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The Rag Player

FADE TO

EXT.-RED TWO-STORY BRICK HOUSE-MID-MORNING-1970

CUT TO:

Four YOUNG BLACK CHILDREN are playing hopscotch outside a two story brick house in Houston, Texas. Suddenly, they hear the sound of a piano coming from the house. The children run up on the porch and peep through the partially cracked door. Their eighty year old great UNCLE JOHNNY is playing the piano again. He usually plays it just on holidays. The children walk quietly in the house.

FADE TO

INT.-RED BRICK HOUSE

PIANO MUSIC-RAGTIME

CUT TO:

UNCLE JOHNNY is sitting at the piano. The sound of Ragtime music plays throughout the house. A bottle of beer and a half cigar sit on top of the piano.

He doesn't notice the children as he close his eyes. He remembers the good times with his dancing sister, Winnie.

UNCLE JOHNNY FLASHES BACK

FADE TO

INT.-THE RAGS NIGHT CLUB-LUFKIN, TX-1909-MID-DAY

CUT TO:

WINNIE is a eighteen year old young Colored country girl dancing to the  
sound  
of nineteen year old JOHNNY'S piano. She is dancing so much that sweat drips down on her pretty 1900's after five red evening dress. JOHNNY is smiling and

playing Ragtime.

FADE TO

INT.-RED BRICK HOUSE-1970-UNCLE JOHNNY PLAYING PIANO  
PIANO MUSIC-RAGTIME

CUT TO:

The CHILDREN are walking slowly toward UNCLE JOHNNY. He stops  
to take a drink of beer. He gulps the beer down, then picks up his half cigar  
and puts it in the corner of his mouth. Just as he gets ready to play again, all  
the children crowd around the piano. He looks surprise.

UNCLE JOHNNY

Where did all ya'll come from? I didn't  
hear ya'll come in, children. Old age must  
be getting to me, little nieces and nephew.

THE CHILDREN

We heard the piano when we were  
playing hopscotch! And we remembered  
that you only play this kind of music  
on holidays, Uncle Johnny.

#1 CHILD

And we said, "I know Uncle Johnny not  
playing that kind of music today because  
it ain't Thanksgiving or Christmas."

UNCLE JOHNNY laughs as he sits the bottle of beer back on top of the  
piano. He straightens his brim on his felt hat and cocks it to the side.

UNCLE JOHNNY

It sure isn't, children.

#2 CHILD

And I said, "Aint Sallie gonna really fuss  
at Uncle Johnny because she only let  
him play Ragtime on holidays.

UNCLE JOHNNY laughs as he gets ready to play another tune.

UNCLE JOHNNY

Well, you sho-nough right about that child.

#3 CHILD

Ain't you scared she gonna catch  
you, Uncle Johnny?

UNCLE JOHNNY

(smiles)

Ah! No. A little fussing won't hurt me.  
Its worth it when I can play Ragtime.

#4 CHILD

How come Aint Sallie just let you play  
Ragtime on holidays, Uncle Johnny? I like  
the sound of Ragtime. That's not fair.  
One day I wanna play just like you.

UNCLE JOHNNY turns on the piano stool, takes off his hat and bends  
over toward the children sitting on the floor.

UNCLE JOHNNY

Now, now, I know all ya'll get excited over my  
music. And it is nice to hear that one of you  
wanna play the piano. Its always good to know  
where're you wanna be, but first, your education.  
Opportunities are very slim for black folks, but  
they gonna get better. Now this old piano used to  
put some extra cash in my pockets when I was  
just a young farm boy. I didn't go no farther than  
the third grade. Couldn't even read music, just  
played by ear, you understand.

#4 CHILD

Playing a piano like that, you don't need any  
school, Uncle Johnny, just music.

#3 CHILD

I don't understand Aint Sallie. Why she just let  
you play on holidays, Uncle Johnny?

#2 CHILD

Yeah. That's being mean, Uncle Johnny.

#UNCLE JOHNNY  
Aint Sallie thinks that Ragtime music is not

UNCLE JOHNNY(CONT'D)  
Godly music. Its for those fast girls  
and men that party in the night clubs.

#3 CHILD  
Will you play us some Ragtime, Uncle  
Johnny, please?

#2 CHILD  
Yeah. Before Aint Sallie comes.

UNCLE JOHNNY  
Aint Sallie is away on a Church Convention  
and won't be back until tomorrow.

CHILDREN  
Then what are you waiting on, Uncle Johnny?

UNCLE JOHNNY turns on the stool toward the piano. He puts his felt hat  
on  
and cocks it to one side. He takes the half cigar and put it in the corner of  
his  
mouth. He wiggles his fingers to loosen them up. The children get closer  
and  
crowd around the piano. They wait patiently.

UNCLE JOHNNY  
Lets see now.....

FADE TO

PIANO MUSIC-RAGTIME-MAPLE LEAF RAG

CUT TO:

PIANO KEYS AND UNCLE JOHNNY FINGERS AS HE PLAYS.

UNCLE JOHNNY FLASHBACK

FADE TO

INT.- THE RAGS NIGHT CLUB-1909-MID-DAY

CUT TO:

His young sister, WINNIE is dancing as UNCLE JOHNNY plays the piano at The RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB in Lufkin, Texas.

FADE TO

PIANO KEYS AND UNCLE JOHNNY FINGERS PLAYING

CUT TO:

INT.- RED BRICK HOUSE AND CHILDREN

the UNCLE JOHNNY finishes his last note on the piano and bows his head to children. They all clap.

#4 CHILD BOY

UNCLE JOHNNY, if I could play like that, I wouldn't have a worry in the world, money would just fall from the sky on my doorsteps.

UNCLE JOHNNY

(smiles as he pulls off his felt hat)

You know, money is not everything. That's the difference with young people today .Hey, in the old days, it just felt good to have a talent to make people happy and joyful. Sometimes I made a few nickels and dimes but sometimes I didn't make anything.

#3 CHILD

UNCLE JOHNNY! Is it true that your sister danced in the night clubs while you played the piano?

#4 CHILD

(laughs)

You talking about Aint Winnie!  
You got to be dreaming, girl.

#2 CHILD

Aint Winnie, the beautician?  
Uncle Johnny's sister?

#4 CHILD BOY

(laughs as he pulls his ears)

The Aint Winnie that look to see whether your ears are clean before entering her house? Man, my cousin told me every time her mother tells her to spend the night at Aint Winnie. She said she would rush to the bathroom to wash her ears clean.

UNCLE JOHNNY

(laughs)

That's my sister. Boy, but couldn't she dance!

#3CHILD

(happy)

Then it is true! I told ya'll. Next time you gonna believe me when I say something.

#4 CHILD BOY

(in disbelief)

Uncle Johnny, you all really had a sister and brother act in a night club.

UNCLE JOHNNY

(smiles as he pulls his hat off)

Yep. And Aint Winnie could sure cut a rug. Children, I would start off with old ragtime and Aint Winnie would come out and light up the night club right in the heart of the Negro community in old Lufkin, Texas. Our little world was a happy one children. Oh, she could dance all night.

The CHILDREN just stand wanting to hear more about AINT WINNIE. UNCLE JOHNNY reaches in his wash pocket and pulls out a railroad watch. He looks at the time and stands up. The children are still waiting for him to continue his story.

UNCLE JOHNNY

(closes the top to the piano)

Listen, Children, my wife left me some chores  
to do----now if ya'll wanna help-----

The CHILDREN turns and look at each other and snap their fingers.

THE CHILDREN

Uncle Johnny! We just remembered.  
Mama left us some chores too.  
See you Later!

The CHILDREN run out the house. UNCLE JOHNNY laughs. He really wants to go take a shot of whisky from his liquor cabinet in the den.

CUT TO

INT.-BRICK HOUSE-LIVING ROOM

UNCLE JOHNNY peeps out the den window to make sure the CHILDREN are outside. Then he turns to his wooden made bar cabinet, opens it, take a small shot glass from the shelf, blows the dust from it and picks up a bottle of whisky. He sits in a nearby chair and pours him a shot of whisky. He gulps it down quickly, wipes his mouth and sits back in his reclining chair. He smiles as he remember the good old days in a small country town in east Texas called Lufkin. The sound of Ragtime music ring in his ears. The dancing steps of his sister, Winnie, brings joy to his face. He pours another shot of whisky and swallows it down. He sits back in the reclining chair, get comfortable and thinks about his youth and music. Thinking of the good old days refreshes his soul as a musician who loves Ragtime. Home alone gives UNCLE JOHNNY that pleasure to reflect and enjoy the moments.

UNCLE JOHNNY FLASHBACK

FADE TO

MUSIC-RAGTIME-BLUE GOOSE RAG

INT.-THE RAGTIMER NIGHTCLUB-NIGHT-1910

CUT TO:

COLORED PEOPLE are dancing to YOUNG JOHNNY CRISWELL'S Ragtime music. OTHERS are standing and sitting around chatting. WOMEN and MEN are sporting their 1900's fashions and stylish hats.

ONE PERSON

(yells out to Johnny)

Hey! JOHNNY! Where is your sister, Winnie?!

Suddenly YOUNG EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD WINNIE appears. She looks foxy in her red dress, gold shoes and stylish hat. She begins to dance to her brother's Ragtime music. The crowd is applauding as YOUNG EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD WINNIE does exploding dance steps while her brother JOHNNY plays the Ragtime.

FADE TO

MUSIC-RAGTIME

INT.-THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-LATE NIGHT

CUT TO:

THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB is empty. The COLORED owner, MR. LUCAS wipes off his bar and counter. JOHNNY and his sister WINNIE are getting ready to leave the club. WINNIE is carrying her dancing shoes and red dress in a shopping bag. The owner doesn't see them as he continues to straighten up his place.

JOHNNY

(turns to Mr. Lucas)

We'll see you next week, Mr. Lucas.

MR. LUCAS stops what he is doing and reach into his pockets.

MR. LUCAS  
(comes from behind the counter)  
Hey! Winnie and Johnny.  
We had a nice house tonight.

MR. LUCAS counts some bills out as he approach JOHNNY and  
WINNIE.

MR. LUCAS  
(still counting money)  
We made a little money tonight.

MR. LUCAS hands each one of them some money.

WINNIE AND JOHNNY  
Thanks Mr. Lucas.

JOHNNY  
(puts money in his pocket)  
It's getting better every week end, Winnie!

MR. LUCAS  
(serious)  
You two are very good. You make a  
good brother and sister act. Have you  
ever thought about leaving Lufkin? You  
probably could make it in a big city. With  
an act like ya'll have, hey no telling. But  
not soon because I wanna see you back  
here next weekend.

WINNIE  
(blushes)  
Thank you Mr. Lucas for letting us do our  
act in your club.

MR. LUCAS  
(smiles proudly)  
Hey! Color folks have to help one another,  
don't we? Like I said, your act is good.  
My customers love Johnny and Winnie.

I always wanted to play a piano like that.  
A God given talent...! Tell your mama, I'm  
sorry I kept ya'll too late. I think she know  
I'm gonna look after you and Winnie

JOHNNY cocks his hat to the side and pulls on his suspenders

JOHNNY

The only reason she's letting us come  
here is because of you, Mr. Lucas.

MR. LUCAS

I can appreciate her trust. Your mama and  
I goes way back to the cotton fields. You think

picking cotton is hard now. You shoulda been  
back in the days when I was growing up.

JOHNNY'S brother FELIX rushes in the door out of breath. He stops,  
sweat pouring down his face. His shirt sticks to his body. His heart beat  
is pounding through his shirt. He is the older brother.

FELIX

Johnny and Winnie! You got Mama worried  
stiff... Ya'll shouldn't be walking them trails  
back home this late. We got some mean white  
folks just waiting in the bushes to bother you..  
C'mon, let's go!

MR. LUCAS

(apologizes)

I'm sorry Felix. We just had a full house  
tonight... Winnie and Johnny just couldn't  
do enough for the crowd. Tell your mama  
it won't happen again. Tell her if she still  
want to sell her pies and cakes here on  
Saturday. She's welcome.

FELIX

(rushes)

I will, Mr. Lucas. Now C'mon ya'll. It's  
already jet dark out there.

FADE TO

INT.-BIG HOUSE IN HOUSTON-ONE YEAR LATER-1913-  
CRISWELL  
FAMILY REUNION-MID DAY

CUT TO:

FELIX, JOHNNY, WINNIE and other families and relatives are standing  
chatting. Everyone is laughing and joking.

SAM walks out the crowd toward

JOHNNY. FELIX spots an old cousin across the room as he walks away.

SAM

Hey! You two. Uh, Johnny Criswell  
and Winnie, the dancing queen. Do you  
remember me?

JOHNNY

(thinks as he looks Sam over)

Yeah! I remembered. I met you at The  
Ragtimer Night Club in Lufkin.

SAM

(excited)

That's it! You and your sister sure did  
light that old club up. My name is Sam.

JOHNNY and Sam shake hands.

JOHNNY

(introduces)

This is Winnie, my sister.

SAM and WINNIE shake hands.

SAM

Please to meet you.... Well, I was just visiting  
Lufkin that night I caught your show. I was  
raised up in Garrison, not too far from  
Lufkin. I live in Chicago now. Ya'll ever thought  
about coming to the city with your act?

WINNIE

(unconcern smile)

Not really. We wouldn't think of leaving mama alone in these neck of the woods.

SAM

(pulls out a card from his shirt pocket)

Well, if you ever decided to do that. Here's my business card. Ya'll are really good. I'm in the entertainment business.

JOHNNY

(out of respect)

We'll be sure to do that Sam.

SAM leaves to go talk to another person that catches his attention.

JOHNNY(CONT'D)

(points)

Whose that woman over there? She has been looking at us ever since we walked in the door.

WINNIE

(slaps Johnny's finger down)

Johnny! Don't point! That's not being polite.

Didn't mama teach you that?

JOHNNY

(smiles)

I kindna like that young woman, Winnie.

WINNIE

(reminds)

They tell me these city women and men will eat you alive if you don't know better. And how you know she's been looking at us?

JOHNNY winks his eye at the WOMAN as she looks at him again. The WOMAN smiles and turns her head. She mumbles something to her friends as

they look over at JOHNNY and laughs.

JOHNNY  
Aw Winnie! Relax. Let's enjoy ourselves.

JOHNNY  
(excited)  
Here comes our cousin! Don't  
you remember Alex?...

WINNIE  
(responds)  
Never heard or laid eyes on him before.

ALEX walks over to them with a beer in his hand

ALEX  
(approaches)  
Well, I'll be. I didn't think you  
were coming---and this must be your  
little sister, Winnie. Last time I saw  
you, you were a little bitty thing, but  
look at you now.

JOHNNY  
(laughs)  
You see Winnie, I forgot you were  
so small when Alex came around.  
Alex is our mother sister's child.

WINNIE  
(nonchalance)  
So that makes us first cousins, huh?

ALEX  
(laughs)  
That's right Winnie. Now you catching on.

