

SALT AN PEPPER

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK - DAY (1918)

A group of youngsters, 13-15, is playing baseball in a large vacant lot. FAVOR the pitcher, 15 year old DANNY O'DAY.

DANNY (V.O.)

I was gonna pitch for the Yankees.
That's right. Me, Danny O'Day.
Yeah, I just knew it.

Danny eyeballs the batter, winks at his CATCHER, and winds up. He fires a blistering fastball right by the batter, who swings wildly and misses. The catcher holds up the ball.

CATCHER

Strike three!

His teammates all let out a yell.

TEAM

Danny! Danny!

THREE TEENAGE GIRLS, 13-14

Are strolling along the sidewalk in the same neighborhood. Danny's younger sister, MARGARET, her best friend, DOTTIE, and the new girl in school, ELIZABETH, also the prettiest.

DOTTIE

(to Margaret)

Is Danny pitching today? Of course
he is. He's always the pitcher.

(to Elizabeth)

Wait til you see Danny, Margaret's
brother. Aahh, what a dream-boat.
And the best athlete in school.

Elizabeth is amused at Dottie's near-worship. She says, not haughtily:

ELIZABETH

You're obviously impressed with
him. I think athletes are kind of
boring. No offense, Margaret. But
every one I meet has a jock-strap
for a brain, and a one track mind.

MARGARET

(laughing)

That's okay. I know what you mean.
(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

I have to say, though, even if he is my brother, he's not as bad as most. But all he talks about is pitching for the Yankees.

ELIZABETH

I'd like to meet a boy that's artistic, you know? Who knows about music, dance, art, but isn't one of those sissy boys.

MARGARET

Wild horses couldn't get Danny into a dance class. He'd die first.

(beat)

Look, there he is.

Margaret points to her brother as they approach the makeshift baseball diamond.

DOTTIE

Isn't he cute?!

Elizabeth almost has to swallow her heart.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, he's okay.

Danny catches sight of his sister and her friends, then zeros right in on Elizabeth. He catches her stare, and returns it with a big grin. Elizabeth blushes and tries to avert her eyes. Margaret notices.

MARGARET

You want to stop and watch?

Elizabeth tries to be cool.

ELIZABETH

Okay, if you want.

Dottie notices too, then yells out:

DOTTIE

Hi, Danny!

Danny waves back, but keeps his eyes glued to Elizabeth. The batter yells at Danny.

BATTER

You gonna throw it, or what?!

A startled Danny returns his attention to the game. The other team's biggest hitter is up, and Danny figures to take this opportunity to impress the new girl. He winds up, eyeballs the batter, sneaks a look back at the girls. Danny zeros in on the catcher's mitt, and fires. The batter blasts the pitch right over third base, but it curves foul.

CATCHER

Foul ball! Strike one!

Danny wipes his brow, whew! Margaret yells:

MARGARET

Come on Danny, don't choke!

Danny shoots her a glare. The batter chimes in.

BATTER

That's right, Danny Boy. Better listen to your little sister.

Danny shots back.

DANNY

You better watch it you don't strike out!

Danny winds up and unleashes a wicked curve ball. The batter looks silly as he swings wildly and misses.

CATCHER

Strike two!

He throws the ball back to Danny who saunters back onto the mound. He tosses a smile to the girls, then returns to the batter.

DANNY

You ready for number three?

Danny heaves one right down main street, and Ka-Pow! Danny watches stunned, as the ball sails over his head and outta there! The batter smiles at Danny as he trots around the bases. Danny looks over at the girls. They giggle as they turn to leave. Elizabeth sneaks him smile.

INT. O'DAY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

The O'Day's are seated at the dinner table. Dr. PATRICK O'DAY, the local dentist, is carving up the roast, while MRS. O'DAY dishes out the mashes potatoes.

MARGARET
(teasing)
So Danny, how did your game go
today? Another no-hitter?

Danny glares across the table at his sister.

DANNY
It didn't break.

MRS. O'DAY
What?! What didn't you break?

DANNY
Nothin'. My curve ball. It didn't
break.

MARGARET
And Mike Flanagan knocked it about
fifty miles.

DANNY
I'm still perfecting it.

INT. MARGARET'S ROOM - EVENING

Margaret is sitting at the mirror, combing her hair, when
there's a knock, and Danny let's himself into her room.

DANNY
Okay, who is she?

Margaret feigns innocence.

MARGARET
Who? Who are you talking about?

DANNY
You know who I'm talking about. At
the game, the new girl. Who is
she? What's her name?

MARGARET
Elizabeth. She just moved here
from Baltimore. You might not be
her type, though.

DANNY
Yeah, what type is that?

MARGARET
The "artistic" type. Guys that
know how to dance an' stuff.

DANNY

Oh, yeah. Girly-boys is what they're called. Anyway, today wasn't one of my best performances. I must've got distracted.

Margaret continues to comb her hair.

MARGARET

You're gonna need more than baseball.

INT. TAP DANCE CLASS - AFTERNOON

A group of teenagers, mostly girls, are beginning a class. They include Margaret, Dottie, and Elizabeth. The "Madame Souzatska" type TEACHER, is just about to begin class when Danny stumbles through the door, slipping on the brand new tap shoes he's already got on. The teacher is aghast.

TEACHER

Who are you?! And what do you think you're doing?

DANNY

I'm Danny, Margaret's brother. I want to learn how to dance.

TEACHER

You must be joking.

DANNY

No, I'm not joking. Look, I bought new shoes.

TEACHER

We'll see. Get in the back line, and try to pay attention.

During class, Danny keeps sneaking glances at Elizabeth, and tries to get next to her whenever he can. Another young man, JAMES, is also enamored with Elizabeth, and tries to impress her with his dancing. She recognizes his abilities, but doesn't care for him.

One time when James tries to get next to Elizabeth, Danny lumbers in between them, nearly knocking him over.

DANNY

Oh, I'm sorry. Maybe you should go dance over there.

James does as he's advised. Elizabeth stifles a giggle. Although obviously distracted by Elizabeth, Danny makes a genuine attempt to learn the steps. By the end of class, he has impressed both the teacher and Elizabeth. Danny introduces himself.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Danny, and you're Elizabeth.

(beat)

Margaret told me.

ELIZABETH

Hi. I know who you are. Margaret told me. Not too bad for your first time.

DANNY

I was inspired. Wanna go to Coney Island with me on Saturday?

ELIZABETH

Sure. Sounds like fun.

DANNY

Great! Pick you up at noon? We'll take the trolley.

ELIZABETH

Why don't I pick you up. I can get us a car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Danny and Elizabeth are riding in the back of a brand new Cadillac, chauffeur and all. Danny is impressed.

ELIZABETH

George is more like a big brother than a chauffeur. He plays a loose chaperone if I want; and I don't tell mother he takes the car.

Elizabeth catches George's smile in the rear-view mirror, and smiles back.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - BOARDWALK - DAY

Danny and Elizabeth stroll along, sharing a bag of popcorn. George stays a few feet behind them.

ELIZABETH

Daddy's always overseas somewhere. He works for a big trading company. Every six months he comes home, and I get a new trinket. Stays about a month, and then he's off again. I have so many knickknacks I could open a store.

DANNY

What about your mom? What does she do in all that time?

ELIZABETH

Tea parties. Socials. Sometimes I think they're drinking more than tea. Mother always comes home and goes to bed early. Which is great, 'cause I can sneak out just about any time I want.

DANNY

My family life is a lot more conventional. You'd call it boring. Dad's a dentist, mom takes care of the house. Margaret's my only sister, and I'm gonna pitch for the Yankees.

ELIZABETH

You sound pretty sure about that.

DANNY

It's destiny. Pitching's like takin' a breath.

ELIZABETH

Seems to me you had a little cough the other day.

DANNY

Aah, if you beat 'em every time, they won't wanna play.

They come upon a booth where you knock down milk bottles with baseballs. Various stuffed animals are the prizes.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Care for a bear?

ELIZABETH

I like the Panda.

DANNY

Done.

(to ATTENDANT)

How may do I have to knock down?

ATTENDANT

To get that panda there, you're gonna hafta knock down all three sets of pins with three balls.

DANNY

Lemme have 'em.

The attendant gives Danny the baseballs. Elizabeth gives Danny a peck on the cheek.

ELIZABETH

For good luck.

Danny smiles, turns to the pins, and fires one baseball after another, blasting apart each set of six pins. The onlookers applaud, the attendant is floored, and Elizabeth is suitably impressed. She gives him a real kiss on the cheek this time.

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY

Danny and Elizabeth stroll along, arm in arm. George follows behind, carrying a stuffed giant panda.

ELIZABETH

Oh, look! A vaudeville stage!

That's what I wanted to see!

They join a large crowd in front of an outdoor stage.

M.C.

Gather 'round ladies and gentlemen,
and enjoy for free what you'll be
paying to see at the Winter Garden,
beginning this Friday, and playing
through the end of July. So
welcome please, the wonderful song
and dance, husband and wife team,
of Winston and Barbara Mackey!

The audience applauds as the "whitebread" duo schmaltz their way through "Let Me Call You Sweetheart". Danny whispers.

DANNY

I bet when that guy was a kid, he
got beat up a lot.

Elizabeth chuckles, and gives him a playful elbow.

DANNY (CONT'D)
If the next one's like this...

The Mackeys finish their pleasant and inoffensive number.

M.C.
Let's hear it for the Mackeys!
C'mon ladies and gentlemen! A big
round of applause. Wasn't that
great?! And now for something
completely different. "The
Blackface Boys" doing a medley of
your favorites from way down in
"Old Dixie".

To Danny's astonishment, the quartet of singers are all
wearing "blackface" makeup. He's never seen it before.

DANNY
What the... Who are these...
What's with the white mouth?

ELIZABETH
You've never heard of "blackface"?
They're white guys wearing black
makeup.

DANNY
Why don't they just get some real
Negroes?

ELIZABETH
It's another form of racism. White
people don't want to share the same
stage with someone of color.

DANNY
It's that way in baseball, too.
But they got their own league.
They don't have to play in ours.

ELIZABETH
You sound like you don't like them.

DANNY
I didn't say that. I just never
really been around them. We don't
exactly live in the same
neighborhood, go to the same
schools. Just the way it is.
(beat)
Anyway, the first guy looked like a
sissy, and these guys look like
sissies with black faces. Wanna go?

INT. CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Danny, Elizabeth, and her new giant panda ride in the back seat. George is at the wheel.

ELIZABETH

I know, let's go see some black theater, like Millie told me about. It's supposed to be really exciting. Much better dancing.

DANNY

Who's Millie?

ELIZABETH

She's, well, her and her mother are kind of like, our housekeepers. Been with us forever. Her mother's like a nanny, and she's like a sister. I don't have any real brothers or sisters.

DANNY

You mean you socialize with the coloreds?

ELIZABETH

Yeah, I do. Like I said, I grew up with them. You don't have to be scared of them. They don't bite.

DANNY

I ain't scared of nobody.

(beat)

They say that about baseball, too. They got their world, and we got ours. I'm not afraid of being around them.

(beat)

So, what about this black theater?. Is it dangerous, you know, for us?

ELIZABETH

No, no, it's okay. The audience is mixed, white and colored. That's what Millie says. She's been there, I haven't. But, it's late, a midnight show.

DANNY

Oh, no, I can't go that late. My parents would never let me. Probably wouldn't want me going to that theater, either.

ELIZABETH

So, sneak out. Haven't you ever done that before.

DANNY

No, I haven't. I never thought about disobeying my father.

ELIZABETH

Then don't ask him. That way, if you do get caught, you weren't disobeying him. We'll pick you up at 11:30.

EXT. O'DAY HOUSE - NIGHT (11:30)

Danny climbs out his window and descends the outside trellis below his window. Elizabeth and Millie in the back seat, with George driving, pull up outside in the street. Danny sprints to the car and hops in the back.

DANNY

Jeez, I feel like I just robbed the place.

ELIZABETH

Danny, this is Millie.

Danny is about to say hello, when he gets a good look at the prettiest colored girl he's ever seen.

DANNY

Hi Danny, I'm Millie... I mean, I'm Danny, hi Millie.

MILLIE

Nice to meet you, Danny. Elizabeth says you want to see some "real dancin'". You'll have fun tonight.

EXT. LAFAYETTE THEATER - MIDNIGHT

A large crowd of white and colored patrons pour off the sidewalk and into the theater.

George escorts Danny, Elizabeth, and Millie through the front door. The ticket taker is curious.

TICKET TAKER

Who are these three.

GEORGE
My kids.

INT. LAFAYETTE THEATER - LOBBY

Inside, Millie surprises everyone and heads for the balcony.

MILLIE
Alright, you guys. See you after
the show.

Elizabeth is stunned, protests.

ELIZABETH
What? No! You're sitting with us!

MILLIE
No, that's okay. I don't mind. I
have friends up there.

ELIZABETH
If I would have known this, I
wouldn't have come.

MILLIE
That's why I didn't tell you.

Just then, a handsome young BLACK YOUTH calls out:

BLACK YOUTH
Millie, c'mon! I saved you a seat.

Millie waves back and turns to Elizabeth.

MILLIE
Don't worry 'bout me. I'll be fine.

They give each other a hug, and Millie joins her beau.

INT. LAFAYETTE THEATER

George escorts Danny and Elizabeth to their seats in the prime orchestra section. They take notice of their section being all white, the balcony is colored. But Elizabeth does notice Millie up there, and waves to her. This raises a few eyebrows among the highbrows. The empty seat next to her is a reminder of the segregation. Danny takes hold of her hand.

They get a kick out of the first act; a colored couple in blackface doing a less candy-coated version of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart".

The next act is a chorus line of colored cuties.

The third act is a steamy blues ballet with a female blues singer, and a scantily clad couple doing an erotic ballet.

Danny and Elizabeth are both a little blushed at this.

The stage goes dark, then a single spotlight hits center stage. From the wings comes the most furious tap dancing they ever heard. The legs appear in the spotlight, and dance toward center stage.

VOICE (O.S.)
And now, pitching for the New York
Yankees -- Sonny Jackson!

SONNY JACKSON, in a Yankee uniform, dances fully in the spotlight, and waves to the crowd(audience), which loudly cheers. The stage lights up, and the backdrop is a baseball stadium.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And catching for the Yankees,
"Sweet" Pete Williams!

The audience cheers as Sonny's partner, also in uniform, dances out from the wings. PETE glides alongside and duets with Sonny at the pitcher's mound, center stage.

He taps back over to home plate at the side of the stage.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And now, batting for the Washington
Senators, Jenny Mathews!

The crowd boos at first mention of the rival Senators, but the jeers turn to cheers, hoots and hollers, when the beautiful, long legged JENNY taps her way onto the stage in short shorts and a brief top. She dances up to the plate and gives Pete the eye. He calls "time out", and dances over to Sonny.

PETE
Go easy on her, huh, Sonny? I
think I got a chance to "score"
with this on. Hit a "home run",
know what I mean?

SONNY
You kiddin'? You couldn't get to
first base with this one.

PETE

I'll be on second 'fore you know it.

SONNY

Only if you drug and kidnap her.

PETE

Now Sonny, don't strike her out, just 'cause you always do.

SONNY

You just catch it. I'll do the pitchin'.

Jenny takes her time in the batter's box, flirting with Pete, blowing kisses to Sonny, playing coy and sexy.

Now Sonny is having trouble resisting Jenny's charms. He winds up and tosses a large papier-mache ball at home plate. Jenny hits it with the bat; exploding confetti rains down over the audience. Jenny dances around the stage diamond as the audience cheers.

VOICE (O.S.)

And that's a home run for Jenny Mathews!

Sonny and Pete act dumbstruck as Jenny dances around them, blows them a kiss, and is gone offstage. Pete dances over to Sonny.

PETE

I said "go easy", not give up the farm.

Pete saunters back to home plate. Sonny gives him a dirty look, rears back and throws his glove at him, as the lights go out.

INT. CADILLAC - NIGHT

George drives the excited teens home.

DANNY

I gotta admit, I never thought I'd be entertained by tap dancing. It was definitely more fun than that Coney Island slop. How come white people don't dance like that?

