

THE BLUE NOTE

Written by

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Inspired by the life of Robert Johnson

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FADE IN:

EXT. MARTINSVILLE, MISSISSIPPI - NIGHT (B&W)

A dilapidated row of houses, circa 1930.

Inside one house, Robert Johnson is playing blues on an acoustic guitar, slightly out of tune.

ROBERT (O.S.)
(singing)
Oh, baby don't you want to go. Oh,
baby don't you want to go. Back to
the land of California, to my sweet
home Chicago.

A few notes are repeated, there's a pause, and the music continues.

ROBERT (O.S.)
(singing)
Now one and one is two. Two and two
is four. I'm heavy loaded baby, I'm
booked, I gotta go.

A few notes are repeated, and the music stops.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)
That was beautiful.

ROBERT (O.S.)
It ain't right yet.

A few notes are repeated. The music stops.

INT. HOME

Robert is sitting on a wooden chair facing the corner of the sparse living room playing the guitar. Virginia Travis is sitting next to the adjacent kitchen table.

He shakes his head in frustration, stands and turns, and walks to his guitar case by the front door.

She stands and approaches him.

VIRGINIA
It was beautiful.

He sets his guitar in the case and closes it.

VIRGINIA

Some folk at church was saying
that's the music of the Devil.

He hoists the guitar and looks at her.

VIRGINIA

They was saying you was thinking
about going to the crossroads to
make a deal with the devil.

He puts on his hat.

ROBERT

They don't know what they're
talking about.

She stands between him and the door.

He moves side to side. She blocks his way.

VIRGINIA

You can sing about the Lord. You
don't have to make no deal with the
Devil. We can be happy here.

He listens closely then narrows his eyes.

ROBERT

Step out of my way, woman.

He opens the door and starts walking.

VIRGINIA

Wait, Robert. I got something to
tell you.

He stops and turns. She gestures for him to enter the house.
He shakes his head and stares at her.

VIRGINIA

It's nothing.

He turns and walks. A tear rolls down her cheek. She touches
her stomach and watches him disappear into the darkness.

EXT. CROSSROADS

Robert is walking alone on the dark gravel road. His eyes
slew left to right as he listens to the sounds of nature --
insects, a dog howling in the distance.

He stops at the crossroads and looks in all directions.

ROBERT
Anyone here?

Silence. He sets his guitar down, opens the case, and hoists the guitar over his shoulder.

He tunes the strings and plays some notes.

ROBERT
Anyone here?

He starts playing Sweet Home Chicago.

ROBERT
Oh, baby don't you want to go--

A flame (color) shoots up from the ditch, followed by a puff of smoke. When the smoke clears, a man wearing a black robe with a hood appears with flaming red eyes (color) slightly visible inside the hood.

Robert squints and approaches.

ROBERT
Are you the--

DEVIL
(not an evil voice)
Silence!

Robert steps back, expecting to be scared, but not.

DEVIL
Have you summoned me to learn to
play the guitar like a blues man?

Robert nods and tries to see the face in the hood.

DEVIL
(yelling)
Have you?

ROBERT
Yes, sir.

DEVIL
Are you prepared to sell your soul
to me for eternity?

Robert pauses and nods -- not what he had expected.

DEVIL
Then let us begin.

EXT. MOUNT ELIKONAS, GREECE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

Welcome to the mountaintop home of the Muses.

INT. MUSE PALACE

An opulent marble palace lit with torches. Ten marble thrones form a circle in the main chamber, with the nine beautiful Muses sitting and wearing robes.

Calliope, the must of epic poetry.

Clio, the Muse of history.

Euterpe, the Muse of lyric poetry and music.

Thalia, the Muse of comedy.

Melpomene, the Muse of tragedy.

Terpsichore, the Muse of dance.

Erato, the Muse of love poetry.

Polyhymnia, the Muse of sacred poetry.

Urania, the Muse of astronomy.

A servant arrives with ambrosia and fruit. The Muses raise their bejeweled chalices for a toast.

TERPSICHORE

Let me guess -- ambrosia? Can't we drink something else?

CALLIOPE

Are you suggesting we drink the beverages of the mortals?

ERATO

The mortals have wonderful beverages and hot men.

Some Muses laugh, then quickly control themselves.

CALLIOPE

We all have a weakness for drink and mortal men, but as Muses we must perform our sacred duties.

TERPSICHORE

In case you haven't noticed, the mortals no longer revere us; it's
(MORE)

TERPSICHORE (CONT'D)
 been years since we inspired great
 works of art.

EUTERPE
 The mortals seem to enjoy music. I
 designed some instruments--

CLIO
 Wait, did you hear that?

No one seems to notice that Euterpe was interrupted. The nine Muses stop to listen.

In the distance, they hear yelling and lightning. The front door slams. The palace shakes.

The nine Muses turn to look. The shoes of Mnemosyne (their mother) echo on the marble floor.

Mnemosyne sits on the tenth throne and exhales.

ERATO
 More problems with Daddy?

MNEMOSYNE
 Zeus never recovered after
 monotheism, but that's not what we
 were fighting about.

She accepts a bejeweled chalice of ambrosia and rubs her stomach as she drinks.

MNEMOSYNE
 I have big news, my lovely
 daughters -- I'm pregnant.

The nine Muses stand and gasp with excitement. They rush closer to look but see only a tiny baby bump.

THALIA
 You're hardly showing, so we have
 time. Were you and Daddy fighting
 about who's the father?

The Muses cannot believe their ears and resist smiles.

There's a loud pounding sound outside as Zeus approaches.

MNEMOSYNE
 He's here. Don't you dare talk like
 that in front of him.

Zeus enters the chamber. Calliope rushes over to hug him.

CALLIOPE

Hello, father.

ZEUS

Calliope, the great Muse of Homer
and epic poetry. Why have humans
stopped writing verse?

Calliope shrugs innocently. Euterpe rushes over to give Zeus
a hug but he does not notice her.

ZEUS

After more than 2,000 years, we're
finally expecting the tenth Muse.
Which art shall we teach her?

The Muses and Mnemosyne look at each other and shrug. They
had not thought about it. Zeus paces.

ZEUS

The mortals today do not worship me
or revere you. We have to reinvent
ourselves and think (turns to
Mnemosyne with finger quotes)
outside the box.

Calliope glances at Euterpe slyly and smiles.

CALLIOPE

What about Euterpe's string
instruments? Does she need so many
instruments?

Euterpe glares at Calliope.

EUTERPE

I worked very hard to design my
piano and guitar. I'll--

ZEUS

My dear Calliope, always the
insightful one. For the new plan to
work, giving the new Muse a string
instrument like the guitar is a
brilliant idea.

Euterpe turns to Mnemosyne, who demands silence.

ZEUS

Euterpe, you shall give the tenth
Muse a guitar. We shall name her
Nepenthe.

The Muses return to their thrones and ambrosia.

INT. HOME, ROBINSONVILLE, MISSISSIPPI (B&W) - MORNING

Circa 1920 (10 years earlier). Robert, now a young boy, wakes up and rolls out of his straw bed. He rubs his eyes.

In the kitchen, his mother, Julia Major Dodds, wearing a simple floral dress and an apron, is washing the dishes.

He sits at the table, spreads some berry preserves on a piece of bread, and takes a bite.

ROBERT

Mama, what was all that fighting
about last nigh? Was Daddy drinking
again?

JULIA

Eat your breakfast, boy.

He eats the bread. She finishes drying the dishes and dries her hands, without turning to him.

He hears a car on the gravel road outside and rushes to look out the window.

A nice black car stops at the house next door. A black man with a guitar and a nice suit exits the car, kisses the woman at the front door, and leads her to the car.

The car drives away. Robert smiles.

He finishes his bread and walks over to hug his mother. When she turns, he sees her black eye.

He reaches up to touch her. She looks the other way.

ROBERT

Mama, what happened? Did Daddy hit
you again?

JULIA

I told you to mind your own
business, boy.

She grabs the broom in the corner. When she turns, he's gone. The front screen door slams shut.

She rushes to the door with the broom and sees him running down the gravel road.

JULIA

You get back here!

She swears under her breath and dries her tears.

EXT. COTTON FIELDS

A scorching hot day. Robert is sitting in the shade of a large tree leaning against the trunk.

The field workers finish their break and return to the fields with hoes.

Robert plays with a stick as they get back to work.

One of the men yells out.

WORKER

I went down to the crossroad.

After collective whacks with the hoes, the others respond:

WORKERS

Fell down on my knees.

Robert sits up to watch. Collective whacks with the hoes.

WORKER

I went down to the crossroad.

Collective whacks with the hoes.

WORKERS

Fell down on my knees.

Robert taps his foot to feel the beat. More collective whacks with the hoes.

WORKER

Have mercy, save poor Bob, if you please.

Robert smiles. More collective whacks with the hoes.

Dissolve to later in the work day.

WORKER

Standin' at the crossroad.

Collective whacks with the hoes.

WORKERS

I tried to flag a ride.

Collective whacks with the hoes. Robert is tapping his foot and singing along.

WORKER

Standin' at the crossroad.

Collective whacks with the hoes.

WORKERS

I tried to flag a ride.

Robert claps as the hoes strike the soil. He watches the nice black car kick up dust as it drives out of town.

INT. HOME - EVENING

Robert arrives. Julia rushes to the door. Robert is singing a song and clapping.

JULIA

Where you been? I was worried sick about you.

He dusts himself off and looks up with a smile.

ROBERT

When I grow up, I'm gonna be the best blues man in the world, so I can take care of you, mama.

She smiles, kisses him, and hands him the broom.

JULIA

Don't you ever run out of here like that without finishing your chores, you hear?

He lowers his head respectfully.

ROBERT

Yes, mama.

He grabs the broom and starts sweeping.

She walks to the kitchen and grabs some food.

ROBERT

What time's Daddy comin'?

She sets the food on the table and touches his cheek.

JULIA

Daddy left, sweetie. He ain't never coming back.

He nods solemnly as he sweeps. She walks to her bed and lays down to cry.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

The nine Muses and Mnemosyne are sipping ambrosia and eating fruit with bored looks on their faces.

MNEMOSYNE

My lovely daughters, I love you
all, very much, but we can't keep
doing this for another 1,000 years.
How can we fix this?

CALLIOPE

Since Dante and Milton, I can't
seem to inspire anyone to write
great epic poetry.

MELPOMENE

Since Shakespeare, the mortals do
not respond to my inspiration for
great tragedy.

POLYHYMNIA

I've inspired many people to write
sacred poetry, but they all
dedicate it to the god of
monotheism, which, as you know,
makes daddy very upset.

THALIA

I'm worried that I've had too much
success -- all of humanity has been
reduced to one big comedy.

The ladies laugh and sip their ambrosia. Mnemosyne gestures to Clio and Urania.

MNEMOSYNE

The mortals are making good
progress in history and astronomy,
but they don't revere us, so they
don't deserve our intuitions.

Mnemosyne stands and paces, then feels a sharp pain in her belly and drops to one knee.

The nine Muses rush over to help her.

INT. MUSE CLINIC

The nine Muses have formed a circle around the bed as Asclepius, the God of medicine, checks Mnemosyne.

He stands and rubs his chin quizzically.

ASCLEPIUS

Very unusual.

He leans over, inspects her again, and stands.

MNEMOSYNE

Well, what is it?

ASCLEPIUS

You have gone into labor.

MNEMOSYNE

What?

NINE MUSES

What?

MNEMOSYNE

That's not possible! I have a tiny baby bump. I can't be more than 4 or 5 months pregnant.

INT. MUSE CLINIC

Eileithyia, the Greek goddess of childbirth, washes her hands with water and gets to work.

Mnemosyne has a confused look on her face. The nine Muses are watching nervously.

EILEITHYIA

You are fully dilated. I want you to take deep breaths and squeeze the hands of your daughters.

Mnemosyne complies with the request, but feels no pain.

EILEITHYIA

I see the head. Keep breathing. You're doing great.

Mnemosyne stops the deep breathing, releases her hands, and rolls her eyes.

