

**HONEYDRIPPER**

Written by  
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We hear a strange, single, BENT NOTE.

**1 EXT. SHARECROPPER SHACK - ECU FINGERS - LATE AFTERNOON 1**  
We follow a small boy's FINGERS on a strange contraption-

**WIDER**

SCRATCH, 10 years old, has a `DIDDLEY BOW', a piece of baling wire nailed to the side of the unpainted shack so it is stretched taut. He moves an old corn cob under it as a fret and makes TWANGY, pitch-shifting NOTES as he plucks the wire.

His friend LONNIE stands moving his fingers over a BOARD he has laid on the side of the porch floor. A few scrawny CHICKENS run around in the yard behind them-

**LONNIE**

Leave off with that, Scratch.

**SCRATCH**

Aint bothering you.

**LONNIE**

Yes it is. That aint no kind of music.

We see that the board has PIANO KEYS drawn across it and that Lonnie is pretending to play a song on it-

**SCRATCH**

Least I make a sound.

**LONNIE**

Yeah and it's a nasty one.

Lonnie looks at the sky-

**SCRATCH**

You want to try again tonight?

Lonnie sits on the edge of the porch, gauging the time from the setting sun-

**LONNIE**

Might as well.

**2 EXT. 1ST COTTON FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON 2**

SLIDE GUITAR plays. A tuft of RAW COTTON bobs on the stem and we begin to scroll OPENING CREDITS-

**2.**

We TILT and RACK to look over a FIELD OF COTTON, the bolls plumped out and ready for picking, blowing in the breeze.

A HARVEST HAND steps into the shot, looks toward the setting sun, wipes his face with a bandanna then stoops to pick the row in front of him. We PULL BACK to see other PICKERS, men and women in denim coveralls, old gingham dresses and hard work shoes, wearing straw hats against the sun and trailing LONG WHITE SACKS between their legs and behind them.

The boys walk down between them in the opposite direction-

**3 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - PINEY WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON 3**

MUSIC CONTINUES. We see the boys walking on a PATH through the PINES-

**4 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE, RAILROAD TRACKS - AERIAL SHOT - LATE AFTERNOON 4**

MUSIC CONTINUES. We float over RAILROAD TRACKS cutting through flat, piney woods, catching up the boys, who walk on the ties-

**5 EXT. ARMY BARRACKS - EARLY EVENING 5**

MUSIC CONTINUES. The boys stroll past white buildings of an ARMY BARRACKS. SOLDIERS, black and white, DRILL on the grounds-

**6 EXT. RAILROAD BRIDGE, RIVER - EARLY EVENING 6**

The river rolls past us in the FG as the boys cross a

RAILROAD BRIDGE. We SUPERIMPOSE-

**ALABAMA - 1950**

**OPENING CREDITS END**

**7 EXT. HONEYDRIPPER LOUNGE - NIGHT** **7**  
We hear PIANO MUSIC as we CRANE DOWN toward the HONEYDRIPPER LOUNGE, a ramshackle wooden roadhouse at a rural crossroads.  
**3.**

BLUE-colored light bulbs (a few broken) FLICK ON and OFF erratically around the HONEYDRIPPER SIGN as we TRACK toward and then THROUGH it on the way to the entrance, catching up with Lonnie and Scratch.

The boys step under the door-light, frantic with insects, and go up on their toes to peek in through a window-

**8 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - NIGHT** **8**  
An OVERHEAD ANGLE of long fingers on piano keys-

**SINGER**

A woman in her late 50's, early 60's, BERTHA MAE SPIVEY, leans into a MICROPHONE from where she sits on a stool on a little makeshift stage, a glass of whiskey in hand, and SINGS-

**BERTHA MAE**

I know a gal name of Betty Sue  
Shook it so much  
She got the German flu  
No matter how she done it  
No matter how she done it  
No matter how she done it  
She done it just the same

As she sings we PAN and TRACK, moving through the large, near-empty COUNTRY ROADHOUSE-

**BERTHA MAE**

You women don't worry  
About your life  
She made Jack the Ripper  
Throw away his knife-

Only a few die-hard REGULARS are scattered at the tables and bar stools. A pretty young woman in her late teens, CHINA DOLL, is behind the bar, head held in her hands, listening aimlessly.

**BERTHA MAE**

No matter how she done it  
No matter how she done it  
No matter how she done it  
She done it just the same

Lonnie and Scratch step in, cautiously looking around, hoping that nobody will notice and tell them to leave.

4.

They plant themselves next to the piano, Lonnie intently watching the long fingers work the keys- we TILT to see TYRONE `Pinetop' Purvis, proprietor and piano player, in his 50's. He acts as if the boys aren't there, concentrating on the music. We SHIFT to include Bertha Mae as she wraps up the song-

**BERTHA MAE**

A copper brought her in  
She didn't need no bail  
She shook it for the judge  
He threw the cop in jail  
No matter how she done it  
No matter how she done it  
No matter how she done it  
She done it just the same

SLICK, a pretty, sharply-dressed man in his late 40's at the bar, and MACEO, who sits at a table near the bandstand smiling throughout, APPLAUD. The sound makes the room seem more empty.

Ty stands, nods to METALMOUTH SIMS, a slight, worried-looking harmonica player who sits behind Bertha Mae-

**TY**

You take it for a while.

As Ty crosses to the bar we hear RECORDED MUSIC booming from outside-

**BERTHA MAE**

They makin all that racket again at  
Toussaint's.

**TY**

Yeah. And all them people over there buying drinks and throwing their money after them dice and whatnot. Lucky we got none a that here.

Metalmouth launches into a HARMONICA INTRO. Ty pauses at the counter next to Slick, who is attentively watching Bertha Mae-

**BERTHA MAE**

You can drink your liquor  
You can drink your cold can beer-

**SLICK**

She sounding good, huh?

**TY**

Sounds fine. Always has.

5.

**BERTHA MAE**

You can drink your good whiskey  
You can drink your cold can beer-

**SLICK**

Not much of a crowd.

**TY**

Not a crowd at all. Just some stiffes who want to drink theirselves to sleep without the music wakin em up.

**SLICK**

You ought to advertise. Got an attraction like Bertha Mae-

**BERTHA MAE**

You can lay up with your sweet gal  
But Poppa don't you leave me here

**TY**

Singin is one thing, Slick.  
Whether people want to look at you while you do it is another.

**SLICK**

(defensive) You saying something

about-

Maceo arrives to join them, interrupting-

**MACEO**

Got quite a number over to  
Toussaint's place tonight.

**TY**

Sounds like it.

**MACEO**

Lots of young folks. Come to  
listen to that box of his.

China Doll brings Ty a glass of whiskey. He gives her a sad  
smile-

**TY**

Thanks, China Doll.

We FOLLOW as Ty crosses to the door-

6.

**MACEO (O.S.)**

Don't see why we don't just turn  
our box on and let folks feed it  
nickels like they do.

**SLICK (O.S.)**

The lady is singing.

**MACEO (O.S.)**

But didn't nobody come to listen to  
her, Slick.

Ty looks out the door at-

**POV - EXT. ACE OF SPADES CLUB**

-the RED-lit ACE OF SPADES CLUB across the road, PEOPLE  
hanging out in front, LAUGHTER heard from within-

**HONEYDRIPPER**

Ty reacts. Behind him, Maceo indicates the near-empty room-

**MACEO**

Like the man say, you can't argue  
with failure.

STOKELY, a bitter drunk who holds on to the end of the bar,  
calls out to them-

**STOKELY**

You know why Slick here is like a  
preacher?

Slick tenses, used to this-

**STOKELY**

Cause he does all his best work on  
his knees.

Stokely almost chokes with laughter-

**MACEO**

Never mind him, he just a drunk-

**STOKELY**

I hear she put a ring through it  
and use it to yank him around the  
house.

Slick starts to rise but Maceo puts a hand on his arm-

7.

**MACEO**

You know Tyrone don't allow no  
scufflin here, Slick.

**STOKELY**

I oughta get me a old woman too,  
take care of the groceries. Just  
got to sweet-talk her some, give  
her a good poke now and then-

**MACEO**

You gonna drink, Stokely, or you  
gonna lay out back recoverin from  
that busted head you about to get?

**DELILAH**

Gentlemen-

They all turn to see DELILAH, Ty's wife, coming out from the  
back of the club. She is dressed for church-

**SLICK**

(doffs his hat) Miss Delilah-

**DELILAH**

Let's behave ourselves. (sees)  
What are you boys doing in here?  
Out!

Lonnie and Scratch, busted, hurry out. Delilah turns her attention to China Doll-

**DELILAH**

And what are you doing behind that bar?

**CHINA DOLL**

It's just for a minute.

**DELILAH**

That's sixty seconds too long.  
Maceo, you get back there and take that child's place.

China Doll mopes as she steps out from behind-

**DELILAH**

You bring people their food. Don't you be messing with their liquor.

**CHINA DOLL**

Nobody's eating.

8.

**DELILAH**

That's cause nobody's here but these couple lost souls, haven't had an appetite since they give over to the devil.

Maceo gets behind the counter as Delilah heads for Ty at the door-

**BERTHA MAE**

At Pinetop's Honeydripper  
That's where I get my cold can beer  
At Pinetop's Honeydripper  
That's where I get my cold can beer-

Maceo reluctantly moves down to take the order of NADINE, a large, handsome woman with a prominent gold tooth who has



just stepped in-

**NADINE**

Evenin, Maceo. You lookin good tonight.

**MACEO**

Likewise, Miss Nadine. What can I do for you?

**NADINE**

(flirting) You know what you can do for me, sweet man.

Maceo tries to slip the hook and be polite at the same time-

**MACEO**

What would you like to drink?

**DOORWAY**

Ty watches the CROWD in front of the Ace of Spades. Delilah comes up to join him, indicates his drink-

**DELILAH**

How many is that tonight?

**TY**

Don't dog me about that, baby. Not tonight.

**DELILAH**

I don't want China Doll behind that bar.

9.

**TY**

She got to help out.

**DELILAH**

Not there she doesn't. You know she's not sposed to get excited-

**TY**

Not much chance of that in here. (wistful) Harvest hands all been crowdin into Toussaint's place. The young ones.

**DELILAH**

You'll get some of them.

**TY**

They stick their noses in here, get one little sniff of the music, and they gone.

**DELILAH**

(joking) Maybe that's the wages of sin.

**TY**

(bitter) Aint no sin happenin here tonight, baby, and there sure as hell aint no wages. Your God wants to chastise some sinners He best move on over to Toussaint's, got a whole barroom crowded with em.

**DELILAH**

He isn't `my God'. He's everybody's God.

He looks at his wife-

**TY**

How that tent meeting went tonight?

**DELILAH**

Viola Underwood found the Lord.

**TY**

I thought she found Him last year when they come through.

10.

**DELILAH**

(smiles) Well, she must have lost Him again between then and now, cause she come down that aisle tonight hollering in tongues.

**TY**

The Spirit didn't move you, though?

**DELILAH**

(thoughtful) Not yet. Might be too late for me.

Delilah surveys the room-

**DELILAH**

I can't believe you're serving  
Alton Stokely.

**STOKELY**

Stokely has to use two hands to keep his glass steady as he  
drinks-

**DELILAH (O.S.)**

That poor man-

**TY (O.S.)**

Toussaint cut his credit off.  
Either he gets it here-

**TY AND DELILAH**

**TY**

-or he drinks that paint-peeler  
Willie Pettigrew cooks up back in  
the swamp.

**DELILAH**

He's gonna drink himself to death  
in here.

**TY**

Least he won't go blind first.

Delilah shakes her head and heads out the door-

**DELILAH**

Imonna go home and say a prayer for  
that man.

11.

**TY**

(calling after) Say one for me  
too, baby.

**STAGE**

Bertha Mae is singing straight to Slick now, as Metalmouth

backs her up on the harmonica-

**BERTHA MAE**

Come here sweet Poppa  
Let me whisper in your ear  
Come here sweet Poppa  
Let me whisper in your ear  
Go back to Alabama  
But don't you leave your Momma here

Only Slick applauds-

**SLICK**

That was outstandin, baby. You  
still got the voice.

Bertha Mae, a little unsteady, holds onto Slick's arm as he helps her off the stage-

**BERTHA MAE**

You think so?

**SLICK**

Sent a chill down my spine to hear  
you.

Bertha Mae looks to Ty as he steps back in-

**BERTHA MAE**

I might be a little late Saturday,  
Tyrone.

**TY**

(mutters, embarrassed) Don't need  
to come in if you don't want to.

She stops dead. Stares at him till he has to let it out-

**TY**

I've made other arrangements.

**BERTHA MAE**

Other arrangements-

12.

**TY**

Try something new in here.

**SLICK**

You can't do that!

**BERTHA MAE**

It's his place, darlin, he can do whatever he want.

Bertha Mae nods to Ty, holding onto her dignity for all it's worth-

**BERTHA MAE**

You know where to find me if you need me.

Bertha Mae pulls Slick out the door. China Doll watches after them, troubled, while Ty pours himself another drink-

**MACEO**

(softly) I put the box on now, Ty?

**TY**

Yeah. Put the box on.

**MACEO**

Imonna crank it up some, see if we can draw a little life in here-

Maceo crosses and plugs an ancient-looking tabletop JUKEBOX in.

The jukebox sputters to life, LIGHTS FLASHING ON and MUSIC BLARING for a moment, then the LIGHTS FLICKER and all the POWER in the club goes OFF!

**9 EXT. HONEYDRIPPER - NIGHT**

**9**

The Honeydripper SIGN is the last to FLICKER and DIE.

Lonnie and Scratch watch from under the streetlight-

**LONNIE**

There it go again.

**SCRATCH**

Lectricity don't like that jukebox.

**13.**

**10 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - NIGHT  
DARKNESS.**

**10**

**MACEO**

Damn.

**TY**

China Doll?

A MATCH is struck, FLARES as China Doll lights a KEROSENE LAMP she's pulled from under the bar-

**CHINA DOLL**

Got to get the power company in here-

**TY**

No you don't. They turned my juice off last month- don't want them sniffin around that splice job Maceo done.

**MACEO**

Must be a short circuit in the juke here-

He yanks the plug out of the wall as Ty steps up to reassure the few patrons-

**TY**

Don't worry folks, bar's still open.

**NADINE**

It's nice like this. Kind of romantic.

**MACEO**

Imonna have to go out back, wiggle some things around.

**NADINE**

Don't be wigglin nothin round less I'm there to see it.

Maceo rolls his eyes as he passes Ty on the way out with a FLASHLIGHT. He freezes in his tracks as the FLASHLIGHT BEAM hits a FIGURE standing in the doorway-

It is SHERIFF HIRAM PUGH, large and in charge. Pugh strolls into the club as if he owns it.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Evenin, folks.

**TY**

Evenin, Sheriff.

Sheriff Pugh looks around the near-empty club-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Your lights gone out.

**TY**

Looks like it.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Don't know but that be a vilation  
of somethin or other.

Ty has played this game before, trying to hold his ground  
without pissing off the white man with the badge-

**TY**

We just about to close up here.

Pugh sniffs the air-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Your wife been cookin?

**TY**

Not tonight. Went to the revival  
tent.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

(grins) I stood by there a while.  
Them nigras was singin up a storm.

Ty doesn't respond. Sheriff Pugh stops right next to  
Stokely, giving him a dead-pan stare as he speaks. Stokely  
won't meet his eyes-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

I just come out here to look in on  
Toussaint- had that shooting two  
nights ago.