ELIZABETH

Be too much of a shock to people.

MILLIE

White folks ain't supposed to have
that much fun. It'd make 'em feel
guilty.

Danny smirks at Millie's statement.

CUT TO:

A FEW BLOCKS UP AN ADJOINING ALLEY

A milkman in his truck is making his morning deliveries. He parks the truck on a slight hill, and sets the brake. He goes around back, and as soon as he unloads a crate of milk, the parking brake slips, and the truck careens down the hill and out across the boulevard where it slams into the unsuspecting cadillac.

A large shard of glass breaks free from the truck's cracked windshield, and flies into the back seat, aimed right for Elizabeth's head. Danny throws out his arm to block it, and takes the glass directly in the elbow.

Everyone else is dazed but unhurt. Danny's elbow is pumping blood. He's too dazed to move. Elizabeth notices, screams:

ELIZABETH

George! Quick! It's Danny! He's
bleeding bad!

George whips off his jacket, and ties it around Danny's elbow, then speeds them off to a hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Danny wakes up in a hospital bed, his right arm in a sling. A nurse slips out, and a DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR

Morning, Danny, how ya feeling?

DANNY

(moans)

Felt better.

DOCTOR

I can imagine. That was quite a
shock to your elbow. We worked all
night on it.

(beat)

I understand you're quite a ball
player. Pitcher, right?

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

There's no easy way to say it,
Danny.

(beat)

You're not going to be pitching
anymore. Too much damage to the
tendons. You'll have your everyday
use, but the arm wouldn't hold up
under the constant strain. You
could do permanent damage.

Danny sports a brave face for the Doctor, but a thousand
drums are pounding through his brain, echoing the Doctor's
words, "You're not going to be pitching anymore". Danny
stares at the ceiling, his eyes welling with tears. The
doctor tries to console him.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Are you feeling any pain? Can I
get you anything?

Danny just shakes his head "no", and continues to stare at
the ceiling.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm gonna go now, let you
rest. If you need anything, ring
this bell, okay?

The doctor eases his way out. Danny can't contain his
emotions any longer, and explodes out, crying.

DANNY

Why?! Why me?! I was good! Really
good! I had it all planned! What
am I gonna do now?!

Danny collapses into his pillow and begins to dream;

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - PITCHER'S MOUND (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Danny is standing on the pitcher's mound at the Yankee's ball
park in his hospital gown. The bases are loaded and it's a
full count. He winds up and checks each of the base runners.
The crowd is chanting "One More! One More!" But he can't get
himself to throw the ball. He's frozen.

Sonny Jackson steps into the dream and takes the ball from
Danny. He tap dances around the mound, then bumps Danny off
of it. Sonny pitches the ball, an "Sweet" Pete becomes the
catcher. Their cute assistant, Jenny, becomes the batter,
and when she hits the ball, the rest of the players all turn
into "blackface" tap dancers.

Danny witnesses all this, bewildered at first, then joins in.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANCE CLASS - DAY

Danny, his arm in a sling, struggles to keep up.

FORWARD TO...

Danny's arm is free of the sling, and he's beginning to get the steps. The teacher, and especially Elizabeth, are impressed with Danny's progress. He and Elizabeth always partner with each other in class.

FORWARD TO SEVEN YEARS LATER (1925)

Danny and Elizabeth are now Mr. and Mrs. O'Day, on the bill at the Monroe Theater in Philadelphia.

INT. MONROE THEATER - EVENING

Danny and Elizabeth are performing one of the standard duets of the day. A perfunctory performance until Danny gives Elizabeth a wink, and they kick it up a notch, incorporating dance steps more associated with black theater.

The black tie audience is a little taken aback by this, but a few people clap along.

BACKSTAGE

The show's DIRECTOR is seething as he watches from the wings.

ON STAGE

Danny and Elizabeth finish their number to definite mixed reviews. The audience that clapped along erupts into hoots and hollers, while the stuffed shirts sit on their hands.

BACKSTAGE

As Danny and Elizabeth exit the stage, they are met by an irate Director.

DIRECTOR

I told you before, I don't want any of that "Coontown Jamboree"! You dance it the way I choreographed it or find another show!

Danny is about to object, but the Director turns in a huff, and storms off.

DANNY

I'd like to knock him on his ass!

ELIZABETH

Yes, but then you'd be arrested for child abuse. C'mon, let's get changed and go back to the hotel.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Danny and Elizabeth are lying in bed.

DANNY

"Don't dance like the coloreds". I don't dance like no "coon".

ELIZABETH

Danny, don't talk like that. You sound as bad as they do.

DANNY

Just 'cause I know how to dance without a stick up my ass, like most white guys.

ELIZABETH

Oh, sweetie, he's not worth the aggravation. Someday we'll get to dance the way we want.

DANNY

It's so aggravating having that little dandy in control of us.

ELIZABETH

I know. It won't be for long.
(beat)
I know a place where he's got nothing to say.

She coos in his ear and strokes his chest. He reaches over and turns out the kerosene lamp.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Elizabeth wakes with a start.

ELIZABETH
Oh, God, I'm gonna be sick!

She leaps over Danny, out of bed, and stumbles into the bathroom. Danny halfway awakens.

DANNY
Huh? What? You okay, hon?

Elizabeth vomits inside the bathroom. Danny gets up and goes to the bathroom door.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Elizabeth, are you okay? You sick?

She lets out another retching.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'm coming in.

Danny opens the door, and Elizabeth sits on the floor, white as a ghost.

ELIZABETH
I'm not ready for company.

Danny gingerly lifts her up onto the toilet seat.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I feel like I've been kicked in the stomach by a mule.

DANNY
I'm gonna get the doctor.

ELIZABETH
I'm sure it's just the flu.

DANNY
I'm not taking any chances. I'll get one of the girls to stay with you. Don't argue.

ELIZABETH
Okay, you get the doctor while stay here and throw up some more.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Danny is pacing outside the room. The DOCTOR steps out and closes the door behind him. This concerns Danny.

DANNY
What' up Doc, is she okay?

DOCTOR
Oh, yeah, she's fine. She's not really sick, she's... she'll tell you. Go on in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Danny peeks into the room. Elizabeth is lying in bed, she smiles at him. He steps in and closes the door behind him.

DANNY
Doctor says you're okay?

ELIZABETH
I'm fine... and you're gonna be a daddy.

DANNY
I'm a wha...? A daddy?!

Danny rushes to her bed and hugs her. He climbs on board and they kiss passionately.

INT. DIRECTOR'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Danny has just told the Director they are leaving the show.

DIRECTOR
You can't just up and quit the show like this!

DANNY
Yes I can and I am, I mean we are. I told you, Elizabeth is pregnant, and I don't think she should be on the road. We're going back home.

DIRECTOR
I should sue you for breach of contract!

DANNY
Yeah, well you won't. It's not worth the trouble and you know it.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Besides, anybody in the cast would love to pick up another slot. You will be filling up the same schedule and paying less money for it. I should sue you for severance.

DIRECTOR

Get out!

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - EVENING

It's Saturday night and an all black crowd packs the theater. Sonny Jackson and "Sweet" Pete Williams are headlining.

They close the show with their new act about lion-tamers; a bevy of colored beauties play the lionesses.

INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

PETE

Hey Sonny, how 'bout spottin' me fifty till next Friday, huh?

SONNY

Fifty?! Who do I look like, John D. Rockefeller? Why you always hittin' me up for money? You get paid same as I do.

PETE

You know I'm takin' care of my sick mother. It ain't cheap!

SONNY

What're you buyin' her, fur coats?

PETE

You gonna loan me the money or not?

SONNY

Okay, but you gotta come to the Cotton Club with me tonight.

PETE

Naw, it's late. My momma'd be expectin' me soon.

SONNY

C'mon, man, you never want to go. The "Duke" is playin' a late night jam. It'll be fun!

PETE
No, you go ahead.

SONNY
You want that money?

PETE
What?! Aw, c'mon Sonny...

SONNY
Don't argue. Go or no dough.

Sonny grabs his bag and walks out of the dressing room. Pete ponders a second, then hurries to catch up.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - LATE EVENING

As Sonny and Pete are walking, Pete keeps looking around.

SONNY
Man, you got your head on a swivel.
What you lookin' for? You're as
skittish as a long-tailed cat in a
room full o' rockin' chairs.
Settle down.

Suddenly, three large white men step out from an adjacent alley. Sonny freezes, Pete takes off running. One of the men whips out a blackjack and throws it, hitting Pete square in the back, knocking him flat.

Sonny starts to object, but one of the thugs grabs him from behind, and the other punches him in the stomach.

The first thug trots over to Pete and drags him by the collar back to the others.

A brand new Packard pulls up. The driver jumps out and opens the rear door. Out steps a MOBSTER of some obvious stature.

MOBSTER
Pete, Pete, what am I gonna do with
you, huh? What are you, stupid?
You know you can't keep the
"Dutchman" waiting on that kind of
dough, an' not pay somethin'! Even
his mother couldn't get away with
that!

All the men force a laugh. Pete tries to appease him.

PETE

Please, gimme a break, will ya? I was just on my way over to give you some money, really!

MOBSTER

Oh, really? How much?

PETE

Uh, fifty bucks.

MOBSTER

Yeah? Let's see it.

Pete desperately fishes in his pockets, then realizes he hasn't got the money from Sonny, who realizes it too.

PETE

First I gotta get it from Sonny... uh, he owes me...

SONNY

That's right! Here, Pete. Actually, it was seventy-five, wasn't it?

MOBSTER

Aw bullshit! You're so fuckin' pathetic. Robbin' from Peter to pay Paul. Give you a break? I'll give you break alright. I'm gonna apply one of your show biz sayings for real, here. How's that go? Break a leg?

Pete breaks down sobbing.

PETE

No, please! Not my legs. I'll do anything. Not that!

MOBSTER

That's right, you're a dancer, huh. How ironic. Anyway, quit your whinin'. I'm gonna go easy on you, and only break one.

One of the thugs chimes in, proud of his humor.

THUG

That's givin' him a break, boss.

They all laugh except Sonny and Pete, who is still sobbing. The mobster motions to his men.

The driver holds a gun a Sonny as the other three stuff a rag in Pete's mouth, and drag him into the alley.

Sonny cringes as he hears the sound, like a branch snapped, as the thugs break Pete's leg. His muffled screams echo through the alley and out onto the street.

The thugs emerge from the alley, leaving Pete moaning in agony. The Mobster motions to one of his thugs.

MOBSTER

An' I'll take that seventy-five.

Sonny hands the money over to the thug.

MOBSTER (CONT'D)

Better go get your friend.

He walks back to the car where the door is already opened for him. The driver hops in the front seat and they speed away. The other three walk away dividing up the money.

EXT. ALLEY

Sonny finds Pete near delirious, and helps him out of there.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Sonny is getting the bad news from the Doctor about Pete.

DOCTOR

Your friend is hurt pretty bad. They snapped the kneecap. Only thing we could do was fuse it together. His leg is gonna be straight as a board for good. I hate to say it, but his dancing days are over.

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER BACKSTAGE - DAY

Sonny is trying to get a gig from the stage manager.

DAVIS

I'm sorry, Sonny, but all the other acts are complete. I can't see where you'd fit in. An' let's face it Sonny, you ain't a young man anymore. How old are you?

SONNY

Fifty-four.

DAVIS

Five years ago, maybe. C'mon.
It's a young man's game.

SONNY

Aw, hell, Davis! I can dance any
one of them kids right out the
door, an' you know it! Too old!

DAVIS

I ain't knockin' your dancin',
Sonny, you're one of the best. But
I'm dictated by the buying public.
The men want to see young women,
and the ladies want young men.

SONNY

I thought they came to see dance.

DAVIS

They do, they just wanna see young
people doin' it. Sorry Sonny, but
I can't help you.

SONNY

I'll be back.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Walking the lonely streets at night, Sonny sings the blues
about an aging black dancer. Then he talks to himself.

SONNY

Too old, my ass! I'll show them
young punks whose too old. Shit.
They talk about the benefits of
age, I'd sure like to know what the
hell they are.

Sonny stops abruptly as a light goes on in his head.

SONNY (CONT'D)

That's it!

EXT. MARKETPLACE, HARLEM - DAY

Elizabeth's colored friend, Millie is shopping, when her attention is drawn to a flyer glued to one of the market stalls. "GET A CHANCE TO DANCE WITH A LEGEND- SONNY JACKSON" CONTEST: SATURDAY, AUG. 14.

INT. O'DAY HOME - DAY

Elizabeth, now visibly pregnant, and Millie are trying to talk Danny into entering the contest.

ELIZABETH

Danny, Millie's right, you've got to enter this contest. Sonny Jackson is a master! You need someone like that to push you.

DANNY

People aren't gonna accept a mixed racial dance team. Probably start a riot. Besides, I'll bet Sonny's not gonna want a white partner.

ELIZABETH

All he can do is say no. Won't kill you to try.

DANNY

How am I gonna compete with somebody like that?

MILLIE

You're not competing against Sonny, just the other guys.

(beat)

Danny, you might not be at Sonny's level, but you're good! Real good. You got somethin' I ain't never seen in a white boy before, if you'll pardon me puttin' it like that. I think he'll be mighty impressed with you.

DANNY

A white guy and a colored. Who's gonna buy that?

MILLIE

A lot of people like cream in their coffee.

EXT. WAREHOUSE DOCK - HARLEM - DAY

A huge crowd, mostly colored, is milling around a large warehouse dock, that has been cleared, and set up with a piano for the contest.

A few of the contestants are practicing their steps. "Sweet" Pete, now with a cane, is seated at a small table, taking the names of the contestants.

Danny, Elizabeth, and Millie arrive and approach the crowd. Danny is visibly nervous.

MILLIE

You two just kind of mingle around back here. I'll get Danny signed up, and make sure he goes on last. Less problems that way.

EXT. DOCK

Millie approaches Pete at his table.

MILLIE

I need to sign up one more.

PETE

Where is he?

MILLIE

Uh, he hasn't got here yet, but he'll be here soon.

PETE

What's his name?

MILLIE

Danny.

PETE

He got a last name?

MILLIE

O'Day. Danny O'Day.

PETE

O'Day?! Don't sound colored. Sounds Irish.

MILLIE

Yeah, well, that's why they call them the black Irish.

It doesn't quite make sense to Pete, but he writes the name down, anyway.

PETE

Okay, Danny O'Day. He's last.

MILLIE

Thank you.

EXT. DOCK

Sonny appears, and motions for the piano player to start; an up-tempo number. The whole crowd that was milling and chattering come to a silent stop, and stare in wonder, as the old master puts on a clinic.

A few of the contestants shake their heads and walk away, muttering. Danny looks at Elizabeth like he wants to do the same thing. She holds onto his arm, kisses him on the cheek.

Sonny's dancing comes to an abrupt halt in perfect time with the piano player. The crowd erupts into huge applause. After they quiet down, Sonny announces:

SONNY

Who's first?

PETE

Noah Johnson, get on up there.

A timid 19 year old walks gingerly up the steps to the dock.

Sonny motions for the piano player to begin. Noah is so nervous he can barely get his steps out. Big mistake. After barely twenty seconds he is pelted with rotten fruits and vegetables. The crowd hoots, hollers and boos until Noah jumps down off the dock and runs through the crowd.

SONNY

Who's next?

Danny looks at Elizabeth.

DANNY

No wonder they're doing this outside.

Pete calls out more names, but most have left.

PETE

Jimmy Taylor? Benny Simms? Billy Ross?

He finally gets to someone who stayed. Billy does a good job, and Sonny is fairly impressed. But when Sonny joins him for a duet, Billy can barely keep up. Sonny halts the dance, and addresses the crowd.

SONNY
What do you think?

A mild applause is emitted from the crowd.

SONNY (CONT'D)
(to Billy)
Well, you didn't get the fruit. Go stand over there.

Billy stands off to the side as other contestants try their luck. Some get the fruit, some make the first cut.

PETE
Alright, now for our last contestant... Danny O'Day.

Danny looks apprehensively at Elizabeth and Millie. Elizabeth kisses him.

ELIZABETH
Go get 'em, sweetheart.