MNEMOSYNE

I don't feel a thing.

Mnemosyne exhales, yawns, and drums her fingers as Eileithyia removes the baby and wraps it in a towel.

The nine Muses watch with confusion as Eileithyia hands the baby to Mnemosyne -- about half the size of a normal baby.

MNEMOSYNE

That's the smallest baby I've ever seen. Is she healthy?

EILEITHYIA

Yes he is.

MNEMOSYNE

Come again.

EILEITHYIA

Yes he is. It's a boy.

Mnemosyne opens the towel to confirm and faints.

INT. MUSE PALACE

The nine Muses are sitting in their thrones. The ambrosia arrives, a jeweled chalice for each Muse.

CALLIOPE

We can't possibly allow a boy to serve the role of Muse.

The Muses nod approvingly.

EUTERPE

I refuse to give my guitar to a boy. Apollo will have to teach him to play something else. Speaking of Apollo, look.

They turn to see Zeus, Apollo, and a mystery god wearing a hooded robe walking down the grand hall.

CALLIOPE

Who is that?

The Muses shrug.

Zeus, Apollo, and the mystery god stop to talk out of earshot. Apollo and the mystery god nod, shakes hands with Zeus, and then leave the palace.

Zeus enters.

ZEUS

Where's my beautiful baby girl?

The Muses point nervously to the Muse clinic. Zeus walks.

They sip their ambrosia nervously. Zeus screams.

INT. HOME, ROBINSONVILLE, MISSISSIPPI (B&W) - EVENING

Robert has aged a few years and is sweeping the floor.

Julia zips up her dress and hustles to the door.

There's a knock at the door. Robert turns.

ROBERT
Who is it, mama?

JULIA
Mind your business, boy. You finish
up your chores now. Mama will be
back later.

Robert stops to watch. A local man arrives, kisses her, grabs her hand, and leads her outside.

ROBERT
Where you goin' mama?

JULIA
I'll be back later.

Robert closes the door then grabs his old guitar and sits. He tunes the strings and plays some basic chords.

ROBERT
(singing)
I went down to the crossroad, fell
down on my knees. I went down to
the crossroad, fell down on my
knees. Have mercy, save poor Bob,
if you please.

He plays around with some chord sequences and taps his foot.

He hears a sound in the distance, stands, and walks to the door to look outside. It's music.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD

With the guitar strapped to his back, Robert is walking down the row of dilapidated houses.

On the other side of the cotton field, the music is coming from an old shack.

FRIEND
Robert. You wanna go to the juke
joint with us?

Robert turns to see a few of his friends and shrugs.

FRIEND

Son House is playing.

As they walk through the cotton field, Robert dangles his hands and runs them through the cotton plants.

As they get close to the juke joint, they can hear the music and see some people dancing inside.

SON HOUSE (O.S.)

(singing)

I got a letter this mornin', how do
reckon it read? It said, "Hurry,
hurry, yeah, your love is dead." I
got a letter this morning, I say
how do you reckon it read? You
know, it said, "Hurry, hurry, how
come the gal you love is dead."

As the music continues, some couples are outside dancing, smoking, or drinking, but most the people are inside.

No one seems to notice Robert and his friends.

INT. JUKE JOINT

The place is buzzing with people dancing and drinking.

Alone on the stage, Son House is playing.

SON HOUSE

Looked like there was 10,000 people
standin' round the buryin' ground.
I didn't know I loved her 'til they
laid her down. Looked like 10,000
were standin' round the buryin'
ground. You know I didn't know I
loved her 'til they damn laid her
down.

As the music continues, Robert and his friends find an open spot on the side of the stage. Robert sees his mother dancing with and kissing the local man in the corner.

Upset, Robert swings his guitar around and watches Son House play and starts to imitate him.

SON HOUSE

You know I didn't feel so bad, 'til
the good ol' sun whent down. I
didn't have a soul to throw my arms
(MORE)

SON HOUSE (CONT'D)
around. I didn't feel so bad, 'til
the good ol' sun went down. You
know, I didn't have nobody to throw
my arms around.

Son House notices Robert and winks. Robert winks back and
continues playing along.

Robert's friends return with a jar of moonshine.

They sip and pass it around, until some of the women see them
and shoo them outside.

WOMEN
Get out!

EXT. JUKE JOINT

The boys run outside laughing. His friend raises another jar
of moonshine in the air triumphantly.

FRIEND
We can hang out here behind those
trees.

The friends laugh and run toward the trees.

ROBERT
Be right there.

Robert catches a glimpse of Son House through a window and
swings his guitar around. With the thumb on his right hand
playing the top string, he uses his other fingers to play the
bottom five strings.

A man from the shadows approaches.

MAN
Sounds good.

Robert looks at him and keeps playing.

MAN
You're Virginia's boy. Sorry to
hear your daddy left.

Robert stops and looks the man up and down, then joins his
friends behind the trees.

He takes a swig of moonshine, swings his guitar around, and
continues playing.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

The ten marble thrones that form a circle in the main chamber are empty.

The god of stonemasonry, Hephaestus, is carving an 11th marble throne that is half the size of the others.

Surrounding the circle of thrones is a circular wall with nine private chambers, one for each Muse.

In each chamber, a Muse leans over a clear glass globe that allows them to see the world of the mortals, from where they locate the fortunate souls they wish to inspire.

The Muses sometimes select random people to inspire. As a writer walks down the streets of Paris, Melpomene gives him a brilliant idea. He stops at cafe to write it down, oblivious to the Muse's gift.

The Muses sometimes look for mortals who are praying to the Muses for inspiration. As a scientist sits working in a Swiss Patent Office, Urania gives him a brilliant idea. He smiles wisely, winks to the heavens, and begins writing.

In the last chamber, Euterpe and her new young brother Nepenthe (half her size, and not nearly as beautiful or radiant) are busy tuning a piano.

Nepenthe stands, slides a chair next to the clear glass globe, climbs up, and rubs the globe.

NEPENTHE

Since you're busy tuning the piano,
I'll find some mortals to inspire
with my amazing music.

Euterpe leaps to her feet as the world of the mortals appears in the glass. She pulls him from the chair. The image of mortal world disappears.

EUTERPE

No you don't. I'm the Muse of
music, not you.

NEPENTHE

Dad said I'm working with you.
We're a team.

EUTERPE

We're not a team. Sit.

She pushes the chair in the corner and points. He sits.

Euterpe returns to tuning her piano.

NEPENTHE

Of all the arts, I'm so glad Daddy
picked me for guitar. I can really
feel the notes in my heart.

She laughs.

NEPENTHE

I can really feel the music inside
of me bursting to get out.

She stops tuning the piano and sits on the bench with a
serious look on her face.

EUTERPE

As Apollo has no doubt taught you,
the notes of the musical scale are
not in your heart. They're in the
laws of mathematics. Haven't you
studied Pythagoras?

NEPENTHE

Pythagor-what?

She rolls her eyes and hands him a scroll. He opens it but
does not seem interested in reading it.

She opens the piano and gestures for him to look. He climbs
on the piano bench to look.

EUTERPE

As you can see, the note the piano
plays depends on the length of the
string. When the length of the
string doubles, the note increases
one octave, with all the notes
between a function of the length.

He plays some notes and watches the hammers smack the piano
strings.

NEPENTHE

So you're telling me that music is
math? (plays a few notes) That
sounds boring. Can I switch?

EUTERPE

Oh, my pleasure.

Zeus knocks on the door and peaks his head inside.

ZEUS

I hope I'm not interrupting.

Nepenthe runs over and hugs his leg.

NEPENTHE

Daddy!

Zeus rubs his head with one finger.

ZEUS

(to Nepenthe)

I hope you keep growing. Are you eating enough protein?

Nepenthe lets go and laughs.

ZEUS

(to Euterpe)

Your mother would like to speak with all of you. Did you inspire many mortals today?

EUTERPE

We, I mean I, am still tuning the piano.

Zeus gives her a look of disappointment.

ZEUS

Your mother wants you to inspire mortals every day. It's your sacred duty.

EUTERPE

I know, Daddy, but the mortals don't revere us anymore.

Zeus gestures to the door and leads the way.

When Nepenthe returns to close the piano, alone in the chamber, he bumps into the clear glass globe.

From a mist, a black and white image emerges. He sees Robert sitting outside the juke joint playing the guitar. Nepenthe is enchanted by the music and touches the glass.

MNEMOSYNE (O.S.)

Please hurry.

NEPENTHE

Coming.

Nepenthe lets go of the glass globe and exits.

EXT. COTTON FIELDS, ROBINSONVILLE - AFTERNOON (B&W)

Robert, now a young man, is leaning against a tree strumming his guitar as the workers finish up in the cotton fields.

ROBERT
 (singing)
 You better come on in my kitchen.
 It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

Playing guitar.

ROBERT
 (singing)
 The woman I love, took from my best
 friend. Some joker got lucky, stole
 her back again. She better come on
 in my kitchen. Baby, it's goin' to
 be rainin' outdoors.

Robert looks up the see a strange glow in the clouds. A burst of inspiration fills him with energy.

The inspiration fades. He shakes his head, touches his arms and the guitar (dreaming?), and rises to his feet.

A smile fills his face as he runs.

EXT. TOWN CENTER, ROBINSONVILLE

As the sun sets in this poor black town on a Friday night, the streets are filled with people.

Men with guitars are positioned at various street corners, luring people with their music to earn tips.

INT. BAR

A bartender dries a glass. Robert enters with his guitar and sits. He watches the crowd.

BARTENDER
 Can I get you something?

Robert turns.

ROBERT
 I ain't got no money.

BARTENDER
 You a blues man?

ROBERT
Yeah, a blues man.

BARTENDER
You here cuttin' heads?

ROBERT
Pardon? No, sir, I ain't gonna
cause no trouble.

The bartender smiles and pours him a shot of whiskey.

BARTENDER
Them boys on the street corners
playing music for tips -- we call
that cuttin' heads. You steal a
man's crowd, you cut his head.

Robert downs the whiskey and looks outside.

BARTENDER
If you want to play outside my bar
and bring me some customers, I
might have a little money for you.

Robert tips his hat and grabs his guitar.

EXT. BAR

Robert removes his guitar and strums a few chords. Some
passersby point and stop to listen.

PASSERBY
Hey, a new guy.

Beads of sweat form on his forehead as he strums his guitar
and clears his throat.

ROBERT
(singing)
You better come on in my kitchen.
It's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

Playing guitar. More people gather around.

ROBERT
(singing)
The woman I love, took from my best
friend. Some joker got lucky,
stoler her back again. She better
come on in my kitchen. Baby, it's
goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

A smile fills his face as the people seem to be enjoying his music. A coin drops at his feet.

Suddenly, however, a powerful voice across the street steals the show.

SON HOUSE

(singing)

I got a letter this mornin', how do
reckon it read? It said, "Hurry,
hurry, yeah, your love is dead."

PASSERBY

Look, it's Son House.

The people rush to the other side of the street, leaving Robert alone with his head cut. He picks up the coin.

INT. BAR

Robert sits on the bar stool and sets the coin down. The bartender grabs it and pours a shot of whiskey.

An attractive woman sits next to Robert.

WOMAN

Mind if I join you?

She grabs the shot of whiskey and drinks half. Robert admires her and drinks the other half.

WOMAN

Got your head cut. If you want to
be a great blues man, you have to
go to the crossroads and make a
deal with the Devil.

Robert turns to the bartender.

BARTENDER

Only the Devil himself can inspire
a great blues man. (whispers)
Careful -- she got a husband.

The bartender pours him another shot of whiskey.

BARTENDER

I think my customers might like to
hear your music.

Robert grabs his guitar and walks to the open stage. The room falls silence as he starts to play.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

Nepenthe is sitting alone in Euterpe's inspiration chamber, pacing nervously. Euterpe enters.

EUTERPE

Are you ready?

Nepenthe nods. Euterpe picks up the guitar, tunes it, and hands it to him.

EUTERPE

You'll rule over the music you play tonight, so play the scales Apollo taught you.