JOHNNY  
(continues)  
Alex. It's been a long time

ALEX  
(pats him on the shoulder)  
Too long Johnny we use to be like brothers.  
Do you remember my mama's old piano?

JOHNNY  
(laughs)  
Do I remember... How can I forget!

ALEX  
(takes a sip of beer)  
Winnie. Has Johnny ever told you  
what we use to do on Sundays?...

WINNIE  
(not excited)  
What were there to do?...Everybody were  
suppose to be in church-----you mean what  
you did after after church?

ALEX  
(laughs)  
Everybody but us!

JOHNNY  
(laughs)  
Yeah! And we are lucky we didn't get caught  
because your mama and my mama would have  
whooped us to 'kingdom come' and left just  
enough for our Papas to finish the job.

WINNIE  
(curious)  
Well. Are ya'll gonna tell me or not.  
Just maybe it ain't funny to me.

ALEX  
(shakes his head)  
It's funny. Even more, because if we had  
been caught... I don't think we would be  
standing here talking about it.

WINNIE

(impatient)

Johnny and Alex! I'm still waiting ya'll!

ALEX

(takes another sip of beer)

You see, little cous, Every Sunday when we would go to church, well when everybody started shoutin and everything and the preacher started walking up and down the pulpit yelling and screaming. Me and your brother Johnny here would sneak out the back door and run home to Mama's old piano. I use to Tap and Johnny would whoop up some ragtime.

WINNIE

(shakes her head)

You musta been mighty brave... .Color folks don't play when it come to church time. They take the sabbath day pretty serious.

ALEX

(changes conversation)

Listen... uh news travels fast... .now I heard *you* and your sister got something cooking in Lufkin at The Ragtimer Club. You whooping on the piano and Winnie sanding the dance floor. Everybody is talking about how good you and Winnie are.

WINNIE

(comments)

We just like to make people happy Cousin Alex. We love to hear people laugh and enjoy themselves and Color folks do know how to have fun.

ALEX

(complements)

Hey! Your sister have a good sense of humor.

JOHNNY

(responds)

Yep. You are right. She know just what to

say at the right time. She gives you a little  
and not much. Her real talking  
is done on the dance floor

ALEX

(smiles)

Speaking of dancing... Listen. Uh, why don't  
you two do something for the relatives...

JOHNNY

(curious)

How are we gonna do something?  
Where's the piano?

WINNIE

(comments)

Can't dance without a piano, Cousin Alex.

ALEX

(responds)

I can fix that problem----just say you two  
will do something.

JOHNNY

(responds with a smile))

Only if you do something for me Cousin Alex.

ALEX

(looks at his watch)

Anything for you Johnny Criswell.

CUT TO:

Three young ladies are talking and laughing across the room. They are  
looking at  
JOHNNY with a blushing face. Sallie, one of the ladies aren't paying  
JOHNNY  
any attention like the others. She just ignores the flirting.

CUT TO:

JOHNNY waves back at the flirting ladies. He sees that Sallie isn't flirting.  
JOHNNY keeps waving until Sallie just walks away to another group of

ladies.

JOHNNY

That lady over there.... the one that is  
talking to the lady with the red hat.  
Introduce me after we do our act.

WINNIE

(responds quickly)

Johnny! I told you, these city girls will  
eat you alive

ALEX

(shakes his head)

Girl! You shough- nuf from Lufkin. Sallie  
Strawder is a fine country girl just like  
you---the only difference  
is she just look like a city girl.

JOHNNY

(curious)

Where is Sallie from Alex?

ALEX

(shakes his head)

Johnny I don't know the woman's life history.  
I will introduce you to her after the act.

WINNIE

(sits down on near by chair)

If you not thinking about marriage Johnny  
Criswell, you best let her alone. She is a  
serious woman. I can see it... .She is  
very religious too.

ALEX

(laughs as he lights up a cigar)

How do you know that, Winnie? Listen I'm  
going to dust that old piano off in the next  
room and then make the announcement... .  
Get ready Winnie and Johnny.

WINNIE is serious as she pulls her dancing shoes from her large purse.  
She begins to put them on while JOHNNY is still observing SALLIE.

WINNIE  
Only another woman can smell another... .  
Mama always told me that.

JOHNNY  
(snaps as he sits down in a chair )  
Winnie! Don't start judging her. I can take  
care of myself.. .Anyway it's about time  
I settle down.

WINNIE is acting very jealous. She throws her old shoes in her big purse.

WINNIE  
(serious)  
And quit playing Ragtime! Quit making  
Color folks happy! What about me Johnny  
Criswell? I'm not ready to quit dancing... .  
This is my life.

CUT TO:

ALEX and THREE COLOR MEN are carrying the piano. They sit it down  
in  
the middle of the crowded room. Everybody begins to mumble. ALEX  
pulls  
the white dusty sheet from the old piano. He throws the sheet in the corner  
and  
becks for JOHNNY and WINNIE.

CUT TO:

JOHNNY  
(calms her down)  
Listen. ...It' s gonna be all right!  
Cousin Alex is ready for our act, Winnie.  
Come on.

WINNIE  
(gets up slowly)  
I've never danced around city folks before.

JOHNNY holds her hand as they walk toward the piano. FOLKS are still  
wondering what is going on. THEY have never heard of WINNIE and  
JOHNNY.

JOHNNY

Just don't look them in the face when you  
dance... Just pretend that you are dancing  
in The Ragtimer.

COUSIN ALEX is getting ready to introduce WINNIE and JOHNNY.  
Everybody gather around the old piano. JOHNNY sits down at the piano.  
FOLKS don't realize that it is a dance and piano act. WINNIE weaves a  
space for herself on the floor.

WINNIE

(not nervous anymore)

Will all ya'll give me some room?

FOLKS look surprised at WINNIE as she waits for ALEX to introduce  
them.

FOLKS are mumbling among themselves as JOHNNY opens the cover up  
to the white piano keys. ALEX steps in the middle of the floor next to  
WINNIE.

ALEX

(introduces)

Can I get everyone's attention, please! I have  
a special treat for all of you beautiful relatives  
and friends. We have talent in the family from  
all sides and if you like that old Ragtime music,  
Winnie is going to dance and her brother Johnny  
is going to whoop up on this old piano. It's  
been in the family for years. Ladies and gentlemen,  
Winnie and Johnny!

JOHNNY plays the piano and WINNIE starts to dance to the ragtime  
beat.

Everyone is transfixed at the footwork of Winnie. Folks start to clapping to  
the sound of Winnie's movement on the floor. JOHNNY smiles as he  
straddles

the piano stool, whipping up on that old piano. SALLIE is looking at  
JOHNNY

as he nods at her. WINNIE's body is wet with sweat as she does all kinds of  
fancy dance moves. Folks are pointing and laughing, enjoying the talent of

WINNIE and JOHNNY. JOHNNY ends the act by strolling his fingers across the old piano keys. WINNIE stops and bows to the observers. ALEX rushes to the middle of the floor with a half cigar in his mouth.

ALEX

(excited)

Winnie and Johnny, folks! They are family!  
They deserve another big hand! Yeh!

Everybody give a strong ovation as they mumble about WINNIE and JOHNNY.

their

JOHNNY and WINNIE stand in the middle of the floor with a smile on

faces. JOHNNY never take his eyes off of SALLIE as she turns to talk to others. JOHNNY leans over and whispers something in ALEX'S ear.

WINNIE

kinds of downs her head. She hears the whisper.

JOHNNY

(whispers in Alex's ear)

Now can you introduce me?!

SALLIE is talking with other friends across the room. She kinds of stops to take a glance of JOHNNY. JOHNNY waves a little and she just gives a half smile and turns away.

ALEX

(laughs as he sip his beer)

I don't want you falling in love on  
me Johnny----come on, I'll introduce  
you and Winnie to this charming woman  
that you just can't keep your eyes off.

JOHNNY and ALEX start walking toward SALLIE but WINNIE doesn't move.

She just stands there with a jealous look on her face. She really doesn't want

JOHNNY to meet SALLIE. She fears that JOHNNY will fall in love and their

act will no longer exist.

JOHNNY  
(looks back at Winnie)  
Come on Winnie!

WINNIE  
(turns away from Johnny)  
No. You go on. I'm gonna get me some  
punch.

JOHNNY  
(looks sadly as Winnie walks away)  
Winnie. Don't be like this.

WINNIE never looks back as JOHNNY catches up with ALEX as he weaves his way toward SALLIE and friends. ALEX approaches SALLIE. He tells her that JOHNNY wants to meet her. SALLIE walks away from her friends with ALEX as JOHNNY walks up.

ALEX  
(introduces Johnny)  
Sallie Strawder. This is Johnny Criswell.  
I promised him if he and Winnie do their  
act, I would introduce him to you because  
he has been asking me all night for this  
moment.

SALLIE kind of blushes.

CUT TO:

WINNIE is pouring a cup of punch while she eye WINNIE and JOHNNY. An elderly lady walks up to WINNIE as she stares at ALEX introducing JOHNNY and SALLIE. She doesn't notices the lady. OLD LADY taps WINNIE on the shoulder. WINNIE turns as if coming out of day dream.

OLD LADY  
May I ask you a question, Winnie?

WINNIE  
(sips her punch)

Yes, mam.....I can't promise you  
I can answer it right now.

OLD LADY

(sits down in a chair next to Winnie)

Where did you learn how to  
ragtime like that? You were just  
simply great or shall I say, 'breath-  
taking.' You made me want to  
shake a leg---you and your  
brother are good---real good.  
Remind me of myself.....By the  
way, my name is Sarah...Everybody  
call me Miss Rah.....

WINNIE

(smiles)

Well, Miss Sarah, thank you for liking us....  
I guess it runs in my family. My grandpa  
and grandma used to do just what Johnny  
and me is doing. We just love to make  
folks happy----and what other way to do  
that than dancing the ragtime.

OLD LADY

You couldn't have said it better, child.

The OLD LADY stands up as she puts her white gloves on. She reaches  
down in  
her purse and pulls out a flyer. She holds it down to WINNIE. WINNIE'S  
big  
eyes raises up to the flyer.

OLD LADY

(holding flyer in her hand)

Listen.....Take this....I own a fabulous  
night club in the South Side of  
Houston. I would love to hire you  
and your brother as an week end act  
in my club.....

WINNIE

(slowly takes the flyer)

Why thank Miss Sarah, but city life  
ain't for me.....I'm just a country girl,  
Miss Sarah.....I don't think---

OLD LADY

(smiles as she pats Winnie on the shoulder)  
Honey. Think about it....I'm not in any  
hurry.....just think about it.....Listen  
I gotta go-----and remember don't  
waste your talents in a cotten field child.  
I almost did.....

The OLD LADY turns and leaves. WINNIE gazes at the flyer again. She  
doesn't know whether to throw it in the trash or to keep it. Finally she  
folds the  
flyer and put it in her purse.

CUT TO:

On the other side of the room stand SALLIE and JOHNNY talking to  
each  
other. SALLIE is smiling and JOHNNY is educating her on Ragtime  
music.

JOHNNY

(takes a sip of beer)  
Now, folks always ask my sister  
and me that question.

SALLIE

(curious)  
So. Are you going to tell me? Its not  
like a country boy and girl to out act  
the city slickers. There must be some  
other blood in you.

JOHNNY

(takes her by the hand)  
Come on!

SALLIE

(reluctantly)  
Wait! Where are we going?

JOHNNY  
(turns and smiles)  
You do want me to tell you, huh?

SALLIE  
(curious but hesitate)  
Why yes, but-----

JOHNNY  
Well, come on! Lets get some air.  
I wanna be able to look in your eyes  
without interruption.....I want bite you!

SALLIE takes a deep breath, smiles and follow JOHNNY through the crowded room.

CUT TO:

WINNIE is sitting alone watching SALLIE and JOHNNY disappear through the crowd. Folks are still passing and acknowledging WINNIE'S dancing talents.  
JOHNNY and SALLIE exit the room, out of WINNIE'S sight. WINNIE gets up and looks around the room. She turns and sits sadly back down.

FADE TO

EXT. FRONT PORCH STEPS-FULL MOON-NIGHT

MUSIC: RAGTIME-NAPPY LEE

CUT TO

JOHNNY and SALLIE are sitting on the front porch of the house.  
JOHNNY is looking up at the moon. SALLIE is taking in a deep breath of fresh air. She kind of looks at JOHNNY while he is watching the moon. A dog is barking in the night. JOHNNY moves closer to SALLIE as he holds her hand.

SALLIE

(reluctantly resist)

Not so fast Johnny Criswell--

JOHNNY

(catches his emotions and backs off)

Sorry. It must be the perfume you  
are wearing. You smell so good.

SALLIE

(smiles)

And I thought you were just a country  
boy. I think you have a little city slick  
in you too.

JOHNNY laughs as he looks away into the stars. He likes SALLIE, but  
he doesn't want to be too aggressive. He calms down.

SALLIE

(reminds him)

I'm still waiting, Johnny Criswell.

JOHNNY

(remembers as he grabs her hand)

Oh. Yes!....Grandpa Step!

SALLIE

(laughs)

Grandpa Step! You are joking!

JOHNNY

Yes. Grandpa Step! He taught me  
how to play ragtime when I was only  
three.....

SALLIE

Grandpa Step. What a name. How could  
anyone forget him.....

JOHNNY

(continues)

They gave him that name in Chicago.  
He could dance and play ragtime  
at the same time.....So people just

shouted, 'STEP!' The name caught on. Now my grandfather was a stepper and city slick. He always came back to the country to play around with Winnie and me. Winnie used to light up when she saw his feet move on the floor. She started immitating him at three. My mother didn't agree to it, but it was just in our blood.

SALLIE

(compliments)

Grandpa Step.....He gave ya'll a rare talent. I complement him where ever his soul is. You two are pretty good. I don't like nothing but church music, but for a while you had me snapping my fingers. The titles of some of your acts and songs, like 'Possum And Taters,' Maple Leaf Rag,' 'Pastime Rag' and many others.

FADE TO

INT. SCREEN DOOR OF HOUSE

CUT TO:

WINNIE is standing inside the screen door listening to the conversation of JOHNNY and SALLIE. She fears JOHNNY is going to fall in love with SALLIE. She has never seen JOHNNY so attractive to a woman before. She just stands there without saying a word.

CUT TO:

JOHNNY is holding hands with SALLIE. SALLIE is not resisting as WINNIE jealousy is arousing.

CUT TO:

WINNIE opens the screen door, walks to the other side of the steps and interrupts the conversation.

WINNIE

(serious)

Blues, jazz, gospel and ragtime  
all belong to each other. Grandpa  
Step taught us that. If you listen  
to it closely, the rhythm is there.

SALLIE

(smiles as she looks up at Winnie)

Oh. Hi! And you are Winnie. I  
was just trying to understand.  
You just might be right, Winnie.

WINNIE

(uncomfortable)

Johnny. I'm going get something to drink----  
You want something to?

JOHNNY

(eyes on Sallie)

Uh, no! You go on Winnie... I'll get  
something later.