**TY**

Lot's of fighting in there.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

There is that. But me and Old  
Toussaint got us a greement.

**(MORE)**

15.

**SHERIFF PUGH**(cont'd)

You get these field hands suckin  
down that whiskey, hop em all up  
with music, there's gonna be some  
razors drawn. He only call me if  
it's a fatality.

**MACEO**

Never been a killin in here. Them  
youngbloods know better-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

-than to mess with Tyrone Purvis.

He turns his attention to Tyrone-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You got quite the reputation round  
here, Tyrone. Say you put some  
poor black boy in the grave.

It gets very quiet, the HISS of the KEROSENE LANTERN growing  
tense and insistent.

China Doll looks from Sheriff Pugh to Ty's face, searching  
for a flicker of evidence. Ty stays deadpan-

**TY**

Just people talkin.

The Sheriff steps to put his face very close to Ty's, an edge  
of menace in his voice when he speaks softly-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You remember that this is my  
county, Tyrone. What goes on goes  
on cause I let it. Don't want to  
get too big for your britches out  
here.

Ty holds Pugh's eyes for an agonizingly long moment, then the  
sheriff turns and heads for the door-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You folks have a pleasant evening,  
now.

They all wait for him to clear the door before they exhale.

**STOKELY**



A nigger aint shit in this world.

Maceo snatches the whiskey bottle from Stokely-

16.

**MACEO**

Speakin for yourself.

**STOKELY**

You didn't have this club, Tyrone,  
what you think you be?

We TIGHTEN on Ty's face. He has been thinking about this  
very thing-

**STOKELY (O.S.)**

Wouldn't be nothin. And if that  
aint true then grits aint  
groceries.

A long TRAIN WHISTLE echoes outside-

11 **EXT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

11

Bertha Mae pauses as she climbs the FRONT PORCH of her two-  
story wooden HOUSE, the nicest in the neighborhood, listening  
to the TRAIN WHISTLE with a troubled look on her face. Slick  
waits for her with the door open-

**BERTHA MAE**

That is a terrible noise.

**SLICK**

Just the northbound from Talledega.  
Sounds like it always does.

**BERTHA MAE**

Like a soul bein carried away from  
this life.

**ANOTHER WHISTLE-**

**SLICK**

Come on in, darlin. You catch your  
death out here.

12 **EXT. RAILROAD STATION - NIGHT**

12

We hear the TRAIN WHISTLE again as the WHEELS ROLL and the  
TRAIN strobes past us, picking up speed as it pulls out from

the yard-

When it clears we see a LONE FIGURE standing across the tracks. He steps forward and catches a bit of light--

17.

SONNY BLAKE, 20's, rumped from hard travelling. He carries a GUITAR CASE and something bulky in a SACK-

SHACK THOMAS, an older man in a PULLMAN PORTER'S UNIFORM stands under the moth-addled light on the tiny STATION PLATFORM, watching Sonny-

**SHACK THOMAS**

Lucky the high-sheriff aint here to see you crawl outta that boxcar.

**SONNY**

He come round here much?

**SHACK THOMAS**

Only when he's bored.

Sonny reaches Shack at the platform-

**SONNY**

You working that train?

**SHACK THOMAS**

Kansas City to New Orleans.

**SONNY**

What you get off here for?

**SHACK THOMAS**

I growed up here. Still got people. How bout you?

**SONNY**

(shrugs) Got tired of sleepin in a boxcar. Listen, is there a place to-

**SHACK THOMAS**

(points) Switchman's shed, right over there, has got a cot. Don't mind the rats none, less you got food on you- and I can see you and a good meal has been strangers for some time.

Sonny looks at the shed, unenthusiastic-

**SHACK THOMAS**

You get into town tomorrow an need  
somethin, tell em Shack Thomas sent  
you. They know who you talkin  
about.

18.

**SONNY**

Thanks. Hey, what's the name of  
this town?

Shack points to the SIGN hanging down from the lip of the  
platform roof-

**SIGN**

**HARMONY**

The sign reads-

**SONNY (O.S.)**

Name like that, must be a good  
place for musicians.

**PLATFORM**

Shack laughs as he heads away-

**SHACK THOMAS**

Only night I ever spent in jail was  
a town called Liberty. Sun comes  
up, you'll see where you landed.  
And you best be out of that shed by  
first light.

13 **INT. HONEYDRIPPER - LATE NIGHT - CU MONEY**

13

A few wet, crumpled BILLS and dirty COINS are spread out on  
the bartop-

**MACEO (O.S.)**

It's just a weekday night-

**WIDER**

Still operating by LANTERN LIGHT, Ty and Maceo look at the night's dismal take, as China Doll lays chairs on top of tables-

**TY**

I owe the chicken man, I owe the ice man, I owe the liquor man-

**MACEO**

Least you don't owe the electric company.

19.

**TY**

(indicates the dark room) Yeah, that's a big relief.

**MACEO**

(worried) You thinkin bout closing down?

Ty frowns, reaches under the counter and brings up a POSTER. He spreads it out on the counter top. It reads-

**SPECIAL ATTRACTION**

New Orleans Singing Sensation

**`GUITAR' SAM**

**TY**

What you think?

**MACEO**

Biggest act in New Orleans, got him a hit on the radio-

**TY**

He's playing here Saturday night. Figured I'd wait till Bertha Mae was gone to put this up.

Ty turns to look for the right spot to fix the poster-

**MACEO**

Here? You mean like in this room here?

**TY**

You know the Tomcat Club in  
Texarkana?

**MACEO**

Big Jim Jamison's place-

**TY**

Just went out of business.

**MACEO**

Damn-

**TY**

And since Sam is giggin his way  
over to Tulsa, that means he got  
the date open-

20.

**MACEO**

But you aint never had a guitar pl-

Ty gives Maceo a warning look, which China Doll notes-

**TY**

I'm having one now.

**MACEO**

What you gonna pay the man with?

Ty glances at China Doll, uneasy-

**TY**

You just worry about gettin these  
hung up everywhere in the county  
tomorrow. Payday come Saturday, he  
gonna draw alla them cotton pickers  
and soldiers boys in here, get us  
back in the black.

Ty looks around at the empty club-

**TY**

They gonna take me down, it won't  
be without a fight.

Maceo holds the poster up to the lamplight, warming to the  
idea-

**MACEO**

Guitar Sam at the Honeydripper.

Man, this joint is going to jump!

**14 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/1ST COTTON FIELD - EARLY MORNING 14**

SUNRISE. An OLD MAN in coveralls leads a MULE along the side of the road.

A TRUCK carrying two dozen PICKERS in its open bed approaches-

**TRUCK**

One of the pickers, DEX, turns to look back at the man and mule-

**DEX**

Aint seen no mule in a long time.

The other pickers, men and women, don't look interested or even fully awake yet-

**21.**

**DEX**

I knew this was Alabama, but that's the Stone Ages, man.

One of the other men, HAM, looks him over. Dex is little and combative and has a nasty-looking SCAR on his face. Ham is big and morose, with a deep, grumpy voice-

**HAM**

Where you from, boy?

**DEX**

Memphis.

**HAM**

Down on you vacation?

A few snickers-

**DEX**

Got in a piece of trouble up there with the white folks, need to bide my time for a spell.

JUNEBUG, a local man with a nervous air, jumps in-

**JUNEBUG**

You bide any time in these fields,

bossman gonna fire your ass for  
takin up space.

**DEX**

Aint no worry bout that. I'm a  
cotton-pickin fool.

**HAM**

You a fool, all right.

More snickers and the truck stops at the side of a COTTON  
FIELD. Somebody lets the tailgate down and they begin to  
climb off-

**DEX**

And where you from, Brother Bear?

**HAM**

Missippi.

**DEX**

Then this a real step up for you.  
Folks round here has discovered  
fire and whatnot-

22.

**HAM**

That trouble you in have anything  
to do with runnin your mouth?

The pickers unroll the sacks they pick up from the pile  
that's been left and begin to spread out at the base of the  
unpicked rows-

**DEX**

Had to do with somebody get on my  
nerves and I had to deal with him.

**HAM**

Must of been somebody kind of puny.

Dex turns to face the much larger Ham-

**DEX**

As I recall he just about your  
size.

The two men stare at each other for a long moment. Way too  
early to fight. Dex breaks eye contact and moves toward a  
row-

**DEX**

What's this place we at?

**JUNEBUG**

Nearest town is Harmony. This Mr.  
Silas Tugwell's place.

He nods toward Dex's row-

**JUNEBUG**

You better get pickin.

**DEX**

Cotton aint goin nowhere.

**JUNEBUG**

More you get first thing when the  
dew still on it, the more it weighs  
when it tip that scale.

Dex's gaze falls upon a tall, strong-looking young woman  
starting down the row next to his-

**DEX**

You live here too?

She gives him a weary look-

23.

**DEX**

(shakes his head) You got my  
sympathies.

15 **EXT. TOWN - TRAIN TRACKS - EARLY MORNING**

15

A WIDE SHOT of the TRACKS that cut the town in two.

**CLOSER**

Sonny stands on the tracks just as the SUN RISES, pondering-  
which side of the tracks is for white people, which for the  
colored.

He hears GUITAR MUSIC to one side, steps cautiously toward it-

16 **EXT. MAIN STREET - GENERAL STORE - EARLY MORNING**

16

Sonny wanders down the street lugging his sack and case,



moving toward the sound of a SLIDE GUITAR being played expertly-

An irate-looking WHITE LADY glares at Sonny as she picks up the milk bottles from her stoop, steps inside and slams the door. Sonny moves ahead, uneasy-

We TIGHTEN on his face as he stops to listen, the MUSIC ECHOING, seeming to come from here, then from there, then suddenly from right behind him-

He turns-

POSSUM, blind, with his chair tilted back against the not-yet-open GENERAL STORE, PLAYS expertly on a beat-up old GUITAR. Sonny lays his case down to listen for a moment, watching the man's fingers-

Possam gets a whiff of him. He keeps playing as he speaks-

**POSSUM**

Somebody slept in the railroad yard.

Sonny watches the blind man's fingers move on the strings-

**SONNY**

Yall can play that thing.

**POSSUM**

Been doin it near forever.

24.

**SONNY**

(looking around) Listen, which side of the tracks am I-

**POSSUM**

The wrong side for you.

**SONNY**

What you doing here then?

**POSSUM**

White folks look right through me. How much mischief an old blind spook like me gonna get up to anyhow?

Sonny surveys the street-

**SONNY**

Where our people go for music  
around here?

**POSSUM**

There's a couple places just a  
little bit out of town. At the  
crossroads.

**SONNY**

Long walk?

**POSSUM**

You in a hurry?

Possum finishes his song-

**SONNY**

How old is that box you playin,  
Pops?

**POSSUM**

(smiles) Second one that ever was-  
an the devil's got the first. How  
bout yours?

Possum gently nudges Sonny's case with his toe. Sonny is  
surprised at the blind man's perception-

**SONNY**

Brand new. Made it myself.

**POSSUM**

(whistles) Made it hisself-

25.

**SONNY**

That's right. So these clubs-

**POSSUM**

Old Toussaint, owns the Ace of  
Spades, don't feature live music.  
And Pinetop Purvis, owns the  
Honeydripper Lounge? He don't care  
bout no guitar. Won't have one  
under his roof.

**SONNY**

That don't make sense.

Possum scratches his head-

**POSSUM**

Yeah- when a musician put his hand  
to murder, nine times outa ten it's  
a drummer done it. But Pinetop a  
piano man-

**SONNY**

He killed somebody?

**POSSUM**

That's the story.      Might be true,  
and it might not.

17      **EXT. HONEYDRIPPER - MORNING - TY**      17

Ty is tacking one of the Guitar Sam POSTERS on the front of  
the building.

**POSSUM (V.O.)**

But if you meet the man, you damn  
well don't be askin him about it.

A CRACKLE and a curse from the side of the roadhouse-

**MACEO (O.S.)**

Damn!

Ty looks up-

**TY**

What's the matter?

**MACEO (O.S.)**

I got a shock.

26.

**TY**

Thought you used to work for the  
power company.

**SIDE OF ROADHOUSE, MACEO**

Maceo wrestles with the jury-rigged WIRES that run out from  
the battered, rusting POWER BOX-

**MACEO**

I drove a supply truck.

**TY (O.S.)**

Guitar Sam aint gonna play by no candlelight.

**MACEO**

(sniffs) I smell bacon.

**TY (O.S.)**

You must of burnt your porky ass with that lectricity.

**CHINA DOLL (O.S.)**

Breakfast ready!

**FRONT OF ROADHOUSE**

China Doll has stepped out from the club-

**TY**

Where's your mama?

**CHINA DOLL**

Already over to the Mayor's. She told me to come here and make sure you eat something fore you start runnin around.

Maceo comes around from the side-

**MACEO**

That is a sweet woman you got.

**CHINA DOLL**

You got one waitin for you if you want her.

Maceo makes a face-

27.

**MACEO**

You mean Nadine?

18 **INT. HONEYDRIPPER - MORNING**

18

They step into the club. Plates of bacon, eggs and biscuits sit on one of the tables-

**CHINA DOLL**

(teasing) Come in here every night  
makin them cow-eyes at you-

Ty and Maceo sit-

**MACEO**

She seems like the kind could  
smother a man-

**CHINA DOLL**

She makes all her own clothes.

**TY**

(smiles) Darlin, that's not the  
kind of thing a man cares about  
from a woman.

The LIGHTS that went out last night suddenly FLICKER ON-

**MACEO**

Hey, I fixed it!

**TY**

You didn't do no such thing. It  
just decided to come back on.

**MACEO**

Decided.

**TY**

Just like it decided to switch off  
last night. You not even in the  
conversation.

**CHINA DOLL**

Miss Nadine makes some good money  
too, sewing for people.

**MACEO**

That woman scares me. Last ole boy  
that give her a tumble, Nappy  
Carpenter?

**(MORE)**

**28.**

MACEO (cont'd)

She cook for him, fixed him up all  
kinds of nice new clothes, kept him  
in gin and poker chips-

**CHINA DOLL**

Don't see no problem with that.

**MACEO**

Well, come four, five months, a man starts to- sorry, China Doll, but this just the way it is- a man gots needs.

**TY**

Nadine look like she can take care of those, too-

**MACEO**

You eat chicken every morning, noon and night for five months, you get a taste for some different kind of meat, right? (looks to China Doll) Maybe I shouldn't be-

**CHINA DOLL**

Aint gonna tell me something I haven't heard worse.

**MACEO**

Well, Nappy goes out and has him a- a porkchop or two, let's say- and he comes back from Toussaint's one night feeling no pain, smelling like- like porkchops- the way a man will- and he falls out on Nadine's couch and commences to snore. Wake up the next mornin, finds she had took all his clothes off without him knowin it-

**TY**

Man was dog drunk-

**MACEO**

Miss Nadine come in with a skillet in her hand, hot grits bubbling in it, says "Baby, I got your breakfast." "Not this morning, Nadine," he says, sittin up, "don't think I could eat a thing." "Well then," she says, "we can't let this go to waste, can we?" and she dump that whole hot bubblin mess right in the man's lap.

**TY**

(wincing) Owwww!

**MACEO**

Then she got busy with that hot iron on his head. Screams didn't bring the neighbors in, she would of killed that man.

They are all quiet for a moment, contemplating-

**TY**

You got to admit it, though- woman is an artist with that Singer machine.

**SONNY (O.S.)**

Scuse me?