Nepenthe takes the guitar, sits, and plays a simple scale. Euterpe nods approvingly -- not impressed.

After a few chords, Nepenthe rips a passionate blues riff.

EUTERPE

What was that?

NEPENTHE

Feels good, right?

Euterpe cannot disagree, which bothers her. She grabs the guitar to ensure the strings are tuned.

EUTERPE

I doubt Apollo taught you to play music like that.

NEPENTHE

I was taught by the other guy, the one with the hood.

Euterpe raises a curious eyebrow.

INT. MUSE PALACE HALL

Nepenthe walks proudly down the grand hall.

As he approaches the dining room, he hears the nine sisters laughing. He stops to listen, out of view.

THALIA

I'm working on my next comedy: tiny male Muse actually believes he's the son of Zeus.

Laughter.

MELPOMENE

I'm working on my next tragedy:
tiny male Muse discovers he's not
the son of Zeus.

Laughter.

EUTERPE

We should go. Trust me, you won't
believe your ears.

Nepenthe wipes his tears and runs.

INT. MUSE CONCERT HALL

Zeus, Mnemosyne, Apollo, and the mystery god wearing a hooded
robe are sitting in elaborate thrones.

The nine Muses file in, pay their respects to Apollo, point
curiously at the hooded god, and then sit in the thrones
flanking either side.

EUTERPE

(whispering to Clio)
Who is that?

Clio shrugs and looks at the hooded god.

Nepenthe enters with his guitar, gives a fist bump to the
hooded god, and walks to the stage.

ZEUS

Are you prepared to perform your
art for us today?

Nepenthe nods.

MNEMOSYNE

The music you play now is the music
you will rule over for eternity.

Nepenthe nods. Zeus gestures for him to begin.

Nepenthe begins playing an emotional blues song.

NEPENTHE

(singing)
I say the mortals come and the
mortals go. I say the mortals come
and the mortals go. But they don't
believe in my Daddy no mo'.

An inspired solo. The Muses are shocked.

NEPENTHE

(singing)

I say they're carving me a small
marble chair. I say they're carving
me a small marble chair. But I
don't look like my Daddy's heir.

Nepenthe plays a second solo and finishes, gasping for air.
After a short pause, there's some polite applause.

Zeus raises a hand. The Muses dutifully file out of the hall.
Nepenthe bows and exits as well.

Zeus, Mnemosyne, Apollo, and the hooded god stand.

MNEMOSYNE

That was interesting. Do you think
the mortals will like it?

Zeus and Apollo turn to the hooded god.

HOODED GOD

This music will shake the world.
The mortals will once again worship
Zeus and revere the Muses.

Zeus and Mnemosyne are pleased.

APOLLO

I would never teach such music --
no offense, brother -- but I can
understand how some mortals might
find it appealing.

Zeus nods approvingly.

ZEUS

We have to try something new.

Zeus gestures to Apollo and the hooded god.

APOLLO

Father.

HOODED GOD

Father.

Apollo and the hooded god exit the chamber.

ZEUS

(to Mnemosyne)

You're sure he's my son?

Mnemosyne smiles and kisses Zeus.

INT. HOME, ROBINSONVILLE, MISSISSIPPI - MORNING (B&W)

Julia enters the house wearing her Sunday best. Robert, now a man, is sleeping on the bed with his clothes.

She sets her purse on the table, walks over to him, and shakes her head in disappointment.

Robert opens his eyes and groans.

ROBERT

Hey, mama. Where you been?

JULIA

In the house of the Lord. Same place you should've been.

He sits up and rubs his eyes.

JULIA

The Lord don't approve of that drinking and Devil music.

ROBERT

Mama, I told you I ain't workin' in no cotton field. I'm makin' some good money.

She sits and closes her eyes.

JULIA

Robert, my son, I love you, but I can't sit by and watch you do this to yourself.

Robert looks at and stands.

EXT. BUS STOP

A bus arrives. Robert grabs his guitar and enters.

The bus drives away. Robert turns to watch Robinsonville fade in the distance.

The bus passes through towns and rural areas. We see the split between the white and black communities.

As the sun sets, a town is visible in the distance.

EXT. BUS STOP, MARTINSVILLE, MISSISSIPPI

A small town by modern standards. Robert is amazed by the lights and the number of people.

Several bars are filled with people, some of them with music playing inside.

INT. BAR

With guitar in hand, Robert sits on a bar stool, sets a coin on the bar, and gestures to a bottle of whiskey.

The bartender pours the shot as Robert turns to watch a man playing the blues in the corner.

Robert turns and downs the drink.

BARTENDER

You a blues man?

ROBERT

I'm fixin' to make a deal with the Devil.

Robert admires the guitar player, his flawless form.

ROBERT

That's what I'm talkin' about.

BARTENDER

Before you make a deal with the Devil, you should meet Ike.

Robert turns.

BARTENDER

They say he plays every night down there at the cemetery.

Robert stands, tips his hat, grabs his guitar, then walks to the door. He stops and turns.

ROBERT

You ever heard of Noah Johnson?

BARTENDER

He's from here. Haven't seen him in years. Why you ask?

ROBERT

He's my father.

Robert tips his hat again and leaves.

EXT. CEMETERY

Robert walks alone down the street. As he gets closer to a small church, he hears a guitar playing.

Behind the church he sees tombstones, but he cannot yet see the man playing the guitar.

The beautiful guitar music calls him like a Siren as he walks through the dark cemetery.

Finally, he sees a man with dark glasses (blind), Isaiah "Ike" Zimmerman, sitting on a tombstone playing guitar.

Ike stops and looks around.

IKE

Who goes there?

ROBERT

Name's Robert Johnson, son of Noah Johnson.

IKE

I recall Noah. Haven't seen him round these parts for years. You here seeking your father?

ROBERT

I'm here to make a deal with the Devil to be a blues man.

IKE

I ain't never made no deal with the Devil; but if you practice with me, I can help you play the blues.

ROBERT

Can we start now?

Ike nods and gestures to an open tombstone. Robert removes his guitar, sits, and starts strumming.

IKE

Follow my lead.

Ike starts playing basic scales and chords. Robert wants to do more, but follows along patiently.

Robert plays and notices a group leaving the church. A beautiful woman (Virginia Travis, from the opening scene) looks at him and smiles.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

The inspiration sessions are over. The nine Muses have retired to their sleeping chambers for the evening.

Nepenthe is wandering the halls with his guitar.

He enters the throne chamber. It's empty. His pint-sized throne still is not finished.

He makes sure no one is looking and enters the inspiration chamber of Euterpe.

He climbs the step ladder and touches the clear glass globe. A black and white image appears of Robert and Ike practicing in the cemetery.

Robert looks tired and does not want to play any more, even though Ike pressures him to continue.

Nepenthe touches the glass and closes his eyes. Robert is suddenly energized and starts playing again.

Ike interrupts him, shows him how to adjust his fingering, and continues practicing.

Nepenthe hears a sound and leaves the inspiration chamber.

INT. MUSE LIBRARY

Nepenthe stays low to avoid detection by Librarian, a wrinkly old lady.

Nepenthe walks down a row of large leather books. One grabs his attention. He opens it and begins reading about the history of the Muses.

He hears a foot tapping. He turns to see Librarian.

LIBRARIAN

Can I help you?

NEPENTHE

I'm reading about the history of my family.

LIBRARIAN

Which family is that?

NEPENTHE

The Muses.

Librarian looks at him, not impressed.

LIBRARIAN

You must be the tenth Muse. They said you were small.

NEPENTHE

Yes, well, I was just--

LIBRARIAN

The great god Zeus and the Titan Mnemosyne are the parents of the nine Muses. In your case, I'm not so sure.

Nepenthe looks at her with insecurity.

LIBRARIAN

The nine Muses were brought here to be taught by Apollo. They have inspired the greatest mortal minds of history. Unfortunately, few mortals these days are worthy of them. As they say (finger quotes), business is slow.

Nepenthe closes the book.

NEPENTHE

Perhaps the mortals would be more responsive to our inspiration if we could meet them in person.

Her eyes bulge. She shakes her finger.

LIBRARIAN

A Muse should never inspire a mortal in person. It's prohibited. You must work from this mountain. Besides, there's no way out.

Nepenthe nods and gestures for her to leave.

NEPENTHE

Thanks for all the information. I'm going to look at a few more books. OK, off you go. Back to your desk now. Go on.

Librarian frowns and returns to her desk.

Nepenthe walks down the row of books. An engineering study for Mount Elikonas grabs his attention.

He reads the first few pages. It was originally a palace for Zeus, until it was given to the Muses and expanded upward.

He continues flipping pages until he sees the blueprints for the palace (the shape of a brain).

On the last page, there are some hand-written dashed lines moving downward indicating that there is a secret tunnel (brain stem) to exit the palace.

He studies the diagram closely and determines that the tunnel is in the library.

He returns the book and begins searching for the tunnel.

He looks for cracks in the floor and walls -- no luck.

He sees that Librarian has left for the evening and tries to pry open the marble with a metal rod -- no luck.

Tired, he sits on a marble bench. When he leans back, the floor rotates 180 degrees.

Nepenthe opens his eyes and loosens his grip to find himself inside a catacombs made with crude bricks.

He grabs a torch and begins walking.

NEPENTHE

Hello. Anyone there?

He continues downward into the depths on steep slopes and steps. As he moves farther, the path transitions from catacombs to cave -- no signs of human ingenuity.

NEPENTHE

Hello. Anyone there?

His voice echoes.

Finally, from the light of his torch, he sees a large wooden door ahead protected by a warrior holding a sword.

Nepenthe stands in silence. The faint sound of a guitar can be heard on the other side of the door.

NEPENTHE

What's behind the door?

The warrior does not answer. When Nepenthe approaches, the warrior raises his sword ready to strike.

NEPENTHE

What's behind the door?

Nepenthe moves side to side to get past the warrior, but he will not let him pass. Nepenthe groans and turns around.

INT. HOME, MARTINSVILLE, MISSISSIPPI - EVENING (B&W)

Robert and Virginia (the woman he saw outside the church near the cemetery) are sitting in the living room (the same house as the opening scene).

He is strumming his guitar.

She gets up to pour two glasses of lemonade. She hands one to Robert, who pauses for a sip.

VIRGINIA

So you and Ike have been practicing every night in the cemetery. It sounds really good.

He nods and continues strumming.

VIRGINIA

I was talking with the preacher. He said you could play some religious songs for us.

He plays a clever riff and stops.

ROBERT

I told you I wanna be a blues man.

VIRGINIA

That blues music ain't Godly.

He sets his guitar aside and gestures for her to sit next to him. She sits and smiles.

He touches her face and kisses her. She smiles and touches her heart.

He grabs his guitar, plays a few notes, and then launches into a sophisticated blues riff.

INT. MUSE PALACE (HD COLOR)

The Muses are sleeping.

A red light flashes as an alarm sounds.

The Muses stumble out of bed and put on robes.

While walking to the throne chamber, Nepenthe catches up with Euterpe.

NEPENTHE

What's happening?

EUTERPE

The alarm means a Muse succeeded in inspiring a mortal to a new level of artistic perfection.

The Muses enter the throne chamber. The red light above the inspiration chamber of Euterpe is flashing.

EUTERPE

It's me!

She runs to the chamber then stops and looks at Nepenthe.

EUTERPE

Wait, I've been tuning my piano recently.

She glares at Nepenthe and runs to enter her chamber. The other Muses gather around.

Euterpe sees the black and white image of Robert playing in Virginia's living room.

EUTERPE

Nepenthe!

Euterpe makes the image disappear and rushes out of the inspiration chamber, angry with Nepenthe.

EUTERPE

I told you to stay out of my inspiration chamber!

Euterpe storms out of the room. After a tense silence, the other Muses gather around Nepenthe.

TERPSICHORE

Don't worry about her. She's just jealous.

ERATO

Good job. So the mortals really like that music?

NEPENTHE

I guess so.

Nepenthe runs after Euterpe. Terpsichore and Erato look at each other curiously.