Danny makes his way through the crowd. A hush comes over everyone as they realize a white guy is going to try. Pete takes one look at Danny and immediately objects.

PETE
You can't be in this!

DANNY
Why not?

PETE
(stammering)
'Cause, uh, you ain't colored.

Pete looks up at Sonny, who's not sure what to do.

DANNY
Where's it say I gotta be colored?

PETE
You just got to, that's all.

He looks again at Sonny. An uneasiness stirs in the crowd. Sonny is just about to tell Danny "no" when Millie breaks through the crowd to the front. Pete gives her a dirty look.

MILLIE

Why can't he try? You ain't scared of him, are you?

PETE

No, we ain't scared of him.

MILLIE

I ain't talkin' to you. Sonny, I know you're better than them what'd deny you. Let him dance.

Elizabeth calls out from the middle of the crowd.

ELIZABETH

Let him dance!

Millie joins her friend in a chant.

MILLIE

Let him dance! Let him dance!

Pretty soon, the majority of the crowd, black as well as the few whites, have joined in.

CROWD

Let him dance! Let him dance!

SONNY

Aw, what the hell. Get on up here.

Danny sprints up the steps and goes right to center stage. Sonny takes note of Danny's confidence.

Danny surveys the crowd. He begins to snap his fingers, getting his beat. Slowly at first, he paces, almost prowls the stage. Clicking his heels, he syncopates the finger snaps. Now, he's circling the stage. His feet and snaps are creating his own beat and rhythm. Sonny is impressed.

Sonny cues the piano player, and they both join in. Sonny challenges Danny center stage, throwing out complicated combinations which Danny responds to brilliantly. He tosses a few back at Sonny, and the duel is on. Sonny responds like the pro that he is, and eventually overtakes the young upstart, but he's been given a run for his money.

Danny steps back and lets Sonny take over; he applauds the elder statesman, and the crowd cheers with him.

Sonny realizes Danny's acquiescence, and brings his dancing to a halt. The crowd cheers. Sonny applauds Danny.

SONNY (CONT'D)
That was damn good there, young man!
(to audience)
I think we have a winner! What do you think?
(points to Danny)

The crowd erupts into applause. Elizabeth and Millie give each other a big hug. Pete is not pleased.

SONNY (CONT'D)
Looks like you won. Be at the Alhambra Theater tomorrow night, eight o'clock, and don't be late.

DANNY
Great! Thanks! Uh, don't you want to talk about it?

SONNY
Talk 'bout what?

DANNY
Us, don't you want to get acquainted? I'm Danny O'Day.

SONNY
I know who ya're. Just 'cause we might be dance partners, don't mean we gonna be hangin' out. I'll see you tomorrow night.

Sonny turns and leaves. Elizabeth joins Danny.

DANNY
See, he's not any more comfortable with me than I am with him.

ELIZABETH
Oh, honey, you just need to get rid of that stick.

INT. SONNY'S APT. - LATER THAT EVENING.

A nice, well-kept apartment in a middle-class black neighborhood. Pete has paid him a visit.

PETE
Sonny, you sure about this? Havin' that white boy as a partner? Could cause trouble, you know?

SONNY

Yeah, well maybe. We'll see.

PETE

I mean, some of them other boys, you know coloreds, was pretty good.

SONNY

You saw him, Pete, he was the best one there by a long shot. What was I gonna do? Fair's fair.

PETE

When did any white man ever play fair with you, or me? Look at my leg. Wasn't no colored man did that to me.

SONNY

Yes it was. You did that to yourself. Gettin' into debt like that. What were you thinkin'?

PETE

Goddam, Sonny, whose side you on?

SONNY

Stop blaming everyone else, Pete! Take responsibility for yourself. If you got into debt like that, even with our people, same thing would've happened. You know that. You fucked up!

Pete is hurt. Sonny feels bad.

SONNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I said it like that, and I'm real sorry 'bout your leg, but I can't stop just 'cause you got to.

(beat)

It's 'cause he's white, isn't it?

PETE

Damn right! Shoulda never signed up that little peckerwood. Hope you're happy with your new partner.

A dejected and miserable Pete storms out of the apartment. Sonny feels bad for his old friend.

EXT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - EVENING

Danny and Elizabeth pull up to the theater in a cab and get a rude awakening. Everyone milling around and standing in line is colored. The moment they step out of the cab it speeds away. The colored patrons outside stare at them quizzically. Danny takes Elizabeth by the arm and leads her around the side of the building to the stage door.

EXT. STAGE DOOR

Danny knocks on the door and a large black man opens it, glowering down on them. Elizabeth pulls Danny closer.

DANNY
Hello, uh, good evening, I'm...

DOORMAN
I know who ya're.

He opens the door wide for them to pass through; announces:

DOORMAN (CONT'D)
King and Queen o' Ireland are here.

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER BACKSTAGE

All the stagehands and some of the cast turn and ogle them.

DANNY
Where do I go?

The doorman points toward the dressing rooms. Danny and Elizabeth kind of mosey in that direction, feeling what it's like to be in the minority. Looking at all the faces:

ELIZABETH
I guess this is why they call it
"Black Theater".

Just then they are approached by a large black woman.

MAMA
You must be Danny, and you are?

ELIZABETH
Elizabeth, Danny's wife.

MAMA
Everybody calls me "Mama". An' you
a lucky man.

DANNY

I know.

Mama gently pokes at Elizabeth's tummy.

MAMA

Got a bun in the oven there, chile?

Elizabeth beams.

ELIZABETH

Uh, huh, five months.

Mama looks her up and down, then at Danny.

MAMA

You gonna have a beautiful baby.
Now ya'll come along with me. I
take care of just 'bout everything
here. Place'd fall apart without
me. An' never mind Otis at the
door, there. He growls a lot, but
he's an old dog.

(to Elizabeth)

You showin' up, sweetie's, goin' to
make things a whole lot easier for
everybody. They's all gonna know
this cute young cracker's taken.

Mama ushers them through to the dressing rooms; at the men's quarters;

MAMA (CONT'D)

(to Danny)

This where you get off. We goin'
to the ladies. You sew, girl?

ELIZABETH

A little.

MAMA

Good, you can help mama out.

INT. MEN'S DRESSING ROOM

Danny walks through the room, being polite, saying hello to everyone. Some of the men are friendly, a few are not. He finally finds Sonny.

SONNY

There ya are. Got your costumes
right here. Then you gotta get
into makeup.

DANNY
Huh? What kind of makeup?

SONNY
Blackface. What'd you think, you gonna go out like that?

DANNY
What do you mean?

SONNY
Besides your wife, you see any other white folks around? They'd stop the show. We all do it.

DANNY
Don't you find it insulting?

SONNY
No, why, do you?

Danny covers up.

DANNY
Hell no. Not me. I just thought you might.

SONNY
Uh-huh. But as far as you're concerned, it's also safety. We don't need to start a riot.

DANNY
Alright, if you insist. But, by the way, you wanna give me a clue as to what we're gonna be doin'?

INT. ALHAMBRA THEATER - ON STAGE

They perform two numbers. In the first, Sonny pretends to pull someone (Danny) from the audience, and teach them to dance by hypnosis. They close with the baseball routine.

BACKSTAGE - LATER

In the dressing room after the show, Sonny is polite but cool, toward Danny.

SONNY
Well, you passed the final audition, kid.
(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

Be here every night, same time.
Paid on Friday, seventy-five bucks
a week, okay?

DANNY

Make it eighty? The little woman's
gonna have a baby, soon.

SONNY

(laughs)
Okay, eighty it is. You did good
tonight. Keep it up or I'll have
to cut your pay.

Danny sticks out his hand instinctively, then realizes before
he can pull it back.

DANNY

Deal.

Sonny stares at Danny's hand for a moment.

SONNY

No white man ever offered to shake
my hand before.

He shakes Danny's hand, who replies.

DANNY

Come to think of it, I've never
shaken hands with a Negro, either.
Close your eyes, it feels the same.

MONTAGE:

Sonny and Danny are playing all the venues on the local
circuit; Danny always in blackface. Danny goes along with it
at first, but after a few weeks, he's beginning to tire of
it, and it shows in his performance. One night after a gig,
Sonny brings it up.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

SONNY

You feelin' alright? Ain't sick or
nothin' are you?

DANNY

Beginning to show, huh?

SONNY

Yep.

DANNY

C'mon Sonny, let me play it without the makeup. Nobody's gonna kill us.

SONNY

No, we just won't get any gigs. The only reason we're workin' is 'cause of that makeup.

(beat)

What's the matter? You got a problem with the color?

DANNY

I can't believe you said that. You know me better than that. Would you wanna go out there in "whiteface" all the time? I just wanna go out there as me.

SONNY

I just don't think people are ready for that... yet.

DANNY

There's mixed audiences.

SONNY

Yeah, but they don't sit together. Look, they ain't gonna let you play the colored places lookin' like that, and the white theaters just plain ain't gonna like the mix. And don't think you won't be stickin' your neck in a noose. A lot of your folks won't like you dancin' with "niggers". Better believe me on that one.

DANNY

Fuck them.

SONNY

That's a noble sentiment, Danny, but it might get you hurt.

(beat)

Look, we're movin' to a new club next week, "The Marquee". Ain't top bill, but it's better money. Tell you what, after that gig, it's four weeks, we'll give it some consideration. How's that?

DANNY

You promise, right?

SONNY

Deal.

He sticks out his hand, and Danny shakes it.

EXT. MARQUEE CLUB - EVENING

Opening night is an extravaganza, mobster Tony Marchetti's answer to the Cotton Club. Limos line the street, searchlights sweep the sky. Celebrities, politicians, and gangsters stroll side by side up the red carpet.

INT. MARQUEE CLUB

A huge stage is surrounded by a semi-circle of plush tables and chairs.

BACKSTAGE - MARQUEE CLUB

Sonny and Danny are in the men's dressing room among the other acts, changing into their "lion-tamer" costumes.

DANNY

Seen our guests out there? Quite a variety; the mayor, Babe Ruth. Got a good look at Tony Marchetti and his boys. He's got the map of Sicily on his face. These guys are mobsters, aren't they?

SONNY

Yeah, I know.

DANNY

Why didn't you tell me?

SONNY

I didn't want you to worry. And you'd tell Elizabeth, and she'd really worry. It's not a big deal, Danny. Most of these clubs are owned by these guys, that's the way it is.

DANNY

I just don't wanna be on stage and somebody decides they want to leave Tony a calling card.

SONNY
Quit your worryin'. Besides, where
else you gonna get two hundred a
week? Wives and babies cost money.

DANNY
Tell me about it.

SONNY
Now, let's go earn that money.

MARQUEE CLUB - ON STAGE - LATER

Sonny and Danny perform their lion-tamer routine with Jenny,
their gorgeous assistant. They are rewarded with tremendous
applause, hoots and hollers.

BACKSTAGE

Sonny and Danny congratulate with a sip of whiskey off the
same flask. Sonny takes a swig, and passes it to Danny, who
wipes it off before taking a sip. Looks at Sonny.

DANNY
Now, I do that with anyone 'cept
Elizabeth. Spit don't know color.

They share a laugh.

SONNY
Here's to ya, Danny boy. You been
doin' a great job.

DANNY
I got the best teacher in town.

He hands the flask back to Sonny.

SONNY
No more?

DANNY
Naw. My girl's alone.

SONNY
Right. Give her my best. I'm
gonna mosey on over an' chat with
the ladies. Catch you tomorrow.

Danny extends his hand.

DANNY
Deal.

Sonny smiles, shakes it, and leaves the room. Danny sits in front of the mirror and removes his blackface makeup. He's just leaving the dressing room, when the STAGE MANAGER, comes running backstage, hysterical.

STAGE MANAGER
He's sick! Our top bill is fucking sick! I need another act!

Danny stops him.

DANNY
You got it! Gimme five minutes.

STAGE MANAGER
You got two!

Danny runs back to the dressing room, finds Sonny.

DANNY
Sonny, Fuzzy Keeler's sick! They need another act. Baseball?

SONNY
Yeah! Go tell Jenny. I'll get 'em warmed up while you get your makeup back on.

Danny rushes over and right into the ladies' dressing room, catching some of them near-naked. They all scream.

DANNY
Sorry, ladies. Jenny! Baseball! Onstage! We gotta go!

Danny hurries back to the men's dressing room. Sonny is already onstage. He hurriedly throws on his baseball uniform, then sits in front of the mirror. He opens his can of blackface makeup, and pauses. He looks in the mirror.

ON STAGE

Sonny is tearing it up, while the crowd claps along.

BACKSTAGE

Danny meets up with Jenny in the wings. She can't believe her eyes. Just then, Sonny's number ends, and the crowd bursts into applause.

DANNY (CONT'D)
That's our cue.

ON STAGE

The curtains open up behind Sonny, who is facing the audience. The crowd stops clapping, and lets out a collective gasp when they see Jenny and Danny.

Sonny is perplexed by this reaction, but when he turns around, he sees why. Danny is not wearing his makeup.

The band stops playing. Everyone is hushed, staring at the stage, then over at Tony, checking his reaction.

Tony breaks the silence. He rises from his ringside seat, and bellows.

TONY

What the hell's wrong with you
guys?! I ain't payin' you to stand
around. Play!

The orchestra leader strikes up the band.

Sonny and Danny run through their skit like they always have, but it does raise a few eyebrows when a white Danny tells Sonny he's got the hots for colored Jenny. But Tony doesn't mind, so the rest of the crowd doesn't either.

The routine is too good for the crowd to resist, and by the end, even the most diehard conservatives are cheering.

BACKSTAGE

After the show, Sonny and Danny are congratulating each other when Tony walks in with a bottle of champagne, followed by two bodyguards.

TONY

Boys, that was somethin'!
(to Danny)
I don't know if you got guts or no
brains, kid, but whatever, you're
alright.
(to sonny)
You too, Pops.

Tony hands them the champagne, then reaches into his pocket and pulls out a roll of bills, peels off three \$100 bills.

TONY (CONT'D)

Here ya go, and give one to that
little colored cutie, too. I'm
promotin' you guys to headliners.
(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

Five hundred a week each. Sound
alright to you? Good.

Without waiting for an answer, Tony turns and leaves the room, shadowed by his bodyguards. Sonny and Danny are awestruck.

INT. DINER - LATER THAT EVENING.

Sonny and Danny are perched at the counter of a late-night diner.

SONNY

When I turned around and saw that white face of yours, I watched my whole career flash before my eyes, and right out the door.

DANNY

I gotta admit, I was using the hurry-up factor as an excuse not to put that makeup back on. In case I had to explain myself later.

SONNY

Well, Tony didn't seem to mind.

DANNY

I also think he didn't want anything to spoil the evening.

SONNY

Yeah, that too.

(beat)

You know, we gotta come up with a name for us.

DANNY

How 'bout the "Black an' Irish"?

SONNY

(laughing)

Or "Chocolate 'n Vanilla"? "Ebony and Ivory"?

Danny grabs the cream and pours.

DANNY

Maybe some "Cream in your Coffee"?

Just then the food arrives. They say simultaneously:

DANNY (CONT'D)
Pass me the salt.

SONNY
Pass me the pepper.

They look at each other, and know.

EXT. MARQUEE CLUB - EVENING

The next night, there it is, up in lights, on the Marquee's marquee: "THE UPTOWN REVUE, FEATURING SALT AN' PEPPER".

INT. BACKSTAGE

Danny enters the dressing room and smiles wide at Sonny, who's reading the newspaper.

DANNY
You see that marquee?!

SONNY
Sure did. You see the reviews?
(reads)
"Who are these two who dare to challenge the color line? Are we ready for this? Is this the beginning of the end for segregation? Or is this a ploy by Tony Marchetti to destroy his competition at the Cotton Club?"

DANNY
Wow, I didn't think it would create social controversy.

SONNY
Yeah, you just one little troublemaker, ain't ya?

INT. TONY MARCHETTI'S OFFICE - DAY

Tony is leaning back in large chair in his plush office, enjoying his cigar and the newspaper.

The Marquee Club's manager, RICO SALERNO, is skeptical.

RICO
Might want to read between the lines, Tony.
(MORE)

RICO (CONT'D)

Mixin' colors like this, I'm not sure it's a good idea. You read the reviews, even they're not sure it's not some publicity stunt.