WINNIE walks back in the house feeling rejection and lonely. JOHNNY  
is  
so much off into SALLIE that he isn't thinking how alone his country  
sister  
is feeling.

SALLIE

(concerns)

Is Winnie all right, Johnny. She doesn't  
seem to be happy about something.

JOHNNY

(not serious)

Winnie! She's fine. That's her personality  
when she's not dancing.

SALLIE

(insecure)

Why am I getting the feeling your sister  
doesn't care that much for me?

JOHNNY

(defends)

Sometimes when I don't give her all the attention, she kinds of show her jealous side. But it all passes once we do our act together. But she is shy around city folks.

SALLIE

(smiles)

Something like that, huh? Well, tell Winnie that I'm just a country girl right outside of Conroe called Leonidas... Where are you from?

JOHNNY

(responds)

I'm from Lufkin. I still live there.

SALLIE

(responds)

I see. I attended Wiley College with some students from Lufkin.

JOHNNY

(responds slowly)

Oh you go to college?...

SALLIE

(laughs)

Do I really look that young Johnny Criswell. Thanks for the compliment, but I've graduated. What about---

JOHNNY

(smiles as he holds her hand)

What does a smart country girl like you doing in a little town like Leonidas if I may ask.

SALLIE

(explains)

I have a one room school house and I teach except when cotton picking time comes. All the children have to leave school to pick cotton My mama is a share cropper. We don't own our land... My father died when I was very young.

JOHNNY

(shakes his head)

We have a lot in common Sallie Strawder.

SALLIE

(serious)

The only way I was able to go to college, I wrote the president of Wiley and begged him for some kind of scholarship, anything that could

SALLIE(CONT'D)

pay my college fee. He gave me that chance. I wore the same dress to class so many times that I could count the number of threads in it.

JOHNNY

(complements)

You are a very smart and brave woman, Sallie Strawder.

SALLIE

(serious)

I'm just detremine to be different. The chances are slim for us, but I will take the slim chances and hope for the best.

JOHNNY

(downs his head)

You are a very important woman, Sallie Strawder. I respect school teachers. I just wish-----

SALLIE

(curious)

And what do you want to do besides play the piano? You must always have a back-up, Mama said.

JOHNNY

(slowly)

My piano is my back-up, Sallie. I didn't go no farther than the 5th grade. Had to drop out of school to help my mama on the

farm after my father died... .You're just lucky I guess, going to college and all. Very few of us around east Texas get by the third grade.

SALLIE

(smiles)

No luck Johnny Criswell.  
Just the blessings  
of God Almighty!.....  
Listen I have to go.

JOHNNY

Did I say something wrong?

SALLIE

(smiles)

Say something wrong? No lord! I'm  
being interviewed tomorrow  
in a little town called Almeda outside  
of Houston. I applied for a teaching job  
there. I have to get my rest. Don't  
wanna look all tired eyes. Wish me luck,  
Johnny Criswell.

JOHNNY

(humble)

Will I see you again, Sallie?

SALLIE

(pulls a pencil and paper from her purse)

I would like to. Here's my address. Write  
to me. I don't go to night clubs, so I  
have probably seen you play for the last  
time, Johnny Criswell. God bless.

SALLIE turns and walks in the house while WINNIE passes her in the screen

doorway. WINNIE nods with a half smile. SALLIE does the same.

WINNIE

walks up to JOHNNY with two drinks in her hands. She sits down on the porch as JOHNNY just stares at the address. He folds it up and puts it in his

pocket. WINNIE gives JOHNNY the drink.

WINNIE

(curious)

You like her, don't you?

JOHNNY

(smiles)

Maybe... maybe and maybe not Little Sister.  
C'mon. Let's go home.. Lufkin is waiting.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-PASTIME RAG

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF THE CRISWELLS IN LUFKIN

CUT TO:

JOHNNY CRISWELL is sitting on the porch reading a letter from  
SALLIE  
STRAWDER. He smiles as he continues to read. FELIX walks up.  
JOHNNY  
doesn't notice him.

FELIX

(agitates)

My brother done fell in love. Your nose  
is as wide as them old bulls out there.

JOHNNY

(smiles as he continues to read)

I never told you that, Felix.

FELIX

(sits down on the steps)

Don't have to... I could see the glow in  
your eyes when you were reading the letter.

JOHNNY

(folds the letter and puts it his shirt pocket)

Well, I can't read that well, but she wrote  
it plain enough for me to understand.

FELIX

(changes conversation)

Winnie is worried. She think that this woman  
will interfere with ya'll dance act.

JOHNNY

(protective)

Sallie Strawder is her name.

FELIX

(serious)

Do you think Winnie is right or what? I would  
hate  
to see that happen Johnny. You and Winnie are the  
only one that got a chance in this family to show  
your  
talents to Color folks. You might never make it big  
anywhere else, but you are big here in Lufkin. Ya'll  
make people laugh and happy, Johnny.

JOHNNY

(shakes his head)

I know and maybe God have other plans for me  
Felix.  
Maybe he has better plans for Winnie too. We've  
been  
dancing and playing the piano as long as I can  
remember.  
And we are still here in Lufkin waiting on cotton  
season.

FELIX

(personal and serious)

I just want you to be sure what you getting yourself  
into. I don't want you to be going on a wild goose  
chase,  
Johnny. Lord knows I've done that enough for both  
of us.  
Now Winnie told me this woman or Sallie Strawder  
is a  
school teacher.

JOHNNY

(excited)

Yeah! She is and a good one!

FELIX

(looks straight out into the fields)

Winnie tells me that Sallie is religious, so religious that she listen to nothing but gospel music. Now how you gonna mix that up with ragtime, Johnny?

JOHNNY

(defensive)

Why are you asking me all these questions Felix? I'm not married to her. I can take care of myself.

FELIX

(he pats Johnny on the shoulder)

Listen. I'm your older brother. We 're family Johnny and family take care of one another.. .I just want you to be sure... . We are all Mama got since Papa passed... . Did you play them numbers the other day?

JOHNNY shakes his head as he pulls out a piece of paper from his shirt pocket

JOHNNY

Sure did. I haven't heard anything yet.

FELIX

(takes a look at the numbers)

I've been playing the numbers for a long time, only hit big a couple of times.

JOHNNY

(puts numbers back in pocket)

I didn't even know Policy existed until you told me.

FELIX

(stands up and put on his hat)

You're a big boy now. It was time for you know a few games, Johnny. Just keep it a secret for yourself....

Don't want mama to know. See ya  
later. I got some business in town.

JOHNNY

(folds letter and put in his pocket)

Yeah! I'm going get some rest.  
Where's Mama?

FELIX

(walks toward the road)

She took some cakes and pies over  
to Aint Rosy's house.

FADE TO

INT. RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-NIGHT-12:00PM

MUSIC: THE HANDS OF JOHNNY PLAYING RAGTIME ON PIANO

CUT TO:

JOHNNY and WINNIE are doing their last show. JOHNNY closes the  
tune  
out as WINNIE takes a bow to the crowd. People are clapping. The owner,  
MR. LUCAS is wiping off his bar with a smile on his face. JOHNNY run  
his  
fingers across the piano keys, stops and take a shot of whiskey. WINNIE  
sits  
down at one of the table as people exit the club. She pulls off her dancing  
shoes  
and put them in her big purse. JOHNNY takes his hat off the top of the  
piano,  
runs his finger across the top and cocks it to one side of his head.

MR. LUCAS

(putting up things on the bar)

Good show tonight. Now ya'll  
be careful walking home. Take  
the short cut. Don't walk on  
them white folks property. Its  
been pretty quiet around here,

too quiet. You just never know  
when they gonna change on you.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME

EXT. JOHNNY AND WINNIE WALKING DOWN DARK ROAD

CUT TO:

WINNIE and JOHNNY are discussing SALLIE. WINNIE is angry as she walks fast ahead of JOHNNY. She throws her hands up in the air as JOHNNY is trying to control her anger. He catches up with her and pulls her by the arm. WINNIE jerks away with tears in her eyes. They stop as JOHNNY explains.

JOHNNY

Aw! Winnie! Come on! You are my sister and partner... Sallie know how much we mean to each other... She comes from a large family and she does everything she possible can for her sisters, mother and brothers. I would never leave my family out of my life. God has another plan for both of us, Winnie, but we got to take chances. We have out grown Lufkin, little sister. Its time for us to spread our wings.

WINNIE

(wipes her eyes)

I don't know, Johnny... you are changing and I'm afraid of the big cities. Folks are different and I don't wanna leave Mama out here all by herself.

JOHNNY

(starts walking along)

Listen! You remember what Mama always preached.

WINNIE

Do I remember?! How could I forget. She still said,  
'God help those who help themselves chullins.'

JOHNNY

Then we just have to carry those words with us everywhere we go.....And about Mama being alone, Felix ain't going no where. He done had his fun in the world.

WINNIE

(curious)

Are we gonna still do our dance act if you marry Sallie Strawder?"

JOHNNY

(smiles)

We sure are Winnie. We will probably find more work in the city.

WINNIE

I don't know, with Sallie being so religious and all, Johnny. Like Mama always say, 'ya'll like two different peas in a pot.'

JOHNNY

Let's cross that bridge when we get to it. Right now, I haven't ask for Sallie Strawder's hand yet.

WINNIE

(smiles)

But you will. I can see it your eyes, Johnny..... I always dreamed of going to hair dressing school and having my own shop. You think that could happen?--.--But I still wanna dance too now.

JOHNNY

(laughs)

Well, let's see... .You could press hair in the daytime and dance in the night time.

They both laugh.

WINNIE

(gets serious again)

This woman has really change you Johnny.  
I didn't ever think that could happen to you.  
What does Sallie Strawder see in you,  
Johnny?.....

JOHNNY

(thinks as he stops observe a shaking bush)

I've asked myself that question over and  
over. I don't know. Surely she could find  
someone with higher standards than me.  
It's all in God's plan, I know that, Winnie.

CUT TO:

THE BIG BUSH ALONG THE ROAD IS SHAKING.

CUT TO:

JOHNNY and WINNIE stops in their tracks. All of a sudden, a BIG  
BLACK  
DOG jumps out of the bush and heads for the two. JOHNNY and  
WINNIE  
run for their lives until the dog just gives up and heads back the other way.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-FROP LEGS RAG

EXT. THE RAGIMER NIGHT CLUB-4:00AM

CUT TO:

WINNIE and JOHNNY are taking their time. MR. LUCAS is ready to  
close  
up. He takes him a shot of whisky, puts on his stingy brim hat and hollers  
over  
at WINNIE and JOHNNY.

LUCAS

Hey, you two! Hurry up over there.  
I promised your mama I wouldn't keep  
you late. Time to go home.

JOHNNY

(responds)

We're leaving Mr. Lucas. Don't worry,  
Winnie. Everything is going to work just fine.  
Sallie is a winner.

MR. LUCAS

(pulls money from his cigar box)

Wait! Here you are! We're making a little  
money now... ..Keep the good work up.

MR. LUCAS hands JOHNNY the money and Johnny counts it in a hurry.  
It is  
more than expected. WINNIE is looking at the dollar bills as JOHNNY  
gives  
her half. She stuffs it in her big purse.

JOHNNY

(puts money in his shirt pocket)

This is more than we ever made, Mr. Lucas!

WINNIE

(excited)

Thank you Mr. Lucas! I'm going shopping  
for some new dancing shoes and dress....

MR. LUCAS

(laughs)

And if ya'll don't hurry up and get out of here,  
we all gonna be shopping after that mother  
of yours get through with us....Go home!

JOHNNY and WINNIE rushes out the door. MR. LUCAS watch them as  
they disappear into the night. He turns his sign on the door to CLOSE. He  
steps  
outside the shop, close and locks the door. He lights up his old cigar,  
looks up  
at the full moon and walks proudly down the old dusty road, whistling a  
Ragtime

tune.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF CRISWELL'S FAMILY HOUSE-NEXT  
MORNING-SUNRISE

CUT TO:

JOHNNY'S mother, MAMA ESTER is sitting on the porch churning cow milk. She stops for a second to glance at the milk in the container. She opens the top and runs her finger along the edge. She tastes the sample on her finger. She smiles as she closes the container. MAMA ESTER wipes her hands on her apron and continues to churn. JOHNNY walks out on the porch, takes a big yawn and leans against the banister. MAMA ESTER stops churning, looks up at JOHNNY and shakes her head.

MAMA ESTER

(curious)

That Ragtimer Club is gonna take you and WINNIE to the limit.....What time ya'll come in last night?.....

JOHNNY

(sits down on porch steps)

Before twelve, Mama. We had a good night. Even made more money.

MAMA ESTER

(smiles)

Listen. I don't have any complaint about what you like to do. Just be respectful. Carry ya'll selves like a gentleman and a lady. One thing I can say about ya'll, the Ragtimer has not taken you away from helping me on this land. And of course, we need the extra money.

JOHNNY pulls a basket of corn near the steps. He takes out a couple of ears and begins chucking them.

MAMA ESTER(CONT'D)

(starts churning)

Where's Winnie? She is usually up by now, feeding the chickens.

JOHNNY

(chucking corn)

I think she did that early this morning. She's looking through some fashion magazines from New York City. You know Winnie takes pride in her dressing when she dance.

MAMA ESTER

(stops churning)

The spitting image of her Aunt Gracie in Chicago. As old as Aunt Gracie is, she still love fine dresses, hats and shoes. She left for the city at an early age, found her a railroad man and never looked back to this land. Told me I could have it--cause she's not ever coming back.

JOHNNY stops chucking corn. He drops the corn in his hand in another bucket.

He turns to his MAMA ESTER as she churns the milk. He is hesitate to discuss

his personal matter with her, but at times he does. Maybe this is the time to get

some old knowledge from his mother about SALLIE.

JOHNNY

(looks at his mother)

Mama....Can I tell you something?

MAMA ESTER

(takes the top off churner)

If it has anything to do with you and Mr. Lucas Ragtimer Club, its too early in the morning.....

MAMA ESTER runs her finger along the edge of the churner. She tastes the sample from her finger, then places the top back on the churner. She starts churning the milk again.

JOHNNY

(in a low voice)

Mama....I...I think I'm in love.....

MAMA ESTER

(keeps churning the milk)

In love..... With who Johnny?

One of them east Texas night club women?.....

JOHNNY turns to MAMA ESTER with a half smile on his face. He really wants to surprise his mother. He believes this time he has a real woman.

MAMA ESTER continues to churn the milk as she wipes sweat from her face. JOHNNY pulls an ear of corn from the basket and begins chucking. He downs his head, hesitates to answer the question. He takes a deep breath.

JOHNNY

Mama.....Not this time.....This woman is a fine and successful school teacher.....And she is from right up the road, Conroe.

MAMA ESTER

(churns milk)

A school teacher, huh?.. You met her in the Ragtimer? An educated woman. Well I would have never thought---

JOHNNY

(smiles)

No, Mama, I met her at the family reunion. The reunion you were too busy to attend..... You could have met her.....

