnny in a blue crush velvet suit with a pink shirt, looking like he just stepped off of stage or a future pimp. Michael has it hard deciding. Michael nervously smiles and waves.

75 EXT. OUTSIDE - NOON

75

The next day, Michael and his newly discovered brother is sitting in the front yard of Johnny's brick home.

MICHAEL
Man, you tore it up yesterday. So you a part of the show.

DAWRENCE
Yeah. I just dance. What happened to you.

MICHAEL
Huh?

DAWRENCE
They called you on stage and you went to hiding. Straight froze up. And daddy said you can sing.

MICHAEL
That was a big crowd. Kinda caught me off guard. I didn't know he was gone do that.

DAWRENCE
Yeah he did that to me the first time too.

(pauses)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAWRENCE (cont'd)
So why I never met you before?

MICHAEL
(reflects briefly on his
answer then replies simply)
I don't know.

DAWRENCE
You shoot dice.

Dawrence goes in his pocket and pulls dice out, shake em in his hand, then shows Michael.

MICHAEL
Naw, not really.

DAWRENCE
That's cool. You wanna go with me
around the corner. You can watch my
back while I crook these niggas
asses.

MICHAEL
Them crooks?

DAWRENCE
I thought you didn't shoot dice?

MICHAEL
I don't, but I been around ya dig?

Dawrence's devil horns start to show.

DAWRENCE
So what's your poison?

MICHAEL
Snake venom if it's good.

DAWRENCE
Well, I'm finna go in here and tell
daddy we bout to walk to the store.

Dawrence gets up and goes inside. As soon as he does a limo pulls up directly in front of Johnny's home and parks. Michael is marveled. His first time ever seeing a limo in person. A well dressed driver steps out and opens the back door. Robert emerges. When Michael sees him he almost passes out. Everything about Robert is immaculate and sharp.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
(floats up to Michael)
Hey what's up young blood. You one
of Dawrence potnas?

MICHAEL
(in disbelief)
No. I'm his brother.

Now Robert's expression nearly matches Michael's.

ROBERT
Hold up?
(pulls back and tkes a good
look)
Damn, it's been that long.
(with his hand on his chin in
remembrance)
It has been hasn't it.

Michael tries to figure out what all of this means.

ROBERT
I'm Rob T!
(with an air of confidence
that Michael should know him)
You Betty Jean's boy ain't you. I
see it now. Damn look like somebody
smushed Johnny's and her face
together.

Dawrence steps out of the door.

DAWRENCE
(in acknowledgement)
Rob T!

ROBERT
Li'l Clyde.

Michael tries to hide his disgust and jealousy at the sound
of that.

ROBERT
So you met your brother?

DAWRENCE
Yeah, for the first time yesterday.

Dawrence walks by and taps Michael. Michael responds by
following him to exit the yard.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
Where y'all headed?

DAWRENCE
To the store.

ROBERT
You wanna take the limo?

DAWRENCE
Naw we got it.

Michael's disgust is apparent at that.

ROBERT
You bout to go round there where
them niggas gambling at.

Dawrence is at a loss.

ROBERT
Man don't have me have to come
around there and kill one of them
turkeys.

DAWRENCE
(laughs)
Yeah. I hear you.
(taps Michael again)
C'mon bro.

MICHAEL
(as they walk off side by side
Michael whispers)
Who is that?

DAWRENCE
(nonchalantly and as if
Michael should know)
That's just Rob T.

MICHAEL
(looking back in time to catch
the last of Robert's full
length mink disappear into
Johnny's house)
Oh. What he do?

DAWRENCE
He Clyde's manager...
(pauses)
And a pimp.

76

INT. TOUR BUS - DAY - MOVING

76

Johnny and a sizable amount of his band is on his tour bus with Johnny's name and face on the side of it. The rest are in a matching van behind the bus. He stands and begins to instruct everyone on it.

JOHNNY

Ok everybody. We pulling into Lafayette. Let's make this the greatest show we've ever played. Let's have everybody leave just how we got here. You go to jail, I'm coming to get you but there go your check until I'm paid back every penny. And you know how it can get in these small towns. Michael...

(Michael's head snaps up)

I know how you is about them females. Man be careful. These dudes get real touchy about their women. It's not many of them to go around and they be ready to kill behind em especially how you like em.

DO NO GOOD

And they all how we like em in Louisiana.

There is a slight raucous laughter by some of the male band members. One of the female members pops Do No Good in his arm. He pretends it hurt him.

JOHNNY

Hey! Soon as the show is over you got fifteen minutes to get back to this bus or get left. We moving out and pushing on up he highway.

Michael stares out of the window and sees people running along the side of the bus. He eyes one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen and they smile at eachother.

77

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

77

LOUISIANA, a dark man with curly hair gets on stage to bring Johnny up.

LOUISIANA

We got a full house tonight. And we bringing back an all time Lafayette favorite. Everytime he comes to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LOUISIANA (cont'd)
 town it's a guaranteed blast. So
 y'all know what to do. We need
 everybody on your feet. Move all
 them tables and chairs because you
 know we bout to throw down up in
 here tonight.
 (puts extra emphasis on his
 introduction)
 Johnny Clyde Copeland And The Soul
 Agents!!!

Johnny and his full ensemble is on display. They come on
 forcefully and uptempo. The horns are blowing, the drums are
 beating, the piano is rocking, the guitars are rolling, even
 the harmonica is piercing through. Johnny's back up singers
 and dancers are all on point. The place is jammed packed and
 jumping.

JOHNNY
 (before Louisiana gets off
 stage)
 Holla at me after the show.

Johnny's coal black skin is glistening, as his words seem to
 manifest from the depths of his soul, somewhere.

78

INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

78

Johnny steps on the bus, with Louisiana behind him.

JOHNNY
 (still glowing)
 Great show y'all! Great show
 indeed! Everybody here, we can go.

The BUS DRIVER stammers.

BUS DRIVER
 Well Johnny...

JOHNNY
 (his eyes instantly looks to
 the back of the bus)
 Michael! Ain't none of y'all seen
 him?

LEROY
 Last time I seen him he was with
 some bad li'l thang. Mmmh!

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
Dawrence?!

DAWRENCE
I don't know.

JOHNNY
This nigga here! Gone get his self
killed. Shit!

As Johnny starts to storm off of the bus a BAND MEMBER makes
it a point to make a statement.

BAND MEMBER
Bet we ain't leaving now.

JOHNNY
(stops)
What?! Somebody got something to
say? Speak up.
(complete silence)
Thought not. Nobody gets off this
bus for nothing. Louisisan come
with me.

79 EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

79

Michael and the LITTLE BEAUTIFUL SISTER is around some dark
and secluded corner in back of the club making out.
Michael's pants are to his ankles and the girl's dress is
up. He hears Johnny's voice before he sees him. He tries to
speed up but Johnny hits the corner.

JOHNNY
(partly in shock at the sight)
Boy what you think you doing?
(snatches Michael away as he
identifies the girl as one of
the club owner, Broussard's,
daughters)
If you don't pull your pants up and
get your ass on that bus. And
little lady you need to be making
your way home.

LITTLE BEAUTIFUL SISTER
I wanna go with y'all. I wanna be
with Michael. I love him!

JOHNNY
(laughs)
I think not darling. Broussard
would kill me.

Johnny lets Michael pull his pants up before he drags him off scolding him.

80

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

80

Johnny is performing in Corpus Christi. Michael and Dawrence is standing on the side of the stage, watching and waiting to go on. BESSIE MAE, a pretty lady holding a baby walks up to Michael and Dawrence. Michael is unattentive towards her

BESSIE MAE
How you boys doing?

DAWRENCE
We alright.

Bessie Mae pushes the baby in front of Michael's face.

BESSIE MAE
You wanna see your baby sister?

MICHAEL
(jumps back)
Better get that goddamn baby out my face. That ain't my sister. Groupie ass.

Bessie Mae is taken aback. She fades back into the background.

DAWRENCE
Hey man, you better hope that woman don't tell Clyde you did that.

MICHAEL
Nigga I don't care.

DAWRENCE
Yeah but you can't say that, though. You know Clyde be fucking these women everywhere we go.

MICHAEL
All I know is, I don't need em running up on me with all that. That's Johnny responsibility.

81 INT. CLUB - NIGHT

81

Johnny is performing at an arena in Victoria, Texas. He and his band is rocking. Johnny spots Michael walking through the crowd high and drunk out of his mind, stumbling and bumping into people. Johnny turns briefly to his band to see who is all paying attention. Then He turns and finds Louisiana on side of the stage and gives him a look as if to go grab that fool.