INT. HOME, MARTINSVILLE, MISSISSIPPI (B&W)

Robert pauses and clears his throat.

ROBERT

(singing)

Early this morning, when you
knocked upon my door. Early this
morning, oooo, when you knocked
upon my door. And I said hello
Satan, I believe it's time to go.

Virginia slaps him on the face, shocked.

VIRGINIA

Don't you be playin' no Satan music
in my house, you hear.

Robert glares at her, raises a hand to slap her, then grabs
his guitar and walks to the door.

VIRGINIA

I'm sorry, Robert. It's just that
you know I can't invite Satan into
this home or our life.

Robert storms out of the house.

INT. BAR

A busy bar with a blues man in the corner.

Robert enters with his guitar and sits at the bar.

He sets a coin down. The bartender pours a shot of whiskey. A
beautiful woman sits next to him -- another coin, another
shot of whiskey.

WOMAN

I hear you and Ike been playin' in
the cemetery. You made a deal with
the Devil yet?

The music stops. Robert winks at her and turns to the
bartender.

ROBERT

You got anyone else to play
tonight?

The bartender wipes a glass and gestures to the stage.

Robert stands and grabs his guitar. The woman pulls him
closer for a kiss. He kisses her back.

Robert walks to the stage, clears his throat, and strums a
few chords as he admires the woman.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

The Muses have gone back to sleep.

Nepenthe opens an eye, gets out of bed, and peeks in the rooms. Euterpe is sleeping.

Convinced the coast is clear, Nepenthe goes to Euterpe's inspiration chamber and touches the clear glass globe.

A black and white image of Robert appears, playing in the bar. The crowd seems only mildly interested. Robert downs a shot of whiskey and continues playing.

Nepenthe touches the glass globe to inspire him, but Robert does not respond. Nepenthe touches the screen again and closes his eyes for strength, but only a limited response.

Nepenthe stands back and takes a deep breath.

TERPSICHOIRE

You didn't give up. Good for you.

ERATO

What's wrong?

NEPENTHE

I don't know. He's not responding to my inspiration.

Terpsichore and Erato move closer to see. Robert pauses to sip his whiskey.

TERPSICHOIRE

He's drinking whiskey.

NEPENTHE

He's been drinking a lot.

ERATO

Wine is the only drink that doesn't block inspiration. Not sure why.

Suddenly, there's a sound. They turn off the inspiration globe and hide behind the marble thrones as Euterpe looks inside her chamber.

NEPENTHE

What now? Should I talk to him?

The sisters looked confused.

TERPSICHOIRE

We can't leave the palace.

ERATO

Can we?

They look at each other and shrug.

INT. BAR (B&W)

The small crowd is not focused on Robert, except the woman at the bar. Robert finishes a song.

ROBERT

(singing)

Well, the blues is a achin' old
heart disease. Do it now, you gon'
do it? Tell me all about it. The
Blues, is a low-down achin' heart
disease. Like consumption, killing
me by degrees.

Playing guitar.

ROBERT

(singing)

I can study rain, oh oh drive, oh
oh drive my blues. I been studyin'
rain, I'm 'on drive y blues away.
Goin' to the stil'ry, stay out
there all day.

Robert ends to modest applause.

He grabs his guitar, walks to the bar, and sits next to the woman he was admiring.

The bartender pours him a shot of whiskey and slides him two coins. Robert is not impressed with the pay.

BARTENDER

Bring me more clients, and I'll pay
you more money.

Robert downs the shot and drops the two coins in his pocket.

WOMAN

How about another one for me?

Robert shakes his head and stands.

WOMAN

You going to practice with crazy
Ike in the cemetery?

Robert nods.

WOMAN

How about we go somewhere, just you
and me?

Robert tips his hat to the bartender and leaves.

INT. MUSE PALACE (HD COLOR)

The nine Muses are sleeping.

Nepenthe, wearing a hooded robe, enters the library, sits on the marble bench, leans back, and spins 180 degrees into the catacombs.

He grabs a torch and begins walking into the dark depths of the cave, from the catacombs to the raw stone.

At the bottom of the stairs, he sees the warrior holding a sword.

Nepenthe moves side to side. The warrior moves with him, preventing him from passing.

Finally, he stops.

NEPENTHE

I'm a Muse. I live here.

The warrior ignores him.

NEPENTHE

I'm the son of Zeus.

The warrior ignores him.

NEPENTHE

I order you to stand aside.

The warrior stands aside.

Nepenthe, surprised, struts past the warrior, opens the wooden door, and enters the damp tunnel.

Up ahead, he sees a faint light and continues walking.

At the end of the tunnel, there's a ladder leading up to a dim light. He climbs the steps.

At the top, he struggles to push the rectangular slab of marble aside. Eventually, it moves.

He climbs through the opening to find himself in a black and white cemetery. He's in color.

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING (B&W)

Blind Ike is strumming his guitar and humming.

Robert arrives, sets his guitar down, and sits on a tombstone with a heavy sigh.

Ike stops playing and turns his head in the direction of Nepenthe, who is hiding behind a tombstone.

IKE

How was your show?

ROBERT

Not good. I can't get the crowd's attention, and I missed some chords.

IKE

Sounds like progress.

ROBERT

How so?

IKE

Because when we first met, you missed all the chords.

Ike strums a chord with a smile and taps his guitar.

ROBERT

Not tonight. I need a break. I got some other ideas.

Ike stops playing and turns his head in the direction of Nepenthe, who again hides behind a tombstone.

IKE

A deal with the Devil?

ROBERT

Everyone says blues men have to make a deal with the Devil.

IKE

Those people don't know nothing about playing the guitar. What about Virginia? The woman who loves you and wants you to get better -- does she want you to make a deal with the Devil?

Robert stands and groans.

ROBERT
She don't understand.

IKE
You want to play the guitar, this
is how you do it -- practice.

ROBERT
Alone in a cemetery, night after
night?

Ike nods and strums a chord. Nepenthe approaches them. Robert watches in horror and taps Ike on the shoulder as Nepenthe arrives, in color, normal height by human standards.

ROBERT
Ike, there's some guy here.

A smile fills Ike's face.

IKE
I'll be.

Ike stands and hugs him. Nepenthe inspects his blind eyes.

NEPENTHE
You know who I am?

IKE
Of course. The birth of the tenth
muse, a boy no less, caused quite a
stir in the spiritual world.
There's someone I want you to meet.

Nepenthe turns to see Robert running out of the cemetery, his guitar leaning against a tombstone.

IKE
He's stayin' yonder there with the
Virginia girl. Talk to him.

Nepenthe nods and starts walking.

Ike sits on the tombstone and starts playing a beautiful song. Nepenthe stops to listen, then walks behind Ike and touches his head.

A blissful smile fills Ike's face as he plays.

INT. HOUSE

Robert is sitting on the couch catching his breath. Virginia is attending to him.

There's a knock at the door. Virginia walks over and peeks outside to see Nepenthe. She opens the door.

NEPENTHE

Hello. I'm here to see Robert.

Virginia looks back. Robert waves frantically "no".

NEPENTHE

To help him with the guitar.

Nepenthe touches Virginia's hand. She feels his energy and falls to the floor muttering a prayer. Nepenthe enters holding Robert's guitar.

Robert leans back in horror as Nepenthe approaches. Nepenthe shows an open hand to indicate he is not a threat.

NEPENTHE

Don't be afraid of me because I'm in color.

ROBERT

What you mean "in color"? You sayin' I'm in black and white?

Nepenthe pauses to think about it.

NEPENTHE

Anyway, please just trust me and play the guitar.

Robert looks to Virginia. She nods nervously.

As Robert plays some chords, Nepenthe walks behind him and touches his head. A blissful smile fills his face.

NEPENTHE

Now, play the most difficult music you know.

Robert, now motivated, starts playing a difficult song. Nepenthe touches his head. A blissful smile fills his face, but he makes the same mistakes.

Robert sets the guitar down and groans.

ROBERT

It didn't work. I felt whatever magic you have, trust me, but it didn't help me play better.

Nepenthe, confused, walks to the door. Virginia, eyes bulging with fear and awe, opens the door.

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT (B&W)

Nepenthe returns to the cemetery, where Ike is playing.

Nepenthe sits on a tombstone. Ike stops playing.

NEPENTHE

I don't understand.

Ike nods wisely.

NEPENTHE

I'm the Muse of the blues, but I couldn't inspire Robert to play better.

IKE

You inspire us to believe that the magic inside us is real. We humans gotta take care of the rest.

NEPENTHE

From talking to my sisters, they really believe we Muses are responsible for inspiring mortals to create great works of art. We find talented mortals and inspire them to greatness.

Ike strums a few chords.

IKE

Most people don't understand talent and inspiration so well. Just about anyone can play the guitar, but most never make the time or effort to master it, so they imagine that mysterious forces must be the cause of greatness.

NEPENTHE

What should we do with Robert?

IKE

He got some strange ideas about the blues. Blues men sing from the heart, but most people think the blues comes from the Devil.

Nepenthe accepts the guitar and plays some chords.

IKE

If the blues is to make it in this world, we have to give the people
(MORE)

IKE (CONT'D)

what they want. If the people want music from the Devil, we'll give it to them, even if it ain't so.

NEPENTHE

What are you suggesting?

IKE

I suggest we help young Robert make a deal with the Devil, and take him to the next level.

Ike stands and waves for Nepenthe to follow him.

NEPENTHE

Where are we going?

IKE

To get you some new clothes. The Devil don't dress like that. By the way, how are you and Euterpe getting along?

Nepenthe groans and slaps Ike on the back.

EXT. BAR - AFTERNOON

Robert is walking down the street the next day. While passing the bar where he had played, he recognizes the music.

SON HOUSE (O.S.)

(signing)

I got a letter this mornin', how do you reckon it read? It said, Hurry, hurry, yeah, your love is dead.

INT. BAR

Robert enters and waves to Son House, who stops playing.

Robert sets two coins on the bar and walks over to hug Son. They sit at a table.

ROBERT

You got a gig here tonight?

Son nods. The waitress arrives with two shots of whiskey. They toast and drink.

SON HOUSE

Just passing through. I hear you're playing better.

ROBERT
I've been practicing every night,
but still making mistakes.

SON HOUSE
Any luck finding your father?

Robert shakes his head.

SON HOUSE
Keep working at the guitar. You'll
get better.

Son leans forward to stand. Robert grabs him.

ROBERT
What do you know about making a
deal with the Devil?

SON HOUSE
I know good folks ain't suppose to
talk about stuff like that.

Robert and Son make stern eye contact.

SON HOUSE
You understand what you're asking --
a deal with the Devil?

Robert nods.

SON HOUSE
There's no going back on a deal
with the Devil.

Robert nods after a brief hesitation.

SON HOUSE
Then go to the crossroads tonight
at midnight. He'll be there.

Son gestures to the stage. Robert smiles and hustles out of
the bar.

When Robert is gone, Ike arrives from the back room.

IKE
How did it go?

SON HOUSE
He'll be there.

Son House grabs his guitar and strums a chord. Ike helps him
tune the guitar and nods approvingly.

EXT. HOME - MINUTES BEFORE MIDNIGHT (B&W)

Robert opens the door (repeat of opening scene).

VIRGINIA

Wait, Robert. I got something to
tell you.

He exits the house, stops, and turns. She gestures for him
to enter the house. He shakes his head and stares at her.

VIRGINIA

It's nothing.

He turns and walks. A tear rolls down her cheek. She touches
her stomach and watches him disappear into the darkness.

EXT. CROSSROADS

He stops at the crossroads and looks in all directions.

ROBERT

Anyone here?

Silence. He sets his guitar down, opens the case, and hoists
the guitar over his shoulder.

He tunes the strings and plays some notes.

ROBERT

Anyone here?

He starts playing.

ROBERT

Oh, baby don't you want to go--

A large flame (color) shoots up from the ditch, followed by a
puff of smoke. When the smoke clears, a man (Nepenthe)
wearing a black robe with a hood appears, with flaming red
eyes (color) slightly visible inside the hood.

