

THE JUKEBOX

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-OLD VACANT NIGHT CLUB-THE HONEY DRIPPER-
EVENING- SUNLIGHT SHINNING THROUGH THE OLD
SHUTTERS-HOUSTON-2000-SUMMERTIME

CUT TO

Inside the shanty building, a black elderly lady is dancing to the sound of the Blues. She is doing the jitter-bug dance. Her name is MISS HELEN BROWN. She is in her seventies. Helen looks very good for her age. She is wearing a dress and stylish hat from the 1940's era. She is gliding on the old floor like a butterfly, jitterbugging. HELEN remembers all the times as a waitress in the HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB. The jukebox is the topic of the club. It is a money maker for her boss, LUTHER. As she dances and smiles, she stops and pick up some old pictures off the floor of HELEN, MC. and LUTHER. She sits down in one of the old dusty chairs. She remembers the first jukebox at the HONEY DRIPPER. She wipes the dust from the picture of her and Luther standing by the jukebox. She smiles and reflects on her late husband, MC. and LUTHER.

HELEN FLASHES BACK TO 1947

FADE TO

MUSIC-THE BLUES

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB-HOUSTON, TX-1947-
MID-MORNING-LIGHT METER ON SIDE OF BUILDING.

CUT TO

A big black dog is near the meter. He is barking at the LIGHT METER MAN who comes to turn off the lights. The DOG will not let him get near the meter. The LIGHT METER MAN is WHITE. He takes out

(CONT'D)

a piece of meat and throws it to the dog. The dog stares at the meat, growls and starts eating, completely forgetting about the meter man.

FADE TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-NEXT MID-MORNING-OLD 1940
CHEVY PICK UP TRUCK

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

MC. BROWN is unloading a jukebox from his old 1940 Chevy. He pulls it down on the two wheel truck, takes the white towel from his back overall's pocket and wipes the sweat from his handsome face. MC. is tall Negro, forty-seven and tough. He owns his jukebox business. He heads for the Honey Dropper Night Club, two doors down, whistling. A Negro woman struts by him as he stops to take a look at her fine shape.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

NEGRO WOMAN STRUTTING PASS MC.

NEGRO woman is walking twisting her shape as she passes by MC. He whistles at her. She turns, smiles and throws him a kiss. The juke-box almost falls off the hand truck.

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB-NO LIGHTS ON-DARK

LUTHER, a NEGRO, the owner, is sitting behind the counter adding up his money with a short cigar hanging between his

lips.He is

a

forty seven, but from the old night club school. LUTHER is

looking

sharp and flashy dresser. He is tall, brown and good

for his

(CONT'D)

age. He is slick and hard at times, but honest. He loves his night club and the Blues. The jukebox is going to be his money maker. HELEN TROMBONE is his manager and waitress. She is the backbone of his business.

FADE TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB

MUSIC-THE BLUES

CUT TO

PEOPLE from the surrounding community stop to view the juke- box MC. is trucking. It is their first time to see such a music maker. MC. stops again and wipes the sweat from his face. PEOPLE gather around staring at the jukebox.

MC

Pretty, ain't it? It sings better than a bird. This here Honey Dripper Joint gonna be jitterbuging all night long. If you can't afford to see your favorite Blues' man, hear them right here on this jukebox.

MC. takes a breath. He wipes his forehead and pulls the truck down.

A YOUNG WOMAN

You got B.B. King on that music maker?

MC. smiles as he chuckles walking with the jukebox.

MC.

Sho-nough do and T-Bone too.

AN OLDER WOMAN

Now I love me some T-Bone Walker. You got him in that music box.

MC.

I'm telling you! Everybody is right here in this jukebox. If you don't believe me, come on out to The Honey Dripper Friday night. I gotta go now. Luther is waiting.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB-DARK-SUNLIGHT SHINNING THROUGH THE WINDOWS.

CUT TO

LUTHER is standing behind the counter putting his money in a cigar box. MC. struggles through the door with the jukebox. LUTHER just takes his time as he closes the cigar box and lays it under the counter. LUTHER and MC. are graduates of the same high school.

MC.

Hey! Luther! Where do you want this jukebox.?.....Can't fool around too much, I got too many deliveries. Every black nightclub I know wants a jukebox.

LUTHER comes out from behind the counter.

LUTHER

(lays his cigar on the counter)

And I know a good friend and old school buddy like MC. here, gonna cut me a deal. That's what friends are for, my man! Put it right over there, MC.

MC. takes the white towel from his pocket and wipes his forehead. He trucks the jukebox to the center back wall of The Honey Dripper. LUTHER just stands and looks without giving him a hand.

MC.

Negro folks always talking about cutting a deal. Did you ever think about what it took for me to even get to this point, huh? To own my own business. You should know Luther...Them white folks ain't giving us nothing. So why should I cut a deal. This jukebox is going to pull in a lot of money for you and your place is going to be packed with pretty women that's gonna love for a man to play their favorite tune on this box here, Luther.

LUTHER

(slick like laugh)

Okay! I get the message, MC.

MC.

(puts juke box in corner)

Thanks.....And pop me one of those cold Pearls.....Man it must be 100 degrees outside.

CUT TO

MC. is taking the cord out to plug into the electric socket behind the jukebox. He is steady moving while talking to LUTHER. LUTHER walks back behind the counter and picks up his cigar.

LUTHER

(lights his cigar)

Its August in Houston, MC.
What do you expect?

MC. plugs in the jukebox. He takes out a dust cloth from his handy bag and starts to wipe it off. He is proud of his work. He steps back and take a long look to make sure the jukebox is straight. LUTHER sits a cold beer on the counter for MC.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

(putting cold beer in a tin tub)

You remembered when we use to
sit out on the porch after playing.
in the neighborhood.....Good old
days, huh, MC.?

MC. walks over to the counter, grabs a stool and sits down to drink
his cold beer. He is not ready to test the jukebox. He chuckles a
little as he takes a sip of the beer.

MC.

(sipping beer)

Yeah! We were dreamers, huh?.....
Talking about being rich like the Jewish
people one day.

LUTHER

(laughs as he bites down on his cigar)

You remembered that old Jewish peddler
who sold clothes and all kinds of other
home items in the community.....

MC.

(takes a sip of beer)

You dam right!.....My mother bought so
many things from him---and that old
man wouldn't give her one discount. Since I'm
in business for myself, I understood why he
didn't----he was already selling at a discount.....

LUTHER

(snaps his fingers)

But we saw something in that old man,
especially after that time we went down-
town one day and come to find out, that
old man come to own the largest department
store in downtown Houston!

MC. gets up to wipe another spot off the jukebox. He stands back and turns his head to see if it is straight. He gives it a little twist. He wipes the glass top again.

MC.

And we said if he could do it, we could, and here we are in the business, waiting to get rich like that old man. The only difference is, we ain't Jewish. Slow process if you know what I mean.

LUTHER stands at the end of the bar. He looks across the club, wondering about all the money that old JEWISH MAN made in the NEGRO communities

LUTHER

Just think, MC. He made all that money in our communities.

MC. looks in his workbag hanging on the hand truck. He pulls out some cleaning chemical for the jukebox. He pours some on a white rag. Then he begins to polish the jukebox. LUTHER is still putting beer in a tin tub behind the counter.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-OLD CHEVY ICE TRUCK-1936-MODEL

An OLD MIDDLE AGE man steps down out the truck, a Chevy wooden bed six wheeler. The truck is full of block ice. The man gets his ice hooks from the side of the truck. THE BLACK MAN hooks a 25-pound block of ice.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER

MC. is placing the records in the jukebox. He is doing it proudly. He dusts them clean and place them on the spinner. He wipes the jukebox off again.

MC.

(wiping the jukebox)

Like my grandfather always said,
'We folks just make other people rich
more than our own, what a pity'.

LUTHER

(praises)

MC. You always said that one-day you
gonna make a million if the right merchandise
comes along....This money box is catching on
all over the country.

MC. closes the front of the jukebox. He stands back, take a good look at it and reaches in his workbag and pulls out a screwdriver. He starts screwing all the screws tight.

CUT TO

The ICE MAN is bringing the ice in the front door. He sees the jukebox and almost freezes. His name is BUBBLE-LO.

BUBBLE-LO

(excited)

Looka der! Wha cha don gone and don,
Mr. Luther. Dem tings is call the music maker,
I heard. Nevar thoug we git one in the community.
Wher ya wan dis ice, Mr. Luther? Dem ric foks on
da utter sigh got pleni music makers.

MC. jumps in the conversation as he screws his last nut on the jukebox. He straightens it again and chuckles as LUTHER points to the place where he wants the ice. BUBBLE-LO puts the block of ice behind the counter in a large tin tub. He pulls out his ice pick.

MC.

(chuckles)

Not anymore, because old brother Luther here is bringing it to his neighborhood. You see, this jukebox gonna be different in THE HONEY DRIPPER. Them blues singers on here gonna wake up the joint--and pretty ladies, man! Even you might give up an extra block of ice.

BUBBLE-LO laughs as he cleans his ice pick off with an old rag from his back pocket. He turns to LUTHER.

MC.

He righ abou dat. Mr. Luther.
You wan me to chip the ice for ya?

LUTHER lights his half cigar. He blows the match out. He takes a sip of his beer.

LUTHER

Thata be fine, Bubble-Lo.....
Not too small now.

BUBBLE-LO starts chipping away at the ice in the tin tub behind the counter. LUTHER walks toward the jukebox and takes a good look. He runs his hand along the edge, examining the structure.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

This is some fine piece of merchandise,
MC. You got yourself a good business
here.

LUTHER puts his tools back in his workbag. He brushes his hands together and picks up his bottle of beer that sits on the floor next to the jukebox.

MC.

(leans against the jukebox)

Yeah! That old Jewish man that Mama worked for did me a favor. After I finished high school, I worked for his brother's music company. I was there when times begin to change. He had heard about these jukeboxes going big in the east, so he ordered two, trained me to go out to deliver them to clubs in the rich part of town. Then after some time I started using my head. Negro night clubs would jump over the moon for one of these in their nightclubs. So, this is when I thought about you first.

LUTHER

(curious)

But these things are expensive!
Who fronted you the money, MC?

BUBBLE-LO raises up from behind the counter. He picks up his ice hooks.
He walks and takes a look at the jukebox. Smiles are all over his face.

BUBBLE-LO

Mr. Luther, The Honey Dripper gon be jumping Fridi. Can I com? I bring my girlfriend. Anita luves to jitterbug.
You gat Gate Mouth on der?

LUTHER walks back over behind the counter. He puts on his gold wrist watch. He likes BUBBLE-LO. BUBBLE-LO is a seventh grade dropout, but he has business sense. LUTHER respects that. He goes into his vest pocket and pulls out some quarters. He gives them to BUBBLE-LO for the ice.

11

LUTHER

(gives money)

Sure BUBBLE-LO. You and your girlfriend is always welcome. You're a good man and your ice is always on time. And I love to see you and Anita do the jitterbug.

BUBBLE-LO

(an honest smile)

Thanks Mr. Luther--I gotta go now.
Foks waitin on der ice.

BUBBLE-LO exits the club.

LUTHER

I really like BUBBLE-LO. I give him a lot of respect. Didn't go no farther than the 7th grade, but has a hell of a business sense. He does well with his ice in the white and black communities.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

EXT.-THREE YOUNG BOYS WALKING TOWARD THE HONEY DRIPPER.

CUT TO

They are carrying shoeshine boxes. THE BOYS are running and playing up the sidewalk. They approach THE HONEY DRIPPER.

FADE TO

EXT.-SIGN ABOVE-THE HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB.

12

CUT TO

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER

Three YOUNG BLACK BOYS enter the club, LEWIS, CHESTER and CURTIS. They come to pick up LUTHER'S shoes. They always come every two weeks to collect the shoes for their father to shine. They are thirteen, eleven and ten. MC. is sitting drinking another beer.

LUTHER

(smiles)

Here's my boys. Right on time.
I like that.

THE BOYS

How you doing Mr. Luther?

LUTHER

Well now. Mr. Luther always doing fine,
especially since I got my jukebox.

THE BOYS look around at the same time. Their eyes lights up like a lightning bug. They run over to the jukebox.

THE BOYS

MAN!

MC. gets up from the bar and walks proudly over to the boys.

MC.

(leans against the jukebox)

How ya'll like this jukebox. Pretty, ain't it?

THE BOYS examine it closely.

LEWIS

I've never seen anything like it Mister!

13

CHESTER

(excited)

Me neither!

CURTIS

(rubs it)

Wait til I tell my teacher!
Can we hear something?!

LUTHER pulls his rag out from his pocket and smiles.

MC.

I wish I could for you boys, but it ain't
time yet. I'm still doing some finishing
touches.

LUTHER takes off his watch. He pulls out an old railroad watch
and sets his gold watch by its time.

LUTHER

MC.. Do you know who these boys are?

MC. turns away from the jukebox and sits down at one of the tables.
THE BOYS are still admiring the jukebox.

MC.

What are you trying to tell me, Luther?

LUTHER

I'm trying to tell you that they can tap
you right into the floor.

LUTHER laughs.

MC..

You don't say....Well I be.....

14

LUTHER

Show old MC. your stuff boys. Then
ya'll gotta get outta my place before
I lose my liquor license.