82 INT. TOUR BUS - NIGHT

82

Johnny gets on the bus and lasers his focus directly on Michael. Everyone else braces for the inevitable.

JOHNNY

What the fuck you think you doing?

MICHAEL

Who you talking to?

JOHNNY

You! I ain't ever been so embarrassed in my life.

MICHAEL

You ain't gotta tell me that.

JOHNNY

And what's that supposed to mean?

MICHAEL

What's that supposed to mean? Huh! Everybody else might think you hot shit but I know the real Johnny Clyde Copeland.

Johnny's road manager, BIG BROWN, tugs at Michael.

BIG BROWN

(whispering)

Hey man, this ain't the time or place.

MICHAEL

Nigga if you don't get your hands off me. Naw it's the perfect time. See all y'all might kiss his ass but he know I ain't built like that. Respect is earned not given. You think just cause you just stepped back into my life I'm supposed to forgive and forget.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)
 Truth is you ain't shit. You damn
 sho'll ain't no father of mine.

JOHNNY
 Since I ain't your father, you can
 get off my bus then.

MICHAEL
 I ain't going nowhere!

JOHNNY
 Oh yeah, you gone get up off of
 here. If I gotta do it myself.

MICHAEL
 (stands up)
 I'd like to see you try.

Johnny squares off. Big Brown steps in between them.

BIG BROWN
 (leans in to Johnny)
 You know he keep a pistol on him
 and he ain't in his right mind. Let
 him make it. It'll all blow over.
 He don't mean it man. He just
 speaking from a place of hurt.

Johnny and Michael exchange menacing stares. Johnny pulls
 away from Big Brown and walks to the back of his bus.

JOHNNY
 (talking to the air)
 I shoul'da left your ass in Acres
 Homes. Ghetto ass! Don't nobody
 disturb me! If the bus catch on
 fire just let me burn up.
 (slams door behind him)

Michael stands there swaying embarrassingly, the center of
 attention. He waves everyone off in attempt to hide his
 shame.

83 INT. STUDIO - EVENING

83

Johnny and his band is in the recording booth waiting on his
 ENGINEER to give him the word.

ENGINEER
 We ready.

Johnny counts his band off and they tear into his song
 Ghetto Child.

(CONTINUED)

DEFOCUS TRANSITION

84 INT. TV SHOW - EVENING 84

Johnny and his band is suited and booted performing Ghetto Child on the LARRY KANE Show. At the end of the performance Larry Kane takes the stage with the band, to the crowd's applause.

LARRY KANE
Keep it going for Johnny Clyde
Copeland.

Larry Kane steps to the side as if he is presenting something. Johnny stands there as basks in it all.

85 INT. MICHAEL'S HOME - DAY 85

The phone at Michael's home rings and he runs and picks it up.

MICHAEL
Hello?

CUT

86 INT. JOHNNY'S HOME - DAY 86

Johnny recognized his son's voice.

JOHNNY
Hey what's up Mike?

CUT

87 INT. MICHAEL'S HOME - DAY 87

Michael responds.

MICHAEL
Nothing much. What's happening with
you?

CUT

88 INT. JOHNNY'S HOME - DAY 88

Johnny answers.

JOHNNY
Cooling. Can you get out here. I
want you to see what Rob T done
got.

CUT

89 INT. MICHAEL'S HOME - DAY 89

Answers nearly before Johnny finishes.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

90 INT. CAR - DAY 90

Michael instructs his girlfriend, a pretty white girl, to pull up in front of the yard Johnny and Dawrence stood in, behind the cleanest vehicle he ever seen. Michael gets out.

91 EXT. JOHNNY'S HOME - DAY 91

Johnny and Dawrence walk up to meet Michael.

DAWRENCE

Who that sexy ass white girl is bro?

MICHAEL

One of my gals.

JOHNNY

You love living dangerously don't you.

MICHAEL

(smirks and changes the subject; pointing at the foreign vehicle)

What's this?

JOHNNY

Rob T. He something else. They let this dude design his own car.

MICHAEL

Yeah, but what is it?

DAWRENCE

What's it called Pops?
Cor...corv...

(Dawrence tries to sound it out)

JOHNNY

Corvarado. A Corvette and El Dorado combined. Check it out.

(CONTINUED)

Michael walks around the vehicle in admiration then opens the door.

MICHAEL

Where Rob T at?

JOHNNY

I don't know. he just came by here,
said he'll be back, and left in
that Rolls Royce.

DAWRENCE

Pops let me see the keys and drive
it around the corner.

JOHNNY

Boy you out your mind.

DAWRENCE

Aww man.

JOHNNY

Aww man my ass.
(Johnny walks up close to
Michael.)
Mike.

Michael looks at his father's disposition.

MICHAEL

(drops his head; as he picks
it up)
You know man I...

JOHNNY

Hey it's cool. Whether you know it
or not I understand. We good. So
I'm going back on the road for a
few weeks next week you wanna go.

MICHAEL

(child-like)
Yes sir!
(falls into his father's
embrace)

JOHNNY

(jokingly)
I'mma kill you you ever do me like
that again.

Michael pulls back and smiles at Johnny. Johnny pulls him in again for another hug.

(CONTINUED)

Johnny let's Michael go and directs him towards the white girl's car.

JOHNNY

Come on introduce me to your li'l
moma.

92 INT. CEILING - NIGHT

92

ELROY, one of Johnny's roadies, is in the ceiling spying on LAVELLE, one of Johnny's opening acts. Beautiful and fine, she is in her panties.

93 INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

93

There is a knock at Lavelle's door. She answers it. She sees it's Michael and Dawrence and allows them in.

LAVELLE

(friendly)

What you two bad asses want?

DAWRENCE

We came to see you.

LAVELLE

See me ha? About what?

MICHAEL

I told you she didn't remember.

LAVELLE

What I'm supposed to remember?

MICHAEL

You said you was gone get both of
us diamond rings for Christmas.

LAVELLE

You know what? I sho'll did. I'm
sorry but i just didn't make as
much money as I thought I was? Now
y'all got me feeling bad.

(pauses)

What if I gave you something better
than a diamond ring?

DAWRENCE

Something better than a diamond
ring?

(CONTINUED)

LAVELLE

Yeah...pussy.

MICHAEL

(spellbound)

Dawrence lock the door.

94 INT. CEILING - NIGHT

94

Elroy sees Lavelle get fully undressed and gets too excited. He begins to move around too much in the cramped space. Before he knows it, the ceiling gives in and he falls to the floor.

95 INT. BACKSTAGE - EVENING

95

Lavelle and the boys are completely shocked as they see Elroy fall from the ceiling to the floor, and spring to his feet like it was nothing.

LAVELLE

What the hell...

ELROY

What you li'l niggas think y'all doing. Get y'all asses outta here.

LAVELLE

They ain't gotta go nowhere. you get your pervertic ass outta here.

ELROY

I ain't leaving. If you don't give me none I'mma tell Johnny.

LAVELLE

Tell him what? How you fell out of the ceiling spying on me.

ELROY

And what you was about to do with his sons.

LAVELLE

We wasn't bout to do anything. Was we boys?

MICHAEL

How we gone do something when we ain't even here.

(CONTINUED)

DAWRENCE

I ain't seen Lavelle since she got off stage.

LAVELLE

Now who you think Johnny gone believe. I bet I still be working tomorrow night. What about you?

Leroy looks around the room and sees he has no win.

ELROY

Yeah, ok.

LAVELLE

Now get your punk ass out my dressing room.

Elroy turns to leave. Lavelle uses her head to instruct the boys to leave to.

LAVELLE

(mouths to the boys silently)
I got y'all. Don't worry about it.

96

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

96

Johnny is being thrown a congratulatory party. All of the local influential movers and shakers in the music industry, as well as other industries, legal and illegal, are there. The place is packed and the drinks and accessories are floating around. Everyone is looking good in their finest. Everyone Johnny passes vies for at least a second of his attention, to congratulate him. WALSH ALLEN, the biggest DJ in all of Houston, is in attendance and being his usual life of the party self.

Michael, keeping close to his father, follows Johnny to where Walsh Allen is standing with a crowd around him.

WALSH ALLEN

(calling attention to Johnny)
There he is the man of the hour.
Johnny come over here. It's some people who've been dying to meet you.

As Johnny approaches the different people in the crowd acknowledge him. He moves into the inner circle.

WALSH ALLEN

Johnny man when I tell you you smoking right now. My phones

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WALSH ALLEN (cont'd)
wouldn't stop ringing up at the
show. I almost done something I've
never done...played your song back
to back.