They turn to see Sonny standing in the doorway-

**SONNY**

Which one of you is Mr. Pinetop?

Ty's eyes fix on Sonny's face for a moment- something familiar there- then go down to the guitar case at his feet-

**TY**

We aint hirin.

**SONNY**

I can play anything-

Ty indicates the Guitar Sam POSTER hanging behind the bar-

**TY**

Already got me a professional.

Sonny looks a little shaky-

**SONNY**

Guitar Sam really coming all the way out here?

**TY**

That so surprising?

**SONNY**

No, no-- uhm, Mr. Shack Thomas said that if I was to-

**TY**

You know Shack?

30.

**SONNY**

We uh- we travelled together-

Ty gives him a once-over-

**TY**

When's the last time you ate solid  
food, young man?

Sonny has to think-

**TY**

(to China Doll) Take him back and  
fix him somethin, China Doll.  
Standin there all hungry-eyed, puts  
me off my breakfast.

**SONNY**

That's real kind of you-

Sonny pulls his hat off as he follows China Doll, who is  
suddenly quiet and self-conscious, back to the kitchen-

**MACEO**

Must of come in on the northbound  
last night.

**TY**

Look like he got cooties, too.  
Straw in them boxcars is full of  
em.

**MACEO**

Never cared to travel that way.

Ty grows somber, reminiscing-

**TY**

I was out there ridin them rails  
between the wars. Seem like half  
the country headin west rolled past  
the other half comin back east.  
(musing) Every one of us scrapin  
for the next meal-

**COOL BREEZE (O.S.)**

This is the place.



They turn to see COOL BREEZE, a hard-looking, sharply-dressed character, leading the prosperous looking MR. SIMMONS into the club as if they aren't there-

31.

**COOL BREEZE**

Yall can tear things down, put things up- got a lot of potential.

**MR. SIMMONS**

Looks bigger in here than it does from the outside.

**TY**

I help you gentlemen?

**COOL BREEZE**

Just showing the man gonna run this place what he's got.

Ty stands-

**TY**

This is my place.

A frozen moment. Then Maceo stands as well, backing up his friend.

Cool Breeze puts one foot up on the chair next to Ty, licks a finger and dabs at his shoeshine with it-

**COOL BREEZE**

You the piano player, right?

**TY**

Name's Tyrone- call me Pinetop Purvis.

**COOL BREEZE**

Pinetop Purvis who owes two hundred dollars to Lucky Hardaway up in Little Rock-

**TY**

He's gonna get his-

**COOL BREEZE**

Pinetop who missed last month's rent-

**TY**

After this weekend-

**COOL BREEZE**

After this weekend you gonna be the same raggedy-ass piano player can't pay his debts off and Mr. Simmons here gonna be the new proprietor.

32.

**TY**

Lucky give me two weeks-

**COOL BREEZE**

Lucky got a better offer.

He nods toward Mr. Simmons-

**TY**

He can't do that.

Cool Breeze takes his foot down and gets up in Ty's face. He lets his jacket fall open so the butt of his .44 PISTOL is visible-

**COOL BREEZE**

You don't think so?

**MACEO**

(trying to defuse) What if we got our payment for him Monday?

Cool Breeze doesn't take his eyes off Ty's-

**COOL BREEZE**

Saturday night.

**MACEO**

We can do that-

**COOL BREEZE**

Not just a taste- the whole two hundred.

**TY**

And I throw in a twenny-five cent tip for his messenger boy.

**COOL BREEZE**

I'll be here.

**TY**

In the meantime, we not open yet.  
Which means yall are trespassin.

Cool Breeze grins, still locking eyeballs with Ty-

**COOL BREEZE**

You seen enough, Mr. Simmons?

**MR. SIMMONS**

I believe I have.

33.

Cool Breeze breaks eye contact, strolls out, followed by Simmons-

**COOL BREEZE**

Yeah, somebody could make something  
out of this place. Wouldn't take  
much work at all.

Ty and Maceo wait till the men are gone before they speak-

**TY**

We cleared over two hundred that  
one weekend-

**MACEO**

Couple years back-

**TY**

And we didn't have no Louisiana  
guitar wizard playin neither.

**MACEO**

Yeah, they say he draws em like  
flies.

**TY**

That's what they say.

An awkward pause. Both men are shaken. Ty sits back down to think-

**MACEO**

They say first thing he does is go  
to the man that owns the joint,  
sticks out his hand and wants that

cash money put in it.

**TY**

I already sent fifty to his manager.

**MACEO**

How much you payin him all out?

**TY**

Another hundred.

**MACEO**

We'd have to clear three hundred-

**TY**

I figure we charge folks two dollars to get in, then drinks-

34.

**MACEO**

(shakes his head) What I'm sayin is, less he sees the green up front the man won't get off the train.

A TRUCK HORN honks outside-

**MACEO**

What's that now?

Ty, mind working, looks desperate as Maceo exits to see who's honking-

19 **EXT. HONEYDRIPPER - MORNING**

19

A battered TRUCK sits in front of the club. ZEKE, a taciturn white man, and his black loader step out as Maceo approaches-

**MACEO**

(calls out) Bout time you fellas run by. We just about dry here.

The loader lets down the tailgate to reveal CASES OF BEER AND LIQUOR. He begins to pull them out and pile them on the ground-

**ZEKE**

Your boss in?

Maceo shouts back into the club-

**MACEO**

Tyrone! Whiskey wagon come by!

Ty steps out of the club carrying one of the Guitar Sam posters-

**TY**

Y'all a day late.

Ty nods at the Ace of Spades club across the way-

**TY**

Old Man Toussaint gonna chew you out.

**ZEKE**

Toussaint went over to another supplier upstate. We just got you, then we headin down to the army base, officers' club needs servicin. This fifty-six dollars-

35.

**TY**

(weak grin) My credit no good anymore?

Zeke only has to look at the loader, who starts to put the cases back onto the truck-

**TY**

Whoah, whoah- what's your hurry?

**ZEKE**

Nobody that's right in his head sell liquor on credit. Specially not to no darktown roadhouse.

**TY**

Well this is like a special case, see- we got the harvest coming in, soldiers at the base gonna be let out on leave- Saturday night. Aint enough hootch in this truck to satisfy what we gonna sell-

**ZEKE**

You pay as you go. That's bidness.

Zeke walks toward the cab of the truck, Ty following him, desperate, waving the poster-

**TY**

You can come by Monday, get paid  
and take back every damn drop I  
aint sold! We got Guitar Sam lined  
up, you know what that means?!

Zeke steps in and slams the door, the loader doing the same  
on the other side of him-

**TY**

I'll pay you extra- penny a bottle  
on the beer and a nickel on the  
whiskey!

The truck engine coughs-

**TY**

(desperate) What if I throw in  
five dollars up front, just for you  
fellas- ?

Zeke pulls away-

**36.**

**TY**

Come on, man, everybody give  
credit, that's the American way!

But the truck is gone down the road. Maceo comes up beside  
Ty, watching forlornly-

**MACEO**

Maybe we could buy some busthead  
from Willie Pettigrew.

**TY**

With that sheriff sniffin around  
every night? Land my black ass in  
jail for good.

Another TRUCK pulls around the bend from the opposite  
direction-

**MACEO**

Then what we gonna do?

The new truck slows to a stop by them. The DRIVER pokes his

head out-

**DRIVER**

Got a liquor delivery for a Mr.  
Lucien Toussaint?

**MACEO**

That's-

**TY**

That would be me.

Maceo bites his tongue. Ty plays it through-

**TY**

I trust they got my check all  
right?

**DRIVER**

Don't spose I'd be here if they  
didn't.

Ty glances over to the Ace of Spades, then points behind the  
Honeydripper-

**TY**

Pull it around to the back- we'll  
help you unload.

37.

The driver nods and wheels the truck past them. Maceo's  
smile fades and he looks to Ty-

**MACEO**

Man, this better be some Saturday  
night.

20 **INT. HONEYDRIPPER - KITCHEN - MORNING**

20

A little kitchen built onto the back of the bar. Sonny sits  
wolfing down eggs and toast as China Doll watches him from  
the stove-

**SONNY**

Arkansas. How bout you?

**CHINA DOLL**

We come here just after Mama met my  
step-daddy.

**SONNY**

Not much happenin, little town like this.

**CHINA DOLL**

(shrugs) They started up the training base again-

**SONNY**

That right?

**CHINA DOLL**

You been in the Army?

**SONNY**

Uh-huh.

**CHINA DOLL**

You shoot people?

**SONNY**

Fixed radios.

**CHINA DOLL**

They say this new war gonna be a short one.

**SONNY**

Might be, might not. I was to Japan.

38.

**CHINA DOLL**

Yeah? What's the people like there?

**SONNY**

Small.

**CHINA DOLL**

Yeah?

**SONNY**

(holds a hand up) Bout that high. And they speak Japanese.

**CHINA DOLL**

You been to California?

**SONNY**



(nods) Los Angeles.

**CHINA DOLL**

Where they make the movies.

**SONNY**

You go to the movies?

**CHINA DOLL**

I been once.

He sits back and looks her over-

**SONNY**

Fine-looking girl like you, ought  
to been all kinds of places.

**CHINA DOLL**

I'm going to em. First I'm going  
to beauty school when Mama saves up  
the money and then I have a  
portable skill-

**SONNY**

Like playin music.

**CHINA DOLL**

My step-Daddy says that aint a  
skill-

**TY (O.S.)**

-it's an affliction.

Ty sticks his head in, Maceo behind him with a case of liquor  
in his arms-

39.

**TY**

Come on, China Doll. Got some  
bidness in town you gonna help me  
with.

Ty gives Sonny a distrustful look-

**TY**

And you, young man, want to point  
yourself west down that highway.  
Bout three miles you see a mess of  
people working in the fields- it's  
harvest time. If you can stoop and

pull, they got a job for you.

He steps out the back door-

**TY**

And wash up them dishes before you  
go.

**21 INT. MAYOR WINSHIP'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING 21**  
Delilah is washing breakfast dishes, SINGING a gospel song as  
she works-

**DELILAH**

I see four and twenty elders  
Down on their knees  
I see four and twenty elders  
Down on their knees  
Well they all turn together  
Standing to greet the rising sun  
I see four and twenty elders  
Down on their knees

AMANDA WINSHIP, the mayor's pretty, high-strung wife, enters  
and hovers uneasily-

**AMANDA**

Your biscuits were wonderful this  
morning, Delilah.

**DELILAH**

Thank you.

**AMANDA**

Of course, they always are. I  
don't know how you do it.

**DELILAH**

Just cook em.

**40.**

**AMANDA**

When I married Floyd I swear I  
couldn't even boil water. Might be  
why he insisted I needed help  
around the house. He used to come  
to the dinner table with a sense of  
dread.

**DELILAH**

Anybody can learn to cook. Just have to put your mind to it.

**AMANDA**

Maybe you could show me some of your secrets some time.

**DELILAH**

No secrets to it. Imonna fix some ham with yams and greens today, you want to learn how.

Amanda thinks about it, smiling all the while, sighs-

**AMANDA**

Maybe some other day.

Delilah isn't surprised by the response-

**DELILAH**

You just say the word, Miss Amanda, I have you cookin in no time.

Amanda nods, uncomfortable but not leaving. She can't exactly offer to help with the dishes-

**AMANDA**

I just don't know what I'd do without you.

**22 EXT. MAIN STREET - GENERAL STORE - MORNING**

**22**

Ty, Maceo and China Doll approach the general store. COUPLE enter from the front-

A WHITE

**TY**

What I need is for you to go get friendly with Luther, then I just happen in-

**CHINA DOLL**

We can't just ask Mr. Skinner?

**41.**

**TY**

Mr. Skinner don't want nothin from colored folks but they buy his goods and shine his shoes. You go on ahead, now-

Maceo and China Doll cut around toward the back of the store.  
We TIGHTEN on Ty as he unrolls the posters he carries, looks  
across the street for another likely place to hang one-

**POSSUM (O.S.)**

It was early  
Friday evenin  
Hounds began to bark

Ty turns- how did Possum get there, chair and all?

**POSSUM**

Stackolee an Billy Lyons  
Was squabblin  
In the dark

Ty frowns at the lyrics-

**POSSUM**

Stackolee said  
To Billy Lyons  
"What you think bout that?  
First you takes all my money  
Then you spits in  
My Stetson hat."

**TY**

I hate that damn song.

Possum keeps playing but stops singing-

**POSSUM**

How you keepin, Tyrone?

**TY**

(wary) Just tryin to hold it  
together.

**POSSUM**

Got your beautiful young daughter  
with you this mornin-

**TY**

Don't you be studyin her.

42.

**POSSUM**

Heard you gone put on a guitar man  
out your place.

**TY**

Where you hear that?

**POSSUM**

(grins) Oh- the breeze.

**TY**

Well this time the breeze know what it's blowin about.

**POSSUM**

Better be careful, Tyrone. You know what them guitar players are like.

Ty glares at Possum-

**TY**

Be careful yourself.

Ty stalks away around toward the back of the store. Possum grins and sings again-

**POSSUM**

Well he shot him  
Three times in the shoulder  
Three times in the side  
That was the last time he shot him  
Cause Poor Billy  
Up and died

**23 EXT. REAR OF GENERAL STORE - MORNING**

**23**

A quartet of WORKMEN and DELIVERYMEN lounge on piled up shipping crates as Shack Thomas stands addressing them-

**SHACK THOMAS**

The time is ripe and the bill is past due. Roosevelt would of done it already, only he died and they don't listen to Miss Eleanor no more. But Mr. Truman startin to bend, specially now that we got a war heatin up. As Brother Randolph says-

**TY (O.S.)**

Here it comes-

**43.**

Shack looks to see Ty joining the others-

**TY**

-the gospel accordin to A. Phillip  
Randolph.

**SHACK THOMAS**

(pleased) Tyrone! How you doing,  
man?

**TY**

Got my nose above the waterline.

**SHACK THOMAS**

And here's my baby- how's your mama  
doing, China Doll?

He gives China Doll a hug and kiss-

**CHINA DOLL**

She's doin fine, Uncle Shack.

**SHACK THOMAS**

Just tellin the boys here how  
Brother Randolph pushin through  
this deal where our boys gonna be a  
full part of services- already got  
the Navy and the Air Force, and the  
Army is-

**TY**

I carried a rifle in the Great War,  
Shack. Boys get in the middle of  
this Korea mess they aint gonna  
thank you for your efforts.

**SHACK THOMAS**

We want our due in this country, we  
got to go whole hog-

**TY**

Black folks shooting yellow folks  
to keep the white folks happy?

**SHACK THOMAS**

It's time to move on from that kind  
of thinkin.

Ty starts in through the back entrance of the store-

**TY**

You go ahead and move right on,  
Shack. Then come back and tell the  
rest of us how it is.

He steps in. Shack turns to China Doll-

**SHACK THOMAS**

That is a hard-headed man.

**24 INT. GENERAL STORE - MORNING**

**24**

LUTHER, the head clerk, arranges boxes on the back wall and  
shoots a nervous look up front-

**LUTHER**

I'd have to ask Mr. Skinner.

**TY**

Of course you would. While you at  
it, remind him how one of the  
reasons colored folks come in here  
is to get the lowdown on what's  
happening in--

Luther brightens as China Doll steps in-

**LUTHER**

China Doll!

Luther is clearly smitten-

**CHINA DOLL**

You gonna let us put these posters  
up, aint you Luther?

**LUTHER**

Oh-- I don't think that be any  
problem at all.