THE BOYS

Yes sir! Mr. Luther! Here we go!
One, two three and four! Hit it!

THE BOYS starts tapping from side to side, doing creative movements as they amaze MC. LUTHER is behind the counter popping his fingers. THE BOYS stop and take their bow. LUTHER and MC. clap.

MC.
Very good.....Maybe one day ya'll
gonna be in Show Biz.

THE BOYS
Yes sir....We hope so.

THE BOYS pick up their shoeboxes and LUTHER hands them some money and three pair shoes.

LUTHER
(takes cigar from mouth)
Now Listen...I like your Pa's work.
But tell him to put a little bit more
shellac around the souls. Them strings
in my Stacy Adams should be a little
whiter too. See ya in two weeks.
Now scoot!

THE BOYS rush out the door.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT. HELEN TROMBONE'S SMALL HOUSE-MID-DAY

CUT TO

HELEN is a very pretty black lady. She has a shape that makes men wanna touch her. She is young, smooth and moves gracefully. She is LUTHER'S right arm. Not only is she the queen waitress, but also the manager of THE HONEY DRIPPER NIGHTCLUB. She puts all her energies and time in making it the best black club in Houston. Just her present, to customers, she is a breath of fresh air. She sits down on the bed to put on her stockings. Her smooth brown legs slide through the black stockings. She slips her feet into a pair of black after five shoes. She gets up and moves her hips side to side to adjust the tight calf-length bright green dress. HELEN walks over to the mirror. She picks up a brush and comb to begin styling her hair. She stops to look at her watch. She is running late. The light bill needs to be paid. She picks up a tube of red lipstick and rubs it across her lips. She presses her lips together. HELEN looks at the light bill on her dresser, then she quickly picks it up , throws it in her purse and rushes out the room.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

EXT. HELEN GETTING IN AN OLD PICK-UP TRUCK.

CUT TO

Children run up to her old truck and jumps in the back. She smiles.

THE CHILDREN

Good afternoon Miss Helen. Can we go for a ride today?

16

HELEN adjusts her rear view mirror as she looks at the children.

HELEN

(starts the motor)

Not today children, maybe Sunday.
Right now I'm in hurry.

The children jump down from the truck.

THE CHILDREN
Okay, Mrs. Helen, Sunday.

All the children run up to her front window.

THE CHILDREN(CONT'D)
Miss Helen. You sure look pretty today.

HELEN
Why thank you children. See ya later.

The CHILDREN stand in the streets waving as HELEN drives off.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-MID DAY

CUT TO

MC. is sitting on bar stool. LUTHER is opening up another case of beer to put on ice. MC. walks over to the jukebox and wipes off the kids' hand prints. He kind of chuckles.

MC.
Luther. I was just thinking about
the question you asked me before
them boys came.

17

LUTHER
What question was that, MC.?

MC.
About who fronted me the money
for my business.

LUTHER

Yeah. Who did?.....

MC. stops wiping the jukebox. He leans against it with a smile on his face. He kind of look up to the ceiling in a proud way.

MC.

Now what I'm gonna tell you is
the honest God truth, Luther.

LUTHER

I'm listening, MC.

MC.

You see, Luther, me and my Jewish
boss made a bet.

LUTHER

You got that old man to bet. Now that's
unbelievable. What cha do, put something
in his drinking water.

MC.

Not quite. Jackie Robinson did.

LUTHER

(a little confuse)

Jackie Robinson!

MC.

Yeah. I can see his face when he
lost that bet.

18

MC. FLASHBACK

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-GOLDSTEIN MUSIC SUPPLY-EVENING-HOUSTON

CUT TO

MC. and GOLDSTEIN are discussing the bet. GOLDSTEIN lays his cigar in an ash tray on the desk. MC. is sitting in a chair in front of GOLDSTEIN'S desk. GOLDSTEIN clears his throat, sits down at the desk and wiggles his two thumbs. GOLDSTEIN is JEWISH, slightly bald, short with a medium fat stomach. He tries to be fair to his word.

GOLDSTEIN

(takes his glasses off)

If someone would have told me that Jackie Robinson was going to last a year in baseball, I wouldna believed a word of it. Do you realize the shit he had to take, MC.?

MC.

Yeah! Mr. Goldstein, I knew he was tough. God was on his side.

GOLDSTEIN turns his back to MC. as he gets up from his office desk and looks out the window.

GOLDSTEIN

Now about that bet we made.

MC. jumps up. He's thinking that GOLDSTEIN is going to back out of the bet.

19

MC.

Now, wait a minute, Mr. Goldstein, I won fair and square. You know that!

GOLDSTEIN

MC. Sit down and hear me out! I'm gonna honor the bet. Jackie did a miracle. He has guts. I like

that. The man was spit on, called
dirty names and he still prevailed.
I'm just amazed that he is in the World Series.

MC.
Yep! That's the way God works Mr.
Goldstein. Didn't your mama ever tell
you that?

GOLDSTEIN
I'm sure she did, MC. But to me it was
just a figure of speech.....Now this is
what I'm going to do.....

GOLDSTEIN sits down at his desk. He looks through some papers.

GOLDSTEIN(CONT'D)
I'm going to start you off with ten
jukeboxes. They are yours. You should
be able to make good profit. They are
very popular now. The Negro community
is ready for this music box and you still
can keep some of my white customers.
Your mama worked for my brother over
thirty years and die with nothing. At least
I can do something for you much better.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

20

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-MID DAY

CUT TO

MC. puts his dust cloth in his work bag.

MC.
That's what happened. Jackie
Robinson is the reason for my
business.

LUTHER
And that old Jewish man kept his
word. Now he had a soul.

MC.
Like my grandmother always preached
to me. Regardless how hateful white people
may be. There is some good in some.

MC. is putting his tools back in his work bag.

MC.(CONT'D)
Well, Luther, your night club is going
to have a change of heart. Give me a
dime and just listen to this juke box light
your joint up.

LUTHER gives MC. a dime.

MC.(CONT'D)
(puts the dime in juke box)
B.B. King gonna jump out at cha,
Luther! Come on B.B. Light old Luther's
place up with your guitar.

The jukebox doesn't make a sound.

21

LUTHER
Hey! You sure this juke box is gonna
work. Now my customers will get very
angry if they lose money in this here juke-
box, and I don't give refunds.

MC.
(examines the juke box carefully)
Come on baby! Don't be stubborn on me

now! I'm in the middle of a business deal here!

LUTHER

(behind the bar counter)

That old Jewish fellow done put one over on you. This jukebox here done lost all it's juice. Maybe this machine ain't gonna work in here. Maybe I ain't rich enough.

MC. stops and looks around and see no lights on. The brightness of the sun shinning through the windows is all the light that's in the club. Then the sun for a moment disappears and the place is dark.

MC.

(curious)

Luther! Why is it so dark in here? I can hardly see in here and it's broad open daylight outside.....Turn on some lights or something.

LUTHER comes from behind the counter and opens the front door wide so some light can come in the club.

LUTHER

(lights his cigar)

I don't use no more electricity than I need, especially when the club is closed.

22

LUTHER(CONT'D)

Now after the sun goes down and folks start coming in, I turn on my dancing lights, very dim. You see them light bills can kill you . And them white folks down town will turn off your juice at the bat of an eye. That's why I chained Old Skipper to the light meter.

MC.

(opens up the front of jukebox)

Luther! I didn't ask you all of that!

Something is wrong here. I've never had this problem before. The light doesn't even come on. It gotta be a bad connection or either your lights are turned off, Luther.

LUTHER

(walks over to jukebox)

My lights are on, MC. I told you!
Hit the dam thing! Sometimes that might help. I got an old radio like that, and when it doesn't play, I just hit it a couple of times.

MC.

(stops Luther from hitting jukebox)

No! Don't ever hit this juke box. Don't you realize what you could be doing to the souls of all the musicians in this box! No! Don't ever hit this box. You just don't abuse something that's going to put pleasure and riches in your life, Luther! Where's your class?.....

23

LUTHER

(steps back and takes the cigar from his mouth)

Hey! M. C. ! Maybe I can't afford this.
And plus it doesn't even work, MC.
Listen, maybe my plugs are different from them white folks plugs in River Oaks. Maybe this thing ain't gonna work in our old community.

MC.

(wipes sweat from forehead)

You talking crazy, Luther. Listen, pop me

another Pearl. Something is seriously wrong here! And that tears my ass up when I can't figure it out! Either that was a slug dime you gave me or either you ain't got no juice in this place. It just doesn't make any sense to sit around in the dark all day.

LUTHER reaches in the tin tub of ice and pulls a dripping bottle of beer out. He wipes it off with a towel and sits it on the bar counter.

LUTHER
(sits beer on bar counter)
You just can't admit that this juke box ain't gonna work in my place and all my plugs are 220, so that ain't it!.....

MC.
(heads for the door)
Listen, where is your fuse box? Just maybe---

LUTHER
(laughs)
You don't wanna go out there, M.C.....

24

MC.
(curious as he stops and turns around)
Cause what?! Luther!

LUTHER
(bites down on his cigar)
Cause Old Skipper gon eat your ass up! I would prove to you that my juice is on, but if I do that, my light bill will jump up to another decimal point. If I'm going to even think about getting this jukebox, I got to save energy.

MC.
(takes a deep breathe)

I'm wasting valuable time here, Luther.

LUTHER

Listen, uh, relax and let's figure this problem out.

MC. gets up and peeps over the bar counter.

MC.

(curious)

Something wrong with your electric cooler, Luther?

LUTHER

(chuckles as he puts some more beer on ice)

Oh no! I don't turn it on until night, right before the customers come. Saving juice like I told you. I just buy a chunk of ice and keep a few cold ones for myself just in case I get thirsty.

25

MC.

I can't believe you operate like this. You used to spend money like it was falling out of trees. What happened? Is your business that bad?

LUTHER

(taking beer out of case)

No! My business is great! I'm just trying to get where that old Jewish man was.

EVERYBODY

(toast beers)

RICH!

LUTHER

Now just relax, MC. Let's think this one out like the white folks do. When there is a problem with them, they look at the problem more than one way. We usually take one way and think about it later. That's why we very seldom solve anything. Now, I know it ain't my electricity because this the way I've been doing my juice for years, the plugs are all 220. There is a problem with your machine here. And I gotta have this juke box running by tonight. I done commercialized it all in the community newspaper. Even done wax my dance floor. If this juke box doesn't come through for you and me, I'm dead meat, MC.

MC.

(takes another sip of beer)

And this one is the last one I have until next week, Luther.

LUTHER

(serious)

Well, you better think of something.

26

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

EXT.-SIGN ABOVE ENTRANCE DOOR-KYOK RADIO STATION

INT.-RADIO STATION-KYOK-HOUSTON-MID AFTERNOON

CUT TO

A short medium size black woman is sitting in a chair across from a desk. She is in her mid-thirties, very neatly dressed. Her name is LIZZY, but her disc jockey name is DIZZY LIZZY. Her director, CLEARANCE is going through papers on his desk. He pulls out some chewing gum, unwraps the paper and rolls the gum in his mouth. Then he offers some to DIZZY LIZZY.

DIZZY LIZZY

(crosses her legs)

No thanks. I don't chew.
What do you have up your
sleeve. I'm own in twenty
minutes.

CLEARANCE

(straightens his tie)

We need a success story on the radio.
Somebody that's from the neighborhood.
Somebody that is doing things differently.
Now I heard a rumor about this new music
maker in the community. It's big in the east,
but-----

DIZZY LIZZY

(interrupts)

I've already heard. You talking about The
Honey Dripper Night Club over off Lyons
Avenue. I go dancing there all the time.

27

CLEARANCE

Then you know about this new music
maker at his place.

DIZZY LIZZY

They call it jukebox. Comes from an
African word, 'jute.' It is a hot commodity
now, especially in the Negro communities.
It's been around for a while with the whites.

CLEARANCE

Dizzy. Do you think you could get the
owner to come on your show.

DIZZY LIZZY

Sure! I can do better than that. He has the
hottest waitress in town. Helen is his
right arm. I'll get both of them to come on.

Anything else, Clearance?

CLEARANCE

(rambles through papers)

Oh, uh, no. And thanks! I'm looking forward to your next show. It's been kind of dull around here, if you know what I mean.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-EVENING

CUT TO

MC. has taken the back cover of the jukebox off. He takes out his flashlight and shines it inside the jukebox.

LUTHER

(looks at his watch)

Hey! In four hours the club will be opened. We gotta get this juke box going, M.C.!

28

LUTHER(CONT'D)

Where is that waitress of mine? She's never late.

MC.

(chuckles)

I tell you what. Helen is as fine as a glass of River Oaks wine! You sure you ain't tapping that a little bit.

LUTHER

(smiles as he lights up a cigar)

MC. You know better. Mixing women with business is a no-no, especially if they work for you. Where's your thinking, boy?.....Didn't Old Goldstein teach you that before he kicked the bucket. Anyway Helen is my right arm and my manager. Plus I don't full around with young

women. Your bank will go down real quick.

MC.

Anyway I kinda like Helen. Seems like she's good for your business.

LUTHER

(serious)

Helen is more than just a waitress. She takes care of all my business. Very young, but a good head on her with customers.

MC.

(takes a last sip of beer and gets up)

This jukebox got to get fix. I'm sure it's just a minor matter here, Luther. I think you have a bad connection in here some where.