Everyone in the crowd enjoys a laugh.

WALSH ALLEN
I need to get you in there for an
interview.

JOHNNY
Anytime. Just let me know when.

WALSH ALLEN
Definitely needs to be soon.

A gentleman standing next to Walsh pulls a small container
and offers up a sampling of cocaine to Walsh, who engulfs it
quickly.

WALSH ALLEN
(playing with his nose and
snorting)
Let Johnny taste that.

The gentleman pushes his open container to Johnny.

JOHNNY
(declining)
No thanks I'm good.

A silence falls over the immediate crowd.

WALSH ALLEN
Go head man everybody in here is
family.

JOHNNY
Naw I don't get down. I appreciate
it though. Michael, he mess around
though.

Michael doesn't hesitate to take advantage of the situation.

Walsh's entire demeanor has changed. His shoulders are
squared and his face is serious.

WALSH ALLEN
What you mean you appreciate it
though? You know who you in the
presence of...

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Walsh man...

WALSH ALLEN

Naw nigga. You gone insult me like that?! I let you in and you spit in my face. Man we don't get down with squares.

(pauses)

I tell you what. You too good to get high with us...I'm too good to play your record. Matter of fact, you good as dead around here.

MICHAEL

(stepping in front of Johnny and reaching into his jacket simultaneously)

Who this turkey think he talking to?

Johnny places his arm across Michael's chest, stopping him.

JOHNNY

(laughing it off)

Michael, be cool. It's all a misunderstanding.

WALSH ALLEN

A misunderstanding? We'll see.

97 EXT. JOHNNY'S HOME - DAY 97

A month or so passes and Robert is beating at Johnny's front door.

ROBERT

Open the door. I know you in there.

After a few more beats and a couple of seconds, Johnny comes to the door. He doesn't greet Robert he just turns and walks off.

98 INNT. JOHNNY'S HOME - DAY 98

Robert is looking around at the condition of Johnny's residence as he follows him to his den, where Johnny plops down on his couch.

ROBERT

Man look at you. This how you living now?

(looking around and stepping over trash)

(CONTINUED)

You way better than this. I been calling and I know you been hearing the phone ring. What the hell wrong with you?

JOHNNY

It's over. I'm done.

ROBERT

You done?! It ain't ever over until it's over. What I tell you about all that feeling sorry for yourself? You a player. But right now you acting like a five dollar Jensen trick.

JOHNNY

What you want me to do?

ROBERT

I tell you what I want you to do... You know what I just remembered. I got an extremely important phone call to make.

JOHNNY

You know where the phone at.

ROBERT

(feeling around on his body)
Yeah but I ain't got no more smokes. Do your potna a favor and go to the store for me.

Johnny looks at Robert with a look of ill repute.

ROBERT

What you too good to run to the store for me now? All the things I done for you?

JOHNNY

(exhales)

Give me your keys. You parked behind me.

ROBERT

hey just walk down there. Clearly you haven't been out of the house in a while and I need you to at least get some fresh air to clear your mind.

(CONTINUED)

Johnny snarls at Robert. He stills stands and proceed to leave for the store.

ROBERT
you know what kind I smoke.

99 INT. JOHNNY'S HOME - DAY

99

Robert peeks to make sure Johnny has left. Once he is sure Johnny is gone, he starts grabbing some of Johnny's possessions. Once he has gathered enough and placed it by the door a thought strikes him.

ROBERT
Damn, the guitar!
(rushes to retrieve it)

100 EXT. STREET - DAY

100

Johnny is walking down the street back to his home as he sees Robert's car pulling up towards him. The closer it gets he recognizes the backseat is full. Robert pulls all of the way up on the side of Johnny.

ROBERT
Where you going?

JOHNNY
What you mean?

ROBERT
Come on get in the car.

JOHNNY
For what? Where we going?

ROBERT
Don't worry bout all that. Just get
in the car.

JOHNNY
(stressing his point)
I ain't getting in nothing and I
ain't going nowhere.

ROBERT
Alright then. Don't matter me none.
All I know it's gone be hard to
write and play music without a
guitar. And it ain't like you just
bringing money in like that right
now.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
 (focuses on Robert's backseat)
 My guitar!

ROBERT
 Now, see. Literally, it's my
 guitar. Besides me, probably the
 best friend you've ever had. How
 you feel you gone get along without
 it? Can't you see ain't nothing
 here for you man. You've outgrown
 this. You're way bigger than all of
 this. Everyone knows it. It doesn't
 mean anything if you don't know it
 though. Come on get in the car
 dude.

(stops and looks at Johnny
 hard and raises his voice)
 Johnny get in the car man.

As they ride off, Johnny is looking out of the window.

JOHNNY
 (audaciously)
 I'll be back.

ROBERT
 (turns his head and sees the
 fire in his friend's eyes)
 I know you will. I know you will.
 Ain't no thang baby.
 (Robert stretches out his
 right hand for Johnny to give
 him five)

Johnny is hesitant but finally slides his hand across
 Robert's and Robert drives off laughing.

ROBERT
 Now that's what I'm talking bout.

101 INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

101

Robert and Johnny is walking, talking, and browsing through
 a record store in Harlem. Johnny stops and searches through
 a record section.

JOHNNY
 (pulls up a record)
 Man they got my record in Harlem!

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Sho' they do. You Johnny Clyde
Copeland.

(pauses)

So what you think?

JOHNNY

(still searching through
records)

About what?

ROBERT

About this place?

JOHNNY

My record in here! Any place that
carries Johnny Clyde Copeland gotta
be cool.

ROBERT

That's good to know because it's
yours.

Johnny looks up with a dumbfounded look on his face.

JOHNNY

(excited)

This place...? It's mine...? Man
you gotta be jiving.

ROBERT

You know me. I ain't got that kind
of time. Square business this your
joint.

JOHNNY

(admires the scenery)

Rob T You the baddest man I ever
met in my life.

ROBERT

I take it you dig it then.

JOHNNY

Dig it I love it.

ROBERT

It ain't for free now. You gotta
repay me by writing them hits like
you do and networking.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Networking?

ROBERT

Yeah I'm not gone be here long. So it's gone be up to you to put together you a band. I gotta go holler at this club owner in a little bit about getting you in there. After that you'll see me once maybe twice a year. You know I got other things going on too.

JOHNNY

Yeah I know.

ROBERT

You think you can handle it? Lemme know now.

JOHNNY

I'm good. Better than good!

ROBERT

My man. Now let's go meet your employees.

(walking off with Johnny)

Now you know if you need anything just call Able Ten and let Rose know.

102 INT. CAB - DAY - MOVING

102

Johnny is in a cab. Looking at the back of the head of an attentive CAB DRIVER.

JOHNNY

Right here.

CAB DRIVER

Right here?! The middle of the Brooklyn Bridge?

The cab driver stops and Johnny pays as he exits. He is right on the Brooklyn Bridge. He carries his guitar and a small amplifier. He walks for a second or so, before he finds a spot he likes. He plugs his guitar in and begins to wail away at it.

103 INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

103

Johnny is sitting behind the counter of his record store when Stevie Ray Vaughn, a scrawny white kid with a guitar and urban cowboy hat, walks in. It catches him off guard, with him being in the middle of Harlem. The sight of the guitar kind of put Johnny at ease.

JOHNNY

Can I help you?

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

(approaches the counter and puts his hand out for Johnny to shake)

Yeah. I'm Stevie and I don't mean to trouble you but...

As if Stevie being white with a cowboy hat on wasn't enough, his accent, that Johnny instantly recognized, didn't help.

JOHNNY

Man where you from?

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

Texas. Dallas, Texas to be exact.

JOHNNY

Get outta here! I'm from Houston?

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

You serious?

JOHNNY

As a heart attack. I'm Johnny Clyde Copeland.

Stevie's facial expression changes as he first scrutinizes Johnny closely, then steps back for a more full view.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

Naw?!!! The Johnny Clyde Copeland?
Rock N Roll Lily Johnny Clyde
Copeland?

Johnny sings a couple of lines from one of his song.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

I can't believe it. Johnny Clyde
Copeland working in a record store
in Harlem. I always wondered what
had happened to you.

Johnny's demeanor becomes shameful.

(CONTINUED)

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

One day you was one of the hottest voices on the radio then it's like you just fell off the face of the...

Stevie's excitement had overtaken him for a spell not allowing him to see Johnny's emotions had changed along with the direction of the conversation.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

...so is the owner in?

JOHNNY

(once again prideful)
You looking at him.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

Oh wow! The odds. I just wanted to know would it be ok if I stood in front of your store and played for a bit?