MAMA ESTER

(stops churning milk)

Family reunions, I don't attend. Too much gossiping and nosy people into your business. This land is my reunion. Anyway, the reunion was on your daddy's side, bless his soul.

MAMA ESTER gets up and stretch her arms from the long sit down.

MAMA ESTER(CONT'D)

(sits down)

And what does this educated woman see in my country ragtime playing son. Explain that to me, Johnny. I don't wanna build your hopes up on this woman. She must know that you are different, Johnny.

JOHNNY

(explains)

Mama. Sallie is a country girl just like I'm a country boy. That kind of thought never entered her mind.

MAMA ESTER

(stops churning)

Don't ever say that son. You can't read anybody's mind....Does she like to go out to night clubs? Does she like your music?

JOHNNY

(shakes his head)

But that's all right. Sallie is a religious woman, Mama

MAMA ESTER

(starts churning)

It bothers me that she doesn't like nothing you doing.

JOHNNY

(downs his head)

Maybe I can do something else besides play music.

MAMA ESTER

(wipes her churner off)

The big city is rough when you have  
no education, son....

JOHNNY

(chucks the corn down)

I don't know Mama! Maybe she can  
teach me something----open my eyes to  
something different.

MAMA ESTER

(putting churned butter into a bowl)

But your music is your heart... .Been like  
that ever since your grandfather taught you  
how to play ragtime. And what's going  
to happen to Winnie. The girl believes in  
you, Johnny.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE SCREEN DOOR OF FRONT PORCH

WINNIE is standing and listening to MAMA ESTER and JOHNNY'S  
conversation. She is curious about the way JOHNNY'S love for SALLIE.  
She fears that his love for SALLIE will come between them. JOHNNY  
doesn't notice WINNIE inside the screen door.

JOHNNY

(puts chucked corn in the basket)

I love music, Mama, but I love to work  
with my hands. Look, Pa, Felix and me built  
this house from scratch. I could play music in  
the big city at night and be carpenter in the day  
----and Winnie, she loves to press hair she  
could go to hair dressing school, Mama... .  
Then you could come live with us in Houston.

MAMA ESTER

(gets up with the bowl of butter)

Son. I'm going to my grave on this land.  
Big city is for young folks.....I've never  
met Sallie Strawder----but you have

fallen in love too quickly, son... .  
Think about it before you ask this woman  
for her hand.

CUT TO

INT. WINNIE WALKS SADLY AWAY FROM THE SCREEN DOOR

CUT TO

EXT. MAMA ESTER EXIT THE PORCH INTO THE HOUSE.

CUT TO

EXT. PORCH STEPS

JOHNNY sits alone on the porch gazing into the distant land.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-THE RAGTIME BETTY

INT. SALLIE'S HOUSE IN HOUSTON, TEXAS-EVENING-SIX  
MONTHS

LATER-DINING ROOM TABLE.

CUT TO

JOHNNY is sitting at dining table. He wipes his mouth with a white  
napkin  
as SALLIE gather the dishes from the table. She is enjoying JOHNNY'S  
company.

JOHNNY

(wipes his mouth lightly with the napkin)  
You are a very good cook, Sallie  
Strawder.

SALLIE

(smiles as she gathers the dishes from the table)  
Well, Johnny Criswell, you should know  
all farm girls are good cooks.

JOHNNY

(laughs)

You right about that because even  
Winnie can cook up a storm.

SALLIE

(changes conversation)

Uh, could I get you something to  
drink----a beer or something?

JOHNNY

(almost chokes)

Say that again!

SALLIE

(smiles)

I asked if you want a beer or  
something, Johnny Criswell.

JOHNNY

(surprised)

Uh, sure! But I thought---

SALLIE

(turns before she enters the kitchen)

It's quite all right.....

JOHNNY

(shocked)

Uh, what! Why...uh I didn't know....

SALLIE

(laughs)

Drink....I don't Johnny Criswell. You do.  
And after all you are my guest. It is always  
good to please your guest.....

SALLIE exits to the kitchen, leaving JOHNNY wondering. JOHNNY  
pulls  
out a cigarett, but quickly puts it back in his coat pocket. He doesn't want  
to over do her kindness.

JOHNNY

Is she just testing me or something?

SALLIE enters the dining area with a glass and bottle of cold beer. She sits down at the table, places the glass of beer in front of JOHNNY and pours the beer in the glass. Her hospitality amazes JOHNNY.

SALLIE  
(pours beer in glass)  
There you are Johnny, The Rag Player....  
All nice and cold.

JOHNNY  
(smiles as he takes a sip of beer)  
The Rag Player.....No one has  
call me that before....I kinda like  
it...yeah.....

JOHNNY and SALLIE look at each other as if they have seen a flower from heaven.

SALLIE  
(gets up from table)  
Anyway, Johnny Criswell, thanks for  
coming.....Could I get you another beer?

JOHNNY  
(smiles at Sallie in a warm and gentle way)  
Sure and let's toast to your new  
job in Houston.....

SALLIE  
(turns and walks to the kitchen)  
Okay, Rag Player. I will be right back.

SALLIE exits to the kitchen. JOHNNY gets up and look at some old pictures of SALLIE'S mother and father on the wall. SALLIE enters the dining area. She pours the beer in JOHNNY'S glass on the table. Then she pours a glass of water for herself. JOHNNY walks toward the table as she holds the two glasses in her hands.

SALLIE  
(hands Johnny the glass of beer)  
Water is the best I can do.....

JOHNNY  
(smiles)  
Then water it is, Miss Sallie Strawder.

*JOHNNY takes the glass from SALLIE. They both tap the glass.*

JOHNNY  
This is to you, Sallie Strawder and  
congratulations to getting that teacher's  
job in Almeda, Texas.

SALLIE takes a sip of water and then pauses. She sits down at the table.  
She is looking curious as JOHNNY sits down.

JOHNNY(CONT'D)  
Did I say something wrong, Sallie?  
I was just tryin----

SALLIE  
(curious)  
Your sister doesn't think too much of me,  
does she, Johnny?

JOHNNY  
(laughs)  
Who Winnie? That's just her way.  
*She loves to dance and I am  
her music. She's afraid if I fall  
in love, I'm going to stop playing.*

SALLIE  
It just didn't seem like she wanted to  
shake my hands at your family reunion.

JOHNNY

Winnie is very protective of me. I guess because we are brother and sister... .not mentioning being partners... .Ever since Papa died, our family kind of protected each other---I guess she is a little jealous.

SALLIE  
That's natural---

JOHNNY  
(touches Sallie's hand)  
Winnie will be all right, Sallie. She just have to get to know you.

SALLIE gets up from the table to look out the dining room window.

SALLIE  
(pull curtains open)  
And playing the piano is your life, Johnny?  
How do you have time to court?.....

*JOHNNY gets up from the table and touches SALLIE on her shoulders as she looks out the window. JOHNNY kind of kisses her lightly on the cheeks. SALLIE closes the curtains and turns to JOHNNY.*

JOHNNY  
(smiles as they look at each other)  
*A pretty lady like you, my time is yours, Sallie.*

SALLIE  
(walks away from Johnny)  
Are you flirting with me, Johnny Criswell?

JOHNNY  
( follows her to the table)  
Uh, no... .just being honest, I guess.

SALLIE  
(serious as she sits down at the table)  
I have dreams, Johnny.

JOHNNY  
Dreams... .Don't we all?

SALLIE

(sips some water)

We all do----but I want to live out my dream, Johnny, that's the difference. I want to travel this country... I want to see the White House. I want to own Land. Something my family never had. I want to be somebody.

JOHNNY

(looks down)

Maybe you are too good for me, Sallie. I'm just a Ragtime piano player with a sister that dances. That's how we live.

SALLIE

(touches Johnny's hand)

Don't ever doubt yourself, Johnny. The good Lord see something in both of us. Maybe more than what we can see.

JOHNNY

(hesitates to reveal)

I must tell you something about me, Sallie.

SALLIE

(reluctant to listen)

Not now, Johnny, don't spoil the evening. I know enough about you for now. And that is good enough for me.

JOHNNY

(explains anyway)

When it comes to reading, writing and arithmetic, I'm not the smartest man... .But I'm good with my hands.

SALLIE

(gets up to take glasses to kitchen)

Then I will take time to teach you more, Johnny Criswell---but I will leave that up to you.

JOHNNY takes an old rail road watch form his pants pocket.

JOHNNY

How times passes.. I've got to catch that last train for Lufkin. It have been a wonderful evening Miss Strawder.

Johnny gets up and Sallie comes out the kitchen and removes his coat from the chair. She hands the coat to Johnny.

SALLIE

Thank you for coming, Johnny.....I have enjoyed every moment. Give your family my love.

JOHNNY

(puts his hat on)

Until next time, Sallie Strawder. And when that be, I may ask?.....

SALLIE

(smiles as they walk to the door)

You mean, getting together again, I think. Well, only the good Lord knows, Johnny Criswell. I'll write you a letter.

CUT TO:

SALLIE and JOHNNY standing out on the porch. JOHNNY looks up at the full moon. They hug each othe under the moon light.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-PALM LEAF RAG

INT. RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-NIGHT

CUT TO:

Winnie and Johnny are during their act in the Ragtimer Night Club. Everyone is having fun. The club is jumping. Johnny is whooping up on the piano and

Winnie  
is dancing her heart out. Finally the act stops and Johnny takes a drink of  
whisky.  
He wipes his forehead with a towel while people are clapping. Sweat is  
pouring  
down her face as she takes a deep breath and bow.

WINNIE

(walks over to piano)

JOHNNY! I could hardly stop....  
It was almost like something took  
over my body. My feet just wouldn't  
stop dancing.

JOHNNY

(laughs as he continues to wipe his face)

Pretty soon, you gonna dance out of them  
shoes, sister. You get better and better  
every night. Maybe you should be on  
Broadway or something.

As JOHNNY and WINNIE are talking, a well dressed tall BLACK MAN  
walks  
over to introduce himself. His eyes are on WINNIE. His name is D-  
BROWN.

D-BROWN

Winnie, you are good, Johnny, you too.  
But your sister has plenty class and rhythm.  
Especially when she sands the floor on that  
tune.'Possum Rag.' And plus you are the  
prettiest thing I ever did lay eyes on, Miss  
Winnie. I been coming to this club every week  
end just to see ya'll act and especially, Winnie.  
My name is D-Brown....I'm from right up the  
road, Marshal, Texas.

WINNIE, JOHNNY and D-BROWN shake each other hands.

WINNIE

(smiles as she shakes D-Brown's hand)

Oh thank you, Mr. Brown. I appreciate

your compliment. We do like to make people happy.

D-Brown  
(just stands there, admiring Winnie)  
Anyway I just wanted you to know,  
I'm a big fan of yours.....Ms. Winnie...  
uh.....

JOHNNY  
(interrupts as he laughs)  
Miss Winnie Criswell, Mr. Brown. That's her full blooded pretty name. I must say that she will be glad to chat with you sometimes.

WINNIE looks funny at JOHNNY while hitting him on the shoulder. JOHNNY is joking and having fun with the conversation. He feels that D-BROWN is trying to ask WINNIE for a date. He just speeds it up to help out D-BROWN.

D-BROWN  
(taken by surprise)  
Oh I see.....Well anyway..... I have to go..  
.I'll be back in two weeks... .Maybe we can have a drink together or talk after your act.

WINNIE  
(reluctant)  
I don't----

JOHNNY  
(interrupts)  
She would love to, Mr. Brown.

D-BROWN  
(smiles as he looks at Winnie)  
Then I will see you in two weeks,  
Winnie Criswell?....Thank you.....  
It will be an honor.

D-BROWN shakes hands with WINNIE and JOHNNY as he turns and tips

his hat to WINNIE. Then he disappears into the standing and chatting crowd.

WINNIE

(turns to Johnny)

I can't believe you did that, Johnny Criswell

JOHNNY

(laughs as he puts on his hat)

Oh yeah! I saw you blushing. I was just trying to help you out.. He seems like a nice gentleman and all.

WINNIE

(sits down on the piano stool)

Come on, Johnny.... I was just trying to be nice to the man. He was a gentleman.

JOHNNY

(smiles as he takes a sip of beer)

Oh, yeah... Your little brown eyes didn't say so. Those little eyes were saying, "I would like to chat with you too." I've never seen your eyes light up so, Winnie.....

WINNIE

(pulls Johnny hat down in his eyes)

I'm not ready to go courting Johnny Criswell. You are trying to get rid of me ever since you met Sallie. How is she doing?

JOHNNY

(smiles as Sallie's name lights him up)

You really want to know Winnie? Winnie, Sallie would make you a fine sister-law. She is different and not selfish.

WINNIE

Johnny! I didn't ask you all of that.....

JOHNNY pulls a letter from his pants pocket. The Club is empty with the exception of Mr. Lucas over behind the bar counting his money.

MR. LUCAS  
(cigar in his mouth)  
Hey! You two---Closing time!

JOHNNY and WINNIE grabs their things and heads for the door.  
JOHNNY  
puts the letter back in his pocket. They both bids Mr. Lucas good-bye.

JOHNNY & WINNIE  
(walking out the door)  
See ya, Mr. Lucas.

MR. LUCAS  
(counting his money)  
Yeah! Ya'll be careful. You never know  
when them bad white folks gonna turn  
on you....Pay day, next week.

JOHNNY  
(walking out the door)  
Thata be just fine, Mr. Lucas.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF JOHNNY AND WINNIE'S HOUSE-NIGHT

CUT TO:

JOHNNY and WINNIE are getting ready to enter the house. JOHNNY  
pulls  
out his letter. He turns and sits down on the steps. WINNIE stops too  
before  
entering the house. She sits down on the steps besides JOHNNY.

WINNIE  
I think you really love this woman.  
You wanna talk about it. I promise  
I won't be jealous.

JOHNNY folds the letter and puts it in his shirt pocket.

JOHNNY

She writes me every week. Its a  
good thing you taught me how  
to better my reading.

WINNIE

(smiles)

That school teacher gonna land  
my brother yet. Have you ask her  
to marry you.

JOHNNY

Not yet. It's just not the time.

WINNIE

(downs her head)

When that happen, I will have to find  
my own act, huh?

JOHNNY

(smiles as he puts his arms around Winnie)

Me and Sallie getting married don't have  
nothing to do with our partnership, sister.  
We gonna still dance and make people  
happy. As religious as she is---do you know  
she fix me a glass of beer and even let me  
smoke in her house. She is not trying to  
change me....

WINNIE

(smiles)

If you say so, Johnny. Believing is seeing.  
That's what Granpa Step used to say.  
Yep. We'll see, Johnny Criswell.

JOHNNY and WINNIE are silent as the sound of the night under a full  
moon  
fades away as they sit, pausing and staring at each other.

FADE TO:

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

INT. RAGTIME NIGHT CLUB-TWO MEN AT TABLE--NIGHT

CUT TO:

TWO MEN are drinking beer at a table in the club. JOHNNY and WINNIE have not begin their act. They are just to begin when WINNIE have to go to the Lady's Room to powder her nose. The two men are impatient. Folks are sitting around laughing and talking with each other.