**CHINA DOLL**

(beaming a smile) That's awful  
nice of you, Luther.

**LUTHER**

You lookin special today.

**CHINA DOLL**

That's sweet of you to say.

**45.**

**TY**

Maceo, go on with the man and he  
show you where you can put em up.  
Come on, darlin, we got more stops  
to make-

China Doll spreads a parting bit of sunshine-

**CHINA DOLL**

Nice to see you, Luther.

Luther smiles and waves as Maceo hooks his arm and pulls him  
back into the store-

25     **EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS/RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING**     25

Ty and China Doll hurry down the tracks and cross to the  
black side of town-

**TY**

You got that boy eatin out of your  
hand.

**CHINA DOLL**

Luther's the only one didn't pull  
my hair when he sit behind me at  
Sunday school.

**TY**

Well I hope you got a little that  
sugar left, cause we got to spread  
some on Miss Bertha Mae Spivey-

**CHINA DOLL**

You gone ask her to come sing  
again?

**TY**

Imonna ask her for money. Word is  
she got a whole pile of it  
squirreled away.

China Doll stops, breathing heavily, bends to put her hands  
on her knees-

**CHINA DOLL**

Daddy-

**TY**

Come on, girl, we in a rush here-



**CHINA DOLL**

I got to rest.

Ty softens, walks back to stand beside her-

**TY**

I'm sorry, baby. You catch your breath.

China Doll smiles weakly-

**CHINA DOLL**

So- why Miss Spivey gonna give you money, you don't let her sing at the club any more?

**TY**

Gonna make her a partner.

**CHINA DOLL**

Partner in what?

**TY**

In the Honeydripper.

**CHINA DOLL**

But all you ever say it's just a hole you pour good money into-

**TY**

That don't matter. Imonna make her a proprietor.

**CHINA DOLL**

`tress'. Like waiter and waitress.

**TY**

Proprietress. She got to like the sound of that.

26 **EXT. MAIN STREET - GENERAL STORE - WINDOW, POSTER**

26

One of the GUITAR SAM POSTERS appears in the front window as Maceo tapes it up-

A trio on teenage girls stop to look at it as they pass (Possum is nowhere to be seen)-

Maceo steps out to join them, eager to close the deal-

47.

**MACEO**

Lovely ladies out to make a purchase-

**OPAL**

That the same Guitar Sam is on the radio?

**MACEO**

The very one.

**OPAL**

What's he look like?

**MACEO**

Fine lookin man. Real lady killer from what I hear. Got that New Orleans style to him.

**OPAL**

You ought to have a picture up there.

**MACEO**

Oh, we'll be gettin some of those when he comes in on the train. The main thing is, the man is electrified- and you know what that means.

27 **EXT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE**

27

Formerly a fairly grand house, Bertha Mae's hasn't been painted for awhile and the yard could use some work. Ty coaches China Doll as they climb the stairs-

**TY**

We make like we just come by to see how she's keepin, and then I'll kind of mention how I been thinking of bringing her on as a partner-

**CHINA DOLL**

Left the door open.

China Doll pushes the front door all the way open. We can hear Bertha Mae's VOICE singing on a scratchy old RECORD.

China Doll peeks in to see-

48.

28 INT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - FRONT PARLOR

28

-Slick, sitting at the bottom of the STAIRS that lead to the second floor, looking lost and bewildered-

SLICK

She's gone.

TY

Oh.

Ty frowns. He was all geared up for the siege-

TY

When she gonna be back?

SLICK

She's just gone. Woke up beside her and--

He can't go on, tears forming in his eyes. China Doll and Ty trade a look-

29 INT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

29

We start on the RECORD PLAYER, needle down on the spinning song, then RACK to see Bertha Mae, laying DEAD in her bed.

TY

Aw, damn.

We RACK again as Ty and China Doll step in. Slick appears in the doorway behind them. He's been drinking-

SLICK

Fourteen years.

TY

China Doll, you go find your Mama. She know how to fix up the body.

SLICK

People make jokes and all, but I been with that woman fourteen

years. That's a good part of my  
life.

**TY**

And stop by Beauchamp's and tell em  
they got a customer.

49.

**SLICK**

She gimme the only home I ever had.

He looks at them, devastated-

**SLICK**

What I'm gonna do now?

30 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY**

30

Sonny walking along. He has left his guitar and sack back at  
the club. He slows, seeing-

**POV - SHERIFF'S CAR**

The SHERIFF'S CAR is sitting at the side of the road, a  
COUNTRY SONG playing on the radio-

**SONNY**

He decides to brave it, walks ahead with his eyes fixed  
straight ahead. We he gets even with the car we see Sheriff  
Pugh sitting in the driver's seat, watching him-

**PUGH**

In a hurry, boy?

Sonny stops, looks to the Sheriff-

**SONNY**

Naw, sir.

**PUGH**

Take your hat off.

Sonny takes his hat off. He meets the Sheriff's eyes, trying  
to strike a balance between defiant and submissive-

**PUGH**

Where you headed?

**SONNY**

Lookin for work.

**PUGH**

You're not from here.

**SONNY**

Naw, sir.

50.

**PUGH**

Stranger wanderin around, no job-  
that would make you a vagrant.

**SONNY**

But I'm lookin-

**PUGH**

I got a job for you. Get in the  
back.

Sonny doesn't even think about running away.

**31 EXT. 1ST COTTON FIELD - DAY - WORKERS**

**31**

Black PRISON LABORERS pick cotton, watched over by an armed  
**DEPUTY-**

**GATLIN (O.S.)**

I can always use another hand.

We SHIFT to see GATLIN, a white planter who chews and spits  
tobacco, looking Sonny over as Sheriff Pugh stands by-

**PUGH**

Caught this young fella in flagrant  
violation of the statutes. Gawkery  
with intent to mope.

**GATLIN**

What's he gonna run me?

**PUGH**

Three dollars a day plus you feed  
im lunch. Now the sentence- that  
depends on how long you gonna need  
the help.

Sonny decides to speak up-

**SONNY**

I don't get any trial?

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Sure you do, boy. And a speedy one, too. (points) Meet Judge Gatlin.

Gatlin spits-

**GATLIN**

Grab a sack.

51.

**32 EXT. PINEY WOODS - CROSSROADS - AFTERNOON**

**32**

Maceo nails a Guitar Sam POSTER to a tree, looks over his handiwork.

An ARMY PLATOON trudges into the crossroads, sweat-soaked and footsore-

Maceo watches, pleased, as the black soldiers check the poster out as they pass-

**MACEO**

Saturday night, fellas! Every fine-looking colored woman in the county gonna be there- don't want to miss it!

A white LIEUTENANT passes, giving Maceo a dark look. Maceo salutes-

**MACEO**

Afternoon, sir. Nice lookin bunch of soldiers.

**33 INT. MAYOR WINFIELD'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY**

**33**

Delilah sits at the dining room table with a sandwich she's made herself. We hear PERRY COMO on a RECORD somewhere in the house. She hasn't gotten two bites down before Amanda wanders in, crossing to the liquor cabinet-

**AMANDA**

Oh dear, I believe it's about that time-

She pulls out a DECANTER OF WINE-

**AMANDA**

Would you care to join me?

**DELILAH**

No thank you.

Amanda pours herself a glass of wine-

**AMANDA**

Of course you won't join me, you don't partake. That was thoughtless of me.

52.

**DELILAH**

That's all right.

**AMANDA**

So you don't take spirits and- what else? In your church?

**DELILAH**

I'm sort of between churches right now. I been thinking about changing over to the Holiness, but I- I haven't been sanctified yet.

**AMANDA**

Ah-

**DELILAH**

There's been a minister in this week-

**AMANDA**

The tent out by the fairgrounds.

Delilah nods. Amanda takes a drink-

**AMANDA**

The church I grew up in- we were Pentacostals- they wouldn't have anything but the human voice inside the church. And dancing- any kind of dancing, music, card playing-- well, it was very strict. They took up serpents.

**DELILAH**

I've heard of that.

**AMANDA**

I tell Floyd these stories and he's horrified. They've always been Methodists, Floyd's family.

**DELILAH**

They're good people too.

**AMANDA**

When I married Floyd-- oh, it was quite a scandal among my relatives. As if I'd taken up with somebody in a cult.

53.

**DELILAH**

It can be a trial, married folks differ in their religion.

**AMANDA**

And your husband is a--- ?

**DELILAH**

Unaffiliated.

**AMANDA**

Unaffiliated. I see. He has his-- social club-

**DELILAH**

The Honeydripper.

**AMANDA**

Such a colorful name.

**DELILAH**

Yes.

**AMANDA**

He must devote a great deal of his energy to it.

**DELILAH**

It's just him and Maceo Green runs it, and then I go over and cook some when I get off here.



**AMANDA**

That's very- supportive of you.  
Considering the sort of-  
environment-

**DELILAH**

(defensive) I been in those  
barrooms most of my life, Miss  
Amanda.

Amanda realizes she has probed too deep, tries to back up-

**AMANDA**

I see-

**DELILAH**

I was a singer. I met Tyrone in  
the Paradise, down in Shreveport,  
China Doll was only two-

Delilah considers, struggling to express who Ty is-

54.

**DELILAH**

I was just kind of livin along, you  
know, drinking more than I ought--  
then Tyrone. It was like a light  
come into my life.

Delilah turns away, embarrassed to have revealed so much-

**DELILAH**

People think things because he owns  
the Lounge, but they don't know  
him.

**AMANDA**

Small minds are never in short  
supply.

She crosses to look out a window-

**AMANDA**

The people in this town---

She catches herself, smiles-

**AMANDA**

I suppose they expected that Floyd,  
being from a prominent family- as

prominent as is possible here in  
Harmony- would have chosen somebody  
more--

She fades away again, empties her glass-

**AMANDA**

My people were very devout, but  
they weren't- financially  
successful.

**DELILAH**

No shame in that.

**AMANDA**

In school, if you didn't have shoes-

She frowns at the memory, sighs-

**AMANDA**

Oh, I forgot--

Amanda is up and out of the room. Delilah frowns at the  
decanter, hurries to put it away.

Amanda comes back in holding a DRESS for a young girl-

55.

**AMANDA**

I was going through Emily's old  
things the other day, and I thought  
this would look just darling on  
your China Doll-

Delilah examines the dress, which is clearly for a little  
girl-

**DELILAH**

Oh- I don't think it would near fit  
her, Miss Amanda.

**AMANDA**

(disappointed) How old is she now?

**DELILAH**

Seventeen.

**AMANDA**

(shocked) Oh my- I must have lost  
track somewhere along the line.

Seventeen.

She sits, still holding the dress, sneaks a look over to where the wine decanter was-

**DELILAH**

It was a very nice thought.

An awkward silence that Perry Como fills inadequately. A KNOCK at the back door, then China Doll steps in, not seeing Amanda right away-

**CHINA DOLL**

Mama? They need you at-

Delilah shifts her eyes to indicate-

**CHINA DOLL**

Oh, I'm sorry, Miss Amanda. I didn't know you was home.

**AMANDA**

(smiles) China Doll! We were just recalling- you used to play right here under this table.

56.

**34 INT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM**

**34**

Ty sits staring, mind working overtime, staring at the dead woman on the bed. He barely hears Slick talking to the undertaker behind him, busy filling out forms-

**SLICK**

There isn't any cash money I know of. She sold a good deal of the furniture, but there's still a nice-lookin sofa in the parlor. Only thing she cared for anymore was singin out to Pinetop's place-

Ty looks at a large RING on Bertha's Mae's cold gray hand. He touches it with a finger-

**SLICK**

You welcome to look around the house- if there's anything your Missus might like-- long as it's not something personal to me and Bertha Mae-

Ty draws his finger away from the ring as if burnt-

**SLICK**

It's just- she got to go out in style, is what it is. The best you got, all the trimmins- lay it out for her. That's the way she lived it- that's the way she ought to leave it.

Ty closes his eyes and buries his head in his hands-

**35 EXT. 1ST COTTON FIELD - AFTERNOON**

**35**

Blazing hot. Cotton chaff in the air as the prison WORK GANG bend to their task, dragging long sacks behind them like snakes. Even the DEPUTIES are sweating rivulets as they stand by with their SHOTGUNS in hand.

Sonny is way behind the others, not dressed for the work, wincing as he pricks his fingers for the umpteenth time. NED, a little prisoner picking his way back in the opposite direction in a parallel row, takes pity on him-

**NED**

Y'all never done this job before.

**57.**

**SONNY**

Can't say I have.

**NED**

You want to set your pins out wide, bend over from the hip-

Sonny widens his stance-

**NED**

-and don't be bobbin up and down all the time. When you up, be up, but when you on the row, stay down.

Sonny digs in and keeps low-

**NED**

But most important, you got to get you a rhythm. Everything in this life got a rhythm to it- even pullin cotton off the plant.

**SONNY**

Lay it out for me.

**NED**

Not my rhythm- your rhythm. That's between you and the day and the work you got before you. Once you on it, don't let nothin and nobody push you off it.

**SONNY**

I'm going so slow.

**NED**

You gettin paid by the pound or by the hour?

**SONNY**

I'm not gettin paid at all. None of us are.

Ned cackles-

**NED**

Then I suggest you work that into your rhythm too.

A DEPUTY calls out-

58.

**DEPUTY**

Let's see more pickin and less talkin over there!

**NED**

Gettin right on it, Boss!

Ned picks his way behind Sonny. Sonny starts to rock slightly, looking for a rhythm of movement he can maintain-

36 **EXT. 1ST OPPOSITE COTTON FIELD**

36

The free pickers sit on and around the truck that brought them, eating lunch. Dex watches the prison laborers across the road as he SHUFFLES a battered DECK OF CARDS, sitting with a couple of the other men-

**DEX**

Them boys fryin over there.

**JUNEBUG**

That Judge Gatlin's gang- he work  
them people from can until can't,  
ever damn day, and when his fields  
is picked he bid em out to the  
neighbors. Harvest time comes  
round here, you sign up with  
somebody fast or you stay outa  
sight.

Dex waves flies away from his face, spits-

**DEX**

Ate a peck of dust today.

**JUNEBUG**

Take some water.

**DEX**

Only thing wash the dust out is  
whiskey.

**JUNEBUG**

(smiles) Aint enough whiskey in  
this world wash out what I  
swallowed in my life.

Dex riffles the cards-

**JUNEBUG**

What we playin for?

59.

**DEX**

Two bits a hand.

**JUNEBUG**

That's kind of steep-

Dex laughs and starts to deal a card at a time to the players-

**DEX**

Hell, I member playin this game one  
night- Memphis is Boss Crump's  
town, folks is gamblin before they  
can walk- ten dollars a hand. I  
caught a winnin streak that cleaned  
out half the sportin men on Beale  
Street. Got up from that table, my

money was as long as train smoke-

**JUNEBUG**

What happen to it?

Dex raises his voice so the woman he checked out in the morning can hear-

**DEX**

Spent it all on fine-lookin women.

He calls to where Ham stands in knee-high grass, a heavy stick in his hand, staring intently at the ground-

**DEX**

Yo, Mississippi-

**JUNEBUG**

His name Hamilton.

**DEX**

Hambone! You want in on this?

He raises a matchstick in his fingers-

**DEX**

Settle up on payday.

**HAM**

That your deck of cards?

**DEX**

What if it is?

**HAM**

I stay clear of it then.

60.

Dex stops dealing to stare at Ham, insulted-

**DEX**

You sinuatin?