29

LUTHER

(shakes his head as he goes behind counter)

Like I said, the problem is in your machine here and just to prove to you, I will let you go out to the fuse box.

MC.

(serious)

You are going out with me?....
Cause I don't wanna kill your dog, Luther.....

LUTHER

(laughs)

With what? You can't bluff old Skipper.....

MC.

(pulls out his gun and waves it in the air)

You don't say. If this 38 don't stop him, he can have my ass!

LUTHER

(surprised)

MC. You crazy! You just giving them
cops an excuse to arrest your ass! Why in
the hell are you carrying a gun?

MC.

(put gun back in pocket)

I handle a lot of money in a day's time and
you got some bad folks out there just waiting
for a chance to knock me in the head but they
gonna have to deal with this 38.

LUTHER

(shakes his head)

Well, I can't talk.

LUTHER pulls out his double barrel shotgun from behind the counter.

30

MC.

(jumps back)

DAM! Watch it with that thing! Let's
hope neither one of us have to shoot
anybody.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT. HL&P UTILITY WINDOW-MID DAY

CUT TO

HELEN is standing at the window trying to get HOUSTON
LIGHTING AND POWER UTILITY to turn the lights back on.
The WHITE MALE Collector is counting out change to HELEN.
He gives her the receipt. Helen is trying to convince him to help
her to get the lights back on in a hurry.

HELEN

(furious)

I need those lights cut on now, Mister!
Our business depends on it. You see,
we are having----

WHITE MALE COLLECTOR

(stone face)

I can't help you, Miss. You have to take
a seat over there in the color section.
Someone will assist you. I don't know how
long it will take. Okay? Next!

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-MID -DAY

31

CUT TO

The lights comes on and the jukebox starts playing. LUTHER and
MC. almost jump out of their skins.

MUSIC-BLUES-B.B. KING

LUTHER & MC.

What the hell! Did you hear that?!

MC.

(goes over to juke box)

Don't get any ideas about any ghost,
Luther. I told you, you had a bad
connection in here. Ain't no such thing
as ghosts. I don't think....

LUTHER

(looks around surprised)

But it happened right when we were
talking about that old man seeing a ghost.

MC.

(pulls out order book)

Hey! Forget it for now, Luther. Let's talk real business. Now this juke box is going to bring in five hundred a week if you play your customers right. Now since you are my best friend, I'm going to sell this jukebox to you on a long term basic. I'm not greedy.

32

LUTHER

(sits down at table)

Some where down the line you gonna charge my ass in little fine print.....

MC. moves to the same table with LUTHER. He takes a pen from his shirt pocket.

MC.

Trust me, Luther. We both can make money off this juke box and I'm gonna give you a deal that I don't give my other rich customers.

LUTHER

(lights his cigar)

And bull shit to the side? You ain't throwing me a selling game, MC.? Swear on your mother's grave. Cause I know how much you loved your mother.

MC.

(reluctant)

You know I don't swear on my mama's grave. Why you asked me to do that Luther?

LUTHER

(smiles)

Then I will know you meant what you said.

MC.

(agrees)

Right! Okay! I swear on my mother's grave that you can trust me on this one! Now can I finish up?.....

33

LUTHER

(shakes hand with MC.)

Okay, how can we make money?
Another question. You not hooked up to the Mafia in anyway?

MC.

(looks disgusted)

What? Yeah! Capone sent me to take care of you. Luther! Will you quit assing around. I'm losing money here!

LUTHER gets up from table to get another beer for MC. He reaches in the tin tub and pulls out a cold beer. He walks back to the table and hands the beer to MC.

LUTHER

(laughs as he pops the cap on beer)

Here, drink another beer on me.
I'm listening.

MC.

(continues)

Now usually my customers pay me two hundred a week and a percentage of the take from the juke box which is twenty percent. Since this is an extra juke box in my inventory, I can afford to be very reasonable.

LUTHER

(takes a sip of beer as he looks at his watch)
I'm listening and it sounds good so fore.
Where is Helen? She's never been this late.

34

MC.

(jokes)

Quit worrying Luther. She's a big girl----
unless--

LUTHER

(snaps)

Unless what?

MC.

Maybe she just needed some over time
with her man!

LUTHER

(defends)

I don't think she has a man. And you were
saying what about the jukebox?

MC.

(continues as he pulls contract from back pocket)

Oh yeah! I've drawn up a contract for us.....No fine print either.

MC. gives the contract to Luther.

MC.(CONT'D)

Uh....Like I mentioned, you'll probably make five hundred a week on the box or maybe more. The agreement is that you pay me one-hundred dollars a week and anything over five hundred on the juke box a week goes to me.

35

LUTHER

(puts on his glasses)

Looks legit to me. Now what if some one break in here and steal my juke box?

MC.

(continues as he takes a big swallow of beer)

Now I knew you were going to asked that question. I can get it insured for you , but you gotta pay for that....no more than fifteen a month. And another thing, your jukebox will be the first of my customers to get all the hottest hits in the country. Folks gonna crowd in your place. Gonna be some music for everybody tastes and you know Negro folks love good music, a little jazz, blues, you name it. I' ve already got you fixed up on the juke box with the latest. Even white folks might come here to party. Your place gonna be the place. This is a new day, friend.

LUTHER

(laughs)

Old Goldstein taught you well, MC. You sound better than him! Only thing, I don't think white folks gonna be coming in the

Negro community to any night club. We ain't there yet.

MC.

(serious)

I don't know about that! I've seen a lot of things happening with white folks on the other side of town. Jukeboxes takes me everywhere and these eyes have seen. White folks like the jitterbug and blues. They even ask me about B.B. King and Lightening Hopkins. Now just think when they hear that you have the best music this side of Mississippi.

36

LUTHER

Listen...uh is it okay that I hold up on signing the contract? I want Helen to look it over. She's kind of my right armed person. I can't trust them relatives of mine.....

MC.

You sure you like my offer, Luther?
Cause I wouldn't.....

LUTHER

(confident)

Hey! I can see dollar signs. I'm going to sign
Thinking, remember?

MC.

(laughs)

Gotcha! Think and then act.

LUTHER

(serious)

Hey, MC.! Would you really shoot

my dog?

MC.

(laughs)

Naw! Who Skipper? Skipper been with you for years. I woulda just shot him in the leg?

LUTHER and MC. laughs.

CUT TO

INT.-ENTRANCE DOOR OF THE HONEY DRIPPER

37

HELEN rushes through the door like a bat running out of hell. She leans on the bar counter to catch her breath.

LUTHER

(jumps from table)

Helen! What's wrong? You had me worried!

HELEN

(catches her breath)

Let me catch my breath. I've been downtown all morning. I thought you were going to be very angry at me, Luther.

MC.

(gets up from table)

Luther, angry at you! No way! Not with that body and beautiful face you have. How could any man get angry at you unless he's cock-eyed or something

LUTHER

(smiles reluctantly)

Hey! Quit flirting with my manager, MC. That's against my rules.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

(serious)

I thought somebody was after you the way you ran in here and I told you not to wear your clubbing clothes on the streets. One day the wrong person gonna walk up on you, Helen. It's fine to wear this in the club cause my shot gun can protect you, but out there--

38

Suddenly MC. spots something on the back of HELEN'S dress. He eases up behind HELEN.

MC.

Helen!! Hold still.....Don't move.....

HELEN

(holds still)

Aw shit! This is so embarrassing. My zipper done busted a loose. This so embarrassing.

MC. brushes a spider off her back

MC.

Got cha! It was nothing but a big spider.....

HELEN

(fearful)

A spider! Oh my God! I hate them creatures! Did you get him?!

LUTHER

(behind the counter)

Helen! Calm down! The spider is gone. What's been on your mind these few weeks?

HELEN

(nervous))

You haven't got no lights, right?.....

LUTHER

(looks surprised)

Sure we got lights! You know I don't turn them on during the day.

39

HELEN

(repeats)

Luther, you sure you got lights, cause them people turned your lights off.

MC.

Luther, she's talking about them white folks down town, the light company.

LUTHER

(shakes his head)

She can't be because I gave her the money to pay the light bill the other day. And anyway Old Skipper won't let anyone near my breaker box.. He would eat them alive.

HELEN

Some boys outside say that them light people threw Old Skipper couple of wieners and all he did was chop and chew away while they turned off the lights.

MC.

(pulls out his gun)

Luther...Do you want me to shoot Old Skipper now or later? They did the same thing to turn them on. Cause I ain't heard no barking.

LUTHER

(serious)

And while you shooting, just shoot her too!
What has gotten into you, Helen? I'm going
check on this dog.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

40

CUT TO

EXT.-BACK OF THE HONEY DRIPPER

LUTHER looks disgusted as OLD SKIPPER is eating away on a box of wieners. LUTHER grabs the box of wieners. OLD SKIPPER growls at LUTHER. LUTHER gives the wieners back to OLD SKIPPER and backs away.

CUT TO

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER

HELEN is explaining to LUTHER about the light bill. LUTHER just walks behind the bar and lights his cigar. HELEN rushes over to the bar trying to get LUTHER attention. HELEN and OLD SKIPPER is in the dog house with LUTHER. MC. goes over and punch a blues tune on the jukebox.

HELEN

(apologizes)

I didn't realize until the last minute that
I had spent the light money. I mixed it up
with my money, something I never do.
Then when I saw the bill lying on my dresser,
I was hysterical! So I rushed over to Wilma
to borrow the money from her. I'm sorry,
Luther. Could I have a beer, Luther? This
just hasn't been my day. I've been down there
pleading with them white folks to turn the

lights back on because tonight is Jukebox night. I told them it was gonna be the first jukebox in our community as if they really cared. But thank God they are back on.

MC.

(shakes his head)

All this time I wasted for nothing because you trying to save money and all we had to do was flip a switch.

41

MC.(CONT'D)

The problem is solved...No lights.

LUTHER

(not too forgiving)

I don't even wanna think about this place tonight without lights.

MC. walks over and wipes another spot off the jukebox.

MC.

Helen, come on over here, take this quarter and play anything your little heart so desires. The quarter will play three tunes. Just drop it right in this little slot.

HELEN walks over to the jukebox. MC. kind of get close to her from the back as he shows HELEN where to drop the coin. HELEN eyes lights up when she see all the different songs on the jukebox.

HELEN

(eyes lights up)

Well! I be! We have our own juke box. I don't have to dream about it when I see the picture in the big eastern magazines. Boy, it is so pretty! Look at all those songs. You mean when I put this here quarter in, and punch a tune, the record will come up to the top and play? And three tunes?

MC.
(moves and leans on the jukebox)
It sure will. Go on. Put the quarter in
and them blues gonna jump out at cha.

42

HELEN
(puts quarter in)
I think I'll play Clifton Chenier first.
You know my folks are from Louisiana
And man, can they Zydeco!

HELEN starts ZYDECOING. MC. just leans up against the jukebox, laughing and watching her butt move side to side. LUTHER is looking under his eyes at MC. This is fooling around to him.

FADES TO

MUSIC-ZYDECO

INT.-KYOK RADIO STATION-CLEARANCE OFFICE

DIZZY LIZZY comes up with an idea to CLEARANCE. He is standing at a window looking out into the streets. His hands are in his pockets. DIZZY is standing with her hands flat down on the desk.

CLEARANCE
(turns)
You think a dance contest at the Honey
Dripper will boost our ratings, huh---And
what will we give the winners?

DIZZY LIZZY
Twenty dollars worth of quarters.
It won't hurt our budget at all. People will
call in on the radio to enter. Then we will

know how many are gonna participate.

CLEARANCE sits down at his desk. He pecks his pencil back and forth nervously on the desk.

CLEARANCE

Do you think the owner will agree to that?

43

CLEARANCE(CONT'D)

Why twenty dollars worth of quarters?

DIZZY LIZZY

(smiles)

Because, they can play the jukebox for sixty times with twenty quarters and as popular as the jukebox is, that's a real treat. And Negro folks love to dance.

CLEARANCE

(agrees)

It's a good try at least. Let me know how its coming along. This is your baby.

DIZZY LIZZY

Don't worry, Clearance. I will see them tonight. It's there first night opening with the jukebox. I tell them our plan. How can they refuse.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

INT.- THE HONEY DRIPPER DANCE FLOOR

HELEN and MC. are doing the jitterbug. All of a sudden, LUTHER pulls the plug on the jukebox.

LUTHER

(wiping tables)

Hey! MC. You are holding up my manager here! In three hours the

doors open folks. And MC. if you want this contract sign by tomorrow, you better let her go so I can talk it over with her.....

44

MC.

Okay, Luther, I'm just a lonesome man here. It's been nice Miss Helen. You are such a fine young woman. I'm going to have to come see you more often. You make me forget how old I am.

HELEN

(goes over to the jukebox)

Are you flirting with me, Mr. MC?.....

MC.

(pulls out another quarter)

Whata you think, Miss Helen? You are a fine specimen that I ever did see. Here, play you another tune, never mind old Luther, he's just jealous.

LUTHER

(yells from behind the bar)

MC.. Do I have to throw you outta here.
Business and women-----

MC.

(interrupts)

Don't mix! Yeah! Yeah! Listen Miss Helen, one day when you off from this friend of mine, we could take a ride in my new pick-up. It's just sitting at home waiting to ride somebody like you.