Johnny started to laugh, which confused Stevie.

JOHNNY

You came all the way from Dallas...

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

(corrects Johnny)
Austin.

JOHNNY

(pauses to recollect)
I thought you said Dallas?

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

From Dallas. Was staying in Austin.

JOHNNY

Well you mean to tell me, you traveled all the way from Texas to play your guitar in front of my store in Harlem?

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

Well you traveled all the way from Texas to own a record store in Harlem. So, yeah.

JOHNNY

You got me there. So where you staying?

(CONTINUED)

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN
That all depends.

JOHNNY
On what?

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN
How much money I can make. If you
let me play in front of your store.

Johnny laughs again and Stevie's confusing look partly returns.

JOHNNY
Yeah you can play out front.

Stevie reaches over the counter to thank Johnny and shake his hand again.

JOHNNY
(grabbing Stevie's hand)
Under two conditions. Don't block
my door. And when you get that name
you're searching for, don't forget
where you got it from.

Stevie's look became more peculiar.

104 INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

104

Johnny is in his Harlem apartment. New York's energy permeates through his windows. He walks into his living room where his new found friend, STEVIE RAY VAUGHN, is on the couch listening to Jimi Hendrix and plucking away at his guitar, with evidence of his living situation all around him.

JOHNNY
Stevie Ray you drunk up all the
juice again.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN
My fault. I was meaning to go to
the store but I started listening
to Jimi.

JOHNNY
And we all know once you start
listening to Jimi...

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN
Check this out. Tell me what you
think.

(CONTINUED)

(Stevie Ray performs a solo on his guitar comparable to Jimi himself)

JOHNNY

(listens intently)

I think you one bad white boy. As good as you is, you gotta do your own thing though. Take all of that and create something new. You gotta make sure you give the world you. So they don't view you as just some cheap Jimi Hendrix imitation.

Stevie Ray sits on the couch soaking in every word. He begins to play and delivering a song on the spot. Johnny walks off inspecting the juice carton as if there was something in it he may have missed.

105 INT. CLUB - NIGHT

105

Johnny and Stevie is backstage in his dressing room, when BEAR, the master of ceremony, knocks at the door.

JOHNNY

Come in.

MASTER OF CEREMONY

(peeps his head in the door)

You got a couple minutes.

JOHNNY

Come here real fast Bear. I need you to do me a favor.

Perplexed, Bear steps in.

BEAR

What's up Johnny?

JOHNNY

I need you to do something for me.

BEAR

Anything.

JOHNNY

I need you to introduce my man Stevie Ray on stage before I go on.

Stevie, surprised, looks upside Johnny's head.

(CONTINUED)

BEAR

(with perfect comedic timing)
 Anything but that. Man you gone
 crazy. You trying to get me fired
 and killed all in the same night. J
 C if you ain't like me, all you had
 to do was tell me. I got two babies
 on the way.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

Twins?

BEAR

My wife and my girlfriend. I'm
 sorry but I can't do that Johnny.

JOHNNY

I'll give you one hundred dollars.

BEAR

White boy you go on in couple
 minutes.

(starts to walk to the door)

Now I'mma tell you something. I
 ain't gone be responsible for your
 white ass when you walk out on that
 stage and all them niggas start
 going crazy. Can you at least take
 that hat off?

(talks all of the way out of
 the door)

Looking like the nigga that shot
 Dr. Martin Luther King.

Once the door closes Stevie begins to plead his case.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

Johnny what you doing? I can't go
 out there.

JOHNNY

(inspirational)

Yes you can! You got this! You
 ready!

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN

I didn't even bring my guitar.

JOHNNY

(picks up his guitar and walks
 to Stevie)

Here. Use mine. Listen man I
 believe in you. I know you can do
 it.

(CONTINUED)

Johnny and Stevie listens to Bear's introduction.

BEAR

We got a real treat for you all tonight. Something extra special. Just remember if you don't like it, it's not my fault. We bringing a newcomer to the stage. But he one bad white...

(Bear stops and cleans it up)
One bad motherfucker.

JOHNNY

Besides it's too late.

BEAR

Stevie Ray!!!

106 INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

106

Johnny's phone ring. He picks it up and instantly hears a OPERATOR.

OPERATOR

You have a collect call from Michael Collins in the Harris County Jail. Do you accept the charges?

Johnny answered before the operator finishes.

JOHNNY

Yeah!

MICHAEL

Hello?

JOHNNY

So you calling me from jail now?
(More to himself than his son)
I knew I shoulda brought your ass up here with me. What's up?

MICHAEL

I'm locked up.

JOHNNY

Tell me something I don't know.
Why?

MICHAEL

It's not that serious.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
Not that serious?

MICHAEL
Yeah. I only signed for two years.

JOHNNY
So two years in jail ain't that serious to you? Boy you really is messed up.

MICHAEL
I'll be home in six months or less.

JOHNNY
You sound like you happy to be there?

MICHAEL
What choice do I got? Might as well make the best of a bad situation. I was just calling to let you know I was in jail and ask if you could put something on my books?

JOHNNY
Books? What the hell is that?

MICHAEL
My commissary?

JOHNNY
Commissary?

MICHAEL
Money so I can get me something to eat, some hygiene, stamps and envelopes. Shit like that.

JOHNNY
And how am I supposed to do that?

MICHAEL
Give me your address and I'll send you some money slips.

JOHNNY
Money slips?

MICHAEL
Yeah. Fill it out and send it back with a money order.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

I shouldn't have to be doing any of this.

There's an awkward silence.

JOHNNY

How's my grandson?

MICHAEL

He's fine. Healthy and happy.

JOHNNY

You need to get yourself together so you can do right by him.

Another awkward silence.

MICHAEL

I need your address up there so I can write you and send the money slips.

JOHNNY

You ready?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

JOHNNY

Eight twenty- nine West one twenty-fifth street. New York, New York one zero zero two seven. Apartment seven-o-nine. You got it?

MICHAEL

Yeah I got it?

JOHNNY

You need anything else?

MICHAEL

Some magazines, if you don't mind.

JOHNNY

Alright, no problem. Call me if you need anything else. And son...

MICHAEL

Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
Take care of yourself.

MICHAEL
I will.

Johnny holds the phone to his chest before he finally hangs up.

107 INT. CLUB - NIGHT 107

Johnny is on stage performing at a club in North Carolina, when Sandra, a beautiful woman, catches his eye. They exchange flirtatious looks through Johnny's entire performance.

108 INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT 108

Johnny and Sandra sit in a booth at a restaurant. Sandra is nervously stirring her drink. Johnny stares at her incessantly.

SANDRA
(looks up)
What?!

JOHNNY
You.

SANDRA
What about me?

JOHNNY
You gotta be the sexiest creature
I've...

SANDRA
(jumps in and completes him)
...seen tonight? How many women
you've told that before?

JOHNNY
It doesn't matter how many I've
told that. I'm telling you? And if
I didn't mean it I wouldn't say it.

SANDRA
I bet.

JOHNNY
Seriously. I got a total different
energy about you. I almost forgot I
was on stage singing. It was like a
vision or something.

(CONTINUED)

SANDRA
A vision ha? Of What?

JOHNNY
(gives her the most genuine
eyes)
Forever.

Sandra blushes so hard, she can't help but try to hide her face.

109

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

109

Johnny is in a radio station with BLUES DADDY about to conduct an interview about his new hit song "Down On Bended Knee". Sandra is sitting to the side with a beautiful baby girl on her lap.

BLUES DADDY
We're back from commercial
and just like I promised I got a
special guest in the studio with
Blues Daddy. Singer of one of the
hottest songs coast to coast and
climbing, Johnny Clyde Copeland.
How you doing king?

JOHNNY
I'm alright. Thanks for asking.

BLUES DADDY
You running things right now, it
must feel good.

JOHNNY
Well you know, I'm just working
trying to deliver the people the
best music possible. Know what I'm
saying?

BLUES DADDY
I definitely do. You surely
delivered with Down On Bended Knee.
Chicago love you man. If I don't
get five or six calls an hour about
you I gotta check the phone and
make sure it's still working. So
you playing the legendary
Checkerboard Lounge?

JOHNNY
Yes sir, tonight.

(CONTINUED)

BLUES DADDY

We talking the likes of Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters. That's some company.

JOHNNY

It's an honor and a privilege. I still can't believe I'm playing Chicago. Chi-town!

BLUES DADDY

I tell you what, let's give the people what they want. We about to get into Down On Bended Knee and when we get back we're going to the phones so the people of Chicago can give you a proper greeting.

JOHNNY

Sounds good to me.