**HAM**

Just sayin I don't want to play.

There is a sudden RUSTLING at Ham's feet and WHAP! he brings his stick down hard. He pulls up a RABBIT, dead, by its hind legs-

**JUNEBUG**

Looks like dinner.

**DEX**

Rabbit is a rodent. Man eat a  
rabbit, might's well eat a rat.

Dex snorts, disgusted, then finishes dealing. He lays the  
top card face up and slaps down the rest of the deck-

**DEX**

(mutters) Simple country nigger,  
fraid to sit down an lose his  
little handful of change--

**JUNEBUG**

He awful big to mess with.

**DEX**

Don't scare me none. I'm a steppin  
razor, man, I'm trouble on two  
legs.

We hear a CAR APPROACHING, SLOWING DOWN-

**DEX**

Your draw, Junebug. And don't be  
drippin sweat on my cards.

**MACEO (O.S.)**

Excuse me, folks-

They turn to see Maceo leaning out of the window of Ty's old  
Ford, a Guitar Slim POSTER taped to the side of it-

**MACEO**

Yall heard about the show we puttin  
on at the Honeydripper Saturday  
night?

61.

- 37    **EXT. PURVIS HOUSE - NIGHT**    37  
A very modest wooden house with a porch.    LIGHTS on inside-
- 38    **INT. PURVIS HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**    38  
Ty and China Doll sit as Delilah lays dinner on the table.  
She is dressed to go out-



**DELILAH**

I expect there'll be a nice turnout  
for Bertha Mae tomorrow.

**TY**

Folks who wouldn't have nothin to  
do with her when she was alive.

**DELILAH**

Some of them, maybe. You still got  
to pay your respects.

**TY**

Slick gonna have to find him a new  
ride.

**DELILAH**

That's a terrible thing to say-

**TY**

That's how the man gets over, is  
all, sugarin up to some woman got a  
job or a bankroll-

**DELILAH**

It's no way to live.

**TY**

Just how it is out in the world,  
baby- man got to walk through the  
gates of Hell to get a piece of  
cheese.

He stares moodily, unnoticing as she lays his plate in front  
of him-

**TY**

You're not so young any more, lose  
hold of what little you got-

He just shakes his head-

**62.**

**DELILAH**

If you lose the club I'm sure  
you'll find something else.

**TY**

In this town? Like what?

Delilah proceeds cautiously-

**DELILAH**

You know anytime you want I could  
get Miss Amanda to ask her husb-

**TY**

"Watch yo feet, Mr. Mayor, I done  
just mopped the flo! "

Delilah tries to ignore this-

**DELILAH**

You work so hard at the Lounge, and  
what it brings in-

**TY**

Isn't even as much as what you make  
polishin that white lady's silver.  
I know.

**DELILAH**

I didn't say that.

**TY**

You didn't have to.

Delilah gives up, knowing he's set on his mood-

**DELILAH**

It'll just have to work out, then.

A strained silence. Delilah crosses to the back door-

**DELILAH**

Meetin gonna start without I'm  
there.

**TY**

Your soul not the one needs savin,  
baby.

She gives Ty a lost look, steps out. The screen door slams.  
China Doll sees how worried Ty is-

63.

**CHINA DOLL**

It's all gonna be fine, Daddy.  
Everbody in town talkin bout Guitar

Sam comin to Harmony.

**39 EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT - WIDE SHOT**

**39**

A CHOIR sings at the front of the LANTERN-LIT tent, a CONGREGATION of salvation-seekers filling the benches-

**CHOIR**

Mother died-  
Yes she died and left me  
It was long- long time ago  
Oh but I searched  
Searched her record over  
I found mother just had to go

**UNDER TENT**

**CHOIR**

Oh she cried son,  
Son don't you worry  
Oh you know the Lord  
Always fix a way

Delilah arrives at the rear of the tent, finds herself a spot on a bench-

**CHOIR**

She left me standing  
Standing along the highway  
Oh wondering- which way I must go!

REVEREND CUTLIP watches his singers, clapping out time with his big hands-

**CHOIR**

As I walked-  
All along the highway  
I was seeking my Lord each day  
She left me standing  
Standing along the highway  
Just wondering- which way must I  
go!

`Amens' and other sounds greet the end of the song. Reverend Cutlip steps to the center of the platform and looks around at the souls gathered-

**64.**

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

The Highway of Life, Brothers and Sisters, will twist you and turn you, it will run you this way and that way, it will tempt you with many a detour-- for the Highway of Life, Brothers and Sisters, is designed to lead us astray!

He gets an 'Amen!' from someone in the crowd-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

It meanders away from the Light and into the Darkness, it tires our legs and whittles away at our spirits!

The congregation start to get into it, RESPONDING, rocking with the rhythm of the sermon, flapping their PAPER FANS that advertise Beauchamp's Funeral Home in the hot night--

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

It snares us with the thorns and thistles of wickedness, it is paved with the black deeds of sinners and laid out on a crooked plan! That's not the road we want to be on, Brothers and Sisters, that's not the path we need to follow!

The Reverend picks up speed-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

We got to get on that other road!  
The one that leads to salvation!  
The one that leads to glory! The one that leads to the right hand of God! Praise His name!

**CONGREGATION**

Praise the Lord!

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

The thoroughfare I'm talking about, the righteous path we got to tread, is called the Highway to Heaven, and by the great Lord above it is straight and it is narrow!

**(MORE)**

65.

REVEREND CUTLIP (cont'd)

Keep your eyes on the prize and your feet on the street and you

won't ever make a mis-step, you  
won't ever falter, you won't ever  
stumble, because Jesus will show  
you the Way!

Several people in the audience are up and SHOUTING now,  
getting into the Spirit. Reverend Cutlip shifts gear,  
filling his voice with a sense of dread and warning-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

But you got to pay attention to who  
it is walking beside you, Brothers  
and Sisters, got to be wary against  
those who will hold you back from  
your journey! There's many a loved  
one got to be left behind! Cause  
you either on the road or you lost  
in the wilderness!

**DELILAH**

We TIGHTEN on Delilah as she listens, upset, taking this all  
very personally-

**REVEREND CUTLIP (O.S.)**

You either headed for glory or  
doomed to damnation! You either in  
with the Lord or you in with the  
Devil- and they aint no in-between!

**40 INT. JAIL - NIGHT**

**40**

We TRACK past CELLS full of black PRISONERS-

**KING (O.S.)**

Tulsa aint so bad but for the smell-

**NED (O.S.)**

Got them stockyards near the jail-

**KING (O.S.)**

That's right- and the flies.  
Course, I had me in a cell in  
Georgia once, six other men, didn't  
have no window atall.

**NED (O.S.)**

Must of got caught on one a them  
freights.

Sonny is in a big COMMON CELL with the other conscripted LABOR GANG. He hangs on the bars as behind him men pitch pennies, while Ned and another veteran jailbird, KING, compare lodging experiences-

**KING**

Yeah, aint no free ride allowed through Georgia. And the food there-

**NED**

Paltry-

**KING**

Paltry aint the word for it. Breakfast was a joke, lunch was a rumor-

**NED**

-and dinner was a anecdote.

**KING**

(laughs) Spose you been locked in that box.

**NED**

Or one just like it.

Sonny begins to SING softly, almost to himself-

**SONNY**

Well you wake up in the morning  
Hear the bing-bong ring-  
Walk up to the table  
And see the same damn thing  
All Imonna tell you  
Knife, a fork and a pan  
If you say a thing about it  
You're in trouble with the Man

The men join him on the chorus-

**ALL**

Let the Midnight Special  
Shine its light on me  
Oh let the Midnight Special  
Shine its ever-lovin light on me-

Sonny turns to face them-

**NED**

You a singer, young man?

67.

**SONNY**

Singer, guitar player- Imonna be on  
the radio some day. People gonna  
know my name.

**NED**

(chuckles) Keep thinkin that way,  
young man. Judge Gatlin don't  
choose to work you into your grave,  
you just might do it.

Sonny ponders this, looking back out through the bars,  
singing more moodily now as we TRACK AWAY from the cell-

**SONNY**

If you ever go to Houston  
Don't you stagger don't you fight  
Cause the Sheriff will arrest you  
You're in the cooler for the night-

**FADE TO BLACK.**

- 41 INT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING 41**  
We hear the slow BLUES DIRGE Bertha May as we see China Doll  
applying polish to Bertha Mae's fingernails-
- 42 INT/EXT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - MORNING 42**  
MUSIC CONTINUES. We TRACK BACK through the house, looking at  
PHOTOGRAPHS and POSTERS of her singing in her glory days,  
finally TRACKING out onto the PORCH where Slick sits glumly  
on the steps and the undertaker stands in his black suit,  
looking at his watch as MOURNERS begin to pass into the house-
- 43 INT. BERTHA MAE'S HOUSE - PARLOR - MORNING 43**  
MUSIC CONTINUES. MOURNERS pass the OPEN COFFIN-
- 44 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING 44**  
MUSIC CONTINUES. Ty and Maceo help carry the coffin down a  
dirt road, Slick walking at the head of the mourners  
following it-

68.

45     **EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING**

45

MUSIC CONTINUES as-

Hands grip ropes as the coffin is lowered into the HOLE-

Reverend Cutlip speaks a eulogy-

Slick tries to keep it together-

Scratch and Lonnie watch the ceremony from a tree branch-

Ty looks at his watch, slips away from the funeral party.  
Delilah notices, frowns. Reverend Cutlip takes note as well-

A shovel digs into piled dirt-

Dirt is tossed down upon us and the screen goes BLACK.

46     **EXT. RAILROAD STATION - MORNING**

46

Ty waits for a train, still in his mourning suit. We TIGHTEN  
on his face- tense, preoccupied with his schemes to save the  
club-

**POSSUM**

Hear tell Miss Bertha Mae passed.

Ty whirls around-- somehow he didn't see Possum, sitting on a  
bench behind him, guitar in his lap.

**TY**

That's right.

**POSSUM**

She lived it how she sang it.

Ty tries to ignore him, looks down the rails-

**POSSUM**

Waitin for somebody.

Ty is silent.

**POSSUM**

Aint nobody on that train gonna  
change your luck, Tyrone. Gonna  
have to save your own self.

69.



**TY**

(annoyed) What you know about anything?

**POSSUM**

Oh, nothin much.

Ty steps away. Possum speaks quietly-

**POSSUM**

But I know you from way back.

Possum starts PLAYING, a dark, moody, slide-guitar blues.

Ty looks toward Possum, not happy he's there, then looks away. The MUSIC gets LOUDER, FASTER, Possum MOANING and WHOOPING, stomping his foot-

We TIGHTEN on Ty's face, tighter, tighter, then DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. BAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

47

47

We're in a BAR ROOM- smoke, heat, packed bodies- Possum's SONG grows more intense as we TRACK IN on GUITAR MAN- young, with slick hair a moustache and tons of attitude. He sneers, flicks his cigarette almost straight at us.

We TRACK IN on YOUNG TYRONE, also swearing, stepping away from his piano-

Guitar Man hands his guitar to one of the eager MEN standing close, hoping for a fight-

A PRETTY GIRL stands to one side, looking scared and excited, covering her mouth with her hands-

Young Tyrone steps in to meet him, the CROWD around almost pushing them together-

Guitar Man pulls out a KNIFE! Young Tyrone grabs for it and they grapple, face to face, struggling in a terrible dance-

A TRAIN WHISTLE breaks the spell!

**EXT. TRAIN YARD - MORNING - PRESENT**

48

48

Possum stops playing and cocks his head to listen-

The WHISTLE again as the TRAIN APPROACHES.

Ty takes a deep breath, hoping-

70.

49 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD/2ND COTTON FIELD - DAY

49

Mourners are walking back down the country road where we saw the coffin carried.

Reverend Cutlip sidles up to Delilah-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

A mournful end for a wayward sinner.

**DELILAH**

She always seemed at peace with herself.

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

The company she kept, the life she led-

**DELILAH**

I never knew Bertha Mae to do hurt to a living soul.

The Reverend is not too pleased with Delilah's forgiving attitude-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

We're all hoping to see you get over and accept the Lord tonight, Delilah.

**DELILAH**

I'm hoping so too.

Cutlip nods toward the FIELD as they pass the PRISON LABOR GANG, picking cotton under guard-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

You been lingering at the threshold long enough, Sister. Time to step ahead.

Delilah tries not to show how shaken she is by this challenge. She passes out of frame and we see China Doll

bringing up the rear of the funeral party, lost in thought.  
She looks over into the cotton field-

**POV - SONNY, PRISON LABOR GANG**

Sonny bends his back with the other laborers, picking and sweating-

71.

**CHINA DOLL**

China Doll pauses, frowns as she sees it is Sonny working, a  
DEPUTY strolling past him, shotgun in hand. Sonny sees her,  
lowers his head in shame-

**50 EXT. TRAIN STATION - LATE MORNING**  
**50**

The TRAIN has just pulled into the station. A pair of  
PULLMAN PORTERS step out--

But nobody else.

Ty feels his heart sink. Shack Thomas comes up behind him,  
carrying an overnight bag-

**SHACK THOMAS**

Tyrone- got somebody gettin off  
here?

**TY**

Supposed to be.

He halts by Ty for a moment, watching. Nobody else is  
stepping out-

**SHACK THOMAS**

What's the party's name?

**TY**

Sam- Guitar Sam-- don't know his  
birth name-

**SHACK THOMAS**

(impressed) He's comin here?

He calls to the porters further up the platform-

**SHACK THOMAS**

Yo, Nat! Guitar Sam get on this train?

**NAT**

Naw, man. He's in the hospital back in Little Rock.

**TY**

Hospital?

72.

**NAT**

You know music folks- whatever he was doin, he must have done too much of it.

The porters LAUGH. Shack, realizing this must be a setback for Ty, pats his shoulder before he steps onto the train-

**SHACK THOMAS**

Well, brother- maybe he be in tomorrow.

We FOLLOW Ty away from the train as Nat calls 'All aboard!' and the engine gathers power.

Possum sits listening to the single SLIDE NOTES he plays, as if tuning his guitar-

**POSSUM**

Somebody didn't show up.

**TY**

(grim) Wish they'd made you dumb instead of blind.

We HOLD on Possum, cackling darkly, as Ty walks away. The train WHISTLE BLOWS-

**51 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - DAY**

**51**

A torn and crumpled Guitar Sam POSTER lays on the bar counter.

FINGERS move on the keyboard.

Ty sits drinking, brooding, PLAYING and SINGING softly at the piano. Maceo is at the bar-

**TY**

Well I had my fun if I  
Don't get well no more  
Well I had my fun if I  
Don't get well no more  
My head is spinnin  
And I'm goin down slow-

**MACEO**

Man don't take care of hisself- out  
drinkin and jazzin the women every  
night-

73.

**TY**

Don't make any difference now.

**MACEO**

Got so bad, I heard there was some  
ole boy goes around pretendin to be  
Guitar Sam, fill out the gigs he  
misses. Does pretty well for  
hissself, what I hear-

Ty pauses on the keyboard-

**TY**

Somebody we could find?

**MACEO**

(shrugs) Hell, I don't know. Just  
a story I heard.

They both go back to brooding. Ty takes a drink. He stares  
at the keyboard-

**TY**

There must have been a first one.

**MACEO**

First what?

**TY**

Back slavery days, they had the  
ones that worked in the big house.  
Might not of had shoes always, but  
their pants didn't have no holes  
and they didn't pick no cotton.