HELEN

(turns and smile)

I would love the opportunity to be in your company, Mr. MC. I didn't know you were so romantic, Mr. MC.

45

MC. smiles as he pulls out a dollar bill and stick it on her forehead

MC.

Well now, it's settle for Sunday afternoon, right before the club open up. I don't want my friend here to think I'm stealing his right hand person. Enjoy the music in the juke-box, T-Bone new release sounds pretty good.

LUTHER

(raises up from behind the counter)

MC. Am I'm gonna have to get my shot gun out to get you outta here so Helen can go to work?!

MC.

(gathers his things and heads for the door)

Okay Luther. I'm leaving right now. I'll see ya later, baby. And please don't ever stop wearing those kind of clothes. You know the female body is like a work of art and yours. Whew!

MC. wheels his hand truck out the door, while smiling back at HELEN.

LUTHER

Listen! Don't mix MC. into your life, Helen.....

HELEN

(walks over to Luther at the bar)

Uh.....Listen Luther, I'm sorry about the light bill, okay? It won't happen again! And MC. has nothing to do with my life.

I just think he is a nice person and it is healthy for me to be around nice people. I'm a good waitress-manager, right?

46

LUTHER

(smiles)

You are the best, baby. I couldn't run this place without you, you know that. Sometimes I just think one day you ain't gonna be here. You gonna fall in love and break my heart, I know I shouldn't talk like this.

HELEN goes behind the bar and pulls out some napkins and table cloths. She walks over to the center table and sits down. She begins to fold the napkins.

HELEN

It's okay----I understand. And it feels good to be wanted and important after all what my life been through. When my mother committed suicide. Helen reflects.

HELEN FLASHBACK

CUT TO

INT.- HOUSE-HELEN STANDING AT BEDROOM DOOR, CRYING

HELEN is ten years old. She is standing at the door. Tears are running down her cheeks. She runs to her mother. Her MOTHER is sitting on the bed crying while holding a gun to her head. HELEN grabs her MOTHER'S, trying to prevent her from pulling the trigger. She begs her MOTHER not to do it. HELEN'S mother looks down at her.

MOTHER

I'm sorry, baby.....It's no use without your daddy.....

HELEN
(pulls on her mother's arm)
NO! Momma! NO! Don't leave me
here all alone. I love you.

The sound of the gun goes off. HELEN is screaming and hollering over her MOTHER.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO
HELEN wiping the tears from her eyes as she continues to fold the table cloths and napkins. LUTHER feels her sadness, so he walks over to the table to comfort her. He stands behind her as he gently puts his hands on her shoulders, massaging them lightly.

HELEN(CONT'D)
It just broke me to pieces. I was only ten. Then right after that, I almost had a nervous breakdown. Couldn't remember nothing but my mother holding that gun to her head and her brains splattered on the walls. She said she was going to join Daddy. He was killed in the woods of east Texas. At times I wanted to do the same thing, shoot myself, until I started working for you. You were kind of my savior. Your customers see me as I am. MC. gives me that feeling and you too. So don't be jealous. This club will always be a part of me especially with the juke box here. Some people look down on a night club waitress, think of them as being whorish. I'm not that kind of waitress. I love people and I love men, but I got class, Luther.

HELEN gets up as she touches LUTHER'S hands on her shoulders. She walks over to the jukebox and drops in a quarter. B.B. KING voice rings out as she moves side to side enjoying the BLUES.

LUTHER
(apologizes as he takes a seat at the table)
Yeah, baby. You definite got
class.....I'm sorry.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES-B.B. KING

CUT TO

EXT.-ALLEY BETWEEN TWO OLD BUILDINGS-MIDNIGHT

Three young BLACK MEN are in an alley shooting dice. One is holding a flashlight. ONE of them covers the dice with his hands. Then he grabs the young man next to him in the collar.

FADE TO

EXT.-ENTRANCE OF ALLEY-ANOTHER FLASHLIGHT

CUT TO
TWO WHITE POLICEMEN are shining flashlights down the alley. THE THREE YOUNG MEN run as fast as they can. THE POLICEMEN shoots in the air as THE YOUNG MEN jumps an alley fence.

ONE POLICEMAN
(puts his gun back in his holster)
Nothing but a bunch of Negroes
shooting dice. I caught three
last week.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-NEXT DAY-MID-MORNING.

DIZZY LIZZY is at the door peeping in. She is looking for the owner, LUTHER. LUTHER comes to the door. He waves his hands gesturing to look at the CLOSE SIGN. He notices her face. He opens the door.

LUTHER

(surprised)

Dizzy Lizzy! Come on in. I'm sorry.
I thought you were a customer.

DIZZY LIZZY

(walks in)

I am. But today it's business.

LUTHER

(puzzled)

Business?

DIZZY LIZZY

You got time to listen?

LUTHER

Yeah! Always got time for my favorite
disc jockey.

DIZZY LIZZY

(looks around for the jukebox)

Is Helen here too?

DIZZY LIZZY walks over to the jukebox. She smiles as she touches it. She looks inside at the labels of songs by the artist. She reaches in her purse and pulls out a quarter.

DIZZY LIZZY

You got more in your collection than
KYOK on here.

DIZZY LIZZY turns to LUTHER to get his permission to play the jukebox before opening hours.

DIZZY LIZZY(CONT'D)

Do you mind?

LUTHER sits down at one of the tables.

LUTHER

Be my guest, Dizzy. Helen is on her way.

DIZZY drops the coin in the jukebox. She plays BOBBY BLUE BLAND. As she goes over to sit down at the table with LUTHER. HELEN enters the club.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES-T-BONE

CUT TO

HELEN smiles when she sees DIZZY LIZZY. She walks behind the bar and puts her purse under the counter. HELEN walks over to the table to shake DIZZY'S hand.

HELEN

(sits down at table)

Dizzy Lizzy. I haven't seen your face
in here since we had that big dancing
crowd--and you were dancing all over
the floor. But I do listen to your show.

DIZZY LIZZY

Listen. I need to talk to both of you.

LUTHER

(curious)

About what? Are our customer complaining?

DIZZY

(smiles)

Complaint about The Honey Dripper? No Lord! Folks love your club. I've heard nothing but good things.

HELEN

(relieved)

That's good to hear, Dizzy because we work hard to satisfy our customers.

DIZZY goes into her purse and pulls out a notepad.

DIZZY

(rambles in purse for a pencil)

The reason I'm here is because Clearance, my director and I came up with an idea for your business that would profit both of us. It would bring our radio ratings up in other communities and increase your customers.

HELEN

That sounds great, Dizzy!

LUTHER

It does. But only one thing. What kind of money is going to come out of our pockets because I just cut a deal on this jukebox.

DIZZY

Believe me, you won't to spend a dime.

HELEN

Are we gonna make any money on this, Dizzy?

DIZZY

Sure! Here me out now.

DIZZY turns pages in notepad.

DIZZY(CONT'D)

Since you have the only jukebox within the Negro community as of now. Everybody is gonna flock to your club. KYOK can assure you that more will come from all over.

LUTHER

How's that, Dizzy?

DIZZY

A contest!

HELEN

What kind of contest?

LUTHER

How is that gonna help my business, Dizzy?

DIZZY

Black folks and even whites like to jitterbug dance.

HELEN

A dance contest!

LUTHER

Great idea...Tell me more.
I'm listening.

DIZZY

Okay. This is the idea. We will announce the contest on KYOK. They will call in or come to your club or the radio station to register to enter the contest. Sometimes our station goes into the white community. They probably listen to it under covers.

THEY all laughs.

DIZZY(CONT'D)

They probably won't enter the dance contest. But they like to see Negro folks dance. You could charge a dollar fee at the door plus the dance contestant will place a quarter in the jukebox for their favorite dance music. The money is made from the fee, and the jukebox that evening is going to overflow with dimes and quarters.

HELEN

I'm excited, Luther! I think it will work.

LUTHER

(curious)

Now what do you need from us?

DIZZY

Just to say, yes, and come on my radio show, both of you.....And another thing, the winner will get twenty dollars worth of quarters donated by KYOK. And they will probably put it back in the jukebox.

LUTHER

How can I refuse your offer. We will do it.

DIZZY

(gets up)

Good. The announcements will start tomorrow. Lets say, two weeks from now, we will have the contest. And three days before the contest, you and Helen be at the radio station 9:00am sharp. KYOK rating should jump after this and we would have helped each other.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-LOU'S GROCERY STORE-NEXT MORNING

The NEGRO OWNER of the grocery store is standing outside on the porch as he talks with RAT, A YOUNG NEGRO who is looking for work.

OWNER(MR. BAGS)

(sweeping his porch)

I'm sorry, Rat. But I just can't hire you.

RAT downs his head and walks away, disappointed. He doesn't know what to do. He is a young convicted criminal. He is broke and no one to turn to. As he walks farther down the street,

RAT

Please Mr. Bags....All I ask for is another chance. I promise I won't let you down.

MR. BAGS continues to sweep off the porch. He stops and looks at RAT.

THE OWNER(MR. BAGS)
Listen son, I'm sorry....With your
reputation, it's bad for my business.

RAT downs his head and walks away.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

BACK ALLEY-NEAR A DUMPSTER-EVENING

RAT is walking toward the BACK ALLEY. Two boys, ELI and JIM are talking with each other. They turns and see RAT. JIM throws his cigarette down and smiles as RAT approaches.

JIM
Let's hear what Rat has to say.

RAT approaches. ELI and JIM are smiling.

RAT
What?

JIM
We were just discussing a plan
you might like.

ELI
Hey! It's a cinch, man.

RAT
What plan? The only plan
I want is to find me a job
around here. Jim, you are
the reason for me getting in
trouble the last time.

JIM

Ain't nobody gonna give us a
job, Rat! You're spinning your
head for nothing. Now are you
gonna listen or what?

RAT sits down on bench to hear what JIM has to say.

JIM(CONT'D)

Mr. Luther has a jukebox, right?

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB-NIGHT

The NIGHT CLUB is crowded. PEOPLE are sitting around chatting at the tables. The jukebox is playing. HELEN is carrying a tray of set-ups(bowls of ice and lemons). She is laughing and talking with her customers as she takes orders. People are standing around the juke box chatting and looking at the different sounds through the glass as records after records are playing. Some people are dancing a little. LUTHER is behind the bar smoking his cigar. He is opening bottles of beer. Some YOUNG BOYS tries to pass by Luther with out him checking I.D. He rushes from behind the bar and points to the door. A MAN pats LUTHER on the shoulder. All kinds of beautiful BLACK WOMEN are crowding the club, wearing their best attire. Some women are dancing by themselves near the juke box. HELEN walks to one table.

CUT TO

HELEN

(goes over to table where two black men are sitting)

Hi, John. What it's gonna be for you
tonight? Oh yeah.....always Budweiser.

JOHN

(smiles smoothly)

You sure know, baby. Listen, you thinking about what I ask you the other night? I would be good for you, Helen.

HELEN

(laughs)

I'm not ready, John.
Maybe when I grow up.

JOHN

(touches her hand)

That's cool. I can wait, baby.

HELEN

(turns toward bar)

And your friend. What will he have tonight?

BOBBY

(looks gentle at Helen)

Oh, please, uh, a Falstaff. You are one pretty lady. I can see what John is talking about. He talks about you all the time.

JOHN

(smiles)

I told you! She's a pretty thing, ain't she?.....

HELEN

(turns toward the bar)

Thanks gentleman for your complements....
Falstaff and Budweiser coming up. I do have to work tonight.

JOHN

(pulls out money)

Helen! Wait! Listen, uh play your favorite tunes, something sweet and mellow on the jukebox. Let me know when the tunes comes up. I know you have good taste.

HELEN

(smiles)

You just won't give up, John. Okay I will try when things slow down.....How do you know I will punch the right tunes for you?.

JOHN

(smiles)

Because I'm in tune with you, baby. Can't you tell?.

HELEN smiles, shakes her head and walks over to the bar where LUTHER is serving CUSTOMERS.

BOBBY

(eyes Helen as she walks away)

Man! She is everything you said she would be.....Dam!

JOHN

(shakes his head)

Something is wrong though. I've given her every pitch I know to win her over to me. It ain't working. I dream of that body every night.

59

BOBBY

(smiles)

Maybe that's it!

JOHN

(curious)

What?!

BOBBY

(explains)

Women are smarter than what we think they are.....Maybe you are thinking of getting in the bed with her more than having a relationship. She senses that, John. Lighten up, buddy and she might just give in.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-DANCE FLOOR

A BLACK COUPLE is dancing on the floor. They are doing the JITTERBUG. Everyone gathers around to look. Then everyone begins to join in with their creative movements on the floor. PEOPLE are clapping.

CUT TO

JOHN

(gets up from table)

Excuse me. I'm going check this jukebox out.

60

JOHN'S FRIEND

(puts his stingy brim hat on)

Yeah. And I'm going to dance with that pretty lady over there that look

like she is waiting for me.

JOHN straightens his sport coat as he walks toward the jukebox.

JOHN
That's why we are here, buddy,
to have fun!

Bobby walks over to the table where a woman is sitting alone.

BOBBY
(walks over to the lady's table very hip like)
Hey! The juke box is something, ain't it?!
I saw you sitting over here all by yourself,
so I decided to come and ask this beautiful
young lady for a dance. May I?