ONE MAN

(yells out)

Hey! You two! Are you going to do your act or what?

JOHNNY is sitting at the piano. He tips his hat at the man, gets up to go see about WINNIE.

CUT TO:

JOHNNY knocks on the Lady's Room door. He whispers to WINNIE.

JOHNNY

Hurry up Winnie! Folks are getting impatient. Our time is up. Are you ready?

WINNIE opens the door to the Lady's Room. She straightens her dress.

WINNIE

Might as well be....You know I like to look my best on the dance floor.

CUT TO:

FOLKS at tables in The Ragtime Club begins to clap as JOHNNY and WINNIE walk toward the piano.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-EUGENIA

INT. RAGTIME NIGHT CLUB-CLOSING TIME-NIGHT

CUT TO:

The Club is quiet as JOHNNY closes the cover on the piano. Lights are dim.

WINNIE is sitting on the piano stool next to JOHNNY taking off her dancing shoes. A few people are still hanging around chatting with MR. LUCAS. He begins to put up chairs on top of the tables. The last of the crowd nod to MR. LUCAS and exit the Club.

MR. LUCAS

Okay Winnie and Johnny! Time to close.  
It's getting late....Ya'll was great like always.  
I didn't know ya'll could do that tune.....

JOHNNY

( puzzle)

What tune, Mr. Lucas? I play so many, I  
forget what I'm playing sometimes.

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WINNIE

**(rubs her aching feet)**

I betcha he's talking about the one  
Grandpa Step taught you before he die,  
Johnny.

JOHNNY

(remembers as he puts on his sport coat)  
Oh, yeah! Thats a good one...Just  
never play it until-----

MR. LUCAS

(snaps his finger)

Policy King!---That's the name!

MR. LUCAS walks toward the bar to get something for JOHNNY.  
WINNIE goes in the Lady's Room to change out of her dancing dress.

MR. LUCAS(CONT'D)

(pulls a yellow slip with numbers from under the bar)  
Somebody left this for you, Johnny.  
You better hide that because it is  
illegal in East Texas.....

MR. LUCAS(CONT'D)

I think you got lucky. I didn't know  
you play the numbers.

JOHNNY

(looks guilty)  
Uh, I don't Mr. Lucas.....This is for  
my brother, Felix.

MR. LUCAS

(laughs)  
Relax... That's your business.. I'm not  
the law. Man gotta do something to make  
his life a little more interesting. I've been  
playing the numbers too, haven't hit  
big yet.

WINNIE rushes out the Lady's Room. She walks to the front door thinking  
JOHNNY is ready to go. She stops and yells at JOHNNY.

WINNIE

Hey, Johnny! Let's go! Its getting late.  
Mama gonna be worried.

JOHNNY

(quickly puts the slip in his shirt pocket)  
I'm coming Winnie! How much do you  
think this is worth, Mr. Lucas?

MR. LUCAS

From what I saw... It said three hundred dollars.

JOHNNY

(snaps his finger with excitement)  
What? See ya next Friday, Mr. Lucas.....  
Thank you!.....Come on Winnie, Let's  
trek.

MR. LUCAS

(wiping the bar off)

Now, ya'll be careful---and tell your  
mama, I'm looking for them pies and  
fried chicken to sell to my customers,  
you hear....She can make a good profit.

WINNIE

(walking out the door)

I'll tell her Mr. Lucas.....Bye.....

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-THE RAGTIME DANCE

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF THE CRISWELL'S HOUSE--AFTERNOON

CUT TO:

JOHNNY is counting the money he won from playing policy. In the  
middle of his  
counting, WINNIE comes out of the house and sits down besides  
JOHNNY.  
She looks speechless at the money as JOHNNY counts.

WINNIE

(curious)

Johnny! Where did you get all that money.  
Pay day is not until next Friday---and even  
if it was, we wouldn't make this much!

JOHNNY

(stops counting money to explain)

I won three hundred dollars, Winnie.

WINNIE

(searching)

How? Johnny Criswell, surely not  
playing the piano without me  
knowing. We are partners, you know.

JOHNNY

(starts counting the money)

No! I just got lucky, sister.

WINNIE

You mean you gambled! Shooting dice with those folks in the alley down from The Ragtimer... You know----

JOHNNY puts his finger over his lip to signal for WINNIE to not talk so loud.

He doesn't want his mama to know about the money.

JOHNNY

(whispers)

Be quiet. I don't want Mama to know. I didn't shoot dice with anybody in the alley. Mama raised us better than that. Listen....For the first time, I played the numbers and hit!

WINNIE

Policy! That is gambling too, Johnny! Mama don't like that---and I don't-----

JOHNNY

(folds money up and puts in his shirt pocket)

Listen... .Whose gonna tell her, not me---- unless... .listen, I will give you half of the three hundred.

JOHNNY takes the money from his shirt pocket and starts counting out one

hundred and fifty dollars. WINNIE is looking and thinking about what she

will do with the money. She forgets that it is gambling money for a moment.

JOHNNY hands her one hundred and fifty crisp dollar bills.

WINNIE

(smiles as she looks at the bills)

You don't tell---I don't tell.....I need some more dancing shoes anyway.

WINNIE stuffs the dollar bills down into her bosom. JOHNNY grabs WINNIE around the shoulders.

JOHNNY  
I knew you would understand.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-FROG LEGS

EXT. OLD DUSTY ROAD TO THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-  
NOON

CUT TO

JOHNNY and WINNIE are walking fast up the road to THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB. They have a serious look on their face. MR. LUCAS wants to see them immediately. They are thinking something is serious wrong.

WINNIE  
(worried)  
I wondered what Mr. Lucas want....

JOHNNY  
Whatever it is, I hope it's not bad news.

WINNIE  
Like what?

JOHNNY  
Like closing down The Ragtimer Night Club.....  
Why would he send for us in the middle of the  
afternoon, Winnie. I'm scared, really scared  
something done happened.

WINNIE  
(walks behind Johnny)  
We've been making money, Johnny... .  
That's not possible.....

JOHNNY and WINNIE are approaching the steps of The RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB. JOHNNY and WINNIE stop to catch their breath.

JOHNNY  
You know, Winnie, I was just thinking.  
Maybe old IRS man found his extra set of

book keepings. Sometimes he don't show  
the government all his records. Come on  
Let's go see for ourselves.

CUT TO

INT. THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB

CUT TO

MR. LUCAS is wiping off his bar. He is smoking a cigar. JOHNNY and WINNIE rush through the door like a storm. MR. LUCAS stops and turns quickly like something is wrong.

MR. LUCAS

(jumps)

Doggonit! Ya'll almost scared my pants off  
rushing in here like that.

WINNIE

(catches her breath)

Is the IRS after you, Mr. Lucas?.....

MR. LUCAS

(laughs)

IRS! Girl please don't ever mention that  
name around this club. No telling where  
them white folks might be hiding. But they  
won't ever catch old Lucas. I'm too smart  
for them.....

JOHNNY

We don't understand, Mr. Lucas.....Are we  
fired? You never called us to the Ragtimer  
this early... .As a matter of fact, I've never  
seen this club in the daytime.

MR. LUCAS

(explains)

Fired! Lord no! Listen, some woman in  
Chicago named Sand Lady heard about Winnie.  
She is a ragtime dancer too. I guess somebody  
been bragging about ya'll act. She wrote me a letter.

MR. LUCAS pulls out the letter and unfolds it.

WINNIE

(surprised)

You mean, somebody is talking about us  
way in Chicago. Did you hear that Johnny?

JOHNNY

(curious)

So, uh, what does she want Mr. Lucas?

MR. LUCAS

(takes cigar out his mouth and opens the letter)

It says here, The Sand Lady wants to come to  
Lufkin and challenge Winnie to a dance contest.  
Right here at the Ragtimer. Can you believe that?

WINNIE

(reluctant)

For what Mr. Lucas. I don't like contest----  
I don't know this woman. Anyway them  
city folks can cut a rug.....She's probably  
real good, Mr. Lucas, for her to come way  
down here to Lufkin, Texas.

JOHNNY

(interrupts)

No. Hold your horses, Winnie. To me, there is  
nobody in this world can ragtime like my sister.  
I wanna hear more about this Sand Lady... .  
Is there more, Mr. Lucas?

MR. LUCAS

(looks at the letter)

A lot more.....It says here. The Sand Lady  
is willing to put up six hundred dollars that she  
can out dance Winnie.

WINNIE

But, Mr. Lucas, we don't have no three hundred  
dollars to put up, I just spent my money on a new  
dress and some dancing shoes.

MR. LUCAS

(confident)

Don't worry, I will put up the money and if  
you win I will give you half, Winnie.

WINNIE

(walks away from the bar)

I don't know Mr. Lucas. Suppose I lose,  
then your money has gone down the drain.  
Why do we have to do this?

MR. LUCAS smiles as he comes from around the bar. WINNIE sits down  
at  
the table. MR. LUCAS gives JOHNNY the letter. JOHNNY sits at the bar  
gazing into the letter as if it is a mystery story. MR. LUCAS sits down at  
the  
table, trying to encourage WINNIE. MR. LUCAS touches WINNIE'S  
hand.

MR. LUCAS

Because to me you are better than anybody  
I've seen Winnie Criswell. I would put money  
on you any day. Nobody going to out dance you.  
If you don't know it, I sure the hell do. Now are  
we going to do this thing or not? Anyway it will  
put The Ragtimer and ya'll act on the map.

JOHNNY

(turns on the bar stool with letter)

Winnie will do it Mr. Lucas. I will just have to  
have a long talk with her. Come on Winnie,  
let's go outside.

MR. LUCAS

(biting down on cigar as he walks to bar)

Yeah, Johnny. Good idea. Ya'll  
family. Always good for family  
to talk things over---I like that.  
Take your time, Winnie, take  
your time.

WINNIE and JOHNNY walk to the front door of THE RATIMER  
NIGHT  
CLUB.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF THE RAGTIMER.

CUT TO:

JOHNNY and WINNIE is discussing contest. WINNIE is reluctant.

WINNIE

The contest is nothing but gambling,  
Johnny. I don't like that. I thought  
you said we weren't going to do  
nothing like this any more.

JOHNNY

(grabs her shoulders, looking her in the eyes)  
Listen to me! This is our chance, maybe  
to get out of Lufkin, Winnie.  
Remember, we do have dreams. What  
about that beauty shop you always  
talked about. You can't have that here.  
You remember what Grandpa Step  
always said, 'Don't be afraid to  
do something different in life especially  
when you have God's gift'---And Winnie,  
you do have God's gift. God gave you  
a gift to dance, girl....Let the world know  
that. It has nothing to do with gambling.  
God knows that, Winnie.

WINNIE

(turns away from Johnny)  
What if this Sand Lady is better than me,  
Johnny?.....I might not ever wanna dance  
again. Them city folks gotta lot of tricks  
up their sleeves.....

JOHNNY

(smiles as he touches her shoulder)

Sister. That Sand Lady gotta have more than tricks to out dance you---anyway all of Lufkin gonna be on your side....Thats all the tricks you gonna need to win this contest. If Mr. Lucas gonna put up his money, you know he believes in you....Now come on---let's tell Mr. Lucas, you gonna be just fine.....

CUT TO

INT. THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB

JOHNNY and WINNIE are walking up to the bar. MR. LUCAS is putting beer glasses up on the shelves. JOHNNY sits down on a bar stool with his arms around WINNIE'S shoulders.

JOHNNY

Mr. Lucas. Winnie gonna dance like she never danced before. She gonna be just fine.

MR. LUCAS

(turns and smiles)

That's the Winnie I've known from a small little ambitious girl... I will return Sand Lady letter with a stamp of approval on it.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF THE CRISWELL--NEXT AFTERNOON

Children are playing up the road. They see WINNIE sitting on the steps reading a magazine from Chicago. They run over to speak to Winnie.

CHILDREN

Good afternoon, Miss Winnie.

VIOLA(child)

(curious)

Is it true you are a dancer at the Ragtimer  
Night Club, Miss Winnie?.....

HENRY(child)

(interrupts)

Yeah! I heard you sure can cut a rug.

WINNIE

(laughs as her eyes look up from the magazine)

Cut a rug! Where did you learn to say  
that, Henry?

HENRY

(excited)

My Uncle. He said you are the best ragtime  
dancer in the whole world. I sure wish I could  
see you dance---but I'm too young to go night  
clubbing.

BETTY SUE(child)

Maybe you will live and dance a long time  
Then we will be old enough to see you  
dance, Miss Winnie.

WINNIE

( smiles)

And I pray that the world be a little bit better  
for you Color children. I love dancing, but  
sometimes I wish I had a better education.

VIOLA

(demonstrates)

Look, Miss Winnie. My Uncle taught me  
a few of your steps.

Viola begins to dance. The other children joins Viola. Winnie is so  
surprise, she  
just laughs.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME

EXT. FENCE OUTSIDE OF THE CRISWELL'S PORCH-GREEN  
TERRAIN  
IS IN VIEW

CUT TO

FELIX and JOHNNY are standing near the fence. FELIX and JOHNNY  
are  
drinking beer as they stare across the land.

FELIX

(wipes sweat from his forehead with a big white towel)  
Man! Summer time is back around, pretty soon  
it'll be cotton chopping time. Sure wish Papa  
was here....

JOHNNY

(shakes his head)  
This farm here just about took Papa away.

FELIX

(props his leg up on the fence as he takes a drink of beer)  
And if we don't be careful, the same thing is  
gonna happen to us. It seem like this share  
cropping don't benefit us at all.....I shoulda  
kept some of that money I spent in the big  
cities....Coulda bought that spread up on  
the hill.....

JOHNNY

(leans his back against the fence post)  
The white man owns the land, we work it  
and share half of what we grow to him.

FELIX

(curious)  
Well, ain't no use in complaining over spilled  
beans.  
This the best we can do for now, plus Mama doesn't  
seem bothered. How you and that school teacher  
making it, huh? They tell me school teachers are

paid  
well, brother.

JOHNNY

(laughs)

I don't think she is making much now,  
but Sallie got dreams... That's what I  
like about her.

FELIX

You have to bring her here Johnny so  
Mama can meet her.

JOHNNY

You think so, Felix.... You think Mama  
will like her.

FELIX

(laughs)

My little brother, hey, how you gonna ever  
know unless you bring her here. Any way it's  
the proper thing to do since I smell marriage  
across the cotton fields.

JOHNNY

(laughs as he pushes Felix on the shoulder)

Marriage. I didn't tell you I was going to  
marry her Felix. I just said I might ask  
for her hand.

FELIX

(laughs as he take a sip of beer)

What's the difference?.....C'mon we got some  
corn chucking to do and some tatters to pull....  
Remember that song you use to play call Rags  
And Tatters---I love to hear you play that...

JOHNNY

(snaps his fingers before walking off)

Wait! I knew it was something I needed to  
tell you, Felix.....Did Winnie mention  
anything to you?

FELIX  
Nothing I can remember. Why?  
Was she suppose to?