**MACEO**

House niggers.

**TY**

That's how they called em. They must of had all their African kinda instruments- drums, shakers, some kind of banjo thing- but the piano-

**MACEO**

Didn't bring no piano over on them ships from Africa.

74.

**TY**

The piano was just sittin there in the white folks' big room, all polished up-- and I figure this one boy, he goes past fifteen, twenty times a day, running the corner of his eye over it. And he's there when they play, the masters, doin all their minuets and whatever-

Ty PLAYS something like a MINUET-

**TY**

-him standing there with a tray of white people food pretendin not to have a thought in his head, might be only some dust hangin in the air for all they know- but he's watchin the fingers, see, watchin them keys work. This old boy, the first one, he can play alla them Africa kinda instruments, he can play mud if you give him the key and the tempo, he's got music in his head, in his heart, in every damn piece of him there's music.

**MACEO**

Down to the bones--

**TY**

And one day the masters is away, huntin foxes or some rich white people thing they get up to, and he's alone in the room with that piano and he comes over and sits

down on the bench-

**MACEO**

Watch out now-

**TY**

-and he spreads his fingers out the way he seen the minuet player do- and he-

Ty hits a MINOR CHORD, lets it decay-

**TY**

And he thinks- `Lord help me, I could do some damage with this.'

75.

A silence. Maceo is moved by the scene-

**MACEO**

Would have liked to been there. I mean to hear the cat play, not none of the rest of it.

Ty gets up and crosses the room with his drink in his hand, distraught. This is the end for Ty, no strategies left, nothing but the bitter taste of total defeat-

**TY**

Mace, Imonna lose my club.

**MACEO**

Old Man Toussaint finds out you stole his liquor, you like to lose more than that-

**TY**

I got no more cards to play-

**MACEO**

Maybe if you was to go down, see Lucky Hardaway in person-

**TY**

(angry) I aint kissin up to no cokey-nose, conk-headed-

WHAP! He kicks Sonny's guitar case, left sticking out under a table, and sends it spinning across the floor till it CRASHES into the bar and flips open. Ty and Maceo stare at

the contents-

**TY**

What the hell that sposed to be?

Maceo pulls out a home-built SOLID BODY GUITAR, a painted white rectangle with a complicated PICKUP jury-rigged over the strings and yards of ELECTRICAL CORD hanging off it-

**MACEO**

Some kind of guitar.

**TY**

A guitar has got a hole in it,  
that's where the sound comes from.  
That boy must be bout three bricks  
shy of a load upstairs.

China Doll rushes in, upset-

76.

**CHINA DOLL**

They gone and arrest him!

**TY**

Arrested who?

**CHINA DOLL**

Sonny. The high Sheriff arrested  
him and sold him over to Judge  
Gatlin.

**TY**

Who's Sonny?

**CHINA DOLL**

Sonny that was here yesterday  
morning.

**TY**

Sonny that got a screw loose is why  
they arrested him. Maceo, make a  
noise on that-

Maceo plucks a string. Not much of a sound-

**MACEO**

It's electric-

**TY**



I plug a chunk of stove wood into  
the wall I get more music out of it  
than that mess gonna make.

**MACEO**

Naw, man, it don't work unless it's  
hooked up to the juice, see? You  
got the juice, you don't need the  
hollow inside the box, the music  
just runs straight from the strings  
through this wire and comes out-

He dumps the sack Sonny brought out and outs falls a mass of  
tubes and wires, also home-modified-

**MACEO**

-your amplifier. Which is what  
this thing must be.

**CHINA DOLL**

Sonny said he fix radios in the  
Army.

77.

**TY**

Sonny didn't do nothin but feed  
bedbugs in anybody's Army, and some  
of em crawled in his head.  
Surprised if that boy got the wit  
to pick cotton. Judge Gatlin  
bought himself a droolin idiot.  
What you want to amplify a damn  
guitar for anyway?

**CHINA DOLL**

Daddy-

**TY**

Less you gonna sit over on your  
chair and play them little Charley  
Christian kind of riffs-

**MACEO**

A sideman-

**TY**

Sit over there and be all clean and  
polite. Guitar hasn't been up  
front since them old piss and moan  
blues shouters, sit their blind

asses on the corner hollerin for  
pennies-

**MACEO**

Old time music-

**CHINA DOLL**

Daddy, Sonny didn't do nothin to be  
arrested for! He was just lookin  
for work.

**MACEO**

They hung colored boys for less  
than that, darlin. Least on the  
work gang they feed em, keep their  
strength up.

**CHINA DOLL**

But he doesn't belong there!

Maceo turns the guitar over in his hands-

**MACEO**

You know, Guitar Sam plays him an  
electric, but I don't think it's  
this no-hole kind of deal.

78.

**TY**

I hope he plugs it in the wrong  
socket some night, lectrocutes his  
sorry no-show ass!

Ty has a thought. He looks over at the guitar in Maceo's  
hands-

**TY**

(thinking out loud) Now if he did  
show up here-- and our power was to  
go out again while he was playing-

**MACEO (O.S.)**

I think I fixed it good this time,  
Ty.

Ty smiles-

**TY**

So he come out and plugs his ax in-

**MACEO**

He come out lookin good, from what I hear. All kind of spangly pants and jacket, got his name spelled out on the back-

**TY**

Clothes, right-

**MACEO**

Hair all slick and shiny, flash some gold teeth at them gals, got his sax man behind him, maybe a piano, harmonica, drums-

**TY**

You remember that night the lights went out in the Esquire Club in Mobile?

**MACEO**

(smiles) And somebody took off with the gate? Stole the whole damn register off the counter-

**TY**

They didn't hold it against Reggie Porter, did they?

79.

**MACEO**

Naw- it was his place that got robbed.

**TY**

Didn't hold it against him, didn't expect no money back for the show-

**MACEO**

They all too busy diving on the pot of that tonk game got interrupted-

**TY**

And nobody suspected it might be Reggie Porter hisself that pulled them lights, did they?

Maceo begins to see where Ty is leading-

**MACEO**

Aw, no, Ty, we can't-

Ty claps his hands together, jumps up and heads for the door-

**TY**

China Doll, you mind the place  
while we're gone! (to Maceo) Come  
on, man, we got work to do.

**CHINA DOLL**

Where you going, Daddy?

**TY**

I promise the people Guitar Sam,  
they gonna get Guitar Sam!

**52 INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**52**

We start on a portrait of Governor Big Jim Folsom on the  
wall, then TILT DOWN to Sheriff Pugh, feet up on the desk, a  
table-top FAN pointed at him, looking up at Ty-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Why you interested in this boy?

**TY**

Got a job for him.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Must be doin pretty good for  
yourself out there, Tyrone, you  
hirin new people on.

**80.**

**TY**

Passing well, yeah-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

But this boy-

**TY**

Name is Sonny-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

He's payin off his debt to society  
right now, and if I was to pull him  
out of the field it would cost the  
county-

**TY**

Judge Gatlin payin three a day for prison labor.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You gonna pay me four for the duration of his sentence?

**TY**

Which might be- ?

**SHERIFF PUGH**

-as long as I care to make it.

**TY**

Well, I was counting on more of a one-time deal- if I could just rent him out for the weekend-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Fifty dollars.

Ty looks stricken-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

It's not just the money. There's legalistic principles involved here. Public safety issues-

**TY**

I pay you Sunday morning?

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You pay me now or you forget about it.

**TY**

I don't have it now.

81.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You think you too smart for the rest of us, don't you, Tyrone? Think you can go it by yourself.

He puts his feet down and sits forward, drilling Ty with his eyes-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You'd rather eat roofin nails than come to me for a favor-

**TY**

It's not a favor if I got to pay-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Oh, you gonna pay all right. You don't hand me that money Sunday mornin, you got yourself a new partner. Same deal as I got with Toussaint. How'd that be?

Ty considers. He doesn't have any options-

**TY**

(deadpan) You'll get the fifty.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

(smiles) And that wife of yours-

**TY**

(wary) Delilah-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Them fried chicken sandwiches- if I was to come by, now and then, check up on my interests-

**TY**

She be happy to fix you whatever you want.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

My wife's cookin would gag a maggot.

**TY**

Different people got different kinds of talents.

Sheriff Pugh heaves himself to his feet-

82.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Lurleen aint discovered what hers is yet. Let's go fetch that boy.

53 EXT. 2ND COTTON FIELD - DAY - SHOTGUN  
A SHOTGUN in a deputy's arms-

53

**POV - PICKERS**

Faces dripping sweat, prison gang pickers stoop to their work-

**TY**

Ty stands by his beat-up old Ford at the side of the road, watching, remembering.

A few of the PRISON LABORERS look up, curious, as Sonny is led over-

**DEPUTY**

This the one?

Ty nods, looks to Sonny-

**TY**

You got any ideas about turning rabbit on me, you best get rid of em now.

**SONNY**

You payin my way out?

**TY**

Till Monday.

**SONNY**

How come?

They get INTO THE CAR-

**TY**

You like draggin that cotton sack?

**SONNY**

No.

**TY**

Then don't ask questions.

83.

Ty pulls away, leaving the less fortunate stooped in the field-

MUSIC plays on the RADIO as Nadine masterfully works her SEWING MACHINE and Maceo stands by uneasily. He holds up the denim jacket Sonny left at the club-

**MACEO**

This size, right, but it's got to shine.

**NADINE**

And when you need this?

**MACEO**

Tonight.

**NADINE**

(considers) That's a tall order.

**MACEO**

It's got to happen.

**NADINE**

(fishing) You know, I do my best work, my fastest work, when I'm happy.

**MACEO**

Yeah, I spose you do-

Nadine looks up at him from the sewing machine-

**NADINE**

You gone make me happy, baby?

Maceo nervously makes for the door-

**MACEO**

Uhm- you come by the club tonight, we havin a special show. Tell em at the door you my guest-

**NADINE**

Food aint the only thing a woman needs three times a day.

**MACEO**

(mutters) Wouldn't hurt you to skip a few meals.



**NADINE**

What's that, baby?

Maceo turns at the open door-

**MACEO**

Boy's gonna need time to try that  
jacket on- see how it feels.  
Later, Nadine-

He is gone-

**55 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - DAY**

**55**

Ty and China Doll stand looking at Sonny as he sits on a bar stool-

**TY**

You got to do somethin with this  
boy's head, darlin. They might not  
know what the real Sam look like,  
but it aint this.

**CHINA DOLL**

I can try.

China Doll looks through the beauty products she's piled up nearby-

**SONNY**

And what exactly I'm supposed to  
do?

**TY**

You gone stand up there with that  
contraption you got an play Guitar  
Sam numbers.

**SONNY**

Hell, I do that with my eyes  
closed.

**TY**

We could get the audience to close  
theirs we be better off.

**MACEO (O.S.)**

Ty-

Maceo pops his head in the front door-

**85.**

**MACEO**

I tracked Mr. Trenier down-

**TY**

Let's hit it.

Ty leaves to join Maceo-

**CHINA DOLL**

Bye, Daddy.

China Doll is a little nervous to be left alone with Sonny. She puts her comb in her hand and walks around Sonny, examining his hair while he examines her face-

**SONNY**

You know what you're doing?

**CHINA DOLL**

I fix Mama's hair all the time.

**SONNY**

But you aint been to that school yet.

**CHINA DOLL**

You go to school to learn your guitar?

**SONNY**

(laughs) No.

China Doll steps behind the bar-

**CHINA DOLL**

I might pick up some new things at beauty school but mostly it's for my certificate, and that is `a ticket to adventure'- that's what it says in the brochure. People lookin for beauty all over the world.

Sonny sees the LOOSE WIRES that come through the wall behind the bar. China Doll searches around-

**SONNY**

You want to watch out for them wires sticking down- don't look safe.

**CHINA DOLL**

(shrugs) Yeah- power's always going out, people getting shocks and whatnot-

**SONNY**

Somebody ought to fix it.

She searches under the counter for something-

**CHINA DOLL**

`A career in beauty is like money in the bank.' Says that in the brochure too. Plus it isn't physically taxin.

**SONNY**

Yeah, I can't see no pretty thing like you behind a plow.

**CHINA DOLL**

I had the rheumatic fever when I was little, left me with a weak heart.

**SONNY**

Oh. Mine been actin funny too- since I laid eyes on you.

She acknowledges his flirting with a little smile and comes up with a MASON JAR full of clear LIQUID-

**SONNY**

What's that?

**CHINA DOLL**

Just some ole moonshine they keep around.

China Doll crosses back to Sonny-

**SONNY**

(concerned) What you gonna do with it?

**CHINA DOLL**

They always joke about how this stuff'll straighten your hair right

out-

She twists the lid off, sniffs the liquid, reacts to its strength-

87.

**CHINA DOLL**

Imonna just make yours relax a little.

**56 INT. PARLOR**

**56**

TIME TRENIER, an older musician with a permanently stoic expression, sits watching his pupil, a YOUNG BOY, torture the SCALES with a CORNET. He glances up at Ty and Maceo, trying not to plug their ears as the boy continues to PLAY-

**MACEO**

Mr. Time Trenier- that's a name to be reckoned with.

Time doesn't seem to react to the flattery-

**MACEO**

Story goes that you used to play with Buddy Bolden.

**TIME**

Played with most all of em down there.

**MACEO**

And King Oliver-

**TIME**

One band falls apart you find yourself another one. Never any shortage of bands, down New Awlins.

**TY**

I didn't know you was givin lessons.

**TIME**

Pays the rent. Almost.

**TY**

You interested in a playin job?

**TIME**

Your place?

**MACEO**

(tentative) It's uhm- backin up a man on the electric guitar?

88.

**TIME**

(shrugs) If you can pay, I can play.

**TY**

Got to dress sharp.

No need to say this to Time Trenier. You could cut yourself on the creases on his pants-

**MACEO**

It aint like a all-night thing- you just start out and there's gonna be a accident-

Ty shoots Maceo a look-

**TIME**

Accident.

**TY**

Sudden loss of power. Lights out.

**TIME**

(shrugs again) It's your gig, man.

**TY**

Eight o'clock. This aint colored people time and it sure aint New Awlins time. I mean eight o'clock on the money.

**TIME**

If you got the green I'm on the scene.

**TY**

That's a deal then.

**MACEO**

You know any drummers?

**TIME**

(nods) I'll bring you one.

**TY**

Nothin fancy, he just got to keep  
time-

**TIME**

Time is my name.

Ty and Maceo wince as the kid hits a particularly SOUR NOTE-

89.

57 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, 2ND COTTON FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON**

57

The free pickers are lined up at the side of the road-

**CLOSER**

A white CLERK sits behind a wooden table in front of the  
transport truck and pulls cash from a METAL BOX, consulting a  
thick LEDGER in front of him as he pays the pickers off.  
Sheriff Pugh observes, his patrol car parked nearby.

Ham has come to the head of the line, Junebug behind him-

**CLERK**

Twenny-four, twenny-five, twenny-  
six, twenny-seven, twenny-eight.  
Make your mark here-

**HAM**

(softly) Owe me thirty.

**CLERK**

Book says twenny-eight.

**HAM**

Dollar fifty every hundred pound,  
and I picked-

**CLERK**

Two dollars deducted for stones.

**HAM**

I didn't put no stones in the sack.

**CLERK**

We mill the cotton, there's always  
stones.

**HAM**

But there wasn't none in my sack-

**CLERK**

We take off two dollars a week,  
always have. Aint that right,  
Junebug?