Robert squints and approaches.

ROBERT

Are you the--

DEVIL

(not an evil voice)
Silence!

Robert steps back, expecting to be scared, but not.

DEVIL
Have you summoned me to learn to
play the guitar like a blues man?

Robert nods and tries to see the face in the hood.

DEVIL
(yelling)
Have you?

ROBERT
Yes, sir.

DEVIL
Are you prepared to sell your soul
to me for eternity?

Robert pauses and nods -- not what he had expected.

DEVIL
Then let us begin.

Robert stares at him with fear and confusion.

ROBERT
What should I do?

DEVIL
Give me your guitar.

Robert hands him the guitar. Devil tunes the individual strings, strums some chords, and hands it back to him.

Robert strums some chords.

ROBERT
Now what?

DEVIL
Now you should go into the
wilderness and practice for forty
days and nights.

ROBERT
That's it?

Flames shoot up from the ditch.

DEVIL
You dare question the Devil?

Devil reaches down and touches Robert's head. Robert faints and collapses to the ground.

Nepenthe removes his hood and turns to Ike, who is hiding in the ditch with the flame machine.

NEPENTHE
What should we do?

Ike shrugs. They drag Robert's body and lean it up against a tree near the crossroad.

Nepenthe and Ike shakes hands.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Robert enters gasping for air.

ROBERT
Virginia, I did it!

He looks around. The house is empty. There's a note on the kitchen table from Virginia saying she left.

Robert drops the note to the floor and rushes outside.

Montage:

Robert practicing under a tree.

Time lapse as morning turns to night.

Robert's precise finger movements.

Robert practicing in the cemetery.

Time lapse as morning turns to night.

Robert's precise finger movements.

Robert leaving the house with a suitcase.

Robert alone at the train station.

Robert walking to the bus stop.

Robert returning to Robinsonville on a bus.

Robert walking through town, waving to friends.

Robert entering the bar and shaking the bartender's hand.

Robert walking to the stage and tuning his guitar.

Robert sitting on a chair.

INT. BAR - EVENING (B&W)

The bar is half-full. No one seems interested in Robert's presence on the stage.

Robert takes a deep breath and starts playing. The people in the crowd are impressed by the sound and turn to watch.

Robert closes his eyes and taps his foot. The woman from the bar leaves her husband and moves closer to watch.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION

Robert runs to the train station, holding a suitcase. He cannot see Virginia.

ROBERT (O.S.)

(singing)

And I followed her to the station,
with my suitcase in my hand. And I
followed her to the station, with a
suitcase in my hand. Well, it's
hard to tell, it's hard to tell,
when all your love's in vain. All
your love's in vain.

BACK TO PRESENT

The crowd is hypnotized by Robert's music. More people are crowding in and watching.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION

Robert moves through the crowd frantically, looking for Virginia as the train arrives. He finally sees her entering the last car.

ROBERT (O.S.)

(singing)

When the train rolled up to the
station, and I looked her in the
eye. When the train rolled up to
the station, and I looked her in
the eye. Well, I felt lonesome, I
was lonesome, and I could not help
but cry. All my love's in vain.

BACK TO PRESENT

Son House, Ike, and other local blues men stop playing outside and enter to watch.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION

Robert runs to the last car. He tries to enter, but the ticker taker stops him. He rushes to the window where Virginia is sitting. She looks the other way.

ROBERT (O.S.)

(singing)

When the train, it left the
station, with two lights on behind.
When the train, it left the
station, with two lights on behind.
Well, the blue light was my blue,
and the red light was my mind. All
my love's in vain.

BACK TO PRESENT

The woman in the front row touches her heart and cries as her angry husband in the corner watches. The bartender wipes a glass and nods approvingly.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION

Robert drops his suitcase and watches as the train leaves. Finally, Virginia turns and waves. He waves back as a tear rolls down his cheek.

ROBERT (O.S.)

(singing)

Oooh, Willie Mae, Ooooh, Willie
Mae, Ooooh, all my love's in vain.

BACK TO PRESENT

Robert finishes the song and opens his eyes to cheers and a standing ovation.

He stands to acknowledge the crowd. He walks to the bar, accepts a shot of whiskey from the bartender, and raises it to his cheering fans.

The woman rushes over and kisses him. Son House, Ike, and the other blues men walk over to pay their respects.

The angry husband in the corner walks to the bar, orders a shot of whiskey, laces it with something, and extends his arm to offer it to Robert.

Ike smells something and tries to stop Robert from drinking the shot. Too late. Robert drinks it and pumps his fist.

CROWD

Encore! Encore! Encore!

Son House and the other blues men encourage Robert to return to the stage as Ike listens with concern.

Robert returns to the stage, straps on his guitar, and waves to the crowd.

Robert strums a chord and tunes the strings, then pauses to hold himself up. Ike listens with concern.

Robert sits on the chair, shakes his head to clear his mind, and then begins playing a song. The audience claps as tables are cleared for people to dance.

ROBERT

(singing)

Oh, baby don't you want to go? Oh,
baby don't you want to go? Back to
the land of California to my sweet
home Chicago.

The crowd goes crazy.

ROBERT

(singing)

Oh, baby don't you want to go? Oh,
baby don't you want to go? Back to
the land of California to my sweet
home Chicago.

Robert collapses to the floor. The room falls silent. Son House rushes over to help, with Ike close behind.

SON HOUSE

Robert, you OK?

Son House slaps his face and shakes him.

SON HOUSE

Robert, wake up!

The people in the crowd look on with concern.

Finally, Robert opens his eyes as the camera transitions from black and white to technicolor.

INT. BAR (TECHNICOLOR)

The crowd cheers as Robert stands, strums his guitar, and sits on the chair. He taps his foot and picks up where he left off.

ROBERT

(singing)

Now one and one is two, two and two
is four. I'm heavy loaded baby, I'm
booked, I gotta go. Cryin' baby,
honey don't you want to go? Back to
the land of California, to my sweet
home Chicago.

Robert is surprised by the sound of horns. He turns to see a horns section blasting away. He smiles and keeps playing.

ROBERT

(singing)

Now two and two is four, four and
two is six. You gonna keep
monkey'in 'round here friend-boy,
you gonna get your business all in
a trick. But I'm cryin' baby, honey
don't you wanna go. Back to the
land of California, to my sweet
home Chicago

Robert surprised to hear the piano and drums kick in. He gives a thumbs-up. The bar extends into a full-blown 1950s night club with waiters and a dance floor.

ROBERT

(singing)

Now six and two is eight, eight and
two is ten. Friend-boy, she trick
you one time, she sure gonna do it
again. But I'm cryin' hey, baby
don't you want to go. To the land
of California, to my sweet home
Chicago.

By now the club is rocking, with a bass guitar to boot. An evil looking guy sitting at a corner table in the shadows, with a beautiful woman on either side, nods approvingly and gestures to one of his security guards.

ROBERT

(singing)

I'm goin' to California, from there
to Des Moines, Iowa. Somebody will
tell me that you, need my help
someday, cryin', hey hey, baby

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)
don't you want to go. Back to the
land of California, to my sweet
home Chicago.

Robert stands and bows for a standing ovation, then gestures to his individual band members.

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Robert and the band are unwinding. Robert shakes the hand of each band member.

ROBERT
That was amazing. The drums, the
horns, the piano, all of it,
amazing. I mean, I never thought we
could get that sound.

The band members are confused.

PIANO PLAYER
We've been playing together for a
long time.

Robert thinks about it (confused), then laughs.

ROBERT
I'm just messin' with ya.

They enjoy a good laugh.

There's a knock at the door. The security guard enters.

SECURITY GUARD
Mr. Johnson, do you have a minute?

Robert nods and excuses himself.

INT. OFFICE

A dark, opulent office.

The security guard leads Robert to a desk at the other end of the office and gestures to a chair.

Robert sits and then turns when the evil looking guy enters the office from a side door with two women.

The evil looking guy gestures for the women to leave. They touch Robert and wink at him on the way out.

The evil looking guy gestures to the security guard.

The evil looking guy opens a box of cigars -- Robert accepts one -- grabs a cigar, clips them, and lights them.

EVIL LOOKING GUY

Mr. Johnson, I'll be direct. I like your music and want to record it.

ROBERT

I'm glad to hear that.

EVIL LOOKING GUY

So you're the famous blues man who made a deal with the Devil?

Robert, suddenly nervous, takes a deep breath.

ROBERT

Just stories, you know.

EVIL LOOKING GUY

People don't play the guitar like that unless they've made a deal with the Devil.

Robert sees a subtle red flame in his eyes. He grips his chair, scared.

DEVIL

You don't think I forgot about our deal at the crossroads?

Robert shakes his head. Devil removes a contract from his desk and dips his fountain pen in blood.

DEVIL

This recording contract will bring you fortune and fame.

Devil hands him the pen. Robert starts to read the small print.

DEVIL

The details of the contract are irrelevant. We already made our deal at the crossroads, right?

Robert takes a deep breath and signs/dates the contract. Devil grabs the pen and signs/dates it as well.

Devil stands and offers his hand as he puffs his cigar. Robert shakes it and puffs his cigar.

Robert walks out of the office. The two women are waiting for him and lead him away.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (TECHNICOLOR)

Nepenthe descends the ladder from the cemetery, walks past the wooden door and warrior, and makes the climb to the catacombs and the marble bench.

He leans back. The marble bench rotates 180 degrees. He's facing Librarian. She glares at him.

NEPENTHE

I got lost.

LIBRARIAN

Right.

Nepenthe strolls down the grand hall. A large door is ajar with a light on inside.

Nepenthe knocks and enters.

NEPENTHE

Mom?

Mnemosyne is brushing her hair in the mirror. She turns, smiles, and gestures for him to enter.

He sits on her lap.

MNEMOSYNE

Where have you been? The librarian said you were in the catacombs. What where you looking for?

NEPENTHE

Nothing. I found it by accident.

MNEMOSYNE

We're not allowed to leave.

NEPENTHE

Of course. (deep breath) Mom, am I really the son of Zeus?

Mnemosyne's eyes bulge. She covers his mouth.

MNEMOSYNE

Don't ever talk like that. Zeus can hear everything we say. Of course you're the son of Zeus.

Nepenthe breathes a sigh of relief and smiles.

NEPENTHE

But I don't look like him.

He gestures to the frescoes on the wall of the sons of Zeus engaged in battle. Mnemosyne admires the paintings.

MNEMOSYNE

We don't always understand the mysteries of nature, but you were born for a purpose. (smiles) How do the mortals like -- how do you call it -- the blues?

NEPENTHE

When I met, I mean, I have one mortal who is studying my art. I think the blues will one day be very popular with the mortals.

MNEMOSYNE

That's wonderful.

Nepenthe kisses Mnemosyne on the cheek and leaves.

Nepenthe walks to the throne chamber, where his half-size throne and half-size inspiration chamber with half-size clear glass globe are complete.

He sits in his throne to join his sisters. They are drinking ambrosia and look bored. They turn their attention to him.

EUTERPE

Your throne and inspiration chamber are ready, so you can stop bothering me now.

Most of the sisters giggle. Terpsichore and Erato look on with concern.

TERPSICHORE

Where were you?

NEPENTHE

I was wondering around. I got lost in the catacombs.

ERATO

Got lost?

Calliope drinks her ambrosia and shakes her head.

CALLIOPE

Look, young brother, we all think it's great you have this blues music thing, but don't think for one second that we will ever take it seriously.

Calliope finishes her ambrosia, sets her jeweled chalice down, and exits the chamber. The other muses follow.

Terpsichore and Erato pass by Nepenthe.

TERPSICHORE

Don't worry about Calliope. She's
Daddy's favorite, but the mortals
ignore her.

Terpsichore and Erato gesture for Nepenthe to follow them.

Terpsichore ensures the coast is clear and waves for them to enter her inspiration chamber. She closes the door and conjures an image of Robert's band playing.

Terpsichore connects a phonograph horn to the clear glass globes -- blues music plays.

As they dance, Nepenthe notices a blissful smile on the piano player as he plays.