TONY

Stunt? No. Publicity? Hell yeah! You saw the receipts from last night. We made a fortune.

RICO

That's just opening night.

TONY

You see the crowd out there, tonight? We'll probably do even better. Relax!

(beat)

I tell ya, those bums over at the Cotton Club are gonna be takin' lessons from Tony Marchetti on how to run a nightclub. You'll see.

RICO

Alienating the other club owners is not recommended, Tony.

TONY

Hey, you just manage my club the way I pay you to, got it? I'll worry about everything else.

RICO

You're the boss.

Without another word, Tony goes back to reading his paper. Rico gets the message and leaves.

ON STAGE - MARQUEE CLUB - EVENING

Salt an' Pepper are doing their baseball routine. Once again, even though most already knew, there's a tremendous gasp when the curtains open and Danny appears next to Jenny.

And once again, the crowd simmers down after the initial shock is over and enjoys the show for its own sake.

BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Sonny and Danny are preparing to leave when Tony and his bodyguards enter the room. He hands Sonny the champagne.

TONY

Hey! There's my boys, Salt an'
Pepper! Great show, great show!
The crowd loves ya, and so do I.

He pulls the roll of bills from his pocket, and hands them
the three \$100 bills.

TONY (CONT'D)

Danny, why don't you come out there
and join me at my table.

Sonny and Danny both sense what he's getting at, but Danny
speaks up for the both of them.

DANNY

Yeah, sure, we'll be right out.

TONY

Well, no, I was just talkin' 'bout
you, kid.
(to Sonny)
You understand, Pops, right?

Sonny disguises his true feelings.

SONNY

Sure, no problem. You go ahead,
Danny. I got other plans.

TONY

Hey, if it was just me, it'd be
fine. But some of my guests, well,
they're kind of old fashioned.
It's just business.

DANNY

Well, I'm not really feelin' too...

SONNY

(interrupting)
Oh, you're fine.
(to Tony)
He'll be right out.

TONY

Yeah, okay. Don't take too long.

He turns and leaves, shadowed by his men. After he's gone:

DANNY

I'm not sittin' down with those
fucking ass-holes!

SONNY
Yes, you are!

DANNY
What?! Are you kidding?!

SONNY
Boy, you don't insult the boss like that! You don't go out there, we're out of a job!

DANNY
Aren't you offended?

SONNY
'Course I am. Ain't the first time. Ain't like you get used to it, just numb to it.

DANNY
I'm sorry.

SONNY
Ain't your fault. Not personally.

DANNY
I can't stand the thought of sittin' with those guys.

SONNY
Like Tony said, it's business. Now get out there.

Danny has a slight tear in his eye, sticks out his hand.

DANNY
Deal.

Sonny smiles and shakes it, barely containing his own emotion.

INT. THEATER - TONY'S TABLE

Danny is seated at Tony's right. Four other obvious mobsters are seated around the table. The bodyguards lurk in the background.

MOBSTER #1
You like a good Irish whiskey, there, Danny? Lemme know. I got the number one distribution in town.

MOBSTER #2

I was out at the track today.
 Fuckin' horse, in the lead,
 stumbles with thirty yards to go.
 Breaks his leg, so I gotta shoot
 him. 'Tween the horse and my bets,
 I'm out a hundred G's!

MOBSTER #3

So, Danny, what's it like dancin'
 with a bunch of nig... uh, Negroes?

DANNY

Seeing as how they're the best
 dancers around, I consider it an
 honor.

MOBSTER #4

You guys oughta come down to my new
 "house". I got some new girls,
 young and sweet.

All this time Danny has been keeping a smiley face for the
 table; inside he's absolutely seething. He's heard enough
 and bursts into the conversation.

DANNY

You know what really makes life
 worth living?

He reaches quickly into his jacket and everybody freezes. The
 two ever-present bodyguards close in on the table. Danny
 acts like he doesn't even notice and pulls out his wallet.
 From it, he produces a picture of Elizabeth, and proudly
 shows the table.

DANNY (CONT'D)

A beautiful woman that loves you.

They all let out a little sigh and a mild chuckle. The
 guards back off.

MOBSTER #4

Hey, that's a nice piece of...

DANNY

(overriding)

My wife.

The table becomes silent with tension as Danny stares eyeball
 to eyeball with the mobster. The others look at Tony; he's
 waiting to see, as well.

Danny's not backing down and the mobster acquiesces.

MOBSTER #4

Sorry, kid. No offense, huh?

Danny is still seething.

DANNY

No problem.

Tony cuts the tension, grabs the champagne.

TONY

Let's all have a drink, huh?

DANNY

Thanks, Tony, but I really need to go. Elizabeth's home by herself.

Tony puts his arm around Danny's shoulder, pulls him close, an whispers:

TONY

You got a big set of marbles down there, kid. I like that. But don't ever try that with me.

He releases Danny from his grasp.

TONY (CONT'D)

Alright, kid. See you tomorrow night.

Danny gives a cursory goodnight to the rest of the table.

INT. OFFICE, COTTON CLUB - DAY

The four owners are having a board meeting.

OWNER #1

You seen the receipts from the last month? They stink!

OWNER #2

The club's been barely half full since Tony's Marquee opened with that goddam Salt an' Pecker. Who'd ever think that would hook 'em?

OWNER #3

I don't like that Tony anyway. Fuckin' carpetbagger from Chicago. Tells everyone he's gonna teach us how to run a club? We'll see.

OWNER #4

Then we're all in agreement, right?

OTHERS

Right.

EXT. MARQUEE CLUB - LATE AFTERNOON

A neighborhood street sweeper is pushing his trash cart up the street. He stops his cart off to the side of the theater, and begins sweeping the gutter.

Walking up the street, about twenty yards away, is an average looking man reading the newspaper as he walks.

A brand new Chrysler pulls up outside the theater. The back door opens, a bodyguard gets out, looks around, then nods. Tony Marchetti gets out, followed by the other bodyguard.

They walk to the front door. Tony pulls out his keys, as the guards keep an eye out. They notice the pedestrian and the street sweeper.

As the pedestrian approaches the trash cart, he folds the newspaper and places it in the receptacle. The sweeper approaches at the same time and places his broom on the cart.

Suddenly the two of them reach into the trash can and pull out machine guns. The bodyguards notice, but too late.

They reach for their shouldered pistols as the other two open fire with the machine guns, releasing a hail of bullets. Tony and his bodyguards are cut down mercilessly.

After their machine gun barrel-clips are empty, the pedestrian killer pulls out a .45 and shoots each of them in the head, just to make sure.

A car roars around the corner, screeches to a halt, picks up the two gunmen, and speeds away.

INT. DANNY & ELIZABETH'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sonny has joined them for dinner. He and Danny are seated at the table as Elizabeth, now visibly pregnant, busies herself serving dinner.

DANNY

She won't let me help. Ask her.

SONNY

That right, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH
He's a lazy bum.

DANNY
What?!

ELIZABETH
Just kidding. It's how I get my exercise. Besides, Danny's the one working, so I don't mind taking care of the house.

DANNY
I'm not working now.

SONNY
Not since somebody knocked off our meal ticket.

ELIZABETH
That was awful. And the way they found them.

DANNY
That's what you get when you live in that world. They weren't the most stellar of gentlemen.
(to Sonny)
You think the club will keep going?

SONNY
Hard to say. Wasn't like Tony died of a heart attack. Somebody didn't want him in business. Could be the end of that place.

DANNY
Then we better start looking for new job.

Elizabeth comes out of a kitchen carrying a roast.

ELIZABETH
Yes, well, you'll do that tomorrow. Right now your going to enjoy this roast I spent all day slaving over. Oops, sorry Sonny.

Sonny does a mock offended, but then smiles.

EXT. BUSINESS STREET - DAY

Sonny and Danny exit a door with the words "TOMMY RAMONE--THEATRICAL AGENT" written on it, walk down the steps, out onto the sidewalk.

SONNY

That's the fourth agent today.

DANNY

All sayin' the same thing.

SONNY

"Sorry, no openings". I'm beginning to feel like a leper.

DANNY

I don't get it. We were a hit at Tony's. That place was packed every night.

SONNY

Sure was. I can think of one more guy who might be able to help us. He's always been able to hand me a gig. C'mon.

INT. MARTY ELLIS' OFFICE - DAY

MARTY is just finishing up a phone conversation as Sonny opens the door.

MARTY

(into phone)

Look, Barney, don't worry, I'll fill that last spot. You'll have your full lineup, I promise. Yeah, right, goodbye.

He hangs up the phone.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Sonny! How ya doin' there, stranger? Who's your friend?

SONNY

This is Danny O'Day, my new partner. Danny, this is Marty Ellis.

DANNY

Sonny says good things about you.

MARTY

At least somebody will. I assume
you're lookin' for work?

SONNY

That's it. Last gig folded kinda
sudden like.

MARTY

Fired?

SONNY

Dead. Tony Marchetti.

MARTY

Oh! That's you guys , huh? Salt
an' Pepper. Heard the name, just
didn't know that was you. You guys
are famous, or infamous.

DANNY

What? What do you mean?

MARTY

You guys are a hot potato. You
were Tony's pet. With him gone, no-
one will touch you.

(beat)

Not around here, anyway.

SONNY

Great. Now what do we do?

MARTY

Wanna see Florida?

SONNY

Not right his second.

MARTY

I mean a tour, to Florida and back.
I just got off the phone with a guy
needs a top act. You'll be second
bill. It's a good gig, two hundred
a week, plus travel, room and
board. Mostly one-night stands.

DANNY

How long would we be gone?

MARTY

Six weeks.

DANNY

Oh, man, I don't know! Elizabeth is due in a month or so.

SONNY

That's good money, Danny. Maybe you should think about it.

DANNY

You're right, it is. I don't know if I can leave her for that long.

(to Marty)

When do we leave?

MARTY

Five days.

DANNY

I'll let you know tomorrow.

MARTY

Okay, but no later. I gotta get back to this guy by tomorrow night.

INT. O'DAY HOUSE - EVENING

Danny and Elizabeth are discussing the situation.

ELIZABETH

Honey, I'll be fine. I'll be at my mother's. If that's the only work, you should take it. Might be fun.

DANNY

Tryin' to get rid of me.

ELIZABETH

Oh, yeah, I'm going to have such a good time at mother's.

Danny takes Elizabeth in his arms.

DANNY

This is why I don't want to go.

They kiss passionately. Danny drops to one knee.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Would you marry me... again?

Elizabeth pats her stomach.

ELIZABETH

I have to, you got me in trouble.

Danny presses his cheek to her tummy and wraps his arms around her. She cradles his head against her womb.

INT. SONNY'S APT. - EVENING

Sonny is fixing himself some tea and subtly soft-shoeing along with Duke Ellington on the Victrola. He answers a knock at the door. It's Pete.

SONNY

Well, long time, no see.

(beat)

C'mon in.

Sonny ushers Pete inside and closes the door. Tension.

SONNY (CONT'D)

I'm makin' some tea, want some?

PETE

Yeah, sure Sonny, thanks.

Pete sits on the sofa, and Sonny brings him the tea.

PETE (CONT'D)

So, how's the kid workin' out?

SONNY

Fine. Yeah, he's real good.
Catches on quick.

PETE

Yeah? That's good. Yeah, um, I remember, he was pretty good.

SONNY

I notice you're gettin' around a lot better with that cane.

PETE

Yeah! Oh, yeah, I've gotten pretty good with this thing.

SONNY

(cuts through)

So, why'd you come here, Pete?

PETE

I need a job, Sonny.

SONNY
Can't find any work?

PETE
None that's worth a shit. While
you was at the Marquee, I was
takin' tickets at the Bedford Hall.
You know that dive?

SONNY
Yeah, I do. Sorry.

PETE
I'm sorry 'bout last time I was
here. You were right. I did this
to myself.
(beat)
But if I can't dance, at least I
gotta be around it. I gotta feel
useful, Sonny, ya know? What's a
man if he ain't no use to anybody?

Sonny is moved to help his old friend out.

SONNY
I'll see what I can do.

MONTAGE:

On tour of the Atlantic coast with Sonny, Danny, and Pete,
who's handling wardrobe and props. They're still billed as
Salt an' Pepper, doing two skits a night. The first has
Danny in blackface, the second without. It raises a few
minor objections, but overall, it's accepted.

INT. DINER - EVENING

Sonny, Danny, and Pete are finishing dinner in a back booth.

SONNY
Two weeks into the tour, so far so
good. Raleigh's next.

DANNY
Yeah, overall, they seem to like
us. Seem to be able to handle it.

Pete notices them first.

PETE
I hope we ain't spoke too soon.

He nods toward the front doors. Sonny and Danny turn and watch as four local rednecks come in and sit down right between them and the front door.

It doesn't take long before they're noticed.

REDNECK

Hey, ain't you that white boy what dresses up like a nigger?

His buddies all snicker.

Sonny, Danny, and Pete look nervously at each other.

SONNY

Oh, no, not this shit.

The Redneck continues.

REDNECK

I know who ya're. You them vaudeville queers, ain'tcha? Heard all 'bout you. But I don't think I wanna see a show where you gotta dress up like a nigger. Let alone eat with 'em.

Danny's heard enough. He snaps back.

DANNY

Mister, we ain't botherin' you. You don't like vaudeville, don't come see us.

The Redneck becomes irate and fires back.

REDNECK

Who you tellin' what to do, boy?! This' my town, I tell you!

Sonny tries to mediate.

SONNY

C'mon, we're not lookin' for trouble. Nobody's telling anybody what to do. We're leaving, okay?

Sonny get up and leaves a generous tip. He motions for his friends to follow.

Sonny walks by the rednecks first, but when Danny walks by, the loudmouth tries to trip him. Danny easily sidesteps it, and walks by as if nothing happened.

This infuriates the Redneck even more, and when Pete walks by, he kicks his cane out, and Pete falls flat.

That's the last straw. Danny and Sonny are both infuriated. Danny steps up.

DANNY

Alright asshole! Right now! Let's go!

The Redneck and his friends jump up. The owner intervenes.

OWNER

Not in here, boys! Take it outside. And keep it fair, Billy Ray.

EXT. DINER

Danny rushes outside and whips off his jacket; he's ready. BILLY RAY goes out next, followed by his friends, then Sonny and Pete.

Billy Ray tears out after Danny, who's ready, and dodges Billy Ray's attack. Billy Ray whirls back around, and Danny punches him in the jaw, knocking him flat.

Another redneck grabs Danny from behind, pinning his arms back, and Billy Ray starts punching on Danny.

Sonny shows remarkable strength and agility for his age, and punches another redneck, breaking his nose, pouring blood like a faucet. Sonny then punches the redneck holding Danny in the kidney, who releases Danny to go after Billy Ray.

Pete has learned to use his cane for more than walking. He pokes the last redneck in the throat, then the groin, and then clobbers him over the head with it.

Danny is giving Billy Ray a thrashing when a squad car roars up, lights flashing and siren wailing.

The portly local sheriff steps out with a deputy and surveys the scene.

The fighting stops.

SHERIFF

Billy Ray, what the hell you got yourself into, huh? Scrappin' with niggers again?

Pete interrupts.

PETE

They're the ones who started it!

The sheriff snaps back at him.

SHERIFF

Shut your mouth, boy! I ain't talkin' to you!

(beat)

That right, son? You start this here ruckus?

Billy Ray pleads innocent.

BILLY RAY

No, Pa, really, It was him! That coon-lover right there! I made a little joke about vaudeville folk, and he jumped all over me. I's just defendin' myself.

The sheriff motions for Danny.

SHERIFF

C'mere boy, wanna talk to you.

Danny walks over, a little too bravely.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You pickin' fights with my boy?

DANNY

He's a lying, foul-mouthed punk.

The sheriff punches Danny in the stomach, doubling him over.

SHERIFF

Careful how you talk 'bout my son.

(beat)

I think maybe you boys all need to spend a night in jail. Think 'bout things.

Sonny interjects.

SONNY

Your son was saying the most disgusting, provoking insults no man would take.

SHERIFF

You wanna make it two nights?