BOBBY extends his hand out to the LADY.

THE LADY
(smiles)
Sorry. You have to ask my husband first.
You see he's kind of the jealous type.

BOBBY
(flirts as he sits down at her table)
Come on. I'm not going to let you off
that easy. Husband, where? I don't see
anybody but you sitting here all alone
and looking all pretty, baby.

The LADY'S HUSBAND is standing right behind BOBBY. A BIG
BLACK MAN with his arms folded looking down on BOBBY.

61

THE LADY
(smiles)
Oh, yeah. You better look
behind you.

Bobby looks behind him.

THE HUSBAND

(looks mean)

Is there a problem, baby?

BOBBY

(jumps up from chair)

Uh, no! I was just asking her about
how she like the juke box music. You
see I'm taking a survey for the owner.
Thank you, mam. I'll tell the owner!
See ya!

BOBBY tips away. The husband and lady gets up to dance. The lady is laughing as BOBBY disappears.

LUTHER

(smoking cigar)

Hey! Helen, MC. hit a gold mine
here. Look at the people standing
around the jukebox. For the first
time since I opened this club, I feel
like I'm in real business.

HELEN smiles as she leans up against the bar watching the customers enjoy themselves.

CUT TO

DANCE FLOOR

62

PEOPLE are dancing, clapping their hands and drinking beer.

HELEN

Yeah. MC. has vision. I like a man like
that, not scared to take a chance, Luther.
You 're like that too. Can't say that about

everybody.

LUTHER bites down on his cigar as he pops another beer for a customer
He looks to the ceiling.

LUTHER

Yeah! Thanks to old Goldstein.
I know he is looking down on this
money making jukebox over there.
Yeah!

HELEN reminds LUTHER about the JITTERBUG CONTEST.

HELEN

Luther! I think this is a good time
to announce the contest. No one is
dancing now.

LUTHER

(bites down on cigar)
Anytime you ready, baby, I will
unplug the jukebox. This is your
show.

HELEN

(straightens her hair and pulls on her dress)
I'm ready to spread the news, Luther!

LUTHER goes over and unplugs the jukebox. PEOPLE get quiet.

63

ONE CUSTOMER

Hey Luther! I just put a quarter in
the jukebox. What's going on?

ANOTHER CUSTOMER

Yeah! I did too, Luther!

LUTHER

(explains)

Listen! Don't worry! This pretty lady has an announcement to make that I think some of you gonna be real interested in. Go on, baby. Make your announcement.

CUT TO

INT.- HONEY DRIPPER-DANCE FLOOR

HELEN walks over to the dance floor.

HELEN

Everybody loves to do the jitterbug, right?

VOICES

We sure do! All night!

HELEN

Well, KYOK and Dizzy Lizzy want to have a jitterbug contest right here at the Honey Dropper.

VOICES

Girl! You're joking! Dizzy Lizzy!

HELEN

It's no joke! Next weekend, Friday night, right here on this dance floor. Now if any of you wanna enter, it's free. But you have to enter at KYOK radio station. Tell your

64

HELEN(CONT'D)

friends, your mama, your daddy, whoever can do the jitterbug.

A VOICE

What's the prize Ms. Helen?

HELEN

(smiles)

Oh, yeah, the prize. I think it is
twenty five dollars worth of quarters.
So whoever wins can play this
jukebox for a long time

A CUSTOMER

(holds up his bottle of beer)
I'll drink to that!

EVERYBODY

(holds up their beer bottles)
Yeah! Me too!

LUTHER smiles as he turns the jukebox back on. HELEN walks back over to the bar and just stands and watches people talking about the contest. She feels good about the idea.

LUTHER

(walks behind the bar)
I think KYOK done started
something, Helen.

HELEN

Yep! Mr. Luther, we gonna be
popular after all.

BOTH of them laughs as some yells at LUTHER from one of the tables.

65

CUT TO

CUSTOMER

(holds up a can of beer)
Hey! Luther! Another round of Pearls!
And Helen, come put your sweet hands
on this money and play us something
we can pop our fingers too, girl!

CUT TO

HELEN

(looks toward table)

I'll take care of loud mouth Henry!
It wouldn't be him if he couldn't yell.
Call it, 'wanting attention.' He doesn't get
enough from his wife at home, so he
lets it all out in here. Bless his little heart.
Married men.

CUSTOMER

(yells again)

Hey! Helen!

HELEN

(walks over to table with beer)

Coming Henry!

RAT and JIM are sitting across the street looking at all the people having a good time at the HONEY DRIPPER. JIM is trying to convince RAT of robbing LUTHER after he closes the store tonight. RAT is not too happy about the idea.

RAT

(shakes his head as he paces)

You crazy, Jim. Not this place, man!
Luther is a good person. Ms. Helen is
very nice.

66

RAT(CONT'D)

And they just got this new style music
box, Jim. Let's go hit a gas station or
something. Not this place.

JIM

(serious)

We ain't gonna take the juke box, man!
Listen to me, the gas station will bring the
whole police force down on us. But to hit

a joint like this in the community, the cops ain't gonna put no effort toward finding the robbers. They never try to solve any crime in our neighborhood, you know that.

RAT

(steady paces)

It's not right, Jim. The man is a Negro, you understand. Where is your soul, man. We've had it hard enough from the white folks ripping us off, man. Now you're talking about this----you crazy!

JIM

(snaps at Rat)

Hey! Listen to me! And quit crying like a baby! We are not going to clean him out. Just take enough to skip town, get outta here, man! Since we got out of prison, nobody wants us around, you understand, Rat? Just from that jukebox alone, I see five hundred tonight, man. Look how people are putting money in that machine. We can sneak up on Luther just before he closes. He always takes that bag of money with him.

RAT paces up and down. He stops and sits down on the bench. He looks across the street at the HONEY DRIPPER. RAT reflects.

67

RAT FLASHBACK

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HARRIS COUNTY YOUTH DETENTION CENTER-
HOUSTON-1942

RAT is standing up in a jail cell. His hands are grasp tightly on the

cell bars. Tears are running down his cheeks. He moves away slowly and sits down on his bed with his head between his hands. He cries.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-ACROSS THE STREET-NIGHT

RAT is staring across the street at the HONEY DRIPPER.

JIM

Are we gonna do it, Rat?

RAT

(responds confidently)

Jim, you are crazy, man! I don't
wanna have anything like this on
my conscious. This man has known
us ever since we were little boys.

Man, how could you stoop so low
You ain't ever gonna get your life
straight. Didn't prison teach you a lesson?

RAT walks toward the club. JIM stops him as he grabs his arm. RAT jerks away from him.

68

RAT

(turns and looks Jim in the eyes)

I'm getting as far away from you
as I can. You messed me up once.
I'm not going down that trail again
Our shit don't stink no more, Jim.

JIM

You stupid! Always have been, Rat!
You think you are better than me now.
You stupid if you think people are
going to treat you like nothing ever

happened. You are a criminal in their minds and you will always be you stupid if you think differently. Quit being stupid, Rat! Folks see us as losers!

RAT

(snaps as he points his finger at Jim)

No! You listen, Jim. This is one time in my life that I'm going to be stupid as hell! So stupid that I don't want no part of your mess anymore! Last time, no way I was suppose to serve any time. I was just out having fun with you. You went in the store for some sodas and came out running with a handful of cash. I was shocked. I should have just jumped out the car. Instead you talked me out of it and I got five years of my life taken away from me. Now on that note, you can go to hell, Jim! Here, go play a nice tune on the jukebox, something with a message about life, brother. I can't get to you.

RAT puts a dime in JIM'S shirt pocket. RAT runs across the street.

69

JIM

(hollers across the street)

You gonna be crawling back to me, Rat!
You need a friend like me, PUNK!

RAT turns right before he opens the door to the HONEY DRIPPER.

RAT

(shakes his head as he turns around)

You still don't get it! Later for you, man.

JIM

(in the middle of the street)
And don't you open your big mouth
to anybody. If you do----

RAT points his finger as he turns back around and walks to the curb.

RAT
Huh. You don't have to worry about me.
You gonna dig your own hole this time,
Jim, and of all people, you should know
by now that crime don't pay, man!
Wake your ass up Jimmy!

RAT walks into the HONEY DRIPPER. JIM walks away angry.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER

70

HELEN is walking toward the bar as RAT enters the CLUB. LUTHER
is talking to a customer at the other end of the bar.

HELEN
(stops to observe Rat)
Hi Rat. How's it going? Staying out
of trouble? What's wrong ? You like
you just came from hell and back, boy.

RAT
(throws up his hands)
Right now, Ms. Helen. I'm not for
words. Just bring me a beer, any kind.

HELEN
(responds)
Excuse me, Rat. Any kind coming up.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-LATE NIGHT

HELEN and LUTHER is sitting counting coins and dollar bills. Helen gets up and drop a coin in the juke box to play her favorite tune. Luther is putting the money in his money sack. Then he looks at Helen.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-WINDOW CURTAINS-CRACKED

SKIPPER is barking outside as JIM peeps in the window. All of

71

(CONT'D)
SKIPPER comes from no where dragging a long chain, growling at JIM. He falls down and high-tails it down the street. SKIPPER is barking and growling.

HELEN
(takes a peep out the window)
I wonder what's wrong with Skipper.
He's doesn't bark like that often.

LUTHER
(bites down on his cigar)
Aw! He's just hungry. I haven't fed him today. I'm gonna take him home with me tonight.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

(closes the money bag)

Not bad, not bad, Helen. I think that juke box is our savior. After next week, I'll probably need a body guard besides old Skipper.

HELEN

(dances with the juke box)

Then something else will come along later. And this will be old to people. Sometimes I wonder why do things have to change so much.

LUTHER

(laughs as he relaxes a little)

I don't know Helen. Things are not made to stay the same all the time, baby. Just like us. We are destined to die. That's God's business.

HELEN

(dances around the juke box)

I guess love music, huh? I wonder how the

72

HELEN(CONT'D)

music going to sound in the fifties and sixties. I wonder will the juke box still be popular like now, Luther.

LUTHER

(pulls his hat off and straightens the creases)

I don't know, Helen. I'm not a fortune teller. All I know is that you have to take life one day at a time. Tomorrow is never promised.

LUTHER reflects back on his visit to the DOCTOR'S OFFICE.

LUTHER FLASHBACK

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-DR. REED'S EXAMINING ROOM-MORNING

DR. REED is rolling up his telescope and putting it in his white medical jacket's pocket. LUTHER is putting on his shirt. DR. REED is an old man. He's been Luther's doctor for years.

DOCTOR REED

Luther. All these years, I've been preaching to you about your health. You just won't listen.

LUTHER

But you always fixed me up Reed. You can do it this time. I got faith in you, my man.

73

DR. REED

(sits down in chair)

Not this time Luther. I told you for so many years to stop drinking and smoking them old cigars. for one thing, your liver is bad. Your heart was always bad and now you done added on another problem, your lungs.

LUTHER

(buttons up his shirt)

But you can fix it, Doc. You always do.

DR. REED

(shakes his head)

Not this time Luther...Not this time.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-LATE NIGHT

LUTHER is putting out his cigar at the bar.

CUT TO

LUTHER(CONT'D)

Take one day at a time. That's what my grandfather used to say. Now come on over here. We need to talk some serious business.

LUTHER looks under the bar counter and pulls out some legal papers. He sits down at one of the tables near the jukebox.

74

HELEN

(leaves the jukebox as she drops a quarter in)

You do make all the decisions around here. Why do you need my advice about anything, Luther? You gonna do what you wanna to do anyway. Why do ya'll men waste time in asking women for advice.....

LUTHER

(laughs as he pulls out the contract)

Not this man. You are my right hand person. The Night Club would be nothing without Helen Trombone. Now we have a decision to make about this juke box. Do you think MC. is giving us a fair deal before I sign this contract?

HELEN

(looks over the contract)

From my calculation, I believe that it is a profitable deal, maybe we can get him to give us a percentage of everything the jukebox make over five hundred. Instead of him getting one hundred percent. Not that it's being greedy, but what I saw here tonight, we gonna make well over five hundred a week, Luther. And that means from that money you can pay the monthly installment. That's the only the way I see it, Luther. Then you could pay me more money.

LUTHER

(smiles)

That's pushing it, baby. But since I've made you part owner-ship, I'll let you sell the idea to him. Is that fair enough? And I thought you liked my friend.

75

HELEN

(excited as she hugs Luther)

You really mean that Mr. Luther!
About partnership?!

LUTHER

(serious)

I went to my lawyer yesterday.
He's drawing up the papers. Couldn't have done any of this without you.
If something happens to me. The Honey Dripper Night Club is yours as long as you live, baby.

HELEN

(walks over and kisses the juke box)

Oh, jukebox, thank you for coming into our lives. I'm going to close my eyes and

what ever tune comes up, it's going to be for Luther and myself. Thanks for making me feel important. I won't let you down, Luther.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-SUNDAY AFTERNOON-JUKEBOX

MC. and HELEN is dancing slowly to the sound of the BLUES on the JUKEBOX. THE different colors of lights from the JUKEBOX waves across the dance floor. They have just come from a ride in MC.'S new pick-up truck. Helen goes over to the juke box and plays her favorite tune.