TERPSICHORE

This music is so fun! I want to
inspire people to dance to it. I'm
so tired of ballet.

ERATO

These blues men sing about the pain
of love in ways that people are
afraid to say in good company.

There's a sound. Terpsichore hides the phonograph horn and they start laughing, but the coast is clear.

NEPENTHE

I'm going to try out my new
inspiration chamber.

Terpsichore and Erato kiss him on the cheek, then reconnect the phonograph horn to dance.

Nepenthe smiles as he walks to his inspiration chamber.

As he passes by Euterpe's inspiration chamber, he hears a sound inside. Curious, he grabs a chair from his inspiration chamber, sets it in front of Euterpe's door, and steps up to look inside through the door window.

Inside he sees Euterpe sitting next to her piano and watching a technicolor image of Robert's band playing.

As she touches the clear glass globe, a blissful smile fills the face of the piano player.

EXT. SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS - EVENING (TECHNICOLOR)

Robert (same age, same suit) is walking down East Houston Street with his guitar case. He's no longer in Mississippi.

Across the street, he sees the Gunter Hotel.

INT. GUNTER HOTEL

Robert wipes his brow with a handkerchief as he climbs the steps.

On the fourth floor, he walks to room 414 and sees a red glow under the door. He knocks.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Robert sits in a chair in the middle of the room. A sound technician adjusts the microphone as the other one watches. Robert taps his foot and strums a few chords.

In the adjoining room, Devil paces as a technician prepares the recording equipment.

Devil enters the room. Robert stands.

DEVIL

I've heard all your songs. I
especially like Terraplane Blues.
The lyrics, the music -- that's the
future of Negro music. Let's start
with that one.

Robert nods. Devil winks, shakes his hand, and returns to the adjoining room.

Robert sits and strums the guitar. Something isn't right. He stands and walks around the room strumming his guitar.

He finds a spot where the acoustics work, then turns the chair around and sits facing the wall. One sound technician shrugs. The other moves the microphone.

Robert finishes tuning his guitar, then turns and nods. The sound technician gives a thumbs-up. Robert closes his eyes as an inspired smile fills his face.

ROBERT

(singing)

And I feel so lonesome, you hear me
when I moan. When I feel so
lonesome, you hear me when I moan.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Who been drivin' my Terraplane for
you since I been gone?

In corner, Robert imagines himself as a young boy playing guitar under the tree and watching blues men playing in the juke joints.

ROBERT

(singing)

I'd said I flash your lights, mama,
your horn won't even blow.
Somebody's been runnin' my
batteries down on this machine. I
even flash my lights, mama, this
horn won't even blow. Got a short
in this connection, well babe, it's
way down below.

Robert imagines himself practicing in the cemetery with Ike and being frustrated.

ROBERT

(singing)

I'm goin' heist your hood, mama,
I'm bound to check your oil. I'm
goin' heist your hood, mama, mmm,
I'm bound to check your oil. I got
a woman that I'm lovin', way down
in Arkansas.

Robert imagines himself playing in the local bars with limited success.

ROBERT

(singing)

Now, you know the coils ain't even
buzzin', little generator won't get
the spark. Motor's in a bad
condition, you gotta have these
batteries charged. But I'm cryin',
please, please don't do me wrong.
Who been drivin' my Terraplane now
for you since I been gone.

Robert imagines the deal with the Devil at the crossroad (a more romantic version of the event) and his first successful gig at the bar.

ROBERT

(singing)

Mr. highway man, please don't block
the road. Please, please don't
block the road. 'Cause she's
reachin' a cold one hundred and I'm

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)
booked and I got to go. Mmmm. You,
you hear me weep and moan. Who been
drivin' my Terraplane now for you
since I been gone?

Roberts imagines himself in a large concert hall with a large band and screaming fans. The front row is filled with beautiful women admiring him.

ROBERT
(singing)
I'm gon' get deep down in this
connection, keep on tanglin' with
your wires. I'm gon' get deep down
in this connection, oh well, keep
on tanglin' with these wires. And
when I mash down on your little
starter, then your spark plug will
give me fire.

As Robert strums the last chord, he see an image of Virginia. He blinks and stands, nervous, his heart pounding.

Devil and the sound technicians enter from the adjoining room offering a round of applause.

ROBERT
I was thinking we could record a
few numbers with the band.

DEVIL
You're a star. You're going to be
rich. Don't worry about them.

Devil hands him an envelope with cash. Robert fingers the contents and smiles.

Devil leads him to a table and pours two drinks. They toast and drink.

DEVIL
Tell you what. We'll record a few
more songs, and then we'll go to a
party.

They pour another drink.

DEVIL
These folks got money, to include
lots of white women just aching to
meet a blues man like you. What do
you think?

Robert smiles and offers a firm handshake.

INT. MUSE PALACE LIBRARY - EVENING (TECHNICOLOR)

Nepenthe is lounging in a marble couch reading a book by torchlight and sipping a chalice of ambrosia.

He finishes the book, closes it with a confused look, and returns it to the shelf.

Librarian arrives and gives him a curious look.

LIBRARIAN

What are you reading?

NEPENTHE

The history of the Muses. It's very interesting, but it's not clear how I fit in.

Librarian gestures to the marble couch. They sit.

LIBRARIAN

The mortal version of our story has changed over time. At one point, the mortals believed in only three Muses. They eventually arrived at the story of nine Muses, which is why we have nine Muses now.

NEPENTHE

Wait, I'm confused. Are you saying we exist because of the mortals? Did the mortals create me or did my parents?

Librarian pauses to think about it.

LIBRARIAN

Both. This is a mystery that most of us in this palace do not want to accept.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. MOUNT ELIKONAS, ANCIENT TIMES

Zeus eyes Mnemosyne below in the valley and flies to her. They embrace and kiss.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)

This palace was built on top of what used to be the palace of Zeus, which are the catacombs you visited. Zeus and Mnemosyne, which
(MORE)

LIBRARIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 means memory, slept together for
 nine nights in those catacombs,
 which resulted in the births of the
 nine Muses.

Mnemosyne and her nine daughters are playing at the foot of
 Mount Olympus.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)
 They were born in Pieria, at the
 foot of Mount Olympus. They were
 brought to live here at Mount
 Elikonus, where a new palace was
 built and they were tutored by the
 Apollo in the fine arts and other
 intellectual pursuits.

In the Muse palace, the Muses study under Apollo. At the foot
 of the mountain, worshippers and artists offer libations of
 milk, honey, and water.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)
 Throughout history, the greatest
 artists and thinkers of the mortals
 paid their respects to the Muses.
 In return, the Muses inspired them
 to create the greatest artistic and
 intellectual achievements of
 history.

In modern mega-cities, secular, materialistic mortals worship
 money and sensual pleasure. The Muses are watching below from
 their marble thrones, bored.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)
 These days, most mortals ignore the
 Muses. Atheists do not believe in
 the spiritual world, and religious
 people ignore the pagan gods. And
 yet, they only have to look within
 and listen carefully to know that
 the Muses exist.

BACK TO PRESENT

Librarian sighs and frowns.

NEPENTHE
 What about me?

LIBRARIAN
 What about you?

NEPENTHE

How do I fit into the story? Mom and Dad go over two thousand years without having a child and then -- boom -- here I am? I don't look like my sisters. I don't act like my sisters. And I wasn't taught by Apollo.

Librarian nods knowingly.

NEPENTHE

I was taught by the other god who wears the hooded robe. I never got his name but he drinks a lot of wine and can really sing and play the guitar.

Librarian nods knowingly.

LIBRARIAN

Now that you mention it, the music you play doesn't sound like the music taught by Apollo.

NEPENTHE

Is it possible I'm adopted?

LIBRARIAN

I was here the day you were born. Mnemosyne is your mother.

NEPENTHE

And Zeus?

LIBRARIAN

You still don't know?

INT. INSPIRATION CHAMBER

Nepenthe conjures a technicolor image of Robert getting ready for his recording session in San Antonio.

Nepenthe touches the clear glass globe as Robert begins playing. Robert closes his eyes as an inspired smile fills his face.

He stops and walks over to the mirror.

NEPENTHE

Who am I?

He takes a deep breath and stares.

EXT. BEALE ST., MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE - AFTERNOON (TECHNICOLOR)

Robert (same age, same suit) exits a bus with his guitar.

He walks down Beale Street. He is amazed to hear so much music blasting from the bars.

While walking, music from one bar grabs his attention. He stops to enter, but a bouncer stops him -- whites only.

Robert stands close to the door to listen, hypnotized.

ROBERT

I'll be damned -- that's Arthur
Crudup.

ELVIS (O.S.)

(singing)

I'm leaving town, baby. I'm leaving
town for sure. Well, then you won't
be bothered with me hanging 'round
your door. Well, that's all right,
that's all right. That's all right
now mama, anyway you do.

Guitar and string bass.

ELVIS (O.S.)

(singing)

That's all right, that's all right.
That's all right now mama, anyway
you do.

The song ends, followed by applause. Elvis and his band members exit and walk down the street.

Robert ignores them and moves closer to the door.

ROBERT

Arthur, it's Robert! How the hell
you been? Robert!

The bouncer looks at him.

BOUNCER

Who you talking to?

ROBERT

Arthur Crudup. That's his song --
That's All Right.

The bouncer points to Elvis and his two band members walking down the street.

BOUNCER
That was Elvis.

Robert turns to look and points incredulously.

ROBERT
The white boy?

The bouncer nods.

INT. RECORD STUDIO

Robert and Elvis are sitting in the waiting room. Robert strums his guitar to imitate Elvis, but keeps slipping back into classic delta blues.

The cute secretary watches them and smiles.

ROBERT
You call it rock 'n' roll?

Elvis nods and watches Robert's fingering, then pulls out his guitar to play along with him.

ELVIS
How about that -- classic delta blues. Right on.

Robert stops. They shake hands.

ROBERT
Robert Johnson at your service.

Elvis laughs (really?) and continues playing. The secretary receives a call and turns to Robert.

SECRETARY
Mr. Johnson, he will see you now.

Robert plays a classic delta blues riff and winks. Elvis' jaw hits the floor.

INT. OFFICE

Robert sits. Devil turns and forces a smile.

DEVIL
Welcome to Memphis.

ROBERT
Thank you for seeing me. As you know, we sold a few records, but
(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)
 we ain't made it big. I was
 thinking we could record something
 here for a bigger audience.

Devil drums his fingers and rubs his chin.

DEVIL
 I'm not sure we can sell Negro
 music -- a black artist, that is --
 to a white audience.

Robert nods, frustrated, thinking what to say next. They're interrupted by Elvis playing for the secretary.

ELVIS (O.S.)
 (singing)
 Well, since my baby left me. Well,
 I found a new place to dwell. Well,
 it's down at the end of lonely
 street at Heartbreak Hotel.

Devil's eyes light up. He stands to see Elvis playing.

ELVIS (O.S.)
 (singing)
 Well, I'll be, I'll be so lonely
 baby . Well, I'm so lonely. I'll be
 so lonely, I could die.

Devil walks to the door.

DEVIL
 That's it. Keep playing.

Robert sits alone and closes his eyes in disappointment.

ELVIS (O.S.)
 (singing)
 Oh, although it's always crowded,
 you still can find some room, for
 broken hearted lovers to cry there
 in their gloom.

DEVIL
 Stop. Do you have a recording
 contract?

ELVIS (O.S.)
 No, sir.

Devil leads Elvis into the office.

DEVIL
 This is your lucky day.

INT. MUSE PALACE - EVENING (TECHNICOLOR)

The Muses are finishing another boring evening of sipping ambrosia and eating fruit in the throne chamber.

As they retire to their chambers, Nepenthe, Euterpe, Terpsichore, and Erato find sealed envelopes on their beds.

They open them and read the fine calligraphy, inviting them to "reinvent" music, signed by "D".

As the other six Muses sleep soundly, Nepenthe, Euterpe, Terpsichore, and Erato sleep with one eye open, watching the clock -- until it strikes 2:00, 2:05, 2:10, and 2:15.