Junebug knows it's useless to complain-

**JUNEBUG**

Yes suh. Been that way my whole  
life.

90.

Ham is furious but has nowhere to go with it-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

You gonna take your pay, son, or  
give it up to charity?

Ham swipes his pay off the table, stalks away. Sheriff Pugh  
glares after him.

We FOLLOW Ham as he crosses to the rear of the truck. Dex  
sits on the tailgate, grinning at him-

**DEX**

Wouldn't let nobody mess with my  
money like that.

**HAM**

They took the same two dollars off  
yours.

**DEX**

Yeah, and you could pave a highway  
with the rocks I threw in that  
mess.

He catches the eye of Lucille, standing nearby-

**DEX**

You country nigos let the crackers  
run you like dogs-

SNATCH! Ham grabs Dex by the shirt front and yanks him  
close, hissing in fury-

**HAM**

That sheriff wasn't here I'd snap  
your neck, boy.

**SHERIFF PUGH (O.S.)**

Don't let me stop you.

Ham turns to see Sheriff Pugh standing behind him, a wry  
smile on his face-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

But first you gonna sign that  
ledger like you sposed to. Don't  
want nobody cryin they didn't get  
their due.

91.

**58 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - DAY**

58

Ty is repairing the little STAGE with hammer and nails-

**SONNY (O.S.)**

Mr. Purvis?

**TY**

(doesn't look up) People call me  
Ty or they call me Pinetop. Mr.  
Pinetop to you.

**SONNY (O.S.)**

I just wanted to tell you- I  
preciate the opportunity.

Ty looks up to see Sonny with his hair pressed under a tight  
cap made from an old STOCKING-

**TY**

Right.

**SONNY**

I know ever one of Guitar Sam's  
songs- know the chords, know the  
words-

**TY**

That's fine.

Sonny begins to stroll around the edge of the club, looking  
at PHOTOS and SHOWBILLS on the walls-



**SONNY**

China Doll said how you was famous  
once.

Ty is pleased at his step-daughter's bragging, but doesn't  
show it-

**TY**

I was known, but I was never what  
you call famous.

**SONNY**

How'd you get your start?

Ty sighs, sits back from his work-

92.

**TY**

Down in Mobile there was an old  
cathouse professor name of Joe  
Dudlow, had had a stroke on one  
side, curled him all up- but he  
kept on pluggin. I used to come  
out and play his left hand for him.

**SONNY**

How old you were?

**TY**

(shrugs) Thirteen, fourteen. This  
one night it was goin hot and heavy  
and Joe just passed, right there at  
the piano, in the middle of Black  
Bottom Stomp. They propped him up  
at the bar, stuck a drink in his  
hand, and told me to keep poundin  
them ivories. (shakes his head)  
There was a meanness hanging over  
them juke joints, there was murder  
in the air. You stopped playin for  
a minute, it come down like a flock  
of crows.

Sonny stops by a poster for the `REGINALD ERSKINE BAND  
featuring Tyrone "Pinetop" Purvis'-

**SONNY**

This is you-

**TY**

Big band days, on the road. If a railroad train run through it, we played it.

**SONNY**

(reading) `Reginald Erskine'.  
Don't believe I ever heard of him-

**TY**

Big tall light-skin fella out of Carolina, said he's part Cherokee. Couldn't play nothin, but he waved his little stick and had this long greasy hair he throw around like Cab Calloway.

**SONNY**

And you were the piano man.

93.

**TY**

Piano man, arranger, you name it.

**SONNY**

That must of been somethin, see the country first class.

**TY**

I don't know about first class, but we seen the country.

**SONNY**

How come you stopped?

**TY**

(shrugs) Got tired of carrying another man's water. Didn't want to die in no colored hotel some night in Who-Knows-Where Arkansas.

He bangs the last nail in-

**TY**

Met Delilah and wanted something of my own.

**SONNY**

Well you don't have nothing to worry about, Mr. Pinetop. I won't let you down tonight.

Ty looks at Sonny, considers telling him what the plan is-

**TY**

No- I don't sponse you will.

Ty gets up and goes into the back.

Sonny crosses to the tangle of wires coming out of the wall behind the counter and snaking off in every direction. He grabs hold of one, thinking-

**59 INT. PURVIS HOUSE - KITCHEN**

**59**

Delilah is in her kitchen, HUMMING a GOSPEL SONG to herself, apron on as she begins to make a pie. She pulls a METAL FLOUR CANNISTER down from the shelf, flips the lid off- about half full.

She starts to scoop flour out from it and something falls out- a small CLOTH PURSE. She picks it up to put it aside, then frowns at the way it feels. She shakes flour off, unzips it-

**94.**

Nothing inside.

**60 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - BACK ROOM**

**60**

Maceo loads bottles of beer into the ICEBOX, wincing as the sounds of a SCREAMING ARGUMENT blast in from the bar-

**DELILAH (O.S.)**

How could you do that?

**TY (O.S.)**

Imonna put that back and double-

**DELILAH (O.S.)**

You don't go gamblin with my baby's money!

**TY (O.S.)**

I had to send off the advance pay or the man don't come and play-

**DELILAH (O.S.)**

I don't care what you took it for, I saved that money up for China Doll-

Delilah bursts through the swinging door into the back room, pursued by Ty, trying to explain-

**DELILAH**

-and you got no business puttin your fingers on it!

**TY**

China Doll don't need any school, baby, she could walk into one of them shops right this minute and get a job!

**DELILAH**

There's got to be some line you won't cross, some thing you won't do-

**TY**

The world starts throwin me breaks, woman, maybe I'll catch religion and walk the straight and narrow like them Bible thumpers you sit up with, but till that day, I-

95.

**DELILAH**

Reverend Cutlip is right about you!

WHAM! Delilah slams the back door as she storms out. Ty turns and CRACK! kicks an empty crate halfway across the floor before stomping out to the bar. Maceo opens a beer with the church-key hanging from the icebox handle, takes a gulp and sits to ponder this new development-

**61 INT. BEDROOM - OPAL - EARLY EVENING**

**61**

We hear the revival meeting CHOIR SINGING an upbeat number as Opal, dressed for Saturday night, checks herself out in a spotted, cracked MIRROR and works on her make-up-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

You got to choose  
Got to choose tween the fire and  
the Light

**62 EXT. TOWN - LUTHER - EARLY EVENING**

**62**

MUSIC CONTINUES. Luther struts around a corner in the black section of town, dressed up to party. Behind him we see a

half-dozen other YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN, all decked out, moving toward the railroad tracks-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

You got to choose  
Got to choose tween the fire and  
the Light  
All you sinners  
Got to choose tween the fire and  
the Light

**63 INT. ARMY BARRACKS - EARLY EVENING 63**

MUSIC CONTINUES. A trio of BLACK PRIVATES share a mirror, spiffing up their uniforms to go out on leave-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

No earthly love  
Is gonna make it right!  
You got to choose-

96.

**64 INT. WORKERS HOUSING - EARLY EVENING 64**

MUSIC CONTINUES. Dex, dressed to go out, pulls a SHOEBOX out from under the cot he sits on. He lifts the lid to reveal an old .38 PISTOL-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

Got to choose tween the world and  
the Lord  
You got to choose  
Got to choose tween the world and  
the Lord

**65 EXT. WORKERS HOUSING - EARLY EVENING 65**

MUSIC CONTINUES. We TRACK toward the barracks-like housing for itinerant workers as PICKERS come out, cleaned up and ready to celebrate-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

All you sinners  
Got to choose tween the world and  
the Lord

Ham walks alone. We see him stuff his ROLL of single dollar BILLS into one pocket, tuck a FOLDING KNIFE into the other. He passes a telephone pole and we HOLD on the Guitar Sam POSTER tacked up on it-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

Train is leavin  
Better jump on board!

**66 EXT. REVIVAL TENT - EVENING**

**66**

Delilah arrives at the revival tent, the CHOIR already  
**SINGING-**

**CHOIR**

You got to kneel  
Got to kneel for the Savior and  
pray  
You got to kneel  
Got to kneel for the Savior and  
pray

**97.**

**67 EXT. HONEYDRIPPER - EVENING**

**67**

MUSIC CONTINUES. The BLUE LIGHTS of the SIGN come on.  
PEOPLE fill the yard in front, heading into the Honeydripper.  
Metalmouth collects COVER CHARGE at the door, MONEY passing  
hands-

**CHOIR (V.O.)**

All you sinners  
Got to kneel for the Savior and  
pray  
Aint no hidin  
From the Judgement Day!

**68 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - EVENING**

**68**

Maybe fifty people are in the club already, mostly LOCALS and  
HARVEST HANDS, with more arriving all the time-

Ty stands watching the crowd, tense, not at all confident  
that any of his scheme is going to work-

A group of twenty of the black SOLDIERS from the base step in-

Maceo comes over and lays a hand on his shoulder-

**MACEO**

Natives gettin restless.

**TY**

How we doing?

**MACEO**

We gonna be full up. But the food-  
Delilah comin in?

Ty's expression gives him the answer-

**TY**

What if I lost her?

**MACEO**

She won't let you down, Ty-

**TY**

This aint gonna work, is it?

**MACEO**

We just got to play it out and see-

98.

**DEX**

(calling) Guitar Sam!

They look out at the growing crowd. Ty is grim-

**TY**

See if you can push another round  
of drinks while I stall em.

**MACEO**

Then you gonna bring him out?

Dex is joined by several OTHERS in the club, calling out-

**DEX AND OTHERS**

Sam! We come to hear the guitar  
man play! Guitar Sam!

**TY**

You be on those wires. Give him  
three bars and then you pull it.

**MACEO**

I got a baseball bat under the  
counter, but you out here all alone-

**TY**

Just get the liquor movin, Mace,  
and keep that money where you can  
run with it.

Reverend Cutlip holds forth under the LANTERN LIGHT-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

The Lord don't want nobody to sit  
back suffering! He wants you to  
stand up! He wants you to rise up!  
He wants you to step forward! He  
wants you rush down into the  
merciful arms of His eternal  
salvation!

Many of the congregation are up on their feet, clapping and  
testifying-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

Is there anyone out here tonight  
gonna answer His call? Is there  
anyone out here tonight gonna come  
forward and be saved?

99.

**DELILAH**

Delilah is standing, tears running down her cheeks, filled  
with the emotion of the moment-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

The fire is heatin up, Brothers and  
Sisters, and Judgement Day is nigh!  
Aint no time to hesitate, you got  
to come on down and take Him into  
your heart!

Delilah starts to walk down the aisle-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

That's right- come on down! They  
no turning back now- feel the  
Lord's hand at your back- got to  
leave all them sinners behind!

Delilah stops in the middle of the aisle, trembling, unsure-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

(sees her) You got a voice in your  
heart, Sister- that's the Lord



talking! You hear him?

Delilah starts to nod her head, weeping-

**REVEREND CUTLIP**

That voice telling you where you  
need to be right now! You just got  
to move your feet and get there!

**70 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - BACK ROOM - NIGHT**

**70**

China Doll fusses with Sonny's hair after he hangs his  
guitar, dangling with electrical hookups, over his head-

**CHINA DOLL**

You look good.

Ty steps back in with them, wiping sweat from his forehead  
with a handkerchief. He looks Sonny over- his hair slick  
and shiny, the outfit Nadine sewed up for him tight and  
sparkling-

**TY**

(impressed) Damn-

**100.**

**CHINA DOLL**

He looks good, doesn't he Daddy?

**TY**

Honey, I want you to get right by  
that front door and take over  
collectin the cover charge. And if  
anything should happen- like go  
wrong or something- you just step  
out and walk away from the club,  
hear?

**CHINA DOLL**

What's gonna go wrong?

**TY**

Oh- our Guitar Sam here gets them  
soldier boys jumping it could get a  
little rough- just be on your toes,  
that's all.

**CHINA DOLL**

Okay.

She starts away-

**TY**

China Doll-

**CHINA DOLL**

Yeah?

**TY**

You know there aint a thing in this world I wouldn't do for you. Even if I mess up sometimes, you know that, right?

China Doll looks at him, not sure what brought this on, but pleased to hear it. The CALLS for Guitar Sam grow LOUDER from the floor-

**CHINA DOLL**

I know that, Daddy.

**TY**

You go on, now.

China Doll exits and Ty looks back to Sonny-

**TY**

Well, you look like something might of come outa New Orleans-

101.

**SONNY**

I forget to tell you- I fixed your hook-up.

**TY**

My what?

**SONNY**

Where the electricity comes in? It was all-

**MACEO (O.S.)**

Ty!

They turn to see Maceo stepping in, concerned-

**MACEO**

We got a situation out there-

**TY**

You don't think I know that?

**MACEO**

Got the law in the house.

71 **INT. HONEYDRIPPER - BARROOM**

71

Sheriff Pugh stands near the piano, putting a considerable damper on the mood in the room. Ty hurries out to him, with a panic-stricken smile on his face-

**TY**

Didn't think we'd be seeing you so soon!

**SHERIFF PUGH**

(looking around) Got a nice crowd in here tonight, Tyrone. See them army uniforms-

**TY**

Yeah, well we got ourselves this special attraction, see, and-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Chicken.

**TY**

Huh?

102.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Them ribs outside smell real good, but I got my heart set on some of your Delilah's fried chicken.

**TY**

Right-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

She made it last Saturday at the mayor's but ole Clayford Gentry was up from Eufala and he got the drumsticks.

Sheriff Pugh is distracted for a moment as Opal and the girls from the store step in, dressed to the nines, drinking up the eyeball action from the pickers and soldiers-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

I'm partial to dark meat.

**TY**

See, the thing is-

**SHERIFF PUGH**

She is back there cookin, aint she?  
Our agreement was-

**TY**

The situation we got, Sheriff, what  
with this special guest come up  
from Louisiana- what it means is-  
uhm-

Ty has nothing, the crowd is starting to CHANT for Guitar Sam  
again. He wipes his forehead-

**TY**

Maybe if you were to come back in-

**DELILAH**

Regular or spicy?

Delilah is there, smiling at Pugh, pulling her coat off-

**DELILAH**

They both take the same time to fix  
up, I just got to know which.

Ty and Delilah exchange a long look-

103.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Have to make mine regular. I like  
the spicy fine but it always come  
back to nip me later.

She shoots a look to Ty-

**DELILAH**

It's important not to bite off more  
than you can chew. (to Pugh) Yall  
just make yourself at home.

She kisses Ty on the cheek and heads for the kitchen-

**DELILAH**

Good luck tonight, baby.

**SHERIFF PUGH**

Slap some maynaise on it!

Ty smiles, his nerves all gone now-

**TY**

(pointing) Might want to wait over  
there, Sheriff. Don't want to  
scare off the customers-

A CHEER from the crowd. Sonny has wandered uncertainly out  
onto the stage!

**TY**

Oh Lord-

Ty runs up to his microphone, shoots a look to the bar-

Maceo is pouring a scotch with one hand, the other wrapped  
around the wires coming out of the wall. He nods to Ty-

Sonny starts to hook his guitar up with a thick COIL OF WIRE,  
then into the dented AMP sitting on a wooden chair beside him  
and pointed out at the crowd. Metalmouth Sims looks on  
uncomfortably. Ty puts on his biggest grin, easing behind  
the keyboard-

**TY**

So here's what you all been waitin  
for, people, the noted performer  
and recordin star-

104.