75

HELEN

(she lays her head on his shoulder)

Oh, MC. I've had a nice evening.
Thank you! I haven't had fun like that since I was a teenager. And in a new pick-up 19 45 Chevy Truck.
There is still hope, huh?

The jukebox stops and they stand in the middle of the floor holding each other. MC. walks over and puts another dime in the jukebox. The BLUES song begins to play.

MC.

(moves away and put)

Now you know what that song make me wanna do, huh?.....

HELEN

(smiles as she leans against the juke box)
What do you wanna do Mr. MC?.

You only took me for ride. Do I
owe you something?

MC.

(grabs her around the waist)
You owe me another dance,
if you don't mind.

HELEN

(pauses as she smiles)
Only if you agree to what I ask
you to do.

MC.

(smiles as they begin to dance)
Sure anything you say, Ms. Helen.
It's a done deal. I will give you and

76

MC.(CONT'D)

Luther ten percent after five hundred
big ones are made. Satisfied? Now do
I have to put it in writing or what?

HELEN

(grabs MC. around the neck as they dance slowly)
I'll take your word. You seem like a
trustworthy man.

MC.

(smiles as song finishes)
Well! That takes care of that, doesn't it.
Now we can move on to other things.

HELEN

(pauses and steps back from MC. as music stops)
Maybe. Let's take it kind of slow, okay?
I really love your company, but if I don't
start getting this place ready for tonight,
Luther gonna kill me and you. You gonna
stick around tonight. We had a wonderful

crowd last night and the juke box played
all night.

HELEN rushes to start fixing up the club for tonight.

MC.

(changes conversation as he sits down at the bar)
I'm happy for you and Luther. He needs
somebody to watch his back in a business
like this and you are the right person for
him, Helen.

HELEN

(goes over to wipe beer glasses)
He really needs to get a Safe for his money
instead of carrying it home with him every
night. Somebody just might be watching
him and the only weapon he

77

HELEN(CONT'D)

has is this old shot gun behind
the counter and old Skipper.

MC.

(laughs)
A dog like that. My grandfather would
take him about twenty miles out of town
and tell him he got two choices, run as
far away as he can or stay in his face
and be shot.

HELEN

(wipes the counter as she laughs)
Quit lying on your grandfather. He wouldn't
do something like that, MC.

MC. walks over to jukebox and puts a quarter in and punches a number.

MC.

(cool as he puts a quarter in the juke box)
I just like to see your beautiful smile.
You know I been looking for a woman

with a real smile like yours! It's saying something, you know what I mean.....

HELEN

(blushes)

I will never get any work done with you around. Come on, you suppose to be a business man.

MC.

(walks toward the door)

Listen...uh, I'm gonna get out of your hair. I'll be back around midnight, about the time we can go for another ride
It's okay. I'm not going to bite you, not yet.

78

HELEN

(smiles as she blushes)

And don't you ever think I won't bite you back.

MC.

(flirts as is exiting)

I'm not gonna complain at all.

HELEN

(laughs)

See ya, MC. Around midnight.....

MC.

(leaves out the door)

Yeah! And I 'hope the moon is real full tonight. See ya.

MC. exits the door. HELEN waves a couple of fingers at him as MC. leaves. Helen walks over to the jukebox, drops in a dances over to a chair and table. She place the chairs under the table and wipe it off. Someone knocks on the door. Helen looks up continue to fix up

things in the club.

HELEN

(yells)

We are not open! Come back at eight.

The person continue to bams on the door.

HELEN(CONT'D)

(shakes her head)

Who in the hell is in such a hurry?!

CUT TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER FRONT DOOR

79

RAT bams on the door again.

RAT

Ms. Helen! It's Rat! Please open the door!

HELEN

(walks to the door)

Rat! Okay! I wonder what this young man wants? I hope he hasn't gotten into any trouble.

Helen opens the door.

RAT

(out of breath)

Miss Helen!

RAT rushes in and sits down at one of the tables.

HELEN

(closes the door)

Rat! You know better than to come

around here when the club is closed.
I'll get in big trouble if Luther knew
I let you in here. Now what's wrong?!

RAT

(shaky)

That's who I come to see, Mr. Luther.
Is he here?

HELEN

(sits down at table with Rat)

Are you in trouble again? You need to
quit running around with that Jim, Rat!
He's no good for you.

80

RAT

(walks over to juke box)

I just need to talk to Mr. Luther,
Miss Helen. This juke box sure is
pretty, Ms. Helen.

HELEN

(gets up and walk toward bar)

Yeah! It came all the way from
New York City.

RAT

(rubs his arms as he looks in the juke box)

Ya'll made a lot of money last night.
I saw all them people putting quarters
in this juke box. Sure do make your
club different than any thing around here.

HELEN

(picks up a stack of table cloths off the bar)

Listen, Rat. I wish I could spend more
time with you, honey, but I got work
to do.

RAT

(turns and starts to pace)

I need to talk to Mr. Luther, right now,
Miss Helen. Can I play something Ms. Helen?

HELEN

(reaches in her blouse pocket)

Here now! After this, you gotta
go, Rat.

Rat drops quarter in juke box. He sits down at a table and downs his head.

MUSIC-BLUES

81

RAT

Do you think I'm a criminal and
will always be one, Ms. Helen?
I didn't do nothing. I just was in
the wrong place at the wrong time.

HELEN

(goes over and sits down with Rat)

No! I think you are a fine young man,
Rat. Sometimes life is not fair, but you
still have to keep living, Rat.

RAT

(feeling sorry)

You think it's a curse or something on
me cause nobody wants to give me a
job around here. People don't like to
forgive, Ms. Helen, then they wonder
why you get in trouble again. They always
say, 'once a criminal, always a criminal,'
Ms. Helen. Even some church people
think that way, but they are always repenting
But I can't. Are you like them church
people too?

HELEN

(touches Rat's hands on the table)

Lord, no, Rat. They probably talk about me too. But you don't have a curse on you. If you think like that, you will begin to act like that. Listen, I know a man who has a good business. He owns plenty juke boxes here in Houston, I'll talk to him about you being his helper. Maybe you could learn something from him, Rat.

82

RAT

(excited)

You think he will give me a job, Miss Helen. You really think so. But then, what if he find out I've been to prison. Folks always hire me until they check my police record, then they fire me.

HELEN

(smiles as she gets up to put table cloths on tables)

Not this man, he's a real man, and his word is good, Rat. I'll talk to him tonight.

RAT

(gets up and looks sadly in the jukebox)

You know I never knew my mother and father, Miss Helen. They left me at my grandmother's doorstep one morning and when she died, I had nobody to look up to. So Jim and I became good friends. I don't know what happened to him. He was as good as gold in high school. His parents gave him everything. But then he changed, like over night. I didn't know he was going to rob that store. I swear!

HELEN

(continues to work)

This is the reason why you shouldn't be hanging around him. He's not a bad person, but sometimes you just never know how he's thinking, Rat!...

RAT

(stares in the jukebox)

You right. But he is the only one that listen to me, Ms. Helen. He's the only one that let me tell my side of life. Nobody else cares to listen.

83

HELEN

(continues to put cloth on tables)

Well, Rat. That's not true.
I'm listening.....

RAT

(paces)

I have to see Mr. Luther! I got to tell him something.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-BACK OF THE HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB

LUTHER drives up holding his head with a bloody handkerchief. He stumbles out his 1945 Plymouth Chrysler. He is carrying his money bag in one hand. He opens the back door and becks for old SKIPPER to get out the car. He grabs the long chain and stumbles toward the gas meter. He ties old Skipper to the meter

CUT TO

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER

HELEN

(wipes off the bar)

Okay. If it's that important. Why don't you just wait for him. He should be coming up in a minute. It better be good cause you could get me in big trouble here, Rat.

84

CUT TO

INT.-BACK DOOR OF THE HONEY DRIPPER

LUTHER opens door and stumbles in the club holding his head and carrying his money bag

RAT

(scared as he heads for the front door)

Aw shit! Mr. Luther!

HELEN

(shocked)

Luther! Are you hurt! What happened?!
Rat! Call an ambulance! Oh, my God,
Luther! I told you about carrying that
amount of cash around, man!

LUTHER

(looks over at Rat he sits down)

Hey, boy! Put that phone down! I'm all right, just a scratch. That ass-hole or whoever he was won't try robbing me again. Old Skipper was hiding in the back seat of my car when he walked up and pulled a gun on me. I pushed the door opened in his face and old Skipper bit a chunk out of his ass. I hit my head on the dam door. We don't have to be worry

with no police. Me and Old Skipper did our own police work. And Rat! What the hell you doing in this night club before we open up?

HELEN goes over to get a piece of ice behind the bar.

85

HELEN

(explains as she puts ice on Luther wound)
He just insisted on talking to you about something. He wouldn't tell me.

LUTHER

(snaps at Rat)
Yeah! I need to talk to you and that friend of yours. I've been hearing things about you boys around town I don't like.

RAT

(jumpy)
Listen, Mr. Luther! I didn't have nothing to do with what just happen. I told Jim you would blame----

LUTHER

(snaps)
What are you trying to say, boy?!.....

RAT

(explains as he paces nervously)
Ever since I got out of prison, anything bad that happens around here, they going to point their finger at me and Jim. I had nothing to do with---

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-KYOK RADIO STATION OFFICE- SUNDAY EVENING

86

CONT'D

DIZZY LIZZY and CLEARANCE are discussing the up-coming jitterbug contest at the HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB. DIZZY is happy and CLEARANCE is counting the number of participants.

CLEARANCE

DIZZY LIZZY! This is great for us
and the neighborhood.

DIZZY sits down. She is quiet and thinking. CLEARANCE sees a different look on her face. He stands up from his desk, put the papers down and walks from behind his desk.

DIZZY LIZZY

We might have to make a decision on
something. It's our call, Clearance.

CLEARANCE

(sits on the edge of desk)

What decision? The contest is on.
You're not having any problem
with Luther, huh?

DIZZY LIZZY

(breaks the news)

I had three white couples to call
yesterday. They want to enter the
contest.

CLEARANCE jumps off the edge of the desk, turns, walks behind his desk and flops down in disbelief.

CLEARANCE

Are you serious? That means that they have been listening to our station all along. Shocking! Didn't you tell them that this is a jitterbug contest, not the two step?

87

DIZZY LIZZY

They already know. You got some young white folks can cut a rug over across town. I'm not saying they can win anything against Negroes, but it would shoot KYOK rating up sky high.

CLEARANCE opens his desk drawer, pulls out a cigar, tears off the wrapper and slides it between his lips. He laughs as he lights the cigar. He puts the match in an ash tray and takes a long puff off the cigar.

CLEARANCE

If we do this, we have to get the 'okay' from Luther. We don't wanna have any problems with Negroes and Whites. If them white people across town got nerves to come to the Honey Dripper Night Club, I wanna meet them personally. Our ratings just went up.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-SUNDAY EVENING

LUTHER

(shakes his head)

Sit down, son. I'm not blaming you and

Jim for nothing, understand? This man was at least in his forties that tried to rob me. I've never seen him around here before. What is this you're talking about! You and Jim thought about doing this to me,

88

LUTHER(CONT'D)

Rat?! Talk to me! Never mind. You two are going through enough hell in town. I wanna help you. I'm really glad you came. I been wanting to talk to you and Jim. Now you wanted to tell me something first, huh?

RAT

(takes a deep breath)

Mr. Luther....I just plain forgot.....

LUTHER

(pulls money out of cloth bag)

Well, times are gonna change. You and Jim are young. You have young ideas and when the times come, me and Helen needs to hear what you thinking business wise. Maybe we can create a job for you and Jim. Somebody gotta give ya'll another chance, son. Can ya'll be over here at twelve noon tomorrow. Helen and I will talk about it later. Now will you get the hell out of my place so we can go to work?

Rat picks up his hat, flips it on his head, takes two jumps in the air and rushes out the door, happy as a Lark.

HELEN

(wipes tears from her eyes)

I think you just save their lives, Luther.

LUTHER
(responds as he counts his money at the table)
There is an old saying in the bible.
If you give, you shall receive.

89

LUTHER(CONT'D)
Let's get ready for Sabbath Night!

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-MONDAY-NOON

The lights of the JUKEBOX is shinning bright in the dark HONEY DRIPPER. BLUES is playing as the records spins around. LUTHER, HELEN, RAT, MC. and JIM are sitting at a table near the JUKEBOX. LUTHER'S shotgun is laying across the table. HELEN is looking through the record books.

LUTHER
(counting quarters from the juke box)
Whata you think, MC? They kind of
remind us of ourselves, huh?

MC.
(shakes his head)
I don't know Luther. Listen, Rat and Jim. Me and Luther here goes way back, but we never had a pot to piss in, you understand. We had an idea ever since we were boys that we were gonna be rich like them Jewish folks. We never thought about doing it illegal, like taking other folks stuff. Now when you get on the bad side of your own people, you are

in big trouble cause them other folks
already don't like you. Now we can give
you another chance.

90

LUTHER

(continues to count the quarters)

You see, ya'll can work for both of us.
maybe there is some hidden talent in
both of you. nobody but us wanna
take a chance on you. We can teach
you what we know and keep you out
of trouble.

MC.

(lays his pistol on the table)

Now we ain't got no time to be watching
you all the time. We gon trust you and
if you ever heard of the Lone Ranger
and Tonto----

JIM AND RAT

Lone Ranger and Tonto! We
don't understand.....