BLUES DADDY

Is there anything else you would like to tell the people before we get your song on?

JOHNNY

Definitely. Chicago has some of the most beautiful women I've ever seen and I pray I see all y'all pretty faces in the place tonight.

Blues Daddy looks over Johnny's shoulder to Sandra and she holds her composure.

BLUES DADDY

That's right! Johnny Clyde Copeland at the Checkerboard Lounge tonight. And now here it is Down On Bended Knee with your one and only Blues Daddy.

(points at the man working the boards and Johnny's song creeps in)

110 INT. JOHNNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

110

Johnny opens his front door and to his surprise it's Robert.

JOHNNY

Rob T?! What you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Damn! You ain't gone ask your best potna in?

JOHNNY

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Come on in man.

(allows Robert in and closes the door)

You alright? You hungry? You want something to drink?

ROBERT

Naw I'm good. You might wanna get you something to drink and have a sit down.

JOHNNY

Why? What's up?

ROBERT

I just booked you a show.

JOHNNY

I needed to sit down for that?

ROBERT

In Houston. Third Ward. Emancipation Park. Juneteenth.

Johnny was all but floored.

JOHNNY

(in a vengeful tone)

I told you I'll be back.

111 EXT. EMANCIPATION PARK - DAY

111

ROBERT CRAY finishes up his set and exits the stage. KATHY LEE WHITMIRE, the mayor of Houston enters as he leaves. She removes the microphone from it's stand.

KATHY LEE WHITMIRE

Y'all give it up for Robert Cray. We about to bring up a Houston legend right now. It's been a while since he been here and since he's back, as mayor of the greatest city in the world I feel it's my duty to give him the key to the city.

A worker brings a key and a plaque on the stage.

(CONTINUED)

KATHY LEE WHITMIRE
 Now everyone put your hands
 together for Houston's own Johnny
 Clyde Copeland.

Johnny comes out on the stage beaming. he and Kathy exchange hugs. When they un-embrace the worker hands him the plaque. Johnny grabs it, raises it above his head, and shows it to the entire crowd. The crowd explodes.

KATHY LEE WHITMIRE
 (waits for the crowd to
 subside)
 Johnny it is a pleasure and a honor
 for me to present to you on this
 day, the nineteenth of June
 nineteen eighty-four, the key to
 the city.

As she hands it to Johnny, they pause for a photographer to capture it on camera.

KATHY LEE WHITMIRE
 Now let me get off here and
 everyone can see who their here to
 see. I present to you Johnny Clyde
 Copeland.

The crowd erupts again.

JOHNNY
 (retrieves and resets the
 microphone)
 Hooooouston! Can I ask Y'all one
 thing?

The crowd responds.

JOHNNY
 Can I come home?!

The crowd responds again. Then Johnny rips into a rocking track.

112 EXT. EMANCIPATION PARK - DAY

112

Johnny is pushing through the crowd of people asking for autographs and handshakes, trying to make it to his limo. Robert is standing, monitoring his watch as if it was a countdown to armageddon. Michael and his son is standing next to the chauffeur, who is holding Johnny's door for him. Johnny finally makes it to the limo. His grandson runs up and hugs him around the leg. Michael and Johnny is conversing.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
(making his watch the focal
point)
You gotta cut that short. We gotta
go and get on the road.

Johnny ignores him.

ROBERT
(more aggressive tone)
You heard me!

JOHNNY
Nigga they can wait. I'm talking to
my son and grandson.

Robert gives the back of Johnny's head an aggravated gesture before he sinks and slides into the limo on the passenger side. Johnny picks up his grandson and him, his son, and grandson all share an embrace.

113 INT. LIMO BACKSEAT - NIGHT - MOVING

113

Robert and Johnny sits in the backseat of a limousine.

ROBERT
What do you think about Europe?

JOHNNY
I don't know. Am I supposed to
think about it. Shit, it's across
seas.

ROBERT
What do you think about touring
over there?

JOHNNY
What for?

ROBERT
What you mean what for? Because we
leaving a lot of money on the
table.

JOHNNY
Rob T what money? What you talking
bout man?

ROBERT
There was an agent from England at
the show tonight. Backstage. He
told me blues is booming over there
and you have a cult following.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Why haven't I heard anything about that?

ROBERT

I don't know. Maybe something we need to ask the label about. You dig?

JOHNNY

I sho'll do.

ROBERT

But he said you're being spun on the air and everything. You're big man, like the Beatles in reverse or something.

JOHNNY

Oh yeah?

ROBERT

Yeah. He told me if we can get you over there to Great Britain, by the time they are done all of Europe will be booking you. And who says we have to stop there.

JOHNNY

They?

ROBERT

Yeah, him and his agency. I was thinking about turning that part of my managerial duties over to them.

JOHNNY

And you made all of these decisions without consulting me first?

ROBERT

Nigga what you think I'm doing now?

JOHNNY

You didn't even bring him to meet me. How do we know we can trust this cat?

ROBERT

He had to cut out before he could meet you. He's legit though. I contacted some of my people and they verified him. You forgot who

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT (cont'd)
 you fucking with. I double C triple
 P. International Cross Country
 Professional Paid Player.

JOHNNY
 (laughs and eases the tension)
 Yeah whatever.

114 EXT. STOREFRONT - DAY

114

Dawrence is in front of a store. He walks up to a car and engages in an obvious drug deal. As the car pulls off and Dawrence repositions himself, a police car zooms in and two cops hop out. Dawrence is instantly shocked and deflated. COP 1, on the passenger side hops out first with his gun drawn with COP 2 following him closely.

COP 1
 (pointing gun and screaming)
 Freeze! Don't you move!

COP 2
 Hands up! Give me a reason boy!
 Oooo give me a reason!

Dawrence hands fly up.

COP 1
 (to his partner)
 Cover me.

COP 2
 Got ya.

Cop 1 walks to Dawrence and roughly grabs him and throws him to the hood of the police car.

DAWRENCE
 Damn man! Nigga this hood hot!

COP 2
 (cuffing then frisking
 Dawrence and sits his pocket's
 contents on the car)
 So you think you just gone be out
 here all day selling this bullshit.
 We passed by three times and you
 was standing in the same place.
 (digs in Dawrence's jeans)
 Look what we have here.
 (holds up a plastic baggy of
 drugs)

(CONTINUED)

COP 1
Got his ass now.

Cop 2 grabs Dawrence takes him to the backseat, opens the door, and shoves him in the car. Cop 2 goes to retrieve Dawrence's belongings that was left on the hood.

115 INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

115

Cop 2 comes and joins his partner in the front seat.

COP 2
This idiot ain't have any I.D. on his person.

COP 1
What you think? All that money but no identification. Fucking genius.
(looks over his shoulder to backseat)
Hey Einstein, what's your name?

DAWRENCE
(answers with an attitude)
Dawrence. Dawrence Copeland.

COP 1
(laughs)
This bum has the same last name as Johnny.

DAWRENCE
That's cause that's my daddy.

Both cops turn and take a good look at Dawrence.

COP 2
What you think?

COP 1
He do kinda favor old Johnny.

DAWRENCE
(confidently)
I'm telling you. He over there at Johnson's.

COP 2
Johnson's?

DAWRENCE
Johnson's Funeral Home.

(CONTINUED)

COP 1
(sarcastically)
And what is doing there?

DAWRENCE
At my grandmother's funeral.

COP 2
Mrs. Ruthie Lee funeral?! And you
up here...un unh I'm taking your
dumb ass to jail.

COP 1
(calming the situation)
Hold up man. Little Copeland I tell
you what, today your lucky day. We
gone take you up here to Johnson's
and Johnny better be up here. If
not it's gone turn into your
unlucky day.

Dawrence breathes a sigh of relief and falls back.

116

EXT. POLICE CAR - DAY

116

Cop 2 gets out and opens Dawrence's door, gets him out of
the backseat, and begins to remove the cuffs.

COP 2
You gone run in front of our car
all the way up there. And you
better not stop for nothing but
stop signs and red lights. If you
do you gone be shitting out out
bumper for months. You got me.

DAWRENCE
(in disbelief)
Run?

COP 2
Yeah run. Now you might wanna get
started.

Dawrence pauses to look at the cops and assess if they are
serious or not. He then turns and opens into a full run.

117 EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

117

Michael is out on the porch of Johnson's funeral home smoking a cigarette. He looks and sees Dawrence struggling to make it up the street. He then focuses on the police car in close pursuit. Michael laughs and thumps his cigarette butt away.

Dawrence runs up to the front of the building and all but collapses.

MICHAEL

Man, what the hell you got going on?