INT. SMALL TOWN JAIL - EVENING

JEB, the night watch deputy, is asleep in his chair behind the desk, when the sheriff comes bursting through the front doors, scaring him out of his dreams, nearly knocking him over. The sheriff is followed by Sonny, Danny, and Pete, all in handcuffs, the deputy last.

SHERIFF

Wake up, Jeb! I got a reason to justify your lazy ass.

JEB

Uh, yeah, Sheriff. Gee, I musta dozed off there a little.

SHERIFF

Go on, open the door.

Jeb staggers up off the chair and over to a door. He takes a set of keys off his belt and opens it, which leads to a room with a single large jail cell.

INT. ROOM

Inside the cell already are two black males. They rise to check it out. Jeb opens the barred cell door.

JEB

Keep back you two.

The sheriff and deputy usher Sonny, Danny and Pete into the room and uncuff them before putting them into the cell.

SHERIFF

Y'all gonna cool off in here for the night. "Crip", we keepin' your cane in the office, you pick it up in the mornin'. Now, y'all enjoy the pleasure of my hotel.

(to Jeb)

Lock it up.

Jeb locks the barred cell door, then they all leave the room, and Jeb locks it from the outside.

INT. CELL

Sonny, Danny and Pete introduce themselves to the other two inmates; they are MARCUS and JEROME.

JEROME

So what'd they haul you in for?

SONNY

Beating up the sheriff's son.

JEROME

You?!

SONNY

No, Danny here. Was doing a pretty good job of it too, until the Sheriff showed up.

MARCUS

And he gave you the usual solution 'round here.

PETE

What're you guys in for?

MARCUS

Bootleggin'.

JEROME

Third time for both of us. Probably lookin' at three to five years in the county farm.

MARCUS

And we ain't lookin' forward to that.

DANNY

Ouch.

MARCUS

You goin' to be sayin' that yourself, come mornin'.

DANNY

What do you mean?

JEROME

You whuppin' up on Billy Ray? He ain't gonna stand for that, no way. Him and his boys gonna have a party on you.

MARCUS

(to Sonny and Pete)

You guys gonna catch some too, just for bein' with him, and colored.

Marcus shines a ray of hope.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
If we could only get out of this
jail, I know a place we could hide
out til we catch a rail north.

Danny confesses.

DANNY
I sure don't feel like gettin' beat
up for breakfast.

PETE
Me neither. I'm for gettin' out of
this shithole any way we can!

JEROME
They only have the one night guard.

Danny ponders a moment, then pulls out his large gold pocket
watch. He caresses it and sighs.

DANNY
I always wondered how I was gonna
break this.

INT. CELL - LATER

Yelling and pounding, the inmates make a helluva racket,
waking Jeb, once again, from his sweet dreams.

He lumbers through the outer door, half-asleep.

JEB
What the hell's goin on?! What do
you want?

SONNY
Where's are friend? What'd you do
with him?

PETE
You workin' him over out there?

All Jeb can see are the four black inmates standing closely
abreast. He takes a step close, puzzled.

JEB
Huh? Where is that little nigger-
lover?

The men drop down, and Danny rises from behind them.

DANNY

Here!

And he hurls his watch as hard as he can, right between the bars, nailing Jeb in the center of the forehead. Jeb stands there, stunned, teetering. Sonny reaches through the bars, grabs him by the lapel, and slams him into the bars. Jeb collapses in a heap. Sonny grabs his keys and releases them.

Danny checks his watch; it's broken. Still, he puts it back in his pocket. Suddenly, a tremendous throbbing pain shoots through his elbow. They lock Jeb in the cell and take off.

EXT. JAIL - EVENING

Marcus hot-wires a car that's parked outside. They all get in, and he speeds away.

INT. BROTHEL - EVENING

Marcus and Jerome escort Sonny, Danny and Pete through the door.

Once inside, Sonny and Pete catch on quick. Danny is a little behind until he catches full view of all the young ladies, scantily clad and lounging on couches. Ah-ha.

MARCUS

Wait here.

He walks to a back booth where a beautifully dressed older black woman is chatting with two customers. She is obviously the madam of the house.

She's happy to see Marcus and extends her arms to him. He gives her big hug and whispers to her. He points to where the others are standing. She looks over, smiles, waves, and nods "yes" to Marcus. He rejoins the others.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, enjoy yourselves. The gratuities are on the house.

PETE

You're not kiddin'? Anyone?

MARCUS

Help yourself. Just be nice.

SONNY

Oh, like you won't believe.

PETE

I feel like a kid in a candy store.

He and Sonny stride on over to the couches, pick out a girl, and head upstairs. Danny is left standing there. He walks self-consciously over to the bar.

BARTENDER

What can I get for this fine young gentlemen this evening? Scotch? Whiskey? I've even got some fine Mexican Tequila.

DANNY

Thanks, but what I'd really like is a beer. I'm thirsty as hell.

BARTENDER

One ice cold beer coming right up.

The bartender pours Danny a large glass, who downs half of it in one draught.

DANNY

Ahhh, that hits the spot. What do I owe ya?

BARTENDER

All taken care of.

Danny holds up his glass to the bartender.

DANNY

Cheers. I think I'll try out that pool table there. Thanks again.

BARTENDER

My pleasure.

Danny takes his beer over to the pool table and racks the balls, stalling. Jerome walks over.

JEROME

You okay? Anything wrong?

DANNY

Oh, no, just need to loosen up a little, you know.

JEROME

Yeah, sure. Take your time.

Jerome walks away and Danny breaks up the rack. He's about to go for his second shot when one of the beautiful young ladies sashays up to him.

MONIQUE

Hi, I'm Monique. Gee, you know, I've always wanted to learn how to play, but no one will teach me.

DANNY

Oh, uh, hi, I'm Danny. I'm not really that good.

Monique plays disappointed.

MONIQUE

What, so you're not going to teach me either?

DANNY

Oh, no, I didn't say that. Here, let's get you a cue stick.

Monique strokes his cue stick down near his crotch.

MONIQUE

I could just play with yours.

DANNY

I guess that will be alright. Let's see now, that one's called the object ball.

MONIQUE

Oh, I know what those are.

DANNY

OK, so then you line up the two balls.

MONIQUE

I know how to do that.

(beat)

Let's put down this silly game and go upstairs. These aren't the kind of balls I want to play with.

Danny is stuck. He feels like the whole place is watching him. He looks around to find they are.

Monique takes Danny's arm and leads him upstairs to her room.

INT. MONIQUE'S ROOM

Danny sets Monique down on her bed and sits next to her.

DANNY
I'm really sorry, but I can't go
through with this. There's one
major problem.

MONIQUE
Oh, honey, you got a problem down
there, I can fix that.

She reaches for his crotch, but he holds her hand away.

DANNY
I'm sure you could, if that was the
problem.

MONIQUE
What is it? Because I'm colored.

Danny looks her up and down.

DANNY
Oh, no, believe me. There's no
problem there.

MONIQUE
Don't tell me you're one of them
sissy boys?

DANNY
(laughing)
No, no, this.

He reaches into his wallet and pulls out his picture of
Elizabeth and shows Monique.

MONIQUE
Your girl?

DANNY
My wife. And about to give birth
to our first child.

MONIQUE
I see. And you don't want to be
unfaithful.

DANNY
I don't think I could look her in
the eye.

MONIQUE

Sure you could. You love her?

DANNY

Yeah, of course I do.

MONIQUE

Nothing could ever change that?

DANNY

No, nothing.

MONIQUE

Good, then you're safe. This is just sex. I ain't gonna try to steal you away. An' I know you ain't never had it like you're gonna get it from me.

DANNY

That's probably true. Monique is a French name, right.

MONIQUE

Uh-huh, and I bet you've heard stories about the French technique. You could even surprise your little lady when you get back.

(beat)

I'm also bein' a little selfish. I ain't never had me a little blond baby doll like you before.

DANNY

I'm not really sure about this.

MONIQUE

Never mind the guilt honey, just relax.

She kneels down in front of him as we fade out.

INT. HALLWAY - NEXT MORNING

Everyone's jolly is brought to an abrupt halt as a young man runs up and down the halls , yelling.

MAN

Get dressed! The cops are here!

INT. MONIQUE'S ROOM

She quickly surmises the situation.

MONIQUE
They lookin' for you. Hide in the
bathroom, I'll stall them.

Danny heads for the bathroom just as there's a loud bang on the door, and someone outside, trying the door knob.

VOICE (O.S.)
Open up in there! This is the
office of the Sheriff of Wade
County!

Monique coos through the door.

MONIQUE
Just a minute, I need to put some
clothes on.

VOICE (O.S.)
Make it quick!

After a few moments, Monique unlocks the door.

MONIQUE
You can come in now.

The DEPUTY bursts through the door.

DEPUTY
We're on the lookout for a...

Monique is standing there in a French teddy, barley covering the gifts God gave her. The Deputy is agape.

MONIQUE
You're lookin' for who, Sheriff?

DEPUTY
No ma'am, I'm just the deputy.
Sheriff's downstairs.

He collects himself, but can't help but stare.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)
We lookin' for a white boy
travelin' with some of your colored
boys.

He's trying to be stern, but Monique is making him melt.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)
Sheriff over in Stafford County say
they broke outta jail last night.

Monique shudders.

MONIQUE
How awful. Did you catch them?

DEPUTY
No ma'am, like I said, that's why
we here. Sheriff wanna see every
one downstairs, right now. Some
body in the bathroom, ma'am?

MONIQUE
Yes, but he's sick.

Danny retches out a horrible vomiting sound from inside the
bathroom.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)
When he heard you were here, he
said he didn't feel too good, and
ran into the bathroom.

DEPUTY
Was he white?

MONIQUE
Oh, yeah, he turned white as a
sheet...

DEPUTY
No ma'am, I mean, is he a white man
or a colored man?

Danny bursts from the bathroom in total blackface makeup,
covering his mouth as well. Actin like "Steppin' Fetchit",
he exclaims:

DANNY
Oh, Lawd, my Bessie goin' kill me!
I know'd I shouldn't come here! My
Bessie goin' leave me fo' sho'.
But look at this bootiful young
lady, Sheriff. Can you blame me? I
challenge any man to resist her!

The Deputy's heard enough.

DEPUTY
Let's go. Downstairs.

INT. BROTHEL - LOBBY

The Sheriff and another deputy have everyone corralled, questioning them. Pete is concealing his limp.

SHERIFF
So you all just ballplayers, huh?
On tour down here?

Sonny points to Jerome.

SONNY
Don't you know who that is? That's
Satchel Page.

The sheriff scratches his head, looks closer.

SHERIFF
Fo' sure? Oh, yeah, I guess so. Ya
know I seen you play once. You
ain't a bad ballplayer for a...

Jerome finishes.

JEROME
For a nigger?

The Sheriff chuckles, a little embarrassed.

SHERIFF
Heh, heh, yeah.
(beat)
Well, hell, I don't see no crip
with a cane, and I don't see no
white boys, neither.

Just then the other Deputy escorts Danny down the stairs, followed closely by Monique.

DEPUTY
This' the last one, Sheriff.

Sonny and the rest, especially, are flabbergasted when they see Danny in blackface. The Sheriff looks up, but barely notices Danny as Monique steps in front of him and sashays down the rest of the stairs.

She successfully detours the Sheriff's attention until he finally peels his eyes off her and gathers himself.

SHERIFF
Yeah, okay, fine. They ain't here.
Les' go.

After the Sheriff and his deputies leave, Danny continues his act for the rest of the house, and dances down the stairs.

DANNY
Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy, my Bessie goin'
kill me dead!

He dances on through the laughing crowd as they part, creating a mock gauntlet for him to pass through.

EXT., INT. OFFICE - DAY

Close on Marty Ellis' front door as it is opened abruptly by Sonny, followed closely by Danny.

SONNY
No more of those! Uh-uh. No more
tours like that!

Marty is startled off the phone and nearly falls over.

MARTY
(into phone)
I'll call you back.
(hangs up)
There you are! What the hell
happened to you guys?

DANNY
We only got waylaid by a bunch of
hillbillies and thrown in jail,
'cause one of them was the
Sheriff's son. How have you been?

MARTY
Jail?

SONNY
That's right! No more of those.

MARTY
Alright, alright, don't get
excited. Jeez, I didn't think I
was sending you to the gallows.

SONNY
Damn near.

MARTY
I know, how'd you like to see "Gay
Paree"? Eiffel Tower and
everything.

Sonny and Danny answer together.

SONNY/DANNY
France?

MARTY
I ain't talkin' about Texas.

SONNY
I don't know.

Marty acts as if it's right down the street.

MARTY
Sure, you guys would be great!
Sonny, you'd love it especially.
Colored folks get treated much
better over there than here. No
foolin'. "Sissle and Blake" are
having a good time with "Shuffle
Along", Josephine Baker has found
an audience. Be an ideal place for
an act like yours.

SONNY
I'll believe all that when I see
it. Can't be no worse than here.

MARTY
You'll see it soon enough if you
wanna go. Boat leaves Tuesday.

DANNY
Tuesday?! Shit, I can't go!
Elizabeth is gonna have her baby
any day now.

MARTY
It's either that, or another six
months. And then, I can't promise
you anything. Tell you what, I can
get her passage as costume
mistress. Can she sew?

INT. O'DAY HOUSE - LATER

Danny has broached the subject to Elizabeth.

DANNY
Honey, I'll leave this totally up
to you, but I'm not leaving you
alone again.
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Either we go to France together, or
we stay here, together.

ELIZABETH

Oh, Danny, let's go! It'll be an
adventure! I'm really not due for
another three weeks. Let's go!
Our baby will be international.

She throws her arms around Danny's neck and kisses him.

EXT. OCEAN LINER - DAY

Danny and Elizabeth, Sonny and Pete, are among the throngs
boarding the ship. They show the PURSER their tickets.

PURSER

(to Danny and Elizabeth)

Your quarters are to the left, C-
Deck.

(to Sonny and Pete)

Yours are to the right, D-deck.

Danny protests.

DANNY

Wait a minute! Aren't these the
same tickets?

PURSER

It's true, they're all third-class.
However, rooming arrangements are
sometimes, ah, different.

SONNY

That's alright, Danny, we're used
to it.

PURSER

You do share a common recreation
room on D-Deck.

DANNY

How thoughtful.

PURSER

Ma'am, you'll find the ship's
infirmary on B-Deck, should you
require any assistance.

ELIZABETH

Thank you.

INT. SHIPS' RECREATION ROOM - EVENING

The room is packed with an international cast of characters; Irish, Spanish, Americans, Asians, Africans.

A cacophony of dialects fills the air. Drinking, smoking, cards, checkers, are going on at the tables.

Elizabeth is chatting with a pregnant Indian woman.

Sonny, Danny and Pete are playing cards with two Germans.

An African man produces a drum and begins to play.

A man from Ireland pulls out his fiddle and plays along.

A Russian man adds a balalaika to the mix.

Sonny and Danny look at each other and nod. They step out into the central area and begin to dance.

The crowd ceases their individual activities, and joins in the revelry, clapping and stomping along.

A teenage red-haired Irish lass adds her flair to Sonny and Danny's American Tap.

Soon, those three are joined by a Spanish Flamenco dancer. An international potpourri of sights and sounds.

INT. SHIP HALLWAY - LATER

Danny and Elizabeth are headed back to their room. Elizabeth suddenly comes to a stop, and grabs her stomach.

ELIZABETH

Danny, I think we better skip the cabin. Would you please take me to the infirmary?

DANNY

Sweetheart, are you okay?!

ELIZABETH

Don't panic. It's not coming out this second. Just get me to the infirmary.

DANNY

(urgent

Okay, I'm fine, really. As long as you're fine, I'm fine. Let's go.

INT. OUTSIDE INFIRMARY - LATER

Danny alternates between seated on a bench and squirming, or up and pacing. Sonny walks up and surprises him.

DANNY

Sonny! How'd you know about this?

SONNY

That ticket taker. How 'bout that.
Guess he's alright after all.
How's the little woman?

DANNY

Still waiting.

Sonny pulls out a flask and hands it to Danny.

SONNY

I figure it can't hurt.