As the four Muses sneak out in five minute intervals, they make their way to the library, where Librarian is waiting for them. All the Muses are surprised, except Nepenthe.

She instructs them to sit on the marble bench and lean back. It rotates 180 degrees to reveal the catacombs. To the left, torches lead the way to an old chamber.

The old chamber, with cracked marble and broken statues, has a guitar and a piano on a small stage. There is also a window with a view of the valley below.

The Muses arrive one at a time -- Nepenthe, Terpsichore, Erato, and, finally Euterpe, who reveals her invitation.

EUTERPE

What's going on? Who is D?

The other Muses look at each other, shrug, and reveal their invitations.

TERPSICHORE

It looks like someone wants us to play music together.

EUTERPE

I'll have you know that I don't like that silly blues music and would never play--

The door slams shut. The Muses turn to see the mystery god with the hooded robe.

EUTERPE

Who are you, and what is this all about?

Nepenthe rushes over to hug him, followed by a fist bump.

The god gestures for them to have a seat.

The god walks past each Muse to caress her cheek, less Nepenthe. He stops at Euterpe.

HOODED GOD

You say you'll never play the silly blues, yet here you are.

EUTERPE

Who are you?

The god removes a dust cloth from a marble table to reveal five ceramic chalices and a skin of wine. He fills the five chalices and hands one to each Muse.

He pulls up a chair and sits. As he reaches for his hood -- the Muses are awestruck -- a glow escapes as he reveals his handsome face.

Terpsichore and Erato touch their hearts and bite their lips. The Muses taste the wine and love it.

DIONYSUS

I'm Dionysus, son of Zeus and Semele, and brother of Apollo. To some people (raises his chalice), I'm the god of wine.

He chugs his wine and fills his chalice again.

NEPENTHE

(to Euterpe)

That's who taught me the blues. I told you Apollo wasn't my tutor.

DIONYSUS

(to Nepenthe)

A fine student indeed -- so full of passion!

Euterpe folds her arms.

EUTERPE

I'm a student of Apollo and the Pythagorean musical scales.

Dionysus stands, grabs the guitar, and gives Euterpe a shoulder massage as he walks behind her. Her eyes flutter as she moans with delight. Terpsichore and Erato laugh.

DIONYSUS

And yet we know you've been inspiring blues pianists.

Euterpe glares at Nepenthe.

EUTERPE
Have you been spying on me?

Nepenthe raises his hands defensively.

DIONYSUS
(to Euterpe)
I admire your work.

TERPSICHORE
Why are we here, Dionysus?

Dionysus rips some rock 'n' roll on the guitar. Even Euterpe can't hold back a smile.

DIONYSUS
We're here to rock the world.

He drinks his wine.

DIONYSUS
Zeus, Dad, brought me here to shake things up. I love Apollo like a brother -- he's my brother -- but the masses of mortals aren't inspired by his Pythagorean notes.

He plays some blues rock 'n' roll.

DIONYSUS
You were probably never taught this but our two worlds, gods and mortals, feed off each other. They need us and we need them. And sometimes, where something is done is just as important as how it is done. That's why we're here in the catacombs: it represents a more primal stage of our development, something Apollo ignores.

He drinks his wine.

DIONYSUS
If you want to inspire the mortals to play this new music, you have to learn how to play it yourself. Who's in?

Nepenthe, Terpsichore, and Erato raise their hands.

Euterpe looks at Dionysus. He winks. She smiles.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO, NEW YORK CITY - EVENING (TECHNICOLOR)

Robert (same age, same suit) is sitting in the waiting room with 1970s decor.

The secretary answers the phone as people come and go. Robert shakes his head in anger and approaches her.

ROBERT
He knows I'm waiting?

SECRETARY
Yes, Mr. Johnson.

Robert sits as more people enter and leave. Finally, Devil exits checking his watch. Robert stands.

ROBERT
Look here. I got no fame. I got no fortune. I want out.

Devil gestures to follow him to his office.

Devil removes a file from the cabinet, slams it on the desk, and opens it to reveal the contract signed with blood.

DEVIL
That's a signed recording contract. I own your recordings, which means you have to pay me to play the songs for money.

ROBERT
What about our deal down at the crossroads? I sold you my soul for fame and fortune. I got neither.

Devil shakes the contract in Robert's face and files it in the cabinet.

DEVIL
This is the only contract we have.

Devil storms out of the office. Robert shrugs in confusion and grabs his guitar.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY

Robert is walking down the street, carrying his guitar with a smile and admiring the lights.

He stops outside Madison Square Garden, with a marquee sign for the Rolling Stones.

He sets his guitar down, opens the case, and starts playing.

Pot smoking ruffians enter the stadium flashing the Satanic sign with their hands.

Robert nods politely and smiles as some passersby throw some coins into his guitar case on the street.

Robert plays the opening to Love in Vain.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

The crowd cheers for the Rolling Stones.

MICK JAGGER

(singing)

When the train, it left the
station, with two lights on behind.
When the train, it left the
station, with two lights on behind.
Well, the blue light was my blue,
and the red light was my mind.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK

Robert ends the song with a bow, followed by applause inside the stadium.

ROBERT

(singing)

All my love's in vain.

Time laps as the marquee shows Eric Clapton.

Robert tips his hat and smiles as coins and dollar bills fill his open guitar case.

Robert plays the opening to Crossroad Blues. More people crowd around to watch.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

The crowd cheers for Eric Clapton.

ERIC CLAPTON

(singing)

I went to the crossroad, fell down
on my knees. I went to the
crossroad, fell down on my knees.
Asked the Lord above, have mercy,
save poor Bob, if you please.

EXT. STREETS OF NEW YORK

ROBERT

(singing)

You can run, you can run, tell my
friend-boy Willie Brown, Lord, that
I'm standin' at the crossroad, babe
I believe I'm sinkin' down.

Robert ends the song with a bow and tips his hat, followed by
applause inside the stadium.

As he starts a new song, four ruffians get thrown out of the
concert -- no tickets.

As they laugh and run away, they stop to watch -- the Red Hot
Chilli Peppers as teenagers.

ANTHONY

Hey, look, a Robert Johnson
impersonator.

FLEA

Sounds pretty good. Play something
cool, dude.

Robert starts playing They're Red Hot.

ROBERT

(singing)

Hot tamales and they're red hot,
yes she got'em for sale. Hot
tamales and they're red hot, yes
she gote'm for sale. I got a girl,
say she long and tall. She sleeps
in the kitchen with her feet in the
hall.

Anthony and Flea give high-fives and howl.

ANTHONY

That's it -- Red Hot!

The four run down the street laughing.

Robert stops playing and leans over to gather the money. The
police arrive and seize the guitar case.

Devil arrives, smoking a cigar with a grin.

DEVIL

We have a contract.

The police give Robert about 10% of the stash.

INT. CATACOMBS - NIGHT (TECHNICOLOR)

Dionysus, Nepenthe, Euterpe, Terpsichore, and Erato are sipping wine by candlelight with a makeshift stage of rock 'n' roll equipment: electric guitar, bass guitar, and drums.

DIONYSUS

The blues have given way to rock
'n' roll, so if we want to stay
relevant, we have to rock. Erato,
you got the lyrics?

Erato nods and hands him a scroll written with calligraphy. He reads the lyrics and nods.

DIONYSUS

Let's do this.

Nepenthe grabs the electric guitar, Euterpe grabs the bass guitar, Terpsichore sits at the drums, and Erato takes the back-up microphone.

Dionysus points to Nepenthe, who starts playing Van Halen's "You Really Got me."

Dionysus chugs his wine and removes his robe to reveal his divine chest. The ladies smile and blush.

DIONYSUS

(singing)

Girl, you really got me now. You
got me so I don't know what I'm
doin'. Girl, you really got me now,
you got me so I can't sleep at
night.

Drum riff, with a point and a wink from Dionysus.

DIONYSUS

(singing)

Girl, you really got me now. You
got me so I don't know where I'm
goin' yeah. Oh yeah, you really got
me now. You got me so I can't sleep
at night.

ERATO

(singing)

You really got me. You really got
me. You really got me.

As Nepenthe kicks a guitar solo, the door slams open.

They stop and turn to look.

Apollo enters, followed by Calliope, Clio, Melpomene, Polyhymnia, Thalia, and Urania.

CALLIOPE

I knew it. You're all in very big trouble.

Dionysus fills two ceramic chalices with wine.

DIONYSUS

Calliope, you were always Daddy's little girl.

Dionysus hands a chalice to Apollo and slaps him on the back.

DIONYSUS

We better take a seat. This is about to get interesting.

Dionysus and Apollo sit.

CALLIOPE

You're not allowed to break the rules. There's one muse for each art, and you are not allowed to visit the catacombs.

Clio looks around the chamber, curious.

CLIO

Wait. This used to be Zeus' palace.

Dionysus and Apollo nod and sip their wine. Clio admires the artifacts and fills a ceramic chalice with wine. She looks down at the valley below as she sips her wine.

CLIO

This is where Daddy first saw Mother, from this chamber. This is where we were born.

Clio joins Nepenthe, Euterpe, Terpsichore, and Erato.

CALLIOPE

Don't you dare join them!

Dionysus and Apollo chuckle and sip their wine.

CALLIOPE

Everyone knows I'm the most important Muse. I demand that you listen to me!

Zeus and Mnemosyne enter. The room falls silent.

ZEUS

What's going on here?

Dionysus walks over and bows respectfully to Zeus.

DIONYSUS

(to Zeus)

Father, I was helping the Muses
play some music from the heart, as
you requested.

Mnemosyne looks around and touches her heart.

MNEMOSYNE

Zeus, is this where we spent those
nine wonderful nine nights?

Zeus nods and winks.

ZEUS

Girls, you may not know this, but
this room used to be my palace.
Your mother and I -- this is where
I first saw your mother.

Apollo leans closer to Dionysus -- fist bump.

APOLLO

Nice touch, brother.

MNEMOSYNE

Your father and I invited Dionysus
here to teach Nepenthe a new style
of music. This fighting and tension
is the best thing to happen to us
in years. Thanks to Nepenthe--

They turn to see that Nepenthe is gone, as the image
transitions from technicolor to black and white.

INT. CATACOMBS

Nepenthe runs down the steps into the dark cave below. He
stops at the warrior with a sword and gestures.

NEPENTHE

(rolls his eyes)

I order you to step aside.

Nepenthe opens the door, runs to the end of the tunnel, and
climbs the ladder to the top.

He heaves the marble aside to see the HD color cemetery.

INT. BUS, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE - DAY (TECHNICOLOR)

Robert (same age, same suit) looks out the window.

EXT. MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

As he exits the bus, we transition to modern Memphis (HD color).

Robert stops to admire the scene, unable to process all the changes -- the cars, the buildings, the people.

While walking down Union Avenue, he stops at Sun Studio.

INT. SUN STUDIO

A young employee with long hair and a T-shirt approaches and looks him up and down.

EMPLOYEE

If you're here for a tour, that
will be \$12.

Robert gestures to his guitar.

ROBERT

Actually, I was hoping to record
some music. You see--

EMPLOYEE

I'm sorry. We no longer sign new
acts. You'll have to--

The manager arrives, admiring Robert's appearance.

MANAGER

Can we help you?

ROBERT

My name is Robert Johnson. I'm
making my way back to Martinsville,
and was hoping to record a few
songs to make some money.

Manager nudges Employee with a wink.

MANAGER

I get it: goin' to the crossroads
to make a deal with the Devil.

ROBERT

Already did that once.

Manager and Employee look at each other and smile. Robert keeps a strait face.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO

Robert strums the final chord of a song, wakes from his reverie, and smiles.

Manager and Employee take a deep breath and clap.

MANAGER

That's the best Robert Johnson impersonation we've seen.

Manager and Employee look at each other and nod.

ROBERT

I, ah, don't follow.

MANAGER

I'm sure a lot of local bars and restaurants would love to have you, and pay pretty good.

EMPLOYEE

Elvis impersonators are everywhere, but not Robert Johnson.