Dawrence, in total disarray, missing one shoe, can't answer for being bent over, panting, sweating, and trying to catch his breath. The cops stop their vehicle and gets out.

COP 2

Whose funeral is being held here?

MICHAEL

(rebelliously)
My grandmother?

COP 1

(reacting to Michael's tone)
And who is your grandmother?

MICHAEL

(pointing at Dawrence)
My brother's grandmother.

COP 2

How bout you go in there and get somebody we can talk to with a little more sense than you?

MICHAEL

(exchanges hateful glances with both cops)
Yeah.
(turns and goes into the church)

Within seconds a small crowd emerges, with Johnny as the lead and Michael on his heels.

JOHNNY

(barely out of the door and seeing Dawrence)
Boy what the hell...

(CONTINUED)

COP 2

Johnny what's up man? We caught
your boy down the way, by the store
selling dope. We started to take
him to jail,

(eyes Dawrence)

but the only reason we let him make
it is because we know you.

JOHNNY

Man David, Glen I appreciate that.
If it's anything I can...

COP 1

Naw we good. You too good of a man
for us to cause you anymore grief
today. Sorry to hear about Mrs.
Ruthie Lee too.

JOHNNY

Thanks.

COP 2

(directly to Dawrence)

You might wanna stay from up there
on that corner. Next time you might
not be so lucky.

JOHNNY

Boy if you don't get your ass up in
here. Looking like who did it and
what the fuck for.

118 INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

118

The reverend is delivering his eulogy when he instructs everyone to bow their heads in prayer. As the reverend delivers his overly expressive prayer, Robert creeps in in a glowing, full length, all white mink and matching hat in his hands. Robert eases up to the casket and stands there paying his respects to Ruthie Lee.

The reverend finishes his prayer with an amen, which the congregation echoes. When everyone lifts their head and sees Robert standing at the casket in all of his splendor, there is a simultaneous gasp that nearly sucks all of the air out of the room. It is near pandemonium when the choir breaks into song, immediately afterwards.

119 INT. JOHNNY'S HOME - EVENING 119

Johnny is back in New York. He walks by SHEMEKIA, his five year old daughter's room, and hears her singing with the control, force, and tone of a seasoned vet. He stands right outside of her bedroom door and beams with pride at his baby girl.

120 INT. HOTEL - DAY 120

Johnny is in West Africa. He's sitting at a bar having a drink when an AFRICAN MAN approaches him.

AFRICAN MAN

(excited with a heavy accent)

Johnny! Johnny Clyde Copeland! Oh my God. I can't believe it. Can I have your autograph.

JOHNNY

Sure. No problem.

As Johnny signs his autograph the man strikes up a conversation.

AFRICAN MAN

Do you mind if I sit?

JOHNNY

Be my guest? Anything to drink?

AFRICAN MAN

Oh no thank you? So how do you like it?

JOHNNY

What's that?

AFRICAN MAN

Travelling and seeing the world by doing what you love?

JOHNNY

It's cool. Alot of times I find myself tripping though. I still can't believe little old me could be so blessed. One thing I can say it's a major culture shock and eye opening experience. I still try to figure out what is it that makes people from another country, that can't even speak my language, connect to my music?

(CONTINUED)

AFRICAN MAN

Well, I can't speak for the other places you have travelled but I can say as for us, your pain is our pain. It is one in the same. And just like love pain is a universal language.

Johnny shifts on his bar stool.

AFRICAN MAN

(continues)

Where do you think your pain derives from. You are merely bringing it back home. You were taken and exposed to an entirely new type of pain. We had to deal with the pain that our loved ones were taken and we were powerless to do anything about it. That pain still exists. That pain connects us.

(turns his head and acknowledges a female)

Oh there is my wife. It was an honor and a pleasure Mr. Johnny Clyde Copeland.

JOHNNY

It was an honor and pleasure as well Mr. I didn't get a chance to get your name.

AFRICAN MAN

Bolaji.

JOHNNY

(repeats it with feeling)

Bolaji.

(reaches out to shake Bolaji's hand)

Mr. Bolaji.

121 INT. HOTEL - DAY

121

Johnny is in his room on the phone with Robert Turner.

JOHNNY

(overly excited)

Robert man I just had the most random meeting with a fan and he gave me the greatest idea.

(pauses)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY (cont'd)

I'm gonna record an album right here in Africa.

(pauses)

A blues album! But I'ma implement African instruments, sounds, and elements.

(pauses)

What you mean you don't know if it'll work? You let me worry about the music and what'll work or not.

(pauses)

I need to hurry up?! For what?

(pauses)

(drops the phone and begins hopping around and screaming)

The Grammy's!!! I'm nominated for a Grammy.

(realizes he had dropped the phone and runs back to retrieve it)

Turner you still there?

(brief pause)

Yeah? When?

(brief pause)

Ok. No problem. As soon as I knock this album out, I'll be on the first thing smoking.

Johnny hangs the phone up and goes back to celebrating.

122

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

122

1986, Johnny is in a tuxedo, walking down the red carpet, exiting the Grammy's ceremony. He is flanked by ROBERT CRAY and ALBERT COLLINS, also appropriately dressed and all three are holding a Grammy. There is a clear cut REPORTER vying for their attention amidst the mayhem.

REPORTER

Albert! Johnny! Robert!

They float over to the reporter.

REPORTER

How you fellas doing? Ernest Gilmore with Living Blues. How does it feel to be Grammy winners?

ALBERT COLLINS

I can't really speak for them, but I imagine they feel just as great as I do.

(CONTINUED)

REPORTER

Did you expect to win tonight?

JOHNNY

Truthfully, we were honored to just be nominated. But to be recognized on such a grand scale for something you pour all of your heart and soul in is an amazing feeling.

REPORTER

One more question before you go if you don't mind. So what can we expect from you gentlemen, perhaps another joint effort?

ROBERT CRAY

Who knows? Right now we are just focused on enjoying the success of "Showdown!".

REPORTER

Thank you gentlemen and congratulations once again.

Johnny and his two collaborators walk off smiling and waving at all of the people adorning the sidewalk.

123 EXT. ASTRODOME - NIGHT

123

Michael is at the back entrance of the Astrodome with his baby mother's gorgeous older sister, LYNN, and her date. When Robert sticks his head from around the big bulky security guards.

ROBERT

(acknowledging Michael)

Yeah he good. That's Johnny's son.

MICHAEL

(pushing his way through)

I told em that.

ROBERT

Yeah but you know how that go.

124 INT. ASTRODOME - NIGHT

124

Michael and his company is barely through the door when Robert notices Lynn and her date trailing Michael.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT
Hold up Michael who is that?

MICHAEL
That's my gal sister and her dude.

ROBERT
(with a more ill intent)
Naw I mean...
(stressing each syllable)
who is that?

MICHAEL
(looks at Lynn then back at
Turner catching his drift)
It ain't nothing like that Turner.

ROBERT
(loud enough for Lynn and her
date to hear)
She can come in but he can't. All
you got is a plus one.

MICHAEL
What? Where Johnny?

ROBERT
Getting ready for stage. Hey man
those the rules.

Michael turns and looks at the disappointment in Lynn and her date's face, then back at Robert.

MICHAEL
Turner you be on that bullshit!
That's why I don't fuck with you.
Fuck this shit, let's go.

As Michael tries to exit, Lynn grabs his arm.

LYNN
Go in there and see your daddy.

MICHAEL
Naw I'm...

LYNN
(takes a firmer grip and
stares in Michael's eyes)
It's alright bruh-in-law. We'll go
catch a movie or something.

Lynn kisses Michael's cheek.

Michael enters Johnny's dressing room amazed at all of the energy and glamour happening around it. Johnny was facing the mirror with people tending to different aspects of his appearance.

MICHAEL

You came a long way from doing all of that yourself.

JOHNNY

(smiles and comes to life,
waving off his attendants)
Yeah! All of a sudden I'm some big kind of a deal now. How you doing son? You been staying out of trouble?

MICHAEL

Yeah I'm good, but that nigga Turner man. He be on some bullshit. He turned my gal and her dude away.

JOHNNY

You know how Rob T is. You shoulda came and got me.

MICHAEL

He wouldn't.

JOHNNY

So how's my grandson?

MICHAEL

He alright.
(pauses as people go back to poking and prodding at Johnny)
You a hard man to get in contact with. I haven't seen or heard from you in a while.

JOHNNY

Since the Grammy's it's been a nonstop whirlwind. I'm all over the place. Man do you know Apple Computer got me to do a commercial for them. Every month it's a check in the mail like clockwork. You been staying out of trouble ha?