DANNY

Keep me from wearing a hole in the
floor.

He accepts the flask and takes a big swig.

SONNY

That's some miracle goin' on in
there. Ain't never had no kids of
my own, but I was the oldest of
eight, an' I helped my momma take
care of everyone that come after
me. Amazing what women go through
to bring our sorry asses into this
world. That's some work!

Sonny's profound statement is punctuated by the wail of a newborn baby. They freeze and look at each other. There it is again. Danny lets out a holler and jumps up off the bench. Sonny joins him, and they give each other a big hug.

The NURSE interrupts, poking her head out the door.

NURSE

It's a boy!

Danny collapses on the floor. He looks up at the nurse.

DANNY

How's Elizabeth? Is she okay? Can
I see her?

NURSE
She's fine. The baby's fine. Hold
on, I'll check.

Sonny helps Danny to his feet.

SONNY
Well, I believe this is my cue.

DANNY
Don't you want to see him?

SONNY
I'll see him soon enough. I'll let
the two, I mean, three of you be
alone. Give Elizabeth my love.

They shake hands.

DANNY
Deal.

Sonny exits. The nurse opens the door.

NURSE
You can come in now.

INT. INFIRMARY

Danny quietly enters the room and feels like he's in another world. The nurse ushers him into a smaller room where Elizabeth is lying in bed holding their son. Danny pauses in the doorway to watch them for a second, when Elizabeth looks up and smiles. Danny bursts into tears.

ELIZABETH
Looks like I'm going to have two
babies to take care of.

Danny goes to her, kisses her, then his son.

DANNY
You okay, sweetheart?

ELIZABETH
I'm fine.

DANNY
(to his son)
Hey little guy. Ready to take on
the world? Ready to teach a dad
how to be one?

He starts to say something to Elizabeth, but she has fallen asleep. He kisses her gently on the forehead, and again his sleeping son, then slips silently from the room. He tells the nurse outside:

DANNY (CONT'D)
They're sleeping. Keep an eye on
them, huh? I'll be back.

NURSE
I will. Congratulations, Mr. O'Day.

INT. SHIP HALLWAYS

Danny sprints by a few startled passengers on his way to the upper deck.

EXT. SHIP - UPPER DECK

On a beautiful starlit night, Danny celebrates his fatherhood by singing and dancing to the heavens.

INT. TRAIN

The train ride from Cherbourg to Paris. Danny, Elizabeth and "Little Jimmy" are seated in the dining car at the same table with Sonny and Pete. The latter two are floored when they are served by a "white" waiter.

SONNY
I can get used to this, real quick.

PETE
If I'm dreaming, don't wake me up.

Danny and Elizabeth smile.

DANNY
I guess Marty was right.

SONNY
Guess so.
(raises his glass)
Here's to Marty.

They all toast Marty.

MONTAGE:

Salt an' Pepper are playing all the music halls and theaters in and around Paris. Now, Danny does all their numbers without makeup. The crowds love them, and they are BOTH invited over to rich patron's tables.

BACKSTAGE WINGS - EVENING

Danny is standing in the shadows of the wings, watching the beautiful black girls dancing bare-breasted on stage. Elizabeth sneaks up behind him and tweaks his ear. Danny spins around to meet his attacker, and sees Elizabeth.

DANNY

Oww! What'd you do that for?!

ELIZABETH

Enjoying the show?

DANNY

We're on next.

ELIZABETH

Don't be late.

DANNY

Oh, come on. Don't be like that.
You're jealous, aren't you?

Elizabeth glares at him. He takes her in his arms.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Look, they're just dancing.

ELIZABETH

Uh-huh, and you're just watching.

DANNY

It's strictly professional, I swear. There's no excitement whatsoever.

Elizabeth takes a quick glance around, then pats Danny's crotch. He flinches.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

ELIZABETH

Just checking.

Sonny appears, as if from nowhere.

SONNY
Now, that's what I call love.

Elizabeth blushes, Danny chuckles.

DANNY
(to Elizabeth)
By the way, who's watching Jimmy?

ELIZABETH
Marie, next door. She's keeping an eye on him. And I'm keeping an eye on you.

The dancers' number on stage has finished.

SONNY
Sssh, here we go.
(to Elizabeth)
Now, don't hurt the girls.

As the chorus of colored girls come dancing off the stage, they glance at Danny and Elizabeth, and giggle. Sonny and Danny take the stage as Elizabeth watches from the wings.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Sonny and Danny are having coffee. They are greeted with calls of "Hello" and "Hey Salt an' Pepper" by some of the locals as they pass by.

SONNY
I like bein' famous.

He lights up a cigarette. Danny is surprised.

DANNY
When did you start smokin'?

Sonny puts on false airs.

SONNY
Oh, hadn't you noticed? Those last few parties we were at. That "Countess", the one I been teachin' to dance. She's always smokin'. Comfortable habit. Goes great with coffee.

Danny is perusing a French newspaper.

SONNY (CONT'D)
How's your French comin'?

DANNY

Slow, but what I can put together, they're applauding us for our talent, originality, and the "courage to challenge traditional color lines". And how we are literally like salt and pepper; two complete opposites that join together to create one great spice, or in our case, a dance team.

SONNY

Well, how 'bout that?

DANNY

Yeah, and it goes on to say how even here in liberal France, no white and black had ever dared perform together in public. It says maybe the United States is not so conservative after all.

SONNY

They could've left that last line out. Funny, though, ain't it. Here we're applauded for playin' it black and white, but back home, they considered it a threat to national security. I had to go across the world just to be treated fairly.

(beat)

Sorry, I don't mean to burden you with my problems.

DANNY

That's okay. I understand why you feel like that.

Sonny suddenly cheers up. He pulls out his new gold pocket watch and checks the time.

SONNY

Well, it ain't like that now, not here. Anyway, I'm off to give my afternoon lesson to the Countess.

DANNY

Alright, see you tonight.

Sonny sticks out his hand.

SONNY

Deal.

Danny shakes his hand. Sonny gets up and heads down the street, waving to well-wishers as he strolls merrily along.

INT. VILLA - EVENING

A lavish party is going strong at the Countess' villa. Sonny and Danny are the guests of honor; Elizabeth is also present.

Danny is by himself, admiring some impressionist artwork, when he is approached by a man with a thick Russian accent.

MAN

Good evening. I believe you are of the two dancers, Salt an' Pepper?

DANNY

Yes, I am. Danny O' Day.

Danny extends his hand, the man does a formal bow.

MAN

I am Igor Stravinsky. I am fan of your act. Very brave.

DANNY

Igor Stravinsky! You're the true revolutionary. We never caused a riot. And I'm no Nijinsky.

IGOR

Ahh, so you know the ballet?

DANNY

Oh, yeah, thanks to my wife. I would think you'd find us kind of, ah, bourgeois.

IGOR

Au contraire! I find your dance exhilarating. Liberating, like your American jazz. No rules. Make your own!

DANNY

Thank you very much.

IGOR

But you must keep moving forward, or become yesterday's news.

DANNY

What do you mean?

IGOR

Art changes constantly, no matter what kind. Dance, music, paintings. And if you're lucky enough to be in style, you make lots of money. Your dance, my music, this painting of Monet's you are staring at, we are all the same. We are someone's entertainment.

DANNY

So relish the moment, huh?

IGOR

Yes, but don't remain there. Anyone at any time can fall out of favor. Salt an' Pepper is a novel idea, but could easily become passe. No matter how good you are, there will always be someone nipping at your heals.

DANNY

I never thought about it like that, but I see what you're saying.

(beat)

Well, now that you've scared the hell out of me, I think I'll go find my wife.

ON SONNY

He's having a blast teaching the "Charleston" to the Countess and a few of her friends.

SONNY

Okay folks, watch the feet. That's the key.

COUNTESS

Oh, Sonny, you must be the best dancer in all the world.

SONNY

Yes ma'am, I could very well be.

Danny has found Elizabeth and they are enjoying watching Sonny enjoy his newfound celebrity.

ELIZABETH

I think France loves Sonny as much as he loves France.

Danny gives Elizabeth a kiss on the cheek.

DANNY
I know who I'm in love with.
C'mon, let's dance.

They join Sonny, the Countess and friends on the dance floor.

Sonny is surprised by Elizabeth's dancing. After the song is finished he says to her.

SONNY
My goodness girl, I didn't know you
could cut the rug like that!

ELIZABETH
Thank you, Sonny, it's been awhile.

DANNY
I told you she's the one who got me
started.

SONNY
I guess you did.

COUNTESS
Come, let's all have a glass of
champagne, eh?

Danny looks at Elizabeth and gets the silent word.

DANNY
Thank you very much, Countess, but
we really must be leaving.

COUNTESS
Oh, no, but it's only one-thirty.

ELIZABETH
My neighbor is watching our little
one. We should be going.

COUNTESS
Sonny, you are staying, yes?

SONNY
Oh, yeah. I still got some time on
the clock.

COUNTESS
Good, good. But first, Sonny,
Danny, come with me.

The Countess takes them to a study where she gives each of them fifty dollars in French francs. They are surprised.

DANNY
What's this for?

COUNTESS
For helping me with my party.

DANNY
What?

COUNTESS
Oh yes. You dance with my guests, you show them steps. They like you, they have a good time.

DANNY
It's not really nec...

SONNY
(overriding)
Thank you very much, Countess. Danny and I appreciate it very much, don't we, Danny?

DANNY
Yeah, sure, we appreciate it, thank you. And thank you for a great evening. Good night Countess. 'Night, Sonny.

INT. BACKSTAGE DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Sonny and Danny are changing after a gig.

SONNY
So, you gonna join me at the Countess' tonight?

DANNY
Naw, I wanna go home and be with Elizabeth and Jimmy.

SONNY
You haven't been to her last few parties. They been askin' 'bout you.

DANNY
Ask Pete.

SONNY

Can't. You know that.

DANNY

Funny kind of prejudice, huh?
Nothin' to do with color, just
whether you're famous or not.

SONNY

Pete's got his buddies on the crew.
They do their thing.

(beat)

The Countess thinks you don't like
her and her friends.

DANNY

I'm tired of her and her friends.
It's one thing to perform on stage,
but it's another to be expected to
entertain at her parties, too. I'm
not their pet.

Sonny is in disbelief.

SONNY

I can't believe what I'm hearing!
It's called "celebrity". It means
they like you. It's part of the
job. What's the problem?

DANNY

Yeah, well, something feels wrong
with it. It's like...

SONNY

Like you're their "nigger"?

DANNY

(confessing)

Yeah, you're right, I do feel like
that, okay?! I'm sorry it came out
like that. I guess I'm feelin'
what you've been dealing with all
your life.

SONNY

Must be. But see, I don't feel
that way here. We were never
makin' dough like this, 'cept with
Tony. An' I'm makin' an extra
fifty to a hundred bucks a night
from these clowns just 'cause I'm a
black novelty from America.

(MORE)

SONNY (CONT'D)

They wanna pay me for that, fine with me. Besides, they ain't bad folks.

DANNY

You do what you wanna do. But don't hold it against me if I don't wanna go. Just tell them I got a wife and kid.

SONNY

That's what I been tellin' them.

(beat)

I'll give the Countess your love.

They are interrupted by the tour manager.

MANAGER

Ah, glad you guys are still here. Guess what? You're gonna get to see the rest of Europe.

DANNY

What?!

MANAGER

That's right. When your gig is finished here next week, I booked you on a month tour of the rest of Europe. Isn't that great?!

SONNY

(to Danny)

Now you don't have to make any more excuses to the Countess.

DANNY

Elizabeth's gonna shit.

INT. DANNY & ELIZABETH'S APT. - DAY

Danny has just broken the news to Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Are you kidding?! Four weeks?!

DANNY

No, I'm afraid not.

ELIZABETH

I don't want to be alone that long.

DANNY

I don't want you to either, but that damn tour manager already booked us.

ELIZABETH

And I'm sure Sonny wants to go.

DANNY

'Course he does, can you blame him? He loves all this. He's never had it so good.

(beat)

I know it sounds like a long time, but it'll go by quick. We were only supposed to be in France for three months, and it turned into six, and they've gone by pretty fast. What do you think, hon?

ELIZABETH

I think I want to go home.

DANNY

I know. I do too.

ELIZABETH

I feel like I'm holding you back.

DANNY

That's silly. If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't even be here.

ELIZABETH

If it wasn't for me, you'd be pitching for the Yankees.

DANNY

Don't say that. Don't you even think that. I love where I am, and I love you. I'm not sorry one bit the way things turned out. But just like you, I wanna go home too.

He hugs and kisses her.

MONTAGE:

Sonny and Danny are playing all the grand concert halls across Europe: London, Rome, Amsterdam, Hungary, Austria.

Everywhere they're a smash. They meet the Queen in England, and the Pope in Rome. But nothing compares to Berlin.

INT. NIGHTCLUB, BERLIN - EVENING

Sonny and Danny have entered a popular nightclub.

SONNY

Now listen, Danny. Gustaf told me
it's real liberated here.

DANNY

Who's this Gustaf again?

SONNY

I told you, I met him in the lobby
at the hotel. He's seen all four
of our shows here. As I was
saying, don't get rattled by what
you might see.

DANNY

Rattled? By what? They gonna have
a human sacrifice or something?

SONNY

No! I mean, people act a little
different... freer.

DANNY

Like how?

SONNY

(pointing)
Like that.

Off in a corner booth, two gay men are kissing and hugging.

DANNY

Holy shit!

SONNY

Ssh. Don't make a big deal out of
it. They don't.

DANNY

Anything else I should be warned
about?

SONNY

Gustaf says sometimes people have
sex in the bathrooms here. He also
told me that...

Sonny is cut off by a voice calling out to him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Sonny! Sonny! Over here!

Sonny peers through the crowd, then sees his acquaintance, GUSTAF, in a corner booth with some friends.

SONNY

There he is. Come on.

Danny follows along, studying everyone in the place. As they approach the table, Gustaf rises, clicks his heels, and extends his hand.

GUSTAF

Sonny, so glad you could make it.

(to Danny)

And Danny, honored by your presence as well. These are my friends, Karl, Wilhelm, and Otto. And these two lovely frauleins are Ingrid and Ursula.

They all exchange greetings and handshakes. Danny scrutinizes the Germans; now everyone is suspect. INGRID makes room for Sonny next to her. Danny pulls up a chair next to Ursula.

GUSTAF (CONT'D)

So, Sonny, Danny, how do you like Berlin? Very cosmopolitan, ya? Like your New York or Chicago?

DANNY

Oh, this is nothing like New York or Chicago, I can tell you that.

SONNY

Yeah, there's kind of ah, let's say nonchalance, you don't find back home.

KARL

Berlin is very liberal now. After the war, we want to forget that, and have a good time.

WILHELM

We are big fans of your American jazz. Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington.

OTTO

And your show, of course.

SONNY

You make us feel welcome.

Ingrid has been eyeing and smiling at Sonny the whole time. He's been trying to stay cool about it, but having a hard time. Danny has been politely fending off Ursula's gaze.

Ingrid shocks Sonny and Danny, but not the Germans, when she says to Sonny:

INGRID

I've heard all about you Negro men.
Big, ya?

Sonny and Danny gawk at each other. Ingrid puts her hand in Sonny's crotch, grabbing his attention.

INGRID (CONT'D)

Come, you show Ingrid, ya?

She gets up from the table, taking Sonny's hand. He smiles wide at Danny as she leads him away.

Danny watches as Ingrid leads Sonny to the men's room.

Danny watches for a second, then returns his attention to the table. Ursula is really giving him the eye now.

Suddenly, there's a wave of commotion as Sonny storms out of the men's room. He strides back up to the table.

Danny looks at him, bewildered.

SONNY

She's a man! She's a fucking man!
(to Ursula)
This bitch's probably got balls,
too! Come on Danny, let's go!

Danny is shocked. He takes a closer look at Ursula, who is still smiling at him. The Germans are laughing hysterically.

SONNY (CONT'D)

You fucking Germans got a fucked up
sense of humor!

Sonny storms out of there, followed by Danny.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB - EVENING

Danny catches up to Sonny, who is outside, fuming.