MC. picks up his 38 and LUTHER picks up his shot gun.

LUTHER

If you cross us at any time. We gon be
Lone Ranger and Tonto on your young
asses.

MC. AND LUTHER

That means. Don't play with our money
and business! Is that understood?

JIM AND RAT

(jumps up from table)

Yes sir!

LUTHER
(puts guns away)
Good! You hired! We gonna figure
out your job title, Monday.

91

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-THE HONEY DRIPPER-FRONT DOOR STEPS-LATE NIGHT

The sound of dogs are barking in the neighborhood. The moon is full. MC.
and HELEN are sitting and kissing on the front steps of the HONEY
DRIPPER.

MC.
(holds her in his arms)
I never thought I would come this
close to loving a woman. It must be
the full moon tonight.

HELEN
(smiles as she looks down at the front of his pants)
Is that it, or is something else full too?!

They both laugh

MC.
(closes his legs)
Now Miss Helen! Why you wanna go
and say that. Do you think---to tell you
the truth---uh---you ain't lying either.....

They both laugh.

MC.
Well, at least you know I ain't one of
those funny men.

HELEN

(smiles as she cuddles up to him)

I wouldn't be sitting here all hugged
up with you if I thought you were,
Mr. MC.

MC.

(compliments)

You just ought not be so pretty.
It seems like when you are in my
arms, I just melt like hot butter.

HELEN

(smiles)

You makes me feel the same way,
MC. But you probably tell
other women the same thing, MC.
Maybe you are just looking at my
physical beauty. Something I've
always had problems with. Men
only see a woman skin deep.

MC.

(rubs her face)

What are you saying, Helen? What's
wrong with being good-looking?.....

HELEN

(leans back on the steps)

It's a problem because folks can't see
beyond my physical beauty. When a
man stares at a woman, most of them
undresses her. First he stares at her ass,
second, her legs, third, her face and
then a 'hello,' haven't I met you before?'

MC.

(almost speechless)
Do you think that I-----

93

HELEN
(curious)
You tell me. Why do you really like
being with me?

MC.
(explains)
Because--I think you have a loving
spirit. That's it, Helen, a loving spirit.

HELEN
(smiles)
MC. I like that. A loving spirit. Do you
really mean that or you just talking under
a full moon?

MC.
(responds as he changes the conversation)
Will you marry me?

HELEN gets up from the steps. She walks down the steps
toward the streets. She is not accepting MC'S invitation at all.
HELEN turns with tears in her eyes. She is almost angry.

HELEN
What?! Are you serious, MC.?
Why uh----The moon is really
full tonight!

MC.
(walks toward her)
What's wrong? Did I asked something so----

HELEN
(folds her chilled arms)
MC.! Why did you have to go and
get so serious?. Everything was going
so fine. It must be the full moon. Folks

act crazy and say crazy things when

94

HELEN(CONT'D)
the moon is full and they forget
about it the next day, MC.

MC.
(holds her around the waist)
Listen. I want to marry you.
Think about it.

HELEN
(tearful eyes)
You know nothing about my past,
MC. And men have taken me through
so many changes, MC. I cherish our
friendship more than anything. Marriage
frightens me.

MC.
(touches her face)
Hey! Hey! Take your time. I'm not
going to push you. Come on, let me
take you home. It's been too good of
an evening for it to turn sour, Miss Helen.

HELEN
(looks at MC.)
Thanks. And I am falling in love with
you----and that's pleasant, not frightening.

MC.
(smiles as he puts his stingy brim hat on)
Well, Miss Helen. That's a start---a real good
start. And I shall say, 'you have a lot of class.'

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-MORNING

JIM and LUTHER are sitting at a table. HELEN goes over and drop a quarter in the jukebox, then she sits down and starts counting money. LUTHER is writing Jim's duties down on paper so.

LUTHER

(gives paper to Jim)

Listen, Jim. Friday nights are always crowded. But this Friday is special because of the jitterbug contest. Your duties are written on that piece of paper so when you come in the mornings, you won't idle around doing nothing. Time is money young man.

JIM

(looks at the duties)

Yes sir. I understand.

LUTHER

(looks at Jim as he lights his cigar)

Listen Jim. You can forget about your past. With us, you are getting a clean slate. One day if you lucky, just maybe you will open your own business. So keep your eyes and ears open.

JIM

(excited)

Mr. Luther! And you really think I could own a place like this one day.

LUTHER

(bites on his cigar)

Stick around us. Anything is possible.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

Now, how old did you tell me you were?
Cause I don't want them folks down town
fining me for having an under age person in
my club.

JIM

I just made twenty-three Mr. Luther.
Is Rat gonna be working here too?

MR. LUTHER

Good you asked. Rat is gonna split his
time up with me and MC. By the time
MC. get through with Rat, he will know
all about the juke box business. Another
thing, we do not turn the lights on until
three hours before the club opens.

JIM

(grateful)

Mr. Luther. I will never forget what you
are doing for me.

LUTHER

(laughs as he pulls money from his pocket)

Hey! Young man! Just don't forget why
you're here. It's left up to you to make the
best out of it. I want you to go out and buy
you some neat looking clothes for tomorrow
night. I'll deduct it from your pay check
farther down the road. You gotta look good
to attract them beautiful young ladies, Jim.
Clothes gonna change your whole personality.

LUTHER pulls out some money and hands it to JIM.

JIM

(takes the money and stuffs it in his shirt pocket)
Oh, uh, thanks Mr. Luther!.....

LUTHER

Friday night is really gonna be special, Helen. DIZZY LIZZY stopped by my house, yesterday. She said that people are coming by the station for the jitterbug contest, four white couples called. She wanted my permission to let them come to the Honey Dripper. What do you think?

HELEN looks up from counting money. Her face turns away from LUTHER. She can't believe White people are that bold to come to the HONEY DRIPPER. She shakes her head in disbelief.

HELEN

Luther! Are you serious? They can't even do the jitterbug like us. Now that's a lot of nerve. You gonna let them come? If you do, you better hire a security police if they win.

LUTHER

I told Dizzy I would think it over when I talk with you.

HELEN

(puts a quarter in the jukebox)
Well, for business it's good.
For the Honey Dripper, it
will make history.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-FRONT STEPS-LATE NIGHT

LUTHER and MC. are drinking beer on the front steps of the HONEY DRIPPER. MC. is telling LUTHER a story about RAT. LUTHER can't believe it. He just sits there and laughs.

LUTHER

(laughing)

You mean to tell me that you and Rat were unloading this big beautiful jukebox in this big fancy night club in River Oaks.

MC.

(laughs)

That's right! I can see the look on that White man's face now.

MC. FLASHBACK

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-RIVER OAKS BAR & TAVERN-EVENING

MC. and RAT are struggling with the big jukebox in the corner of RIVER OAKS BAR & TAVERN. Sweat is dripping from their faces. Suddenly the jukebox almost falls to the floor. MC. yells at RAT!

MC.

(yells)

Rat! Catch it Rat!

The WHITE OWNER comes out with a broom in his hands.

THE OWNER

Where is the rat? Which way did he go?

CUT TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-FRONT STEPS

LUTHER can't stop laughing. He is laughing so hard, the dogs start barking in the neighborhood.

LUTHER

You expect me to believe that?!
What did you tell him, MC?

MC.

(dry his eyes)

I said, "Who, my helper? He's right here." And the owner turned fire red in the face and said, "you mean to tell me your helper is named Rat!". Then Rat said, "I been named that all my life."

LUTHER

(laughs)

It's a wonder he didn't throw ya'll outta his place.

MC.

(takes a sip of beer)

Well, you see it was so funny, he didn't know whether to throw us out or laugh. He started laughing as he wrote my check out. I told Rat if I had lost that customer, I woulda fired him just because his name was RAT!

LUTHER

(shakes his head)

Why in the hell did his grandma give him that name. That name gonna haunt him for life, MC.

MC.

(explains)

He told me that he ate so much cheese when he was little, his grandmother just started calling him Little Rat. Only Negroes can stick you with nick names like that.

LUTHER and MC. are quiet for a moment. MC. wants to tell LUTHER that he is in love with HELEN. But he is trying to find the words to break the news. He knows how much HELEN means to his business. LUTHER always fears some man is going to snatch her away. She is ninety percent of the HONEY DRIPPER.

MC.

(break the news)

Suppose I tell you that I 'm in love with Helen and she's in love with me.

LUTHER is quiet as he looks up to the sky.

MC.(CONT'D)

(shakes his head)

We didn't expect for it to go this far.
Try to understand, man.....
I asked her to marry me.....

LUTHER takes another sip of beer, stares up to the sky and gets up.

LUTHER

(drinks another sip of beer)

It's getting a little late, we gotta big night tomorrow. I'll see you later.

MC.

(sits as he rolls the beer bottle between his hands)

Sure, Luther. I understand how close you are to Helen.....See ya.....But I wouldn't hurt her for nothing in the world.....

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB-JITTERBUG CONTEST

It is FRIDAY night. The night of the JITTERBUG contest. The night Club is crowded. JIM is working behind the bar. RAT is stopping a few young faces to check their I.D. Luther is helping put beer in the ice cooler. FOLKS are crowded around the JUKEBOX. Helen is weaving through the crowd with her tray of beers. LUTHER is standing and talking with old friends. Folks are dancing to the music. The club is jumping. RAT and JIM looks good, all dressed up in their slacks, stingy brim hats and sport shirts. Some young girl comes up to RAT and throws her arms around him.

THE YOUNG GIRL

(throws her arms around Rat)

Rat! Where have you been hiding?.....
You looking good. What a surprise!....
Listen! If you have time, come over to my table, I'm alone tonight. I wanna give you my phone number and maybe we could go out or something.

RAT smiles as the girl struts away. The FOUR WHITE YOUNG COUPLES enters the door. Everybody stares. JIM directs them to some tables. JIM is showing them a little hospitality. As they pass other tables, attitudes flare up through whispers. THREE NEGRO LADIES are sitting at a table. Their eyes stare the WHITE COUPLES up and down.

THREE LADIES

Now, they know they don't have no business here. Times ain't changed that quick!

ONE LADY

We can't even buy ice water on their side of town. And this ain't two step night. Did anyone tell them that?

JIM seat the FOUR WHITE COUPLES near the jukebox. LUTHER immediately goes over and greet them. They smile as everybody is waiting for DIZZY LIZZY to appear. One of the WHITE WOMEN gets up and plays a Blue's tune on the jukebox. SHE turns some heads.

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-ENTRANCE

DIZZY LIZZY walks in the door. Her designed fashions catch people eyes. Her forties' hat sways to one side. She looks like she just come off the Run-Way. EVERYBODY stands up and clap. DIZZY is the show and the host for JITTERBUG NIGHT at the HONEY DRIPPER. LUTHER walks over and welcomes her to the audience.

LUTHER

Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome to the first jitterbug jukebox contest night at the Honey Dripper. And now, your hot and popular disc jockey, DIZZY LIZZY! From Kyok Radio Station.

As DIZZY LIZZY walks in the center of the dance floor. The audience claps louder and louder. She just stands and smiles. After a while it gets quiet. DIZZY LIZZY walks over to the jukebox, pat it a little.

DIZZY LIZZY

You gonna work for us tonight, baby--just hold your horses. And I wanna thank everyone for coming out to jitterbug night sponsored by the Honey Dripper and Kyok. Are ya'll ready to have some fun?!

103

THE CROWD

Yeah!

DIZZY LIZZY(CONT'D)

Now before we start. We have a few guest
from across town. I want to welcome you.

Everybody just look around at the FOUR WHITE COUPLES. There is
only one CLAP in the crowd. THE FOUR WHITE COUPLES just sit
and smiles.

DIZZY LIZZY(CONT'D)

Now the rules are, you have three
minutes to do your jitterbugging. Everyone
should have a number that's participating.
You will have an extra thirty seconds to
come up to the jukebox, put in a dime to
play your dance tune. The prize is twenty
five dollars worth of quarters. So if you win,
that's a lot of tunes for you to play on this
jukebox. And remember, three tunes for a
quarter.....Now, before we begin. What is
your favorite radio station?

EVERYBODY

KYOK!

DIZZY LIZZY

(pull numbers from her briefcase)

All right! Let's roll! Number 20!
Step up!

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

104

CUT TO

A YOUNG NEGRO COUPLE are jitterbugging across the dance floor.
Their steps are unbelievable. The MALE slides his PARTNER between

his
clap

legs, twist and moves his feet creatively back and forth. The crowd
as #20 jitterbugs off the floor. They take their bow and return to their
table.

DIZZY LIZZY

All right! We gonna do some jitterbugging
and the Honey Dripper is gonna drop
some honey. Number 21.

A YOUNG WHITE COUPLE gets up from their table, walks over to the
jukebox and play their tune. The crowd is quiet. Not even a clap is heard.

MUSIC-BLUES

The YOUNG WHITE COUPLE jitterbugs gracefully across the floor.
Everyone in the crowd is in shock. Their moves are slick, just like they
come from the neighborhood. They have a little soul in their movement.
Folks begin to clap. They glide off the floor and takes their bow. The
folks clap again.

DIZZY LIZZY

What a surprise. Ya'll fooled all of us.
Ya'll must have some Negro friends.