Michael doesn't answer. He just gives his a father a revealing look.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Yeah. I don't know what's wrong with you and Dawrence. You know he locked up.

MICHAEL

Yeah I heard.

JOHNNY

I don't know why you two won't do something with your gifts. Just gone squander em away.

(pauses to reflect)

That's life I guess. You need anything?

MICHAEL

I...I...I'm alright.

Johnny takes a hard look at his son. Then points to his assistant, MILDRED.

JOHNNY

MILDRED make sure you give him five hundred dollars.

She instantly moves.

MICHAEL

I told you I'm good.

JOHNNY

Not for you for my grandbaby.

A female with a headset slides in between Michael and Johnny. When she moves Johnny sits up.

JOHNNY

That's my cue. Mike you make sure you catch Stevie Ray set. Baddest white boy you ever gone see.

MICHAEL

Ain't he the white boy you said used to sleep on your couch.

JOHNNY

(begins to walk by Michael)

Yep. Ain't that something. Now I'm opening up for him.

(stops right by Michael's ear)

Don't get in trouble back here. It's a lot going on. A lot.

Johnny slaps Michael on the back and heads out. Michael turns his body and let his eyes follow his father. Until he sees someone hand Johnny his guitar and he disappears into the thick of the crowd.

126 INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT 126

Michael is walking around backstage marveling at all he saw. Women with hardly anything on. People openly smoking weed in front of the police. He even sees people pass joints to cops and the cops hit it. There is a spread with every kind of food and drink imaginable.

Michael finds the restroom and is ill prepared. It is an open unisex restroom, men and women with no privacy. By now he is engulfed by the lifestyle. He pulls out his penis and begins to piss right next to a beautiful white girl sitting on a toilet next to him. Her admiration of his manhood is the opening of Pandora's box.

127 INT. SIDE OF THE STAGE - NIGHT 127

Michael is at the side of the stage mesmerized by Stevie Ray's guitar antics.

128 INT. STAGE - NIGHT 128

Stevie Ray ends his song then goes to interact with the crowd.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN
Houston how y'all doing?

The crowd roars.

STEVIE RAY VAUGHN
Beautiful city. Beautiful people. I swear i could make this my second home.

(the crowd roars again)
I wanna bring somebody back out. I don't think you know what this man means to me. He is the epitome of your city and one of the greatest representatives that the blues could ever have. My brother from another mother, Johnny Clyde Copelaaand.

Johnny bumps into Michael as he pushes pass him, halfway bringing him out of his trance. The music is already swinging as Johnny come to the forefront of the stage, where he joins in. Johnny and Stevie rips into "Tin Pan Alley".

129 INT. HOTEL - DAY

129

Mildred is knocking at Johnny's bedroom door, repeatedly.

MILDRED

Johnny?

(knocks again)

Johnny?

She eventually sticks her head inside and sees Johnny laying on the floor, clearly in distress. She calls out for help as she runs to his rescue.

130 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

130

Johnny is in a hospital bed, hooked up to all of these different type of machines. DR. BLEDSOE walks in and comes to Johnny's bedside.

DR. BLEDSOE

That sure was a close call. I'm glad you're still here with us. You don't know how blessed you are.

JOHNNY

Funny, I don't feel blessed.

DR. BLEDSOE

Well you are. You had a mild heart attack. A minute or two longer, we probably wouldn't be having this conversation. We ran some tests and we're going to keep you here for a day or two for monitoring. I've encountered this before with people of your stature. And I know you don't want to hear this but you gotta slow down and take it easy.

Johnny attempts to speak.

DR. BLEDSOE

Now I already know the argument you're going to try to make. You got commitments and people depending on you, but the truth of the matter is none of that will matter at the slightest if you're not here. And if you continue on the path you are on, that's definitely gonna be the case. Now I'm about to step out and let you think about it, but I'll be back.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. BLEDSOE (cont'd)
 Besides, you have some people
 outside shaken up who wants to see
 you.

JOHNNY
 Thanks doc.

DR. BLEDSOE
 Thank me by taking care of
 yourself.
 (turns and exits and speaks to
 Johnny's family and friends on
 the way out)
 He can see you now.

Johnny's family and friends enter the room in a celebratory
 fashion.

131 INT. JOHNNY'S HOME - EVENING 131

August 27, 1990, Johnny is at his home in New Jersey watching
 tv. There is breaking news. A news reporter informs that
 Stevie Ray Vaughn has been killed in a helicopter accident.
 The news reporter offers as much information as it has
 available. Johnny sits and watches in disbelief as tears
 begin to roll down his face.

132 INT. ARENA - NIGHT 132

Johnny is dressing room and Robert sticks his head in.

ROBERT
 (playfully)
 You decent?

JOHNNY
 (solemnly staring in his
 movie)
 Yeah I'm good.

Robert steps in.

ROBERT
 I got someone you need to meet.

JOHNNY
 (turns in his chair)
 Oh yeah? Who's that?

Robert signals to HAMILTON LOOMIS on the outside the door to
 step in.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Johnny Clyde Copeland I present to
you Hamilton Loomis.

Johnny looks at the wide eyed, teen aged, white boy with his
guita.

JOHNNY

How you doing Mr. Hamilton Loomis?

Loomis is dumbfounded and searching for his words.

HAMILTON

Johnny Clyde Copeland! I'm actually
in Johnny Clyde Copeland's dressing
room.

Johnny shares a look of unsurety with Robert.

HAMILTON

(runs to Johnny to shake his
hand)

Mr. Copeland...

(his guitar partly interferes)

My guitar.

(he moves it)

You don't know how many times I've
played along to Tin Pan Alley with
you and Stevie Ray.

JOHNNY

That's funny because you kind of
remind me of him, the first time i
met him.

HAMILTON

Really? No? Really?

JOHNNY

Yeah really? So I take it you play
the guitar?

HAMILTON

I sing too?

JOHNNY

Oh do you now?

HAMILTON

Yes sir. I pretty much know every
song you've ever recorded.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Every song?

HAMILTON

Pretty much.

JOHNNY

Since you pretty much know all of my music, how would you like to join me on stage?

HAMILTON

What?! Are you serious?

JOHNNY

You do have your guitar with you. What would be the point of having it and not using it.

HAMILTON

(turning all around exclaiming to the walls)

Man, I can't believe I'm going to hit stage with a legend.

Johnny winks at a smiling Robert.

ROBERT

Come on son. Let's get you something to eat and drink before you go on, to help calm you down.

133 INT. STAGE - NIGHT

133

Johnny is on stage.

JOHNNY

(talks to the crowd)

Being an ambassador of the blues I have a responsibility to not only protect it but to ensure that it lives on. I must push it forward. Sometimes to move forward you have to give back. I've always made it a point to share all I can with anyone who has it in their heart to be apart of the blues. I feel it's my duty. So tonight I have not one, but two treats for y'all. It is my pleasure to present the future of the blues. My daughter Shemekia Copeland and Loomis Hamilton.

Shemekia and Loomis walk front center stage. They hear Johnny count off to his band and they all began an epic journey together.

134 INT. STADIUM - NIGHT 134

Johnny is finishing up a show in Denver, Colorado. He bids farewell to the audience. He gets up and walks backstage. No soon as he hands his guitar off to a roadie, Johnny collapses. Everyone around runs to his aid.

135 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY 135

Johnny opens his eyes. His vision is blurry and he is confused. A strange face, DR. HEATHE, is standing over him with a couple nurses.

DR. HEATHE
Mr. Copeland! Mr. Copeland! Do you know where you currently are?

JOHNNY
(struggling to look around and make sense of it all)
A hospital?

DR. HEATHE
(to one of the nurses)
Looks like he's very well aware. Could you go retrieve his charts from the cardiovascular ward please?
(turns back to Johnny)
Do you know what happened?

JOHNNY
Another heart attack, I guess?

DR. HEATHE
Mr. Copeland you are what we around these parts would call a medical miracle.

The other nurse rushes to Johnny when he tries to sit up.

JOHNNY
(gestures for her to give him some water)
And why would that be.

DR. HEATHE
Well we had to call for your file. When we finally received it, you
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. HEATHE (cont'd)
can imagine my surprise. Eight open
heart surgery. Honestly I didn't
even know that was humanly
possible. It's hard to imagine one
heart could take that amount of
stress and strain, and still be
functional.

JOHNNY
(a little smug and
unimpressed)
Yeah, so?

DR. HEATHE
Well it got me to thinking. For one
to have a continuous issue,
procedure after procedure, what was
being overlooked. After going
through your files, I decided to do
some further testing. As much as I
hate to tell you...