SONNY

THAT was the other thing Gustaf told me about! Men dressin' up like women. Can't tell the fuckin' difference! She, uh, he, uh, was gonna show me some "French".

(beat)

Ahhh!

DANNY

Hey, like I said before, close your eyes, it feels the same.

SONNY

What?!

Danny bursts out laughing. Sonny glares at him at first, then starts laughing, too.

INT. DANNY & ELIZABETH'S APT., PARIS - DAY

Elizabeth is changing Jimmy's diaper in his bedroom, when there's a knock at the door. Elizabeth calls out.

ELIZABETH

Who is it?

VOICE (O.S.)

(in an odd French accent)

Telegram.

ELIZABETH

What?

VOICE

Telegram! For Mrs. O'Day.

Elizabeth pokes herself with a pin.

ELIZABETH

Ow!

(shouts)

Just a minute!

She finishes with Jimmy, washes her hands and hurries to the front door.

VOICE

Telegram! Telegram!

ELIZABETH

Alright! I'm coming! Jeez.

She opens the door to find a telegram hanging from a string in the doorway. Elizabeth is perplexed.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
What the...?

Danny jumps into the doorway from off to the side, scaring her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Ahh! Oh, you!

First she hits him , then she hugs him.

DANNY
I told you it'd go by fast.

He's lying. She cries tears of joy.

ELIZABETH
God, I missed you!

DANNY
It felt like forever. I know I said this before, but I'm not leaving you again.

ELIZABETH
Better not.

More kissing and hugging.

DANNY
Let's go see our son.

INT. JIMMY'S BEDROOM

Jimmy is lying awake in his bed, playing with a stuffed baby Panda. He beams when Elizabeth comes through the door, but his look turns sour when he sees Danny. He starts to cry. Elizabeth picks him up, consoling him.

ELIZABETH
It's okay, it's okay. That's daddy.
(to Danny)
He doesn't recognize you.

DANNY
Great, I'm a stranger to my own son. Now I know I'm not leaving.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - DAY

On a beautiful late summer's day, Sonny and Danny stroll through the park among painters, musicians, mimes, dancers, actors. Some people recognize them with greetings.

In a not so busy area, Danny breaks the news of his and Elizabeth's desire to return home. Sonny is stunned.

SONNY

You wanna do what?!

DANNY

We want to go back ho...

SONNY

(overriding)

I know, I heard ya. I just can't believe what I heard. Go? Not me. I ain't going back. I'm having the time of my life.

DANNY

I'm sure you are, but... we're not.

(beat)

Why don't you just come back home for a little bit?

SONNY

Are you kidding?! Here I'm somebody! I have respect! You don't know what it's like to always have to watch what you say, how you behave. Don't offend the white man! Here, I'm free to be me, a man. Not a colored man, just a man. I ain't never been treated this well in my own country.

DANNY

Aw, c'mon Sonny. It's not that bad, is it?

SONNY

No?! Back "home" I can't even walk in the front door of the places I'm supposed to entertain at. Here, I not only walk in the front door, I can rent a room and eat in the same restaurant if I want to. Don't tell me how it is. You ain't never walked in my shoes.

Danny still tries to convince him to leave.

DANNY

But Sonny, we're nothing but an amusement to them. They like to have us around because it makes them look "artistic". We're court jesters to them. Walking, talking, dancing pieces of art for their parties. Toys for the bored elite. They don't do it for us, they do it for themselves.

SONNY

Yeah? Well, at least they do it.

DANNY

So that's it? You're stayin'?

SONNY

'Fraid so, I like it here. I don't need to see Berlin again.

DANNY

I'm sorry to hear that, 'cause I'm goin' home. Might be back, I don't know.

Sonny is feeling hurt, abandoned.

SONNY

You're only leavin' on account of Elizabeth!

DANNY

You're right, I am. If I wasn't married, I'd probably stay. But I'd still want to go home at some point.

(beat)

I'm married, so I'm going home now.

Sonny acquiesces.

SONNY

Yeah, I know it's been tough for Elizabeth and Jimmy. I'm sorry, I'm just lettin' off steam, ya know? I guess I knew it was comin'. I didn't mean nothin' when I mentioned Elizabeth.

DANNY

I know. Pete's here, though. That's someone from back home.

SONNY

Yeah, if I can keep him out of the bars and outta trouble.

They give each other a hug. Danny chokes out the words first.

DANNY

I'm gonna miss you.

SONNY

I know you will.

(beat)

Gonna miss you too.

DANNY

We'll see each other again.

Sonny sticks out his hand, Danny shakes it.

SONNY/DANNY

Deal.

INT. ELIZABETH'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Danny, Elizabeth, and Jimmy have landed at MOTHER'S house, a beautiful, large Tudor-style home in an upper-class neighborhood.

They are all sitting in the parlor. Danny is reading a newspaper, Elizabeth is showing a picture-book to Jimmy, and MOTHER is knitting and chattering, oblivious to the fact that no-one is really listening to her.

MOTHER

...And now you're back home where you belong. Jimmy is an American, he should grow up here. And when he's older, if he wants to go abroad, then fine...

Danny and Elizabeth sneak furtive glances at each other as Mother rambles on. You'd swear she never pauses to breathe.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

...But not for too long, if he's married. A father should be near his family, not like Elizabeth's father, who shows up once every six months. One gets the feeling the other doesn't care. I'm knitting this sweater for my grandson because I care. And I will always be around for my grandson.

To Danny, that's a scary proposition. At that moment, Mother pause in her soliloquy to yawn. Danny jumps at the opportunity. He tosses aside his newspaper and springs from his chair. Deftly, he cuts Mother off.

DANNY

I know! Let's have some music!

He hunts down a lively Duke Ellington disc from the cabinet, and places it on the Victrola. Jumpin' Jazz emanates from the speaker.

Danny picks up his son and dances around the room with him. Jimmy loves it and is all smiles and giggles. Elizabeth joins in their reverie. Mother tries to ignore the fact that she's been usurped.

DANNY (CONT'D)

It sure is nice to have my son know who his daddy is again.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danny and Elizabeth lie in their bed. Danny is on his back, staring at the ceiling. Elizabeth is on her side, her arm across his chest.

ELIZABETH

Mother is driving you nuts, huh.

Danny chuckles, then rolls on his side to face her.

DANNY

Madame DeFarge? I know she means well. If she only came with an on/off switch. I feel a little guilty about cutting her off tonight, but jeez Louise, shut up.

ELIZABETH

I know you'll find something soon, and we can get our own place.

(beat)

We'll make our escape before Jimmy knows the difference.

DANNY

Your mother is definitely an incentive for finding a job.

They chuckle, kiss and caress.

MONTAGE:

Of scenes with Danny in New York and Sonny in Paris, trying unsuccessfully to replace their former partners.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Danny is trying to get his new prospective partner, CHARLES, who is white, to loosen up and truly feel it. He's all technique, and stiff as a board. A single piano player provides the music.

DANNY

C'mon, Charles, it's okay to enjoy it! You're dancin' like I'm pointing a gun at you.

CHARLES

I really don't understand what you're talking about. I have the steps perfectly.

DANNY

It's more than just steps.

INT. THEATER, PARIS - DAY

On a theater stage in Paris, Sonny is having the same problems as Danny, as he tries to continue Salt an' Pepper with young male French dancers.

SONNY

Look, Maurice, you got to pay attention. I told you, for sixteen bars we're dancing the same steps, the next sixteen bars, we improvise. Then repeat. Comprend?

MAURICE

Oh, oui, Sonny, I'm sorry. I'll pay attention, I promise.

They try it again. Maurice kind of gets the first sixteen bars with Sonny correctly, but falls apart when he has to do his own thing.

Sonny gives up, and halts the piano player.

SONNY

Okay, okay, that's enough torture. Look, if you want me to teach you to dance, I'm gonna charge you.

MAURICE

Sonny, you are ze best. It is an honor to share ze stage with you.

(beat)

But I have no money to pay you.

SONNY

Then don't let me detain you.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danny and Elizabeth are lying in bed.

DANNY

Sonny sure left some big shoes to fill.

ELIZABETH

These guys don't have it, huh.

DANNY

No, they all dance like they have a broomstick up their... sorry. They are afraid to have fun. They dance parrot like.

ELIZABETH

You two had a chemistry.

DANNY

We sure did.

ELIZABETH

Maybe you should try it as a solo.

DANNY

I am. I have an audition for a show tomorrow. I have to admit, I'm a little nervous. I'm used to having a partner.

INT. THEATER STAGE - NEXT DAY

Danny is auditioning for a PRODUCER and his DIRECTOR. They are a little dismayed with him.

Danny has his steps down fine, but he's always looking at a partner that isn't there. They can't figure out what Danny keeps looking at.

PRODUCER
(to Director)
Too distracted.

DIRECTOR
(shouts)
Next!

INT. BAR, PARIS - EVENING

Sonny and Pete are sitting at a table polishing off their second bottle of wine, which Pete has drank most of.

PETE
So, can't find no French crackers
to take the kid's place, huh?

Sonny laments.

SONNY
No Pete, not yet.

PETE
You really think he was that good?

SONNY
Yes, he was that good. Best
partner since you, Pete.

PETE
But not as good, right Sonny?

SONNY
That's right, Pete, not as good.

PETE
Yeah, I was somethin' in my day.
"Sweet" Pete Williams. I 'member
when we started, back in '96. Man,
we was somethin".

Sonny is barely listening, staring into space. Pete gets teary-eyed as he recalls the good old days.

INT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - PARLOR - DAY

Danny is stuck once again listening to Mother ramble on. He's trying to ignore her with his nose buried in a newspaper. Mother is knitting as usual.

MOTHER

...Now don't get me wrong, you're a wonderful dancer, and there's nothing wrong with it except that there comes a time when if one can't make a living and provide for his family, then one should possibly look elsewhere...

Danny is granted a reprieve, when the doorbell interrupts Mother. He tosses aside the paper and leaps to his feet.

DANNY

I'll get it!

INT./EXT. FRONT DOOR

Danny flings open the front door to find a well-tailored man holding his briefcase.

DANNY

Can I help you?

MAN

I believe I can help you. You're Danny O'Day, formerly of "Salt an' Pepper", and I am Marvin Stevens, senior talent scout for Metro Pictures. You've heard of us?

He hands Danny his business card. He checks it out.

DANNY

Yeah, you guys are pretty big.

Danny steps outside and closes the door behind him

DANNY (CONT'D)

Let's talk out here.

MARVIN

That's right, and we're going to get a whole lot bigger. We're going to lead the way in "talkies".

DANNY

What does that have to do with me?

MARVIN

Ever thought about being in pictures?

DANNY

Are you kidding? I'm a song and dance man. I need sound, music. I'd never translate onto film.

Marvin is persistent.

MARVIN

Until now. That's why I said "talkies", talking pictures. They're the future, and musicals are going to be a big part of that future. Have you seen "The Jazz Singer"? It's killing the competition. All the studios are scrambling to find actors who can speak.

Danny is reluctant.

DANNY

I don't know. I've never done anything but perform live in front of an audience.

MARVIN

So now you perform live in front of a camera. Only now, you get to fix any mistakes. I've seen your act, here and in Paris. Seen you try to go it alone, too. On stage, you need a partner, on film, I don't think you will. And if you do, we'll create one for you.

Danny brightens.

DANNY

I know! Let's send for Sonny. Then I know it'll work.

MARVIN

We hadn't planned on Sonny, we just want you.

DANNY

Why not Sonny? I know he'd come back to do a movie.

MARVIN

Because Hollywood doesn't feel that America is ready for a colored lead. Maybe if we made him your butler or chauffeur.

DANNY

That's an insult! Sonny would never go for that, neither would I.

MARVIN

I'm sorry, but I don't see another way in for him. I appreciate the sentiment, but I don't make the rules, I just find the talent. Anyway, you have my card. I'm at the Waldorf until Friday. Don't pass on a bright future. G'day, Mr. O'Day.

Danny ponders the card. He steps back into the house...

INT. HOUSE

...And closes the door. He takes a few steps toward the parlor where Mother is going on like he'd never left.

MOTHER

...There are many good positions in Father's trading company, without having to spend your life overseas. Of course you'd have to start at the bottom...

Danny whirls around and runs upstairs to where:

INT. JIMMY'S BEDROOM

Elizabeth is putting Jimmy down for a nap. He bursts through the door, startling Elizabeth.

DANNY

How'd you like to live in California?

INT. HOLLYWOOD SCREENING ROOM

Marvin Stevens and the owner of Metro Pictures, "L.B.", are watching a screen test of Danny.

L.B.

I like him. Has a polite, easy-going manner, but strong. Your mother will love him, but he can still kick your ass.

Now, Danny is dancing on the screen.

L.B. (CONT'D)

Look at that! That kid can move!
Yeah, I like him a lot! Nice goin'
Marvin, you found us a gem. We're
gonna play on his strengths. What's
that new musical floatin' around?

MARVIN

"A Gentleman Never Tells", with
Marcy Dormand.

L.B.

Excellent, great! She'll be
perfect for him. Maybe we can even
play up the romance for the fans,
know what I mean?

MARVIN

He is married, sir.

L.B.

He is, huh?
(beat)
Oh well, can't have everything.
We're gonna make somethin' outta
this kid. If the test screenings
go well, we're gonna open first
class at the Chinese.

EXT. GRAUMANN'S CHINESE THEATER - EVENING

It's an opening night extravaganza at Graumann's Chinese
Theater for the film, "A Gentleman Never Tells", starring
Marcy Dormand, and introducing Danny O'Day.

Danny and Elizabeth arrive in a limousine. As they stroll up
the red carpet to the theater, throngs of fans are waving and
cheering. Danny says to Elizabeth:

DANNY

This is amazing. They don't even
know me, but they're cheering like
I'm the Pope.

Elizabeth pulls him close, and kisses him on the cheek. He
beams and waves some more to the crowd.

MONTAGE:

Of Danny's first two films: "A Gentleman Never Tells", a
romantic comedy musical about a newspaper columnist and his
female editor.

"The Road To Freedom", about a young idealistic senator from Ohio, and his bumps and bruises in Washington; a straight, non-musical role.

INT. SCREENING ROOM

L.B. and one of his directors are watching the movie.

L.B.
David, I'm gonna stretch his wings.
Let's go with an adventure next
time. I think he can handle it.
Maybe we can scare Fairbanks.

DAVID
(laughing)
I don't know about that, but I
think Danny can handle it.

MONTAGE:

Of Danny's next two films: "A Pirate's Revenge"; Danny swashbuckles his way across the Caribbean, chasing gold and beautiful women.

"The Price of Justice", a western about a lone bounty hunter who brings a criminal in for trial, but then has to save him from a town lynching.

INT. SCREENING ROOM

L.B. and one of his producers are watching the western.

L.B.
I tell ya, that boy can play
anything. What a gold mine! He's
keepin' Metro afloat after those
other bombs we've had.
(beat)
Tell anybody I said that, an' I'll
cut your heart out.

A LARGE "ONE-SHEET" MOVIE POSTER

Of Danny in costume and on horseback for "The Price of Justice".

PULL BACK to reveal Sonny staring at the poster in front of a Paris movie theater. He debates whether or not to go in. He looks at the cashier's booth.

He takes a few tentative steps in that direction, but turns away, and heads off down the street. He pulls up his collar to fight off the chill from the cool night air.

INT. PARIS BAR - EVENING

Sonny walks through the door and is greeted by everyone. He walks over to the bar and signals to the bartender who nods and gets Sonny an automatic beer. He hands it to Sonny who makes a token gesture for his wallet, knowing full well MARCEL, the bartender is going to say:

MARCEL

On the house, Sonny.

Sonny holds up his glass.

SONNY

Thanks, Marcel. Seen Pete?

MARCEL

See that argument going on over in that corner booth?

SONNY

Oh, no.

MARCEL

You better have a talk with him. The owner is about to ban him from the bar. I had to throw him out again last night after you left.

SONNY

Alright, thanks, Marcel.

INT. BAR - PETE'S TABLE

Pete is arguing with two Frenchmen.

PETE

Ballet?! You kiddin'?! Runnin' 'round like you been sprinkled with fairy dust? American Tap! That is the real thing. You got to be ON to be doin' that shit!