JOHNNY  
(explains)  
There is a lady in Chicago. They  
call her Sand Lady.

FELIX  
(interrupts)  
Sand Lady!

JOHNNY  
Yeah! Catchy name, huh? Anyway she  
dances around in night clubs in Chicago...  
Someone bragged to her on how they saw  
a woman in Lufkin Texas that could dance  
the Sand Lady right out of her stockings  
and shoes. They said that she was furious,  
so furious that she wrote Mr. Lucas asking  
for a contest to be held at the Ragtimer.

FELIX  
(excited)  
What?! Boy, you joking with me, huh?  
What did Mr. Lucas say?

JOHNNY  
He invited her down for the contest. The  
Sand Lady is betting six hundred dollars  
that she can out dance Winnie. Mr. Lucas  
is putting up the money for Winnie.... and  
he gonna give Winnie half if she wins.

FELIX  
(thinks)  
Wait! Lord have mercy! I see a gold mine  
appearing in my head, Johnny. A way to buy  
Mama that piece of land on the hill..... Yeah!  
We can make money on this Johnny.  
Listen, I can do side bets. I got confidence  
in Winnie.....

JOHNNY

(curious)

Who in Lufkin gonna bet against Winnie?

FELIX

(shakes his head)

No! Listen little brother, I'm not just thinking about around here. I'm thinking about putting up notices in other towns around here, like Center, Garrison, Huntsville, Tyler, Marshal, and even Shreveport, all in the Color folks neighborhoods. And there will be a five dollar fee to place their bets. It will be a business, Johnny.

JOHNNY

(smiles)

Yeah! And if Winnie wins, we could buy Mama that land on the hill...Yeah!

FELIX

(snaps his finger)

Now you talking. Let's finish up what we gotta do. We'll talk about it some more tonight before we go to bed.

JOHNNY

(pushes Felix on the shoulder)

Big brother, that's why I like having you around. Sometimes it's good to be a little city slick.....

They laugh as JOHNNY grabs FELIX around the shoulders.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-POSSUM AND TATERS

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF THE CRISWELL-NEXT EVENING

CUT TO

JOHNNY is sitting on the porch reading a letter from SALLIE STRAWDER.

He smiles as he closes the letter. Winnie comes out of the house and sit down besides him.

WINNIE

(curious)

Is she doing all right, Johnny? Felix tells me she's coming after the contest. It's too bad Sallie don't go to night clubs because she could really see how much we need each other.

JOHNNY

(puts the letter in his pocket)

Well it doesn't matter to me.

WINNIE

(shrugged her shoulders)

If you say so, Johnny. Did you mention anything to her about the contest?

JOHNNY

You were the first name she mentioned in the letter. She said tell Winnie to dance The Sand Lady's stocking, socks, shoes and whatever else she might be wearing right off her body.....

WINNIE

(laughs)

Johnny Criswell, you telling a lie.

JOHNNY

(touches his shirt pocket)

I'm telling the honest God truth, Winnie. Sallie really likes you.....Anyway we better go practice.....I learned a new tune called Cabbage Leaf.....

WINNIE

(curious about Sand Lady)

You think Sand Lady is going to bring her own piano player.

JOHNNY

(serious as he stands up from the steps)  
She better because if she think she gonna  
dance to my music, Sand Lady better be  
prepared to dance without no music.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-MAPLE LEAF

EXT. OUTSIDE WALL OF A BUILDING-MORNING

CUT TO

FELIX is tacking up white and black cartoonish flyers in different  
COLOR  
FOLKS' COMMUNITIES advertising theDANCE CONTEST at  
RAGTIMER  
NIGHT CLUB between THE SAND LADY FROM CHICAGO and  
WINNIE FROM LUFKIN BEGINNING NEXT FRIDAY AT 8:00PM.  
THE ADMISSION IS FIVE DOLLARS. Folks are standing around  
reading the flyers and chatting among themselves.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME

EXT. OUTSIDE WALL OF ANOTHER BUILDING IN EAST TEXAS

CUT TO

FELIX is tacking some flyers in another small town in East Texas.  
FOLKS  
are watching.

ONE MAN

(walks up)

This Winnie any good?

FELIX

(turns to the man)

Winnie is the best ragtime dancer this side  
of Shreveport and all of East Texas.

OTHER MAN

(interrupts)

Is that right... and you think she can out dance  
this old Sand Lady, huh?

FELIX

(laughs)

Who Winnie? I tell you boys, I would bet my  
right arm on Winnie.... I've seen her dance with  
my own eyes... nobody can touch her. My name  
is Felix...I'm her sister.

OTHER MAN

(curious and interested)

And this Sand Lady----Where did you  
say she is from?

FELIX

(takes out his handkerchief and wipes the sweat from his  
face)

I didn't say... but it's right here  
on the poster.

FOLKS walk closer to the poster to take a good look. FELIX steps back.

OTHER MAN

(takes out his glasses as he looks at the flyer)

Chicago, huh.....The Sand Lady. Yeah!  
I knew it. This woman is good. I saw  
her Rag in Chicago when I visit my  
brother last summer. You better  
tell Winnie to call it off.

FELIX

Oh yeah...Well we gonna have betting time  
right before the contest on the outside of The  
Ragtimer Night Club. To enter, the cost is  
another five dollars. I will hold all bets and  
my word is good, gentleman---now I gotta  
go spread the news else where.

ANOTHER MAN

(looks closely at the flyer)

I don't know, them big city folks got a

lot of tricks up ther sleeves. I sure wish Winnie luck, but my money is on The Sand Lady.

FELIX taps the man on the shoulder.

FELIX

Well. See you next Friday. Put your money where your mouth is. I'm gone now.... Ya'll spread the news, you here.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND RAGTIME NIGHT CLUB-ONE WEEK LATER

FRIDAY NIGHT BEFORE CONTEST

CUT TO

JOHNNY is collecting bets from men folks behind RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB. He is standing up on a bench as he writes the name of each person on a small table.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

INT. THE RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-NIGHT

Everyone is anxious and chatting among themselves. Mr. Lucas is pacing up and down puffing on his cigar. WINNIE is sitting at a far table, putting on her dancing shoes. JOHNNY is over at the piano, sitting on the stool and looking towards the door. THE SAND LADY is running late. Everyone is staring at the front door wondering if she's going to show.

MR. LUCAS

(pacing as he looks at his pocket watch)  
Where is that Sand Lady?

CUT TO

INT. FRONT DOOR OF RAGTIME NIGHT CLUB

CUT TO

THE SAND LADY , SLIM AND TALL steps in the door like she owns the place. Everyone gets quiet. Can't hear a pin drop. She catches everyone's eye including JOHNNY and WINNIE. The SAND LADY is wearing one of those roaring 1900's dress and exotic hats complimented with a city slick hair style. WINNIE stands just gazing like she's looking at a movie star. THE SAND LADY'S piano player is right behind her with his city slick suit on. She stops and the piano player takes the shawl from around her shoulders. She takes the long black cigarette holder from her mouth, taps the ashes on the floor and walks to the bar. She sits down on the bar stool. MR. LUCAS is quiet behind the bar. He can hardly keep his eyes off of her.

SAND LADY  
(leans over the bar as she puffs on her cigarette)  
You must be Mr. Lucas.....

MR. LUCAS waves the smoke from his face and pulls proudly up on his suspenders.

MR. LUCAS  
(sticks out his chest)  
Yes I am--and you must be---

THE SAND LADY  
The Sand Lady. The one whose gonna take all your money. I'm sorry for the delay, but our vehicle unfortunately got stuck in your red clay.

MR. LUCAS

(laughs)

That's East Texas, Sand Lady. But anyway we are glad you made it. Everyone have been waiting to see this special event.

SAND LADY

(laughs as she snaps her fingers to the piano player)

Is that right. Well here's my end of the bargain.

SAND LADY nods for her piano player, FRED to give MR.LUCAS six-hundred dollars. FRED walks up to the bar, reaches in his coat pocket and pulls out a white envelope. He gives it to MR. LUCAS.

SAND LADY(CONT'D)

(laughs)

Now don't get too comfortable with that, because you gonna be doubling that before the night is over....You can count it if you wanna.

MR. LUCAS

(puts envelope in his coat pocket)

I trust you...Any lady come this far to dance, how can I not.

SAND LADY

(looks around)

And where is that WINNIE woman that suspose to Rag me off the floor.

MR LUCAS

(becks for Winnie to come)

Right over there, Sand Lady.

Winnie! Come on over here.

WINNIE stops powdering her face and comes over to the bar where SAND LADY is sitting. SAND LADY looks WINNIE up and down. WINNIE smiles as she steps forward to shake SAND LADY's hand. She extends her hand

to  
SAND LADY.

WINNIE

Please to meet you Sand Lady.  
I've heard so much about----

SAND LADY refuses to shake Winnie's hand. She laughs.

SAND LADY

(laughs)

Now ain't you nice.... Uh, uh, Honey  
I stop shaking hands long time  
ago. You see I heard this African story  
about a chief shaking a man's hand who  
he despised and hour later, the man  
whole right side was paralyzed.....  
You get my point, Honey?

WINNIE

(downs her head)

Well it doesn't matter anyway. I was  
just trying to show you some kindness.

SAND LADY

(takes a puff off her cigarette)

Let's get on with this show. I came from  
Chicago to dance, not to be nice. Honey,  
you sure you wanna dance against me?  
You look scared stiff.

WINNIE turns away and go back over to the corner, sits, pulls out her  
powder  
muff out her purse to finish powdering her face.

MR. LUCAS

(laughs)

Winnie Criswell ain't never been scared of  
nothing Sand Lady. Let's get on with this  
show.

CUSTOMER

(yells out)

We country folks don't talk as much you

city slick folks----C' mon, dance up or  
go back where you came from.

MR. LUCAS smiles as he rubs his hands together as he bites down on his cigar. He reaches under his bar counter and pulls out a writing pad. Before he goes over the rules with SAND LADY, he calls out for WINNIE to come. WINNIE cross her legs to buckle her dancing shoes. She slowly gets up and walks up to the bar. MR. LUCAS begins to explain the rules of the show.

MR. LUCAS

(looks at his pad)

Now Sand Lady, you will come up first,  
then Winnie. Since you are the visitor.  
Thats no more than right----And you  
will be judged fairly. Most of these  
folks in here has never seen Winnie  
dance. They are from other little  
towns in East Texas and some parts  
of Louisiana.....Ready, Sand Lady?

SAND LADY

(disagree)

No baby, I don't want her copying any of  
my dance steps. She goes first.

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WINNIE

(laughs)

I wouldn't do that. I got my own steps.  
My Mama always said, 'God bless the  
child who got it's own.'

Everybody laughs

MR. LUCAS

(serious)

We have a problem here Winnie does it  
make a difference to who goes first?

WINNIE

(agrees)

Why no. I'll go first. If Sand Lady copy my  
dance steps, then I have more to burn.

MR. LUCAS

(reads from pad)

Good! Each dancer will dance five minutes each and give the floor over to the next. It will continue like that for one hour. Your piano player will exchange position each time with one another. So that means that the two piano players are going to be sitting on the piano stool together. Are there any questions?

SAND LADY

(putting on her fancy gloves)

Yes...Do you have any whisky back there.

MR. LUCAS

(shrugged his shoulders)

That's against the law out here.

SAND LADY reaches in her purse and pulls out a half pint of whiskey. She opens the bottle and take a quick swallow. She screws the cap back on the pint of whiskey, takes out her white handkerchief and softly wipes her mouth.

SAND LADY

I'm ready now.....

CUT TO

JOHNNY and FRED take their position on the piano stool. They kind of jockey for position. FRED cracks his fingers. JOHNNY twists his neck.

CUT TO

WINNIE steps out on the dance floor. JOHNNY is waiting for WINNIE to nod. She looks over at JOHNNY. His hands raises above the keys to play. JOHNNY whispers the tune out he's gonna play for WINNIE.

CUT TO

A CLOSE UP OF JOHNNY on the piano stool.

JOHNNY

(whispers)  
Possum and Taters.

CUT TO

WINNIE nods back as she stands on the dance floor. The crowd is very quiet, waiting to see WINNIE at her best. JOHNNY raises his hands and quickly plays the tune.

MUSIC: POSSUM AND TATERS

CUT TO

WINNIE begins to dance as folks clap her on. WINNIE creating steps she has never done before. Folks stands up, yelling and screaming at her Rag moves. Sweat pours down her face. Her five minute is up. SAND LADY steps out on the floor.

CUT TO

FRED begins to play the piano.

MUSIC: TICKLE TO DEATH

THE SAND LADY begins to dance. Steps different from WINNIE. The crowd are clapping to her CHICAGO RAG moves. She dances like she is the Queen of CHICAGO. WINNIE looks on, even SAND LADY moves impress WINNIE.

CUT TO

JOHNNY watching Fred bang on the piano. JOHNNY just shakes his head as if to say, 'you are good, man.'

CUT TO

FELIX is sitting at a table with friends and folks who have their bets on.  
ONE  
man whispers to FELIX.

ONE MAN  
This SAND LADY is good. It's gonna  
be close.

FELIX  
(brags)  
Ya'll haven't seen nothing yet--just wait.  
Winnie gonna Rag her off the floor,  
you watch.

OTHER MAN  
(leans over with cigar in his mouth)  
That's why I put my money on The  
Sand Lady.....

FELIX  
(pulls out a cigarette nervously)  
We'll see, Mister. That's my sister  
and I know what she gonna do.  
Come on Winnie!

CUT TO

WINNIE steps on the dance floor. She is doing moves that freezes the  
crowd.  
JOHNNY is playing POSSUM TATER like he never have before. Folks  
are jumping up and down at WINNIE'S moves.

CUT TO

JOHNNY hands on the piano keys are playing as fast as WINNIE'S  
moves on the floor.

CUT TO

FRED is playing the piano. Folks are screaming at SAND LADY'S  
CHICAGO  
moves. She freezes the crowd. In the middle of the dance, she pulls off her  
shoes

and throw them into crowd. The crowd yells for WINNIE and SAND LADY both to come out on floor.

THE CROWD

(yells)

Come on! Winnie and the Sand Lady!  
Together! Come on!

WINNIE comes out on floor while SAND LADY is dancing. The two piano players play together as WINNIE and SAND LADY do their RAG moves.

CUT TO

The feet of each DANCER moving quickly on the floor.

CUT TO

JOHNNY and FRED playing the piano, different tunes.

MUSIC: POSSUM TATERS and TICKLE TO DEATH

FADE TO

INT. RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-MIDNIGHT-AFTER SHOW

CUT TO

MR. LUCAS is counting money. The Ragtimer is empty. The contest is over.  
JOHNNY head is laying on the piano. WINNIE props her feet up in a chair.

MR. LUCAS

(smiles as he puts some money into an envelope)

Well, Winnie, how do you feel being the best Rag dancer around? You showed that Sand Lady something, girl. But she was tough and cocky-and didn't complain after she lost. She just took another shot of whisky and invited you to come to Chicago and dance in her club sometimes----and Johnny and Fred, I might have to buy another piano the way ya'll were playing.