JOHNNY
But I have a feeling you're gonna
tell me anyway.

DR. HEATHE
It's my job. I've found that your
condition is extremely worse than
previously thought.

JOHNNY
How worse?

Dr. Heathe is hesitant.

JOHNNY
Doc I'm a big boy. I can take it.

DR. HEATHE
Have you ever heard of congenital
heart defect.

JOHNNY
Can't say that I have.

DR. HEATHE
Well it's a disease that presents
itself at birth.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

So you telling me I was born sick?

DR. HEATHE

well in your case, yes and no.

JOHNNY

Well which is it doc?

DR. HEATHE

Please remain calm Mr. Copeland. Getting excited doesn't help at all. See the thing about this disease is just because you are born with it, doesn't necessarily guarantee that it can, or will, be detected. It's one of them things that can become troublesome with time. As in your case.

JOHNNY

So what are you telling me?

DR. HEATHE

Your heart is having a hard time doing it's job.

JOHNNY

Meaning?

DR. HEATHE

You have circulatory problems.

JOHNNY

So is there a cure?

DR. HEATHE

Not traditionally. But there is a treatment. There is a fairly new experimental device called the ventricular assist device which can help you. But it's only temporary. What you will need to be is placed on the list for a heart transplant.

JOHNNY

So I have to be cut on again?

DR. HEATHE

And hopefully once more after that.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

Hopefully?

DR. HEATHE

When you receive your new heart.
Not to fret Mr. Copeland, we have
recommended you to one of the
young, up and coming, hotshots in
the country. He's aces. Dr. Oz.

JOHNNY

Like the wizard?

DR. HEATHE

(has an introspective laugh)
Well I guess so?

JOHNNY

Ain't that something. I gotta go to
Oz for a heart.

136 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

136

Sandra and Shemekia walks into Johnny's room. The doctor,
Dr. OZ is already there, making his scheduled visit. He
turns when he hears the door open.

DR. OZ

How you doing Mrs. Copeland?

SANDRA

I'm fine Dr. Oz. The real question
is how is Johnny doing?

Dr. Oz eyes shift from Sandra to Shemekia in concern.

SANDRA

(somewhat bothered by his
hesitance)
Well?

DR. OZ

Well, aside from him being in a
coma his condition is stable. His
blood pressure has leveled off and
his heart is functioning. All we
can do now is pray and wait. One
thing I can say is, he has to be the
strongest man I have ever
encountered.

(turns his attention to
Shemekia)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DR. OZ (cont'd)
Aren't you just the prettiest
little lady. What's that you're
carrying.

SHEMEKIA
(innocently)
It's a tape player for my daddy. It
has a tape of his music in it.

DR. OZ
Isn't that thoughtful.
(takes his right hand and
places to the opposite side of
his face and lowers his voice
like he's telling Shemekia a
secret)
It's really against rules but I
think we can make an exception this
time. Here.
(reaches his hand out and
takes it from Shemekia)
We'll place it right here next to
him, to make sure he can hear it.
(sits it next to Johnny's bed
and looks back)
You say it's his music? Well let's
play a little of it for him and see
how he enjoys it.

Dr. Oz presses play on the small cassette player. Johnny's voice meanders through everything but the beep of the heart monitor. Everyone stands hypnotized by his voice for a spell. Dr. Oz decides to give them some privacy he stops to console Sandra before he leaves. Shemekia walks directly to Johnny's bedside.

SHEMEKIA
Don't cry daddy?

DR. OZ
(as an afterthought)
Cry?!
(moves quickly back to
Johnny's bedside)
Johnny's eyes begin to move. As
laboring as it appears for him, Dr.
Oz cheerleads him back to
consciousness.

137 INT. TV SET - MORNING

137

Johnny is sitting on the set of Good Morning America, joined by CHARLES GIBSON and JOAN LUNDEN. One of the shows PRODUCER(s) gains their attention.

PRODUCER

And we're back in five, four,
three...

(uses fingers to finish
countdown and signals they are
live)

CHARLES GIBSON

Good Morning America and you're
back. I'm Charles Gibson.

JOAN LUNDEN

And I'm Joan Lunden. Right now we
are being joined by one of the most
resilient, gifted, and I would have
remiss not to add, most blessed men
on earth. Wouldn't you say.

CHARLES GIBSON

(laughs)

I would. Too many our next guest
might be a stranger but to loyal
and devout blues fans he is a
legend, Grammy award winning, blues
ambassador. Yes you heard me
correctly, a real United States
ambassador. Johnny Clyde Copeland.

Johnny beams with a megawatt smile.

JOHNNY

It's a pleasure and an honor to be
here.

JOAN LUNDEN

Likewise. Now Johnny much of
America doesn't know of you but you
have the most remarkable story.

JOHNNY

Thanks, but it's just life to me.
you know I started from very humble
beginnings, in Houston Texas.

CHARLES GIBSON

Yes but you worked your way into
being thought of in the same way as
the greats.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

You don't know how humbling that is.

JOAN LUNDEN

You have accolades on your resume others could only dream of.

JOHNNY

True. I am the only blues artist to play Russia during the Cold War.

JOAN LUNDEN

Wow!

JOHNNY

I am currently, the only blues artist to also record an entire in Africa.

CHARLES GIBSON

And you've traveled the world twice over.

JOHNNY

Yes, and it's been a memorable experience.

JOAN LUNDEN

As of lately, you have been making headlines for other than your music though.

JOHNNY

Well, recently I was diagnosed with congenital heart defect.

CHARLES GIBSON

And what would that be exactly.

JOHNNY

Simply put my heart isn't performing it's most fundamental task and that is to beat and make sure my blood circulates.

CHARLES GIBSON

So is that the reason for this device you have hanging from your shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY

It is. It's called an L-VAD. Left ventricular assist device.

JOAN LUNDEN

And it is supposed to assist your heart in functioning correctly.

JOHNNY

Exactly.

JOAN LUNDEN

Do you ever take it off? Can it be removed

JOHNNY

No ma'am. It is basically a part of me. An extension of my heart you could say.

CHARLES GIBSON

So it has been said you have had eight heart surgeries.

JOHNNY

Nine, as of now. But who's counting?

JOAN LUNDEN

(looks directly into the camera)

You would think with this condition, someone in his shoes would slow down. But nope, not this one. His heart is as big as the state he hails from.

CHARLES GIBSON

Sure is. When we get back from commercial Johnny Clyde Copeland will be performing his latest single. Don't go anywhere.

138 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

138

Johnny is sitting with his doctor, in his doctor's office.

DR. OZ

Johnny it's good you made it in for your check up. Your new heart isn't doing so well.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY
 (mumbles)
 Must not be so new.
 (speaks up)
 What is it now?

DR. OZ
 As much as I hate to tell you this,
 your heart is leaking. We have to
 go back in. Don't worry though.
 This should correct it for good and
 eradicate any complications from
 this point on.

JOHNNY
 (mumbles again this time
 standing and staring out of
 the window)
 Yeah, hopefully.

139 INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

139

Four months later, Johnny is on stage in Memphis, at the W. C. Handy awards. He is giving the performance of a lifetime. The room is full of emotion and Johnny sings and plays like his life depended on it. When he finishes the crowd roars and several fans emotions show in the tears streaming down their face. Johnny says his thanks and waves to the crowd.

FADE TO BLACK

Three months later, on July 3rd 1997, Johnny Clyde Copeland dies due to heart complications. He is laid to rest in Houston, the city that meant the most to him, in Paradise South Cemetery. Someone once said, "There may never be another heart as big as Johnny's Blues Heart."

140 INT. PENITENTIARY - DAY

140

Michael is in the penitentiary laying on his bunk, reading a magazine. He jumps up and takes off walking fast, with the magazine in his hand.

141 INT. OFFICE - DAY

141

Michael walks into the WARDEN THALER's office.

MICHAEL
 Warden you mind if I use the phone.

WARDEN THALER
 Make it quick. I'm on my way out.

(CONTINUED)

Michael picks up the phone and dials. After a couple rings Sandra picks up.

MICHAEL

Hello, Sandra?

(pauses)

Yeah this Michael.

(pauses)

No I'm still locked up.

(pauses)

Everything's fine.

(pauses)

(somewhat agitated)

Look I don't have that much time. I was just reading a magazine and I read an article that said The Rolling Stones about to drop a new album.

(pauses)

Listen. It's a new album dedicated to Texas Blues

(brief pause)

Yeah, and they supposed to be using to of Johnny's songs. You might wanna call somebody and check on that.

THE END