The WHITE COUPLES laughs and the crowd clap again. As the evening
passes. All the dancers are competing. Over twenty couples. From number
twenty to number forty. Everyone is good and creative with their
movements. The jukebox never stops playing.

CUT TO

COUPLE #22- DANCING

CUT TO

COUPLE # 23-DANCING

CUT TO

WHITE COUPLE #24-DANCING

CUT TO

COUPLE #26-DANCING

CUT TO

JIM and RAT are betting on who will win the contest. They are standing near the bar. JIM pulls out five dollars. RAT goes in his pocket and pulls out five dollars.

JIM

I got number twenty.

RAT

I got number twenty six.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-FRONT WINDOW OF HONEY DRIPPER

CHILDREN standing outside looking in the window of the HONEY DRIPPER.

CUT TO

INT.- HONEY DRIPPER

COUPLE #40-DANCING

The COUPLE take a bow after the dance and return to their seats

106

The crowd get up to give a standing ovation for all the couples. DIZZY LIZZY walks to the middle of the dance floor. CLEARANCE, her director walks out on the floor with her. He is the other judge besides DIZZY.

DIZZY LIZZY

What a contest! And I didn't know
white folks dance like that across town.
Now it's time to pick a winner.
This is the director of Kyok, Mr.
Clearance Smith. Now both of us
are the judges.

DIZZY LIZZY pulls out her score card and announces the winner.

DIZZY LIZZY(CONT'D)

And the winner is #20!

The WINNERS runs up to the dance floor and bow. JIM won the bet
and he is jumping up and down.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-SATURDAY-LATE NIGHT

LUTHER is counting his money. RAT is taking the rest of the money out
of the juke box. JIM is cleaning off the tables and HELEN is helping
LUTHER count the quarters.

JIM

(looks at money)

Look at all that money! Mr. Luther,
could I touch some? Maybe it will bring
me good luck.

107

LUTHER

(laughs as he bites down on his cigar)

Sure young man, sure! No harm in touching!

RAT
(brings rest of coins from juke box over)
And here's more from where that came from.

JIM and Rat sits down to look at all that money

LUTHER
(gives earnings to Jim and Rat)
Honest pay for an honest days work.

JIM AND RAT
(excited)
Aw, man! Thank you Mr. Luther!

LUTHER
(putting money away)
And listen! Put some of it away for a rainy day.....

RAT
(smiles)
Sure, Mr. Luther.

LUTHER
(picks up bags of money and put on his hat)
Now one more thing, young men, just in case any one get any ideas about taking this off my hands, I want both of you to be my body guards tonight. I'll drop you off at your houses. Old Skipper is just getting too dam old. Looked in his mouth the other day and he done lost all his dam teeth.

108

JIM AND RAT
(surprised)
Why, uh, sure, we don't mind Mr. Luther.

LUTHER

(turns to Helen)

He's a good man, Helen. Tell Luther,
whatever happens, good blessings to
both of you.

HELEN

(kisses Luther on the cheek)

Thanks, Luther.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-LATE NIGHT

HELEN is dancing with the jukebox. There is a knock on the door.
It is MC, stopping by to help her close up the HONEY
DRIPPER. HELEN dances over toward MC. as he stands there
smiling.

HELEN

(she stops and holds his face in her hands)

Listen! You better not change on me.
And another thing, once you start
something with me, you gonna have to
do it for the rest of your life. Don't bring
me flowers every day unless you planning
on bringing me flowers for the rest of our
lives. And another thing, if you kiss me

109

HELEN(CONT'D)

off to work everyday, plan to do that for
the rest of your life with me. If you gonna
take a bath with me everyday, don't stop
because that's what I expect. Other words,
don't spoil me. My grandmother said once
you start something and quit, then the

relationship is taken for granted and minds
drift apart. And another thing, Mr. MC.,
I will marry you!

MC. is happy and excited. He just jumps around on one foot and picks
HELEN up from the floor. He turns round and round like a merry-go-
round.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-CHURCH OFFICE-ALMEDA, TEXAS-NEXT MORNING

MC. is talking to a long time NEGRO friend who is a small time preacher
in Almeda, Texas. MC. is trying to give him money. His name is LEACH.

THE PREACHER

(sitting behind his old desk)

This is against God's principals MC
You are asking me to marry you in a
night club.

MC.

(holds money in his hand)

Come on Leach! I knew you before
you made preacher man. We use to
do everything under the sun. Here,
take this as a donation to your building
fund. Marry me and my lady the way
we live our lives. This way we probably

110

MC.(CONT'D)

gotta a better chance of making it
considering all them divorces I hear
of, comes from folks who had
church weddings.

THE PREACHER

(shakes his head as he eyes the money)

I have never forsaken God since
I've been his servant, MC.

MC.

(counts out some more money)
What about the building fund?

THE PREACHER

(looks nervously at the money)
Yeah, but that's---

MC.

(pulls out some more money)
All me and my lady want is a simple
marriage ceremony near the jukebox
at the Honey Dripper. You will be a
part of a historic event, might even
save a few souls. Come on Leach!

THE PREACHER

(curious)
Do your jukebox play gospel?

MC.

(smiles as he counts more money)
Are you kidding? Hey, you talking
about The Five Blind Boys, The Dixie
Humming Birds, The Mighty Clouds of Joy.

THE PREACHER

(grabs the money from MC.'S hand)
Say no more! Amen! It would be an honor.

111

THE PREACHER

(counting money)
Add another hundred to this here?
God would love that, MC.

FADE TO

MUSIC-GOSPEL

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-TWO DAYS LATER-NOON

The PREACHER, LUTHER, best man, JIM and RAT are standing near the JUKEBOX. HELEN is wearing a silk colorful calf length gold dress with gold shoes and a wide brim black hat. MC. is wearing a black fine shark skin suit. They are standing near the JUKEBOX smiling at each other. The AUDIENCE is sitting down at beautiful decorated tables complimented with red roses and white table cloths.

THE PREACHER

(holding bible)

I now pronounce you man and wife.
You may kiss the bride.

The PREACHER turns and put a quarter in the jukebox as MC. and HELEN are kissing each other. He punches a Blue's tune

THE PREACHER(CONT'D)

And may the lord forgive me for having
such a wonderful time.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

Folks start partying and dancing. Everyone is up doing the jitterbug.

112

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-TWO YEARS LATER-NOON-1949

HELEN is dancing with the JUKEBOX. Tears flow down her cheeks. LUTHER is very ill. She is dancing trying to forget the worst. She dances until she is dripping sweat from her face. The music stops and she flops down in a chair at one of the tables. She holds her head in her hands and begin to cry.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

EXT.-1947 PICK-UP TRUCK-LATE NIGHT.

in HELEN and MC. are discussing LUTHER'S condition. They are sitting
the back of MC.'S PICK-UP CHEVY TRUCK. LUTHER doesn't seem
to be getting any better. Two weeks have passed and he is still bed ridden
and is as weak as melted butter. The relatives are coming from
everywhere thinking he has money. HELEN and MC. are very angry.

MC.

(reaches in his ice cooler and pulls out a beer)

I'm angry as hell at all them relatives over at his house. They think LUTHER is rich and they gonna get something. I need to take my 38 over there and clean house. The man is sick, Helen. I don't even think he's going to kick this pneumonia. It done covered both lungs.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

113

CUT TO

EXT.-HONEY DRIPPER-FRONT STEPS-EVENING

JIM and RAT are sitting out on the steps of the HONEY DRIPPER. JIM is smoking one of MR. LUTHER'S cigars. He is almost imitating MR. LUTHER.

RAT

(laughs)

Jim. You crazy. You always imitating
Mr. Luther..... I sure hate he's sick.

JIM

(downs his head)

Yeah.....I guess I miss him so much that
I try to imitate him. Dam!

RAT

(looks into space)

What was the funniest thing he ever told
us about women?

JIM

(imitates)

You boys come sit over here. Grab you
a chair. Listen, women are cool before you
drop your pants, but after you done drop
them pants, it's a whole another ball game
and in her ball park. So if you wanna stay in
your own ball park, keep your pants zipped
up long enough to keep her under control.

RAT

(shakes his head)

He ain't gonna die, Jim. Old people die.
Mr. Luther ain't that old, Jim.

114

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-NEXT MID-MORNING

Helen, Rat, and Jim is at the Night Club. Everyone is worried because they
don't know where LUTHER is. MC. rushes inside, out of breath.

HELEN
(jumps up from a table)
Have you heard anything, MC?!.....

JIM
(shakes his head)
Maybe his relatives killed him, Mr. MC.

RAT
(agrees)
Yeah! Cause those people were like
vultures over there. He was just looking
at everybody and holding on to his briefcase.

CUT TO

INT.-HONEY DRIPPER-FRONT DOOR

LUTHER walks in staggering all over the place with his briefcase and
shotgun. Everybody is shocked as Helen rushes over to him.

HELEN
(worries as she helps him to sit down)
Luther! What are you trying to do, kill
yourself?! You are not well.

Everybody rushes to his aid at the table.

115

LUTHER
(grabs him by the arm)
You need to be in bed. Come on,
I 'm gonna take you back home.

JIM
(looks at Luther)
He's right, Mr. Luther---

RAT
(takes the shot gun)

Let me put this away Mr. Luther--
It just might go off, sir...

LUTHER

(faint smile as he breathes heavy)

I fix their ass! You shoulda seen the
look on their face when I pulled my
shotgun from under the bed. Aunt
Grace ran so fast that she lost her
pretty red shoes and that old no for
good first cousin ran smack into a tree!
All these years, they show up for my
money. Fix they ass good.....I got it all
in this briefcase.....

HELEN

(cries as she bends down to Luther)

Luther, please, for God sakes man,
come on, Let's go home...You don't look good!

LUTHER

(starts to shiver)

Jim and Rat! Come over here!

116

JIM AND RAT

(rushes to his side)

Yes sir, Mr. Luther!.....

LUTHER

(looks them in the face)

Life is a bitch! Do ya'll know that?!

JIM AND RAT

(responds)

Yes sir! We know that. But there is always
hope, Mr. Luther. You got some unfinished
business, remember?

MC.

(interrupts)

Luther. Let's go home. You going to kick this sickness right in the ass.

LUTHER

(faint smile)

Yeah! Well you tell the man up-stairs because Gabriel is about to blow his horn on my ass. Listen Jim and Rat, what unfinished business do I have here?

JIM AND RAT

(responds)

To become rich like the Jewish people..... You know what you always said.

LUTHER

(laughs out loud, then he coughs)

Are you kidding?! MC., Helen, tell these young men that we are already rich. We reached that goal a year ago. Just didn't broadcast it.

117

LUTHER(CONT'D)

(pulls both of them up to him)

Now, Listen, I want you to stick with MC. and Helen. Maybe one day if you show promise, ya'll might become partners.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

The jukebox will live for ever, its music, boys, it's music.

LUTHER looks down at HELEN as she lays her head on his shoulder. He touches her hair with his hand. He takes the briefcase and gives it to HELEN. HELEN holds the briefcase close to her chest. She sits it near the jukebox. LUTHER tries to get up. He wants to look at the jukebox one last time. He nervously pulls a quarter from his pocket. He falls

back in his chair. LUTHER calls for JIM and RAT to take him to the jukebox.

LUTHER

Help me young men to get to the jukebox.
I wanna hear my favorite tune.

JIM AND RAT

(holds his arms and walks him over to the jukebox)
Yes sir! Be careful, sir.

There is silence as he trembles while putting a quarter in the juke box. The sound of the quarter trickles down in the juke box. The jukebox lights up. LUTHER turns away with tears in his eyes. RAT and JIM is trying to hold back their emotions. HELEN is weeping at the bar.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES-B.B. KING

LUTHER stumbles toward the table. JIM and RAT snaps out of it to help him to the table. He sits down quietly.

LUTHER

I must confess.....I am dying.

118

LUTHER(CONT'D)

I shoulda been gone, the doctor told me,
but for some reason, old Gabriel wanted
me to see ya'll face together in the place
I loved so much....The HONEY DRIPPER.
I don't wanna go, but hey! What can I say?
MC., we dreamed of being rich like the
Jewish people, but we didn't dream of sickness.

LUTHER(CONT'D)

Now I know what some people mean
when they say, 'you can have all the
richness, but if your health is bad, you
have nothing.'

FADE TO

MUSIC-B.B. KING-BLUES

CUT TO

INT.-OLD VACANT HONEY DRIPPER-2000-AFTERNOON

HELEN is sitting and holding pictures of MC. and LUTHER. Tears are running down her cheeks. She wipes the dust from the pictures. She kisses both of them. Tears run down her old wrinkle cheeks.

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

CUT TO

EXT.-PARADISE CEMETERY-HOUSTON, TEXAS-MORNING

JIM, RAT and HELEN are putting red roses on MC. and LUTHER'S graves. Their graves are next to each other. On MC'S grave, a jukebox is carved in the gravestone. On LUTHER'S grave, THE HONEY DRIPPER NIGHT CLUB with a jukebox is carved on the gravestone.

119

LUTHER'S GRAVESTONE:
Luther Johnson
Heart Made of Honey
1902-1949

MC.' S GRAVESTONE:
MC. BROWN
The Jukebox Man
1902-1965

FADE TO

MUSIC-BLUES

THE END