Manager hands him \$20 and walks him to the front door.

MANAGER

Thanks for coming. Good fun.

ROBERT

I don't understand.

Manager closes the door and waves.

Robert walks to Beale Street, stops in front of a bar, sets his guitar down, and start playing.

Some tourists stop and point, to include some provocatively dressed women that grab his attention.

As he prepares to sing, a policeman taps him on the shoulder.

POLICEMAN

Do you have a permit?

Robert checks his pockets.

ROBERT

No, officer. I was just--

Policeman shakes his head and gestures for him to leave.

POLICEMAN

Off you go. All impersonators need
a permit to play on the streets.

ROBERT

Impersonator? I don't understand.

Robert walks down the street, stops at the bus station, and
slaps down his \$20 bill.

INT. BUS

Robert watches the scenery from Memphis to Martinsville,
surprised by the changes.

The bus arrives and stops.

EXT. MARTINSVILLE

Robert looks around in all directions.

A young woman stops to offer help.

WOMAN

Can I help you?

ROBERT

My name is Robert Johnson. I was
born here.

WOMAN

Like the blues musician?

ROBERT

That's right. I'm looking for
Virginia Travis.

The woman shrugs -- never heard of her.

ROBERT

She used to live close to the
cemetery where old Ike used to play
the blues.

The woman nods knowingly and points down the road.

Robert walks down the road. The house where Virginia had
lived has been torn down.

Robert enters the cemetery, sits on a tombstone, and plays.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY (HD COLOR)

Nepenthe (black and white) heaves the marble tomb marker aside, climbs up to the cemetery, and dusts himself off.

Nepenthe hears Robert playing and walks over to listen.

Robert (same age, same suit) finishes the song and opens his eyes to see Nepenthe clapping politely.

NEPENTHE

That was beautiful.

Nepenthe gestures to his skin.

NEPENTHE

Don't be afraid because I'm in
black and white.

NEPENTHE

What you mean "in black and white"?
You sayin' I'm in color?

They enjoy a laugh.

ROBERT

I never thought I'd see you again.

Nepenthe has a confused look.

NEPENTHE

I never thought I'd see you again.
Didn't you, you know--

ROBERT

Left town, that's right. Done got
me a recording contract and now see
that people all around this country
are playin' my music.

Nepenthe reflects on how to raise the topic delicately.

NEPENTHE

The last time we saw each other,
you were practicing here every
night with Ike.

Robert smiles and strums a riff.

ROBERT

Ike done taught me a lot, but it
wasn't enough.

Nepenthe gestures for more.

ROBERT

I went to the crossroads that night
and made a deal with the Devil,
'cept that didn't bring me no fame
and fortune.

NEPENTHE

I remember those times. I talked to
Ike about some of the problems you
were having with the guitar.

Robert nods knowingly.

NEPENTHE

Which is why I told you to go into
the wilderness and practice for 40
days and nights.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. CROSSROADS (B&W)

Robert stares at him with fear and confusion.

ROBERT

What should I do?

DEVIL

Ah, give me your guitar.

Robert hands him the guitar. Devil tunes the individual
strings, strums some chords, and hands it back to him.

Robert strums some chords.

ROBERT

Now what?

DEVIL

Now you should go into the
wilderness and practice for 40 days
and nights.

ROBERT

That's it?

Flames shoot up from the ditch.

DEVIL

You dare question the devil?

Devil reaches down and touches Robert's head. Robert faints
and collapses to the ground.

BACK TO PRESENT

Robert squints and looks at Nepenthe.

ROBERT

That was you at the crossroads?

Nepenthe nods.

NEPENTHE

Ike and I thought it was the only way to convince you to practice. Inspiration and the Devil can't make you a great blues man.

ROBERT

So if I didn't make no deal with the Devil, that means I didn't give him my soul?

Nepenthe nods knowingly, then gets serious.

NEPENTHE

Do you remember the night of your first show? When you started the second song, you collapsed.

Robert jogs his memory. Nepenthe is about to continue then looks up and stops.

Robert senses someone behind him and turns to look.

Virginia (old), holding flowers, sets the flowers at the base of the tombstone and walks around.

VIRGINIA

Robert?

Robert stands and hugs her.

ROBERT

Virginia.

Virginia steps back and wipes her tears, with a wave to Nepenthe.

VIRGINIA

But how?

Robert shrugs and gestures into town. Virginia nods and leads the way.

The other side of the tombstone reads: Robert L. Johnson, May 8, 1911 - August 16, 1938.

EXT. MARTINSVILLE - DAY (HD COLOR)

Robert, Nepenthe, and Virginia walk into town. Robert looks around in amazement.

ROBERT

I just can't get over how much this town has changed. Look at the cars, the buildings.

Nepenthe and Virginia look at each other with concern.

Robert stops and stares -- the Robert Johnson museum.

ROBERT

Well I'll be. (smiles) They done built me a museum! I bet they'll be excited to see me!

Robert hustles to the museum.

VIRGINIA

Robert, wait.

Nepenthe and Virginia catch up to him.

INT. MUSEUM

Robert is playing a song before a small group of tourists, with a glimmer in his eye as he admires Virginia.

ROBERT

(singing)

When the train, it left the station, there was two lights on behind. When the train, it left the station, there was two lights on behind. Well, the blue light was my baby, and the red light was my mind. All my love's in vain.

Robert plays the guitar and closes his eyes.

ROBERT

(signing)

Uumh, Willie Mae, Uumh, Willie Mae, Uumh uumh, all my love's in vain.

Robert plays the last notes and opens his eyes.

Nepenthe and the audience claps. Virginia wipes her tears. Curator is speechless.

A tourist raises his hand.

TOURIST

That was amazing. Love in Vain --
my favorite Robert Johnson song.
Your fingering was impeccable. As I
recall, he played that song the
night he--

Nepenthe stands and steps forward.

NEPENTHE

It's a classic. Thanks for coming.

ROBERT

I'm really honored you made this
museum for me. I've been playing
all these years and never knew
about it.

The tourists and Curator are confused as they file out of the
room. Robert waves and smiles.

Robert admires the photographs and artifacts. Nepenthe and
Virginia cover up references to his death.

Curator returns with Manager. They shake hands. Manager
cannot believe the resemblance.

CURATOR

That was amazing, Mr.?

They shake hands.

ROBERT

Johnson, Robert Johnson.

Manager smiles and turns to Curator.

MANAGER

I'm sorry, but I don't see that we
had you on our schedule. Did we
negotiate a price?

Robert shrugs with confusion.

ROBERT

I'm more than happy to play for my
fans. I notice you don't sell my
records here. You could make some
good money.

Curator and Manager loot at each other.

MANAGER

Original Robert Johnson recordings
are hard to find.

Robert reaches into his guitar case and hands him a mint
condition record.

Manager cannot believe his eyes. Curator dons glasses to
inspect it.

CURATOR

This is a first edition Terraplane
Blues. Could we listen to this once
before we put in on display?

ROBERT

Of course.

MANAGER

This will be a significant addition
to our collection.

ROBERT

If you want, I could call my
producer. I'm sure he could use the
original recordings to make more.

Curator chuckles.

CURATOR

Original recordings. Can you
imagine?

Manager hands him a \$100 bill.

MANAGER

You could make a lot of money with
that act.

Robert is confused.

ROBERT

I recorded many songs, but I've
never made much money. Contract
issues.

Nepenthe shakes the hands of Curator and Manager.

NEPENTHE

First show's on the house. We'll be
in touch.

Nepenthe and Virginia escort Robert outside.

EXT. MARTINSVILLE - AFTERNOON (HD COLOR)

Robert, Nepenthe, and Virginia continue walking down the street. As they pass by "Crossroads Bar," Crossroad Blues by Eric Clapton is blasting.

ROBERT

This is too much. Y'all got museums
and bars named after me!

Robert walks to the bar, followed by Nepenthe and Virginia.

INT. BAR

The bar turns silent and heads turn as Robert enters. He sees his poster on the wall -- same age, same suit. Below it are the words: "The Father of Rock 'N' Roll".

ROBERT

I'll be damned -- father of rock
'n' roll. I always thought of
myself as a blues man.

Robert looks at the other posters -- Elvis, Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin, others.

ROBERT

That's the kid I met in Memphis.

VIRGINIA

Elvis?

ROBERT

I got him his first recording
contract. (to Nepenthe) You're
gonna like this -- with the Devil.

The greeter approaches them and gives them a table near the stage, where a band is getting ready to play.

NEPENTHE

(to the waiter)

Three beers. (to Robert and
Virginia) As I said, you didn't
make a deal with the Devil. That
was me at the crossroads.

ROBERT

I'm talking about my record deal.
He tricked me -- said he was there
at the crossroads, so I gave him
the rights to my music.

NEPENTHE

He told you he was the Devil?
(finger horns) The Devil?

ROBERT

Scary guy with red eyes.

VIRGINIA

Wait a minute, the night you left
my house, you didn't make a deal
with the Devil?

ROBERT

(gestures to Nepenthe)
It was this guy. Though, I believed
in my heart I was making a deal
with the Devil.

VIRGINIA

And you've been wondering the
streets ever since, wearing this
same suit?

Nepenthe looks at Virginia with confusion. She gestures for
him not to worry about it. The beers arrive.

NEPENTHE

The Devil has your original
recordings?

ROBERT

All 29 songs and 41 tracks.

Nepenthe and Virginia look at each other.

NEPENTHE

When did you record the songs?

ROBERT

Right after my big show. Problem
is, he got the copyright or
something like that.

VIRGINIA

But copyrights expire after--

NEPENTHE

How can we find him?

Robert reaches into his suit pocket and removes a dusty old
business card.

NEPENTHE

I have an idea.

Curator and Manager from the Robert Johnson museum grab two stools at the bar and wave as the sun goes down.

The band finishes tuning up. Curator and Manager wave the singer over. They talk and point at Robert. The singer turns to look -- impressed.

The singer nods and hops on the stage.

SINGER

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a big surprise for you in the Crossroads Bar tonight -- the one, the only, the king of delta blues and the father of rock 'n' roll -- Robert Johnson!

A light shines on Robert. Singer gestures for him get on stage. Nepenthe and Virginia encourage him.

Robert grabs his guitar and steps on stage. He sits on the stool near the microphone, plays a masterful blues riff, and tips his hat.

The crowd rises for a standing ovation. Robert glows (literally). The guitar falls through his hands.

The room falls silent. The guy controlling the stage lights shrugs. Robert stops glowing and picks up his guitar.

ROBERT

Sorry about that. You guys ever hear Sweet Home Chicago?

The band and the crowd laugh.

ROBERT

I'll take that as a yes.

More laughter as Robert begins the song. A smile fill his face as the band kicks in.

ROBERT

(singing)

Oh, baby don't you want to go. Oh, baby don't you want to go. Back to the land of California, to my sweet home Chicago.

Nepenthe and Virginia give Robert a thumbs-up. Robert smiles and winks.

People move toward the stage to dance. Nepenthe stands and leads Virginia to the dance floor.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - MORNING (HD COLOR)

Virginia, son, grandson, Nepenthe, and lawyer arrive in the parking lot and are swarmed by the press.

Uniformed members of the Sheriff Department come to their rescue and clear a path to the courthouse stairs.

As they enter the courthouse, a limousine parks in front of the courthouse. Lawyers with nice suits file out, followed by Devil, who puts on sunglasses.

INT. COURTROOM

The courtroom is hot, with fans blowing.

Lawyer approaches the witness in the stand. He gestures to Virginia, son, and grandson. Nepenthe is watching carefully and scribbling notes.

LAWYER

The plaintiff's son and grandson submitted DNA samples to you for testing, is that true?

WITNESS

Yes.

LAWYER

And what were the results of the DNA test?

WITNESS

The tests showed with over 99% certainty that they are the biological descendents of Robert Johnson.

There's a rumble. The judge slams the gavel.

DEVIL'S LAWYER

Objection, your Honor -- relevance.

LAWYER

Your Honor, by proving the biological link to