MR. LUCAS(CONT'D)  
(walks over to the table where Winnie is resting)  
Look at both of you, dead tired.

MR. LUCAS hands the money envelope to WINNIE. She takes it without looking.

WINNIE  
Thank you, Mr. Lucas. I'll feel more excited tomorrow. Right now my feet are aching.

WINNIE raises her head up from the table and look over at the piano.  
JOHNNY  
head is leaning on the cover of the piano. He is sleep.

WINNIE(CONT'D)  
JOHNNY.....JOHNNY CRISWELL.....

JOHNNY raises his head up from the piano. He looks around.

JOHNNY  
(rubs his face)  
Man! That was some contest. I feel like I been chopping cotton all day.

MR. LUCAS  
Ya'll did just fine Johnny...Now both of ya'll get out of here. Go rest your feet and I don't wanna see ya until two weeks in the club.

They all laugh

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-POSSUM TATERS

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF THE CRISWELL'S HOUSE-AFTERNOON

CUT TO

JOHNNY is sitting on porch chucking corn in a basket. Winnie rushes up to him. She brings bad news. She's out of breath.

JOHNNY

(stops chucking)

Hold on Winnie.. .What's the rush, girl?  
You must wanna show me them pretty shoes and dress you bought. You better save some of that money.

WINNIE

(trys to catch her breath)

Johnny, something----

JOHNNY

Slow down Winnie... .What's wrong.

WINNIE

(sobs)

Something bad done happen to The Ragtimer and Mr. Lucas, Johnny!.....

JOHNNY

(gets up and grabs Winnie by the shoulders)

What happened, Winnie?

WINNIE

(wipes her eyes)

They done closed The Ragtimer for good.

JOHNNY

(in disbelief)

What! Who told you this?! Mr. Lucas would have told us. Maybe this is just a rumor... .You know how Color Folks always starting rumors.

WINNIE

(sniffs)

No! It just happened an hour ago. They said that Mr. Lucas had a heart attack when he tried to stop the IRS from closing The Ragtimer down. He just fell to the floor. They say, they don't know whether

he's going to make it through the night. Poor Mr. Lucas!---What are we gonna do Johnny?

JOHNNY

(throws an ear of corn down in the basket)

Them IRS people musta found Mr. Lucas other set of book-keepings. I tell you, Color Folks can't have nothing around here. Where they take Mr. Lucas---first I wanna see him, Winnie. He's been good to us for a long time.

WINNIE

(drys her eyes)

In some hospital downtown---I don't know Johnny.....

JOHNNY

(pushes basket of corn to the side)

Come on.... We'll find out.....

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

INT. THE RAGTIME NIGHT CLUB-EVENING

JOHNNY and WINNIE is sitting together on the piano stool. They have a sad look on his face.

JOHNNY

(wipes tears from his eyes)

I didn't even getta a chance to thank him for everything he done for us, Winnie.

WINNIE

(turns away from the piano, wipes her teary eyes)

I can't believe Mr. Lucas is dead Johnny.

JOHNNY begins to play the piano. WINNIE turns around on the stool.

JOHNNY

(plays)

This was one of his favorites, Winnie.

MUSIC: WEEPING WILLOW

JOHNNY stops playing as he closes the piano cover. WINNIE is silent.

JOHNNY(CONT'D)

(downs his head)

Before Papa died, he always preached, if one  
trail is covered up, make yourself another one.  
We just have to figure out where to start.

WINNIE sobs as JOHNNY holds her close to his chest.

*JOHNNY*

C'mon sis, Let's go home... It's nothing left  
here for us anymore. Nothing but memories.

FADE TO

MUSIC: WEEPING WILLOW

EXT. CRISWELL'S FRONT PORCH-NIGHT

SALLIE and Johnnie are sitting out on the porch. Sallie has come to visit  
his family.

They have just left the dinner table with Felix, Mama Ester and Winnie.

SALLIE

is trying to catch a Lightning Bug.

SALLIE

(trys to catch a lightning bug)

I almost caught it Johnny!

JOHNNY is quiet. He smiles gradually at SALLIE. His mind is really on  
the

lost of MR. LUCAS and the RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB.

JOHNNY

(looking into space)

Listen. Thanks for coming! After

Mr. Lucas died, my mind is at a stand still  
Sallie. He was good to me and Winnie.

SALLIE

(grabs Johnny hand)

You know, Johnny....They tell me God  
works in mysterious ways. It's a reason  
for everything....I'm so sorry that Mr.  
Lucas is gone.

JOHNNY

(turns to Sallie)

I'll be all right---it's just this  
happened so quick....And  
my sister Winnie is in a shell.  
Ever since he died, Winnie  
goes everyday and just sits  
on the steps remembering  
the good times.

SALLIE

(sympathy)

I know how much The Ragtimer  
meant to you and Winnie... .

JOHNNY

(downs his head)

Yeah. And I'm still trying to figure out  
the mystery part of it all.

SALLIE

(holds his hands tight)

Just be ready when the answers comes,  
Johnny.

JOHNNY

(holds her hand)

I want to ask you something.

SALLIE

(braces herself as if Johnny is going to ask her to marry  
him)

I'm listening---Go ahead.

JOHNNY

(pauses for a second)

Didn't you talk in private with Mama and Winnie.

SALLIE

(smiles)

We sure did.

JOHNNY

(curious)

Did you bat one thousand with my  
sister and Mama, Sallie?

SALLIE

(laughs)

Johnny Criswell. Quit being so nosy.

JOHNNY

(curious)

Tell me something, even a little clue will do.

SALLIE

I told them about my dreams, Johnny.

JOHNNY

(waiting to hear more)

And.....

SALLIE

(turns away from Johnny and looks up to the sky)

We talked about Winnie....She has dreams of her  
own. You told me she wanted to be a hair dresser,  
but I didn't know she was that serious until now.  
But she still want you and her to be partners  
once again.

JOHNNY

And Mama.....

SALLIE

(gets up and swings around the banister post)

Johnny Criswell. .. I'm going to tell you everything if I don't shut up. After we finished talking, your Mama just nodded and smile.

JOHNNY

(happy as he jumps up from the steps)

Haliluya! Haliluya! If Mama just smiled and nodded, you batted a thousand with her Sallie. That's how she is. If she didn't have much to say, you are a winner with her.....Will you marry me Sallie Strawder?. . . I know I'm just a ragtime piano player, but-----

JOHNNY grabs SALLIE softly by the shoulders and looks her straight in the eyes. SALLIE pulls away from his hands. JOHNNY is feeling rejection.

SALLIE

(turns her back to Johnny)

No!....

JOHNNY

(confused)

No.. .uh....I don't under----

SALLIE

(looks at Johnny)

Yes I will marry you. No! I don't ever want you to be in doubt about yourself as a man, Johnny, even in these hard times for Colored folks.

JOHNNY

Then it's settle. You will marry me. Thank God and I will try to be the best husband to you in the world----but listen, I do love to play ragtime music and I love the piano.

SALLIE

And I love going to church on Sundays

JOHNNY

I love scotch and whiskey.

SALLIE

We can get along as long as you don't make a fool of yourself. As a matter of fact If you have to drink, do it home. Drinking in the streets will give you a bad name.

JOHNNY

Give me time. Will a piano in the house disturb you?

SALLIE

(laughs)

Maybe not now, but when we get older, please play it on Holidays and only for the relatives.

JOHNNY

(confess)

I must confess, I don't go to church that much.

SALLIE

(smiles)

We can work on that. Mama always taught us to believe that church is in a person's heart.

JOHNNY

(continues)

I want Winnie to come to Houston and go to that hair dressing school.

SALLIE

I want her to come too. My dream is to help get all of my sisters and brothers out from under this share cropping thing. I'm the only one that can see a little light at the end of the tunnel.

JOHNNY

(continues)

Before I die, I want to have a small dance club for young Colored girls and boys to enjoy. I want

to call it The Truckin Grill... .Dancing at the top  
and grill sandwiches at the bottom.

SALLIE

(continues)

With our own land, we can have a grocery  
store, a beauty shop and a dancing hall on top.

JOHNNY

(laughs as he slap his hands)

Doggonit! Sallie! One thing about it, they can't  
stop Colored folks from dreaming, not even the  
IRS.

SALLIE

(smiles as she sits down on steps)

They are not just dreams to me. I see the  
vision, Johnny Criswell.

JOHNNY

(sits down by Sallie)

One more thing, Sallie. I want Winnie to dance  
at our reception and I'm going to play the piano.

SALLIE

(looks surprise)

Suggestion denied. A wedding is suppose to  
be a spiritual thing, Johnny.

JOHNNY

(turns away from Sallie)

You always said you wanted to be different, Sallie.  
It's nothing wrong with music and dance at the  
reception.  
Winnie would feel a part of the whole thing....

SALLIE

(thinks)

I will have to sleep on that one, Rag Player.

JOHNNY

(smiles as he takes Sallie by the hand)

It will make Winnie very happy. This probably

will be our last performance together because  
no tellings what going to happen in the big city.

SALLIE

Listen Johnny, I'm not telling you and Winnie to  
give up your act because of me.....Okay. I agree.  
Winnie can dance at our wedding reception.

JOHNNY

(smiles)

It's the only real thing she can give us for a  
wedding gift. Thanks.

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SALLIE

(gets quiet)

I'm not trying to change you Johnny. Only the  
good lord can do that. That's between you and  
the lord's business. Deep down inside, eliminating  
all the other habits, you are a good man and an  
exciting Rag Player even if I don't personally listen  
to the music.....But I do love you Johnny Criswell.

JOHNNY

You are different than any woman  
I've met Sallie Strawder. And I do  
love you.

JOHNNY and SALLIE hugs each other.

FADE TO

MUSIC: WEEPING WILLOW

INT. METHODIST CHURCH-HOUSTON, TEXAS-NOON-THREE  
WEEKS LATER

CUT TO

THE MINISTER is standing before JOHNNY and SALLIE pronouncing  
them  
MAN and WIFE.

MINISTER

(closes his bible)

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

JOHNNY raises SALLIE'S white veil and gives her a kiss.

FADE TO

MUSIC: WEDDING MARCH

INT. CHURCH-TWO LADIES GOSSIPING

CUT TO

TWO LADIES are talking about JOHNNY and SALLIE as they walk toward the exit of the church.

ONE LADY(PEOLA)

(gossiping)

Girl I heard they are different than  
night and day. He's handsome though.

OTHER LADY(HELEN)

(whispers)

He's a ragtime piano player and his sister dances.  
I don't think this marriage will last before sun  
down.

ONE LADY(PEOLA)

(smiles and very proper)

She's a school teacher and a very religious  
woman. This Johnny I don't know. We'll see.

OTHER LADY(HELEN)

Huh, we can't complain though, at least she's  
getting married, we don't even have a boyfriend.

ONE LADY(PEOLA)

(snaps)

Why you don't know nothing about my  
business, Helen. I have nothing else to

say to you.

PEOLA gives HELEN a dirty look and walks away.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

INT. RAGTIMER NIGHT CLUB-AFTERNOON-SIX MONTHS LATER

CUT TO

WINNIE is sitting a table in the vacant RATIMER NIGHT CLUB. She sits quietly as tears pour down her cheeks. She remembers all the good times of ragging on the wood floor. She touches the floor with her hands. She looks around as she walks toward the old piano. She rubs her hands gentle on the top of the piano.

CUT TO

The front door squeaks open. WINNIE jumps and picks up a chair. The sound of the old door gets louder as it opens. WINNIE thinks it is a bum looking to sleep or hide out.

VOICE(D-BROWN)

(whispers)

Anybody here?

WINNIE

(holds the chair higher as she tips behind the door)

You better go on and leave me alone now.

THE VOICE(D-BROWN)

(peeps around the door)

It's me Winnie. D-Brown . Your Mama told me you would probably be here. What are you doing?

WINNIE

(puts the chair down and sits)

Sorry, D. I didn't know it was you. I just can't get the past out of my head. And Johnny is gone with his life.....I miss this place and Mr. Lucas so much.

D-BROWN

(sits down at the table and takes her hand)

Just cherrish it, baby and move on. Listen I'm moving to Houston. I got myself a job on the railroad. I'm gonna be making good money. I heard Johnny gonna be working on the railroad too. They beginning to hire Color folks now because of the war.

WINNIE

(gets up and walks toward dusty glass front door)

I'm happy for Johnny. But I sure do miss our act. He gonna send for me next month. He done already paid for my hair dressing school.

D-Brown slowly gets up from the table and grabs Winnie by the shoulders

D-BROWN

That's good because I can see more of you Winnie. I want you to be my wife one day Winnie.

WINNIE

(in disbelief as she laughs)

Do you know what you just said D?

D- BROWN

(serious)

Proposing to you, Winnie. I want to marry you.

WINNIE

(almost speechless)

Is this a joke, D-Brown? Are you really proposing to me?

D-BROWN

(smiles)

Well I guess I am. Winnie Criswell. Will you marry me?

WINNIE

(turns to him and smiles)

My answer is yes, D-Brown, I'll marry you. But not until I finish that hair dressing school.

D-BROWN

(yells out)

Haliluya!

FADE TO

MUSIC: GOSPEL SONG

INT. JOHNNY AND SALLIE'S HOUSE-HOUSTON TEXAS-EVENING

FOUR YEARS LATER

CUT TO

JOHNNY is drinking a beer and reading the newspaper. He turns around in his comfort chair, opens his liquor cabinet and pours a shot of whiskey. He drinks it down, put the bottle of whiskey back in the cabinet and finishes reading the newspaper. Sallie comes in from one of her meetings downtown with the banker.

SALLIE is happy. She hold up the deeds to some property she bought.

SALLIE

(hands the deeds to Johnny)

Now, Johnny Criswell, we are on our way. We saved up enough money to buy this whole block. It's near the railroad tracks, the price was cheap. But I saw the vision and the lord spoke, 'buy that land Sallie.'

JOHNNY

(strange look on his face)

Sallie, you bought the whole block!

SALLIE

(sits down in a chair)

That's right. That old white banker finally swayed to our side. With you being a railroad man and I, a Houston school teacher, those were all the credentials we needed. Don't have to worry any more because we have a friend down at the bank. And he's the right color.

JOHNNY

(curious)

What we going to do with a whole block, Sallie?

SALLIE

(smiles)

You remembered that night on the porch, my dreams, your dreams, Winnie dreams.

JOHNNY

(still looking through the deeds)

Yeah. I haven't forgot--but--

SALLIE

(points to the deed)

Well, all of them are right here in this piece of paper.

Rent houses, beauty shop, grocery store, and The Truckin Grill. We start building next year. It's a bunch

of cow stables on the land. But come next year, we will see a difference. God is working for us Rag Player.

And your sister Winnie will have her own beauty shop.

She won't have to work out of her house anymore.

JOHNNY

(shakes his head)

That's great! You are some woman,

Sallie Criswell. The good lord sure knew  
what he was doing when he created you.