FRENCHMAN #1

Ballet is the first and original civilized dance. Everything about dance begins and ends with ballet.

PETE

You're out to lunch. American Tap says it all! If it wasn't for my leg, I'd get up and show you!

FRENCHMAN #2

Yeah, yeah, we've all heard that one before.

He and the other Frenchman share a laugh.

PETE

I would! Fuck you!

They both get up laughing, and as they walk away, Pete calls after them.

PETE (CONT'D)

Go on! You'd all be speakin' German if it wasn't for us.

Sonny walks up to Pete's table.

SONNY

Makin' friends again?

Sonny takes a seat.

PETE

Ahh, fuckin' frogs. Piss me off.

SONNY

Better lighten up Pete. Marcel told me you're almost on the "get lost" list.

PETE

Marcel over-reacted last night. I wasn't gonna hit that guy. But he threw me outside anyway.

SONNY

Marcel doesn't over-react. Now, quit these squabbles or I can't help you.

INT. CAR - DAY

Sonny is riding in the back of a Rolls Royce. The chauffeur, GERARD, is trying to create conversation.

GERARD

So, Sonny, how do you like teaching the Countess' niece? You can be honest with Gerard.

SONNY

She's alright. A little flighty, but what do you expect from a fifteen year-old?

GERARD

Oh, oui, so young. I want to see her in five years.

SONNY

The Countess would bring back the guillotine just for you, Gerard, if she heard you talk like that.

GEORGE

But not from anyone we know, eh?

SONNY

Not from me.

The Rolls pulls into the driveway of the Countess' villa. Gerard brings the car to a halt at the front door.

SONNY (CONT'D)

Off to entertain the idle rich.

GEORGE

Just make them pay for it.

Sonny climbs out of the Rolls.

SONNY

I'll be back. And I will.

GEORGE

I'll be waiting.

Sonny approaches the front door, when it's opened for him.

There stands the Countess, dressed to the nines, even though it's only two o'clock in the afternoon.

She greets Sonny with fake kisses on each cheek.

COUNTESS

Sonny, darling, here you are. Did you have a nice drive over?

SONNY

The drive was fine, Countess. And aren't you looking divine today. Expecting a gentleman caller?

She giggles.

COUNTESS

Oh, Sonny, no! In this old outfit? You flatter me.

SONNY

It's their loss.

COUNTESS

Sonny, I do believe you're flirting with me, scoundrel. Now, go see if you can teach my niece something.

Sonny kisses the Countess' hand and exits to where he knows their built-in dance studio is located.

INT. VILLA'S DANCE STUDIO

The Countess' niece, YVETTE, and three of her friends are all laughing and giggling like the fifteen year old schoolgirls they are. A pianist sits idly by. When Sonny enters the room, Yvette hugs him and kisses him on the cheek.

YVETTE

"Ello, Sonny! I brought some friends today. Okay, my sweet?

Sonny relents, what else is he going to do?

SONNY

Of course, Yvette, your friends are welcome to stay.

She hugs and kisses him again.

YVETTE

Oh, Sonny, you are ze best. I will make sure my aunt pays you extra.

Sonny changes into his dance shoes and attempts to teach.

SONNY

Alright, now get in a line. We're gonna try the basic time step.

He signals the piano player; Sonny begins the step.

SONNY (CONT'D)
 Alright now, follow me.

Yvette and one of the girls almost have it, the other two aren't even close. They start laughing, which fouls up the others. Soon, all are laughing and not dancing. Sonny stops the piano player. He tries to maintain their interest.

SONNY (CONT'D)
 Okay, that wasn't bad, but I think we can do it better. Concentrate.

Still giggling, the girls stumble back into a line.

SONNY (CONT'D)
 Ready? One, two, three, four.

He signals the piano player and begins the step. The girls are a little better this time, but just as Sonny gets his hopes up, the worst two fall apart again, breaking up the others. He's getting irritated, but has to cover.

SONNY (CONT'D)
 Alright girls. Someone's paying for you to be here. Let's not disappoint them.

Two of the girls whisper to Yvette. She translates.

YVETTE
 Sonny, please dance for us.

SONNY
 What?

YVETTE
 Please. My friends have never seen you dance. I have told them so much about you. That is why they came here today. Please.

All the girls chime in, their cute little French accents.

GIRLS
 Oh, Sonny, please.

At first a little miffed, he remembers Gerard's words of wisdom, "Just make them pay for it". He relents.

SONNY
 Oh, what the hell.

He signals the piano player for something up-tempo. The pianist begins and Sonny launches into some major tap dancing, as the girls watch in awe. He soon forgets they're even there, and is dancing for himself.

As Sonny dances around the room, the pianist gets into it, and now they're having a jam session.

Pretty soon, the girls' fascination turns to restlessness, and they return to their adolescent giggling. They've soon had enough, and leave the room to Sonny and the piano player.

EXT. THEATER DES CHAMPS-ELYSEES - DUSK

Gerard pulls up in the Rolls Royce and drops Sonny off in front of the theater. Sonny looks up at the marquee: "LE REVUE NEGRI -- STARRING JOSEPHINE BAKER".

He walks around to the side entrance where the ever-present doorman, JEAN-CLAUDE, resides.

JEAN-CLAUDE

Good evening, Sonny! How have you been?! You have not been around for a while. Still dancing?

SONNY

I'm fine, Jean-Claude. Yes, still dancing, that's why I'm here. I wanted to see if there might be an opening in the show. Maurice around?

JEAN-CLAUDE

In his office, go ahead. Good luck.

SONNY

Thanks.

INT. THEATER

Sonny walks through the backstage wings, completely alone. A faint light from somewhere barely illuminates his passage.

He continues out onto center stage. The curtains are up, and he imagines a full house. He breaks into one of his favorite steps and scoots across the floor. He says aloud:

SONNY

This is where I belong.

He continues on past the stage to Maurice's office. He knocks on the door, then pokes his head inside.

INT. OFFICE

Maurice looks up from his desk, surprised.

MAURICE
Sonny! My old friend, how are
you?! Come in, come in!

Maurice rises from his desk, and shakes Sonny's hand.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Sonny, you have been away too long.
What brings you by?

SONNY
I'm lookin' for a gig.

MAURICE
I thought you were just teaching
now.

SONNY
No! Hell no! I'm as sharp as I
ever was. I wanna get back out on
that stage. Where I belong. Got
anything that I could jump into?

MAURICE
I don't know, Sonny. The show is
pretty full, you know? The acts
are already chosen.

SONNY
C'mon, Maurice, there's gotta be
somethin' I can do in the show.

A FEMALE VOICE interrupts them.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
You bet there's something you can
do in my show.

They both turn to look, and there's JOSEPHINE BAKER, standing
in the doorway to Maurice's office.

SONNY
Josephine Baker! It's a pleasure
to finally meet you.

She holds out her hand to him.

JOSEPHINE

It's an honor to meet you.

Sonny kisses her hand as Maurice scurries around from behind his desk to do the same.

MAURICE

Madame Josephine, you look divine.

JOSEPHINE

Thank you, Maurice. And now, after all these years, I get to meet the legendary Sonny Jackson... again.

SONNY

Again?

JOSEPHINE

Uh-huh. Don't you remember that fourteen year old girl in Kansas City, 1920? You and, let's see, it was "Sweet" Pete Williams, right? I was the one who knocked down the scenery in the middle of your show.

SONNY

That was you? My God, you've certainly come a long way.

JOSEPHINE

Thank you. Maurice, I know there's got to be some place for Sonny. Think. What?

(beat)

I know, the plantation number. I always thought the men's chorus needed more.

MAURICE

Yes, we could fit Sonny in there.

JOSEPHINE

Good. And don't be surprised Sonny, if I pull you out front to do a number with me.

SONNY

Whatever you need, Miss Baker.

INT. THEATER - EVENING

Josephine Baker is dancing her lead role in the "Plantation" number, about a beautiful black slave and her affair with the white owner of a large plantation.

Sonny performs in the chorus of field hands. It's not a big part, but he's loving it. He's on stage, "where he belongs".

Josephine surprises Sonny at the end of the act by bringing him out front to share the spotlight.

Sonny feels resurrected, and receives a standing ovation.

Josephine steps back and salutes him. She comes forward.

JOSEPHINE
Ladies and gentlemen, the
incomparable Mssr. Sonny Jackson!

After about five minutes, an ecstatic Sonny exits the stage.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Sonny enters the downstairs hallway of the two-story apartment where he lives. He's in a dour mood.

He is stopped by HENRI, his landlord, who lives in the apartment below him.

HENRI
Hello, Sonny. Here, another letter
came for you from your famous
friend.

SONNY
Oh, okay, thanks.

He mechanically raises his arm and accepts the letter.

HENRI
What is wrong, my friend? You look
like someone peed in your soup.

SONNY
I wish. Josephine Baker went on
tour without me.

HENRI
I am very sorry to hear that. And
don't you worry about the rent.

SONNY

Thanks, but that's not a problem. I just need something to do.

(beat)

She said they were using a smaller ensemble on the road. Yeah, all the younger guys.

HENRI

How old are, Sonny? Honestly.

SONNY

Sixty-seven.

HENRI

If it's any help, you look and dance like a man ten years younger.

SONNY

Thanks, and yes, it does help.

(beat)

I was born fifty years too soon.

(beat)

Well, thanks for the letter.

Sonny heads upstairs to his apartment.

INT. APARTMENT

Sonny sits at his writing desk. He reaches into one of the drawers, withdraws a pair of spectacles and puts them on.

He investigates the envelope. Sure enough, it's from Danny. He turns it over in his hands, and acts as if he's going to open it, but he doesn't. He opens another drawer and places the letter on top of five more unopened letters from Danny. He gazes at them a second, then slowly closes the drawer.

EXT. PARIS SIDEWALK - EVENING

Sonny strolls up the sidewalk for his usual evening rendezvous with Pete at the Club Royale. He becomes anxious when he sees a police car parked outside.

He quickens his pace and as he reaches the club, three policemen are escorting a man, whose hands are shackled and stained in blood, out the door and into the squad car.

Sonny rushes inside, and just as he feared, Pete is lying on the floor next to his favorite table, his stomach oozing life. Sonny rushes over to his friend who is being helped by Marcel, the bartender, who is nearly crying.

MARCEL

Ohh, Sonny! I am so sorry! I
could not stop it in time!

Sonny kneels down next to Pete, crying.

SONNY

Damn you, Pete. I told you, I told
you!

Pete can barely speak.

PETE

What a way to go, huh?

Pete expires his final breath. Sonny cries.

SONNY

Poor son-of-a-bitch was snake-bit.

The medics arrive, gently brush Sonny aside, lift Pete onto a
stretcher, and carry him away. Sonny watches his friend go.
Marcel pats him on the back.

SONNY (CONT'D)

His troubles are over now.

Marcel gently escorts Sonny to the bar.

MARCEL

Come, my friend. Let me buy you a
drink.

INT. OFFICE, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Danny flings open the front office door of Metro Pictures'
chairman L.B., and strides right past the secretary, PEGGY,
in spite of her objections.

PEGGY

Excuse me, Mr. O'Day. Please wait!
You can't just barge in on him!

DANNY

Sorry Peggy, but he's not returned
one too many of my phone calls.

Danny bursts into L.B.'s office and closes the door behind
him. L.B. is on the phone.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Hang up. Whatever it is can't be more important than what I have to say.

L.B.

(into phone)

I'll get back to you, Harry.

He hangs up and tries to play nice guy.

L.B. (CONT'D)

Danny, Danny, how are you? I've been trying to get back to you.

DANNY

Save it. You've been ignoring my calls for two long. Now, ignore this. My pictures have been floatin' your boat for almost four years now. You know it an' I know it. This studio is still alive because of me. I've got two months left on my contract, and I'm gonna drag my ass, an' not do a fuckin' thing, and then I'm gonna go talk to Jack and his brothers, an' see if they wanna do "Salt an' Pepper". What do you think?

L.B. is stuck and he knows it. He tries to glad-hand his way out of it.

L.B.

I think "Salt an' Pepper" is an excellent idea! We should have done this a long time ago.

DANNY

And Sonny is in it, too.

L.B.

I wouldn't do it without him. In fact, I'll send a telegram today.

DANNY

I'll take care of Sonny. You just get the wheels turning on this.

Danny turns and exits. L.B. Picks up the phone.

L.B.

Peggy, get me head of production.

INT. SONNY'S APARTMENT, PARIS - DAY

Sonny is fixing himself some tea, when there's knock at the door. He calls out from the kitchen.

SONNY
Who's there?

HENRI (O.S.)
Henri. I have a telegram for you.

SONNY
Come on in.

Henri enters as Sonny steps out from the kitchen.

HENRI
Drink your tea, I'll read it to
you, since I've read it myself.

Sonny nods, sits with his tea, as Henri reads.

HENRI (CONT'D)
"Hello Sonny, hope you are well.
Stop. Am coming to see you. Stop.
Studio wants to do movie about us.

Sonny stops drinking. Henri continues.

HENRI (CONT'D)
Hope this sounds good to you. Stop.
Looking forward to seeing you.
Stop. Love, Danny. Stop.

Sonny doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

HENRI (CONT'D)
Congratulations, Sonny. I am very
happy for you, even if it means
you'll be leaving.

SONNY
Thanks, Henri. It's nice to get
some good news for a change.

Henri exits. Sonny stares teary-eyed at the telegram.

Sonny puts some Ellington on the Victrola and begins dancing away. My God, haven't felt like this in years! He glides from one end of the room to the other, dusting off old steps and creating new ones.

But wait, what's this pain in my chest?! Better sit down! Sonny tries to make it to a chair, but falls, knocking over the phonograph, hits his head and lands with a thud.

INT. HENRI'S APARTMENT

Henri hears the commotion from above and runs upstairs to:

SONNY'S ROOM

He finds Sonny lying on the floor. He grabs the phone.

HENRI
(into phone)
Operator! I need an ambulance. One-
four-three Rue Madeline. Emergency!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Sonny is lying in a hospital bed, a bandage around his head. There's a knock at the door, then Danny enters. Sonny is surprised and pleased, but his pride keeps him at bay.

SONNY
Well, lookie here. If it ain't
Movin' Pictures come a callin'.

DANNY
Hi Sonny, how ya feelin'? Henri
told me you were here. Got my wire?

SONNY
Yeah, I got it. That's why I'm in
here. Got so excited, thought I'd
dance myself into a heart attack.
You come to rescue my career?

DANNY
Thought you might like to make a
movie.

Sonny scoffs.

SONNY
Movies, huh? That's for people
that can't do it for real.

DANNY
It's not like that. There's a lot
of work involved.

SONNY
Uh-huh. Taught you everything you know.

DANNY
I know.

SONNY
Damn right. Tap dance your ass right outta here. Lucky I don't get up right now an' do it.

DANNY
I bet you could.

SONNY
Better believe it.
(long beat)
Hell, I ain't never gettin' off this bed. That's when you're supposed to say, yes you are Sonny.

DANNY
Yes you are, Sonny.

SONNY
Huh, nice try. You never could lie worth a damn.
(beat)
Listen I'm tired. Wanna rest. Movie sounds good. We'll talk later. 'Fore you go, do me a favor? My dance shoes on the floor there, put 'em on my feet? I feel naked without 'em.

Danny does as his friend requests.

SONNY (CONT'D)
Ah, that feels good. I'll be fine now, you run along. I'll be seein' ya. We'll talk later.

Sonny looks up at Danny and smiles.

SONNY (CONT'D)
And Danny, thanks.

He lies back and closes his eyes. Danny places a hand on Sonny's.

DANNY
Deal.

He kisses Sonny on the forehead.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Goodnight, Sonny.

Barely holding back the tears, Danny exits the room.

CLOSE ON SONNY

After Danny's footsteps have faded down the hall, Sonny opens one eye and looks around, then the other eye. The coast is clear. He slowly rises and stands away from the bed. He looks down at his dancing shoes.

SONNY
One more time?

He dances a few brief steps around the room, but has to stop, out of breath. Feeling dizzy, he sits down in a chair.

He smiles, closes his eyes, and passes on.

THE END