**ENTRANCE - TIME AND YOUNG HENRY**

Time Trenier strolls in with his sax still in its case, hat  
on his head, exuding his no-sweat attitude. Beside him is  
YOUNG HENRY, a kid who can't be more than 14, wearing a  
fedora-

**TY (O.S.)**

-direct from New Orleans, Louisiana-

**STAGE**

**TY**

-Guitar Sam!!!!

A TERRIBLE SQUAWK emits from the amp as Sonny makes the connection-

Sheriff Pugh cover his ears-

The girls from the store cover their ears, making pained faces-

Sonny pulls his guitar away from the amp and the SQUAWK settles to a FUZZY BUZZ. Sonny frowns at the amp-

**SONNY**

Sorry, folks- must of got kicked on the train.

The audience is stone-faced. Could this really be the man?

Young Henry steps up and sits behind the DRUM KIT, pulling sticks from inside his shirt-

Ty closes his eyes, begins to shake his head in defeat-

China Doll looks worried, collecting another cover charge at the door-

Delilah steps out from the kitchen and looks to the stage, worried-

Sonny holds his arms out wide, shifting his body to get the BUZZ under control-

Dex leans to talk in Junebug's ear-

**DEX**

What's this fool playin at?

**105.**

Maceo isn't going to wait to find out. He grabs the wires with both hands, yanks- they hold firm! He looks to the stage, panicked-

-as Sonny brings his fingers to the strings and the amp BLASTS the room with a long, trip-hammering, spine-shivering, **ELECTRIC GUITAR INTRO!**

Ty stands at the piano with his mouth hanging open-

Sonny WHOOPS and leans into his microphone-

**SONNY**

Gonna hold my baby as tight as I  
can  
Tonight she'll know I'm a mighty  
man!  
Have you heard the news?  
There's good rockin tonight!

Sonny looks over to Ty, who catches himself and begins to play along. Young Henry is impassive as he plays a fast shuffle on the skins-

Ty looks over to Maceo, half-climbing the wall as he tries to pull the wires out. Maceo sees Ty, who waves him off-

**SONNY**

Have you heard the news?  
There's good rockin tonight!

Delilah smiles and presses her hands together, shooting a look upward-

**DELILAH**

Thank you, Jesus.

Time Trenier has his case open now, the gleaming instrument in one hand, squinting at the mouthpiece as he holds it up to the light with the other-

**SONNY**

Meet me at midnight behind the barn  
Don't you worry I'll do you no harm

The crowd is already CLAPPING and STOMPING in time with the song. Henry starts to hit the two and the four beat hard to keep time-

**SONNY**

Make sure to bring my rockin shoes  
Tonight I'm gonna rock away all of  
my blues!

106.

Time Trenier screws the mouthpiece on, puts his horn to his lips and BLOWS right on the beat to take the sax break, walking through the parting crowd to the bandstand!

Junebug grabs Opal's hand and they begin to DANCE a modified jitterbug, people spreading to give them room-

Sheriff Pugh, hands still over his ears, sits in a corner paying special attention to Opal's hip action-

As Time continues to blow, stepping up onto the stage, Sonny keeps urging Metalmouth Sims to come closer to his microphone with the harmonica. Sims is hesitant but Sonny keeps waving-closer, closer-

Metalmouth shoots a nervous look to Ty, who nods from the piano, so he butts his harp smack against the microphone, takes a deep breath and HONKS his soul out, grabbing the break from Time!

The audience goes wild, a half-dozen couples dancing now, others clapping and finger-popping and jumping to the beat where they stand. Sonny shakes out the long CORD attached to his guitar-

China Doll is trying to keep collecting from the new CUSTOMERS pressing in the door and dance at the same time, thrilled by the music. Lonnie and Scratch sneak in behind her as she turns toward the bandstand-

Metalmouth wraps up his break and Sonny takes over with the guitar again, making it WAIL as he hops off the stage, steps up on a chair, then onto the bar counter!

He walks the length of the bar, playing his ass off, hops down at the far end, grins at China Doll and heads out through the door, dragging extension cord behind! Lonnie and Scratch hurry to pull slack for him as he steps out into the **NIGHT-**

**72 EXT. ACE OF SPADES - NIGHT**

**72**

Ham and a few other pickers stand outside Toussaint's, beers in hand, staring across toward the Honeydripper as Sonny steps out PLAYING with a CROWD behind him-

**HAM**

What the hell is that?

Sonny steps out into the middle of the crossroads and plays, a CAR stopping short of running him over.

**107.**

He hops up on the hood and keeps playing, a TRUCK from the other direction stopping to blast him with its HEADLIGHTS.

Sonny indicates with his guitar neck to the CROWD emptying out of Toussaint's that he wants them to follow, then hops



down onto a big picker's back and is carried back in to the Honeydripper, still playing-

**HAM**

We got to check that out!

A couple dozen patrons move away with him. We HOLD on the doorway as OLD MAN TOUSSAINT comes out to look, puzzled and angry-

**73 INT. HONEYDRIPPER - NIGHT**

**73**

Time and Metalmouth SING into the same microphone as Sonny plays his way back up to the stage-

**TIME AND METALMOUTH**

Have you heard the news?  
There's good rockin tonight-  
Have you heard the news?  
There's good rockin tonight-

We FOLLOW as Maceo hustles back and forth, trying to keep up with orders for ribs, bring cold beers out from the icebox, etc. He suddenly stops in his tracks-

Nadine stands before him, looking fatally sexy in a SATIN DRESS she no doubt made herself.

**MACEO**

Oh my soul.

**NADINE**

Don't tire yourself out, Poppa.  
You an me got bidness together.

**MACEO**

I believe we do.

He hurries past with his arms full of beer, pivoting to check her out from another angle-

Dex sees across the room, frowns-

Ham is talking to Lucille at the bar, leaning in close to be heard over the music-

**108.**

**SONNY**

I heard the news-  
There's good rockin tonight!

Sonny finishes with a squawking chord and the joint goes wild-  
**CHEERING, WHISTLING, STOMPING!**

**SONNY**

Alla you men grab hold of a woman!  
You can't find a woman, just grab  
hold of yourselves- we gonna play  
this one slow and tight.

Sonny goes into the intro for Louis Jordan's Blue Light  
Boogie. Time lays down a steady rock beat with his sax and  
Ty joins in at the piano-

**SONNY**

They	did	the boogie real	slow
With	the	blue lights way	down low
They	did	the boogie real	slow
With	the	blue lights way	down low

Ty joins him-

**SONNY AND TY**

They did the boogie real slow  
With the blue lights way down low

Ty takes the verse-

**TY**

I went to a party  
With a bobby sox  
I started swingin  
All she would do was rock

As they join in the chorus, Ty sees-

Cool Breeze, strolling in, checking out the action with a  
proprietary air.

Ty looks to Maceo, getting back behind the bar. Maceo sees  
as well, tightening up-

Cool Breeze nods to Ty.

A slow, sexy SAX BREAK comes up and Ty leaves the piano to  
cross to the bar. When he gets there Maceo is already  
counting out a huge pile of BILLS-

109.

**MACEO**

Hundred forty-two, forty-three,  
forty-four, five, six, seven,  
eight, nine- hundred fifty. And  
they's another fifty in here-

Maceo thunks a heavy CLOTH SACK full of change onto the  
countertop-

**MACEO**

Lucky Hardaway don't mind some  
change, does he?

Cool Breeze doesn't even glance at the money, hard-eying Ty  
instead-

**COOL BREEZE**

What if Mr. Hardaway was to say let  
the chumps keep their change, he  
wants the club back one way or the  
other?

Maceo looks to Ty, who remains impassive, mind working-

**COOL BREEZE**

How'd that be?

**TY**

Well- he'd have to take it up with  
my bidness partner.

Ty shifts and we RACK FOCUS to see across the room to Sheriff  
Pugh, receiving his sack of chicken and white bread from  
Delilah. Ty smiles and waves-

Cool Breeze reconsiders his terms-

**COOL BREEZE**

That sheriff your partner?

**TY**

(sighs) Yeah, and he's twice as  
mean as he is ugly.

Cool Breeze grins, scoops up the bills on the counter-

**COOL BREEZE**

You must want this club awful bad,  
brother.

Cool Breeze hefts the sack of change, shoots a look to the  
stage and leans over to speak into Ty's ear-

**COOL BREEZE**

You maybe know this already, but  
that aint no Guitar Sam.

He steps away just as the song ends to APPLAUSE, Ty taking a deep sigh of relief. Sonny steps up to the microphone to introduce the next song-

**TOUSSAINT (O.S.)**

You is a lie!

A shocked silence.

The audience makes way for Old Man Toussaint to come tottering up to the foot of the stage. He points a bony finger at Sonny-

**TOUSSAINT**

You is a lie, boy! I known Sammy  
since he's drinkin mama's milk,  
hell, I known his Mama herself when  
she live up to Plaquemine- and you  
aint him!

The audience looks to Sonny for his defense-

Ty holds his breath. Maceo brings the baseball bat up from behind the bar.

Sonny just smiles-

**SONNY**

That's Creole Guitar Sam you talkin  
bout, Pops. I'm Delta Guitar Sam.

Toussaint ponders this a moment, then huffs-

**TOUSSAINT**

As long as we straight on that.

**JUNEBUG**

Get on outa there and let the man  
play!

A CHORUS of CRIES to the same effect, and Sonny crosses back to his microphone-

**SONNY**

Imonna play you one I come up with

today while I was havin my hair cut-

He starts into a bouncy INTRO that Metalmouth joins in with,  
then starts to SING as the crowd starts to dance and clap-

**111.**

**SONNY**

Oh China Doll  
Can't get you offa my mind!  
Oh China Doll  
I can't get you offa my mind!  
If you be my baby  
Gonna leave all them others behind!

The front row is all girls goggling at Sonny, instant groupies- but we RACK to China Doll, transfixed, as she is drawn toward the stage-

**SONNY**

Oh China Doll  
Think about you day and night!  
Oh China Doll  
I think about you day and night!  
Can't forget you baby  
Oh when you gonna treat me right?

Time Trenier steps in for a growling SAX BREAK-

**TY**

Ty looks around the crowded, rocking room-

**POV - SHERIFF PUGH**

The Sheriff makes his way through the crowd and out the door.  
The last person he passes turns toward Ty-

Possum?

But then DANCERS cross in front and he is gone.

**TY**

Ty frowns, troubled. Under the sax now we hear a dissonant SLIDE GUITAR, the haunting notes Possum was playing at the train station. Ty searches the crowd-

**POV**

The SLIDE GUITAR continues underneath as we PAN across the crowd dancing-

There's Possum again, at the bar, face turned toward Ty.

112.

**TY**

We TIGHTEN on TY. Why is he here?

**POV - POSSUM**

Possum turns his head slowly, fixes on something, and we PAN to see Dex and Ham standing toe-to-toe, snarling into each other's face.

We PUNCH IN tighter and tighter on the young men, body language telling us a fight is about to break out-

**ECU TY**

Ty desperately pushes his way across the crowded floor to reach them and the FLASHBACKS come again, the SAX MUSIC growing echoey and menacing-

**INT. BAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK**

74

74

The shaky perspective and over-saturated colors again, tight on the men struggling, the Girl cowering, then Young Tyrone twisting the Guitar Man's wrist and thrusting, again and again, hugging close to him, then pulled away and the-

-KNIFE falls to the floor, BLOODY, and the-

-Guitar Man falls to his hands and knees, his stomach a bloody mess, crawling on all fours and HOWLING and Young Tyrone watching in horror as he is held back by many arms and the Girl SCREAMING-

**INT. HONEYDRIPPER - NIGHT - (PRESENT)**

75

75

-which becomes Time BLOWING HIS SAX into the microphone-

-and Dex reaches for his pistol-

-and Ham reaches for his knife, but-

-a huge, strong hand clamps down on Dex's wrist-

-and another huge hand grabs Ham's wrist!

Ty is there, clamping onto them with a grip of iron.

**113.**

A lighter, bouncier ELECTRIC GUITAR RIFF has replaced the sax now. Ty looks deep into the eyes of the two surprised pickers-

**TY**

Yall in my house, here, gentlemen.  
Don't have no fightin, don't have  
no killin, don't have none of that  
dismal nonsense in my house.  
Understand? What's your name son?

Dex is shaken by the strength of the grip on his arm-

**DEX**

Dex- Dexter Moncrief.

**TY**

And you?

**HAM**

Hamilton Drinkwater.

**TY**

Well, gentlemen, this is the night  
there won't be no pitiful song  
written bout you two killin each  
other. Don't nothin rhyme with  
'Moncrief' anyhow.

Maceo is there now, holding a cardboard BOX in one hand and the BASEBALL BAT in the other-

**MACEO**

Got a problem here?

**TY**

These young men seem to brought  
something in for our collection.

**MACEO**

(to Dex) Yours first.

Ty gently takes the pistol from Dex, regards it grimly before laying it in the box. He turns his attention to Ham-

**TY**

Now yours.

He takes the knife from Ham, tosses it in the box-

**TY**

Yall still need to mess with each other, you go outside and do it.

**114.**

Ty lets go of their wrists-

**TY**

This world is full of people got no use for us, like to see us in the grave. We don't need to give em any help.

The two give each other a final dirty look and move away into opposite corners-

**STAGE**

Sonny keeps playing-

**SONNY**

Oh China Doll  
Got to let you into my heart!  
Oh China Doll  
Got to let you into my heart!  
I surrender darlin  
I loved you from the very start!

Ty rushes to the piano, joins in jamming with the other players-

**76 EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT**

**76**

Slick sits on a tomb, drinking wine, MOONLIGHT spilling over Bertha Mae's fresh-dug GRAVE. He listens to the MUSIC in the far distance-



**SLICK**

Sound like the music movin on  
again, darlin. The way it always  
do.

He listens for another moment, sighs-

**SLICK**

Time to make room for whoever comin  
next.

**FADE TO BLACK.**

**115.**

**77 EXT. HONEYDRIPPER - MORNING**

**77**

The SUN RISES next to the Honeydripper sign. We hear the  
CROW of a distant ROOSTER. The parking lot is empty but for  
Ty's old Ford-

Ty, exhausted but happy, steps out front. He pastes a SNIPE  
that says HELD OVER! across the Guitar Sam poster-

**POSSUM (O.S.)**

That boy can play some.

Ty turns. Possum is on the road, guitar strung over his  
shoulder, feeling his way with a red-tipped CANE.

**TY**

You leavin?

**POSSUM**

Aint needed round here no more.

**TY**

Where you headed?

**POSSUM**

(smiles) Oh-- down the road.

Ty watches the blind man move away for a moment.

**MACEO (O.S.)**

Tyrone-

Ty turns as Maceo steps out, equally tired and unshaven-

**MACEO**

Who you talkin to out here?

Maceo looks down the road, but Possum is nowhere to be seen.  
Ty shrugs-

**TY**

Just myself.

**78 EXT. SHARECROPPER SHACK - EARLY MORNING**

**78**

Scratch and Lonnie are set to pretend to play music again.  
Lonnie spreads his fingers over the keys he's drawn on the  
board-

-and begins to PLAY! Fast, rhythmic boogie piano-

**116.**

Instead of a Diddley bow, Scratch is pretending to tune the  
two strings on a `guitar' made of a plank of wood and baling  
wire. He carefully takes a length of clothesline rope  
leading from the guitar, tacks the end of it to the wall of  
the shack, plugging himself in. He looks to Lonnie, who  
nods, and then-

-he begins to PLAY in time with Lonnie.

We CRANE UP and away from them, the MUSIC spilling out over  
the field-

It sounds a whole lot like rock and roll.

**THE END**