SALLIE

(quotes)

It is said Johnny, 'when the doors open, run  
through them before they close again.' We've  
opened our first door. And your mama and  
my mama can kiss that share cropping good-  
bye.....Halliluja!

FADE TO

MUSIC: POSSUM TATERS

INT. WINNIE'S HOUSE-KITCHEN-MORNING-SIX MONTHS LATER

CUT TO

WINNIE is pressing a CUSTOMER'S hair. As she presses her hair, they  
gossip a little bit about old times. WINNIE seems very happy as she curls  
the LADY'S hair.

CUSTOMER

(laughs)

Girl! You mean to tell me you are that same  
young girl I won all that money off of when the  
Sand Lady came to Lufkin.

WINNIE

(laughs and jokes)

Take a good look. Have I changed that  
much. Just a few more wrinkles.....

THE CUSTOMER turns and takes a good look at WINNIE.

CUSTOMER

(turns back around)

Well I be.....You is that young girl.  
Couldn't nobody beat you and your  
brother Ragging.....Can you still  
move like that?.....

WINNIE

(jokes)

In my dreams, honey.

CUSTOMER

(wipes the sweat from her eye brow)

I came all the way from Louisiana  
to see you dance Old Sand Lady  
right off the floor, but she was good.  
You had me worried there for  
a minute----How come ya'll didn't  
try out for broadway, you and your  
brother.

WINNIE

(smiles as she continues to press hair)

I was too country, didn't want to  
leave Mama and Johnny, well he  
fell in love.....

CUSTOMER

(laughs)

That will getcha everytime!

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-POSSUM TATER

INT. THE CRISWELL'S HOUSE-HOUSTON, TEXAS-FIFTEEN  
YEARS

LATER-AFTERNOON

SALLIE is out of town during church work. JOHNNY walks in the living  
where  
an old piano sits. He raises the cover of the piano and sits down on the  
stool.  
He runs his fingers across the keys. It's been a long time. He touches the  
keys  
softly as if they are going to break. The sound rings through the house. He  
pulls

off his felt hat and lays it on top of the piano.

FADE TO

EXT. FRONT STEPS OF JOHNNY'S HOUSE

CUT TO

A stylish dressed MIDDLE AGE LADY walks up on the porch. The sound of ragtime seems to bring her on the porch. She knocks on the door. But no answer, just the sound of Ragtime, a tune that she admires. Then the piano stops. She knocks on the door again.

FADE TO

INT. HOUSE- LIVING ROOM

CUT TO

JOHNNY is closing the piano cover. He hears a knock.....

FADE TO

EXT.-LADY STANDING AND WAITING AT FRONT DOOR

INT. JOHNNY COMES UP TO SCREEN DOOR

CUT TO

JOHNNY opens the screen door, but he doesn't recognizes the lady. She just stands there smiling with an address in her hands.

JOHNNY

(very polite)

May I help you, Mam?

THE LADY

(looks Johnny in the eyes)

Were that you playing the piano?

It's a familiar tune.

JOHNNY

(puts his glasses on)  
Yes it was.....

THE LADY

(curious)

I was just passing through Texas  
and I decide to look up somebody.  
I'm from Chicago and someone  
in Lufkin gave me your address,  
I believe his name was Felix. I  
went to the Ragtimer Club, but  
it was nothing but a frame of where  
it used to be.....

JOHNNY

(steps outside the door to the porch)  
Felix is my brother. He takes care  
of my mama up there.....Now  
did you say your name is.....

THE LADY

(smiles)

I didn't say. But my name is Cora Mayes.

JOHNNY

Are you looking for my wife. She got some  
relatives in Chicago....Your face sure do look  
familiar.

THE LADY

(laughs)

I'm little older, but I stiill  
can cut a rug or two. Your  
brother Felix made quite a  
lot of money off me when  
I lost to your sister.

JOHNNY

(excited)

What?! The Sand Lady! Oh my God! It is you. I didn't think I would ever see you again. Come on in. You are welcome.....The Sand Lady.

FADE TO

INT.-HOUSE

CUT TO

JOHNNY and THE SAND LADY walks into the house to the living room.

JOHNNY

(gesters)

Can I get you something to drink?  
Hey! You were good. You had all of us sweating. That event changed all our lives.....

THE SAND LADY

(takes out a handkerchief from her purse and wipes her face)

It also changed me.....I would like a glass of water if you don't mind.....

JOHNNY

(gets up)

You sure you don't want any whiskey, beer or----

THE SAND LADY

Water will be fine, Johnny.

JOHNNY disappears into the kitchen. THE SAND LADY picks up a picture from a nearby end table of JOHNNY and SALLIE'S wedding picture. She looks it from bottom to top. JOHNNY comes out the kitchen with a glass of water.

JOHNNY

(hands her the glass of water)  
Here you are Miss Sand Lady.  
Me and Sallie been married  
almost twenty years now. Two  
children all grown now---You  
know this must be a lucky day!

THE SAND LADY

(sips the water very slowly)  
How's that?.....

JOHNNY

(explains)  
Winnie is on her way over here.  
She comes every Monday because  
She doesn't press hair on that day.  
And her husband works evenings  
for the railroad.....

THE SAND LADY

(laughs a little)  
Little innocent Winnie is married  
and she's a Hair Dresser. I can't  
picture her doing nothing but dancing.

JOHNNY

(looks in his liquor cabinet and takes a shot of whiskey)  
Sorry. But this gives me a little bit more get up  
and go..... What ever happened to that piano  
player that came down with you. He could  
sure play.....

THE SAND LADY

(downs her head)  
Fred passed last year in my night club.

JOHNNY

(sympathises)  
Sorry...I didn't know.

THE SAND LADY

(takes another sip of water)  
Well. We all have to go sometimes.....

There is a knock on the door.

JOHNNY  
(gets up)  
Excuse me....That's probably Winnie.

THE SAND LADY sits quietly alone in the living waiting to see WINNIE.  
She is kind of nervous. The woman that she admires as a dancer. THE SAND LADY has to see her one more last time because she has very little time. She looks around the room at all the family pictures. It seems as if time stands still in the room. WINNIE walks in the living room. Their eyes meet, not knowing whether to embrace each other or not. It is the memory that lingers with THE SAND LADY. With WINNIE, it is a shock that she would ever see this lady again. WINNIE doesn't know whether to extend her hand for a shake or just speak and be quiet. It's is like two boxers staring each other in the face.

JOHNNY(CONT'D)  
(feels a need to break th ice)  
I think you all have met before.

WINNIE  
(extends her hand to The Sand Lady)  
My pleasure to see you again.

THE SAND LADY  
(extends her hand with a smile)  
My pleasure.....And thank you....  
I've been wanting to do this  
for a long time.....You were  
such a lady and I was so envy  
of you.....I came all the way  
from Chicago to tell you that  
you were the best rag dancer

I ever did see. That next day  
I just couldn't play that role  
of a mucho woman anymore.  
Thanks to you. I hope you  
will forgive me for my actions  
back then.....I have very little  
time here on earth--and I wanted  
to settle that score with you.

JOHNNY is sitting on the piano stool. He downs his head in sorrow.  
WINNIE  
wants to hug her, but don't know whether she will refuse the sympathy.  
Tears  
run down THE SAND LADY'S face.

THE SAND LADY

(gets up to leave)

I'm not gonna take up no more of  
your time. I've said what I wanted.  
It's time for me to go.....

WINNIE

(touches her on the arm)

No....Don't go now....Stay for dinner.  
I have a lot to ask you. Maybe Johnny  
can play some Rag and we could do a  
few steps together.

JOHNNY opens the cover of the piano. He hits the first note. WINNIE  
and  
THE SAND LADY looks at each other, pulls off their shoes and starts  
dancing  
while JOHNNY plays 'POSSUM RAG.'

CUT TO

WINNIE and THE SAND LADY FEET as they move slowly on the floor  
They are older and slower, but the movements are still there.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-POSSUM AND TATERS

EXT.-JOHNNY'S HOUSTON HOUSE-BACK YARD-MID-MORNING  
SIX MONTHS LATER

CUT TO

JOHNNY is painting screen doors for the rent houses. He is in his back yard.

As he paints the screen doors, FELIX, his brother walks in the back gate. JOHNNY is surprise to see him. He drops everything he is doing to greet his older brother.

JOHNNY

(grabs Felix's shoulders)

It is always great to see my big brother.  
How you doing Felix....How's Mama.  
I was just telling Winnie we need to  
come up there this week.....

FELIX downs his head. He walks toward the back yard's fence and stare into space. JOHNNY senses something is wrong. He follows FELIX to the fence.

FELIX

(looks at Johnny)

We need to talk, Johnny.  
Mama ain't doing too well.

JOHNNY turns away as he senses something is terrible wrong and it can't take what he might hear.

JOHNNY

(in denial)

We just saw her two weeks ago  
and she was in good spirits.

FELIX

(lights up a cigarette)

When age hit you like it have  
Mama, two weeks is a long  
time---anything can happen.  
They don't think she's gonna  
make it, Johnny. You and  
Winnie need to come as soon

as you can.....

JOHNNY hits the fence with his bare hands.

JOHNNY

(shakes his head)

Me and Winnie tried to get her to  
come stay with us.....She just  
couldn't leave the land.

FELIX

(takes a puff off the cigarette)

Old folks like Mama, you just  
can't take them away from where  
they were raised. Mama is where  
she wanna be especially on the land  
we bought her.....I gotta go---  
I will see you soon, little brother.

FELIX leaves Johnny staring into the sky with tears running down his  
cheeks

FADE TO

MUSIC: GOSPEL HYMN-AMAZING GRACE

EXT. LUFKIN, TEXAS-GRAVE YARD-MID-AFTERNOON-HOT

CUT TO

MAMA ESTER is dead. Everyone is standing around the gravesite as the  
minister is saying the last rites. JOHNNY, WINNIE, FELIX and SALLIE  
with  
the rest of the CRISWELLS and STRAWDERS' family are in attendance.  
It is a very hot and summer day.

THE MINISTER

(picks up some earth from the ground)  
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust.

FADE TO

MUSIC: WEEPING WILLOW

EXT. LUFKIN -VACANT LOT- WHERE RAGTIMER ONCE WAS-  
AFTER MAMA ESTER'S FUNERAL

CUT TO

JOHNNY and WINNIE are standing looking at a vacant lot.

WINNIE

(looks around)

The Ragtimer used to be right here, Johnny.  
Right here where we are standing.

JOHNNY

(picks up an old sign that is buried in the dirt)

Look Winnie! An old Ragtimer sign.

JOHNNY brushes the dirt off with his hands. The name, RAGTIMER  
NIGHT

CLUB appears. WINNIE and JOHNNY stares at it for a moment.

WINNIE

(looks at the sign)

How time have passed, Johnny. It seems  
just like yesterday we were doing our act  
here. And Mr. Lucas was the finest  
gentleman I ever did meet besides, you,  
Felix and D-Brown.

Cement steps of the RAGTIMERS' front porch are still in place. WINNIE  
and  
JOHNNY decides to take a seat.

JOHNNY

(reflects on his mama)

Winnie. We had a good mother.  
Even though we worked hard  
here in Lufkin, she still let us  
do our act in a night club.

WINNIE  
(turns away and looks off)  
Yeah. She never complained  
about that as long as we stuck  
to her rules....We were blessed.

FADE TO

EXT. YOUNG WOMAN WALKING ACROSS THE STREET

CUT TO

A YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN walks over from across  
the  
street. She walks up to WINNIE and JOHNNY. JOHNNY and WINNIE  
look at each other.

YOUNG WOMAN  
(extend her hand to Winnie and Johnny)  
Hello. My name is Viola Johnson.

WINNIE and JOHNNY shake her hand.

WINNIE and JOHNNY  
(look curiously at the woman)  
Please to meet you.

WINNIE  
How may we help you, Miss Johnson?

YOUNG WOMAN  
(pulls from her purse an address)  
I was looking for the Criswells.  
Do they still live around here?  
Particular Johnny and Winnie.  
I was a very young girl when  
I remember my uncle talking  
about a dance act at the Ragtimer.

JOHNNY and WINNIE look at each other.

YOUNG WOMAN(CONT'D)

I am a dancer myself in Harlem, New York and I grew up right here in Lufkin. I remember playing with my cousins in the streets one day and we saw Miss Winnie sitting right here on those steps. We all ran up to her. I showed her some of my rag steps my uncle had taught me. I always wanted to see her dance, but I was just a little girl and my mama was very religious. She didn't want me to have no part of ragtime..... My uncle used to tell me about the different rag moves she had.

JOHNNY and WINNIE look even more surprise. They kind of laugh at each other. They look at the young lady.

WINNIE

(smiles)

Should we tell her, Johnny Criswell.

YOUNG WOMAN

(puts her hands up to her mouth)

Johnny Criswell....You are the piano player. And you must be Winnie! I can't beleive it. I couldn't recognize you, Miss Winnie. I was just a little girl---Oh thank God, I got so many question to ask ya'll before I go back to New York.....

The YOUNG WOMAN pulls out a pencil and paper. She begins to ask WINNIE and JOHNNY question after question. JOHNNY and WINNIE seem to be enjoying themselves.

FADE TO

MUSIC: POSSUM AND TATERS

INT.- CRISWELLS' TWO STORY BRICK HOUSE-1970- FLASHBACK

JOHNNY is sleep in his comfort chair. SALLIE walks in the room.

SALLIE

(peeps in on Johnny)

Honey, you gonna get a crook in your neck sleeping in that old chair....Did anyone bring the rent.

JOHNNY is not responding or moving. He looks like he is in a deep sleep. SALLIE worries. He alway awakes when she talks to him. She puts her packages down and hobbles over to JOHNNY.

SALLIE(CONT'D)

(she shakes his shoulder)

Johnny...wake up! I'm home.  
You know I'm going to have to stop driving. I almost got ran off the road. Johnny!  
Wake up! Don't you know I need you.....

SALLIE bends down and lays her head in his lap. She crys.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

EXT. LUFKIN GRAVE YARD-AFTERNOON

CUT TO

WINNIE is putting flowers on JOHNNY'S GRAVE. She stands up and stares at the his grave site. Her body have grown old now. She leans on her cane.

WINNIE

I really miss you Johnny Criswell. I betcha playing Ragtime up there in Mr. Lucas place...Tell Mr. Lucas to save that dance spot for me.....

A hand touches WINNIE on the shoulder. WINNIE turns and there stands SALLIE CRISWELL. They pause a moment and then hug each other.

SALLIE

(tears running down her eyes)  
I miss him too, Winnie.

WINNIE

(looks down at the grave)  
I know....Thanks for being a good  
friend and sister-in-law.....You meant  
so much to him.

SALLIE

(takes out her handkerchief and wipes the tears)  
Did he ever tell you that I called him  
"The Rag Player" sometimes?

WINNIE

(looks surprise)  
Really! I like that name, Sallie.

FADE TO

MUSIC: RAGTIME-WEEPING WILLOW

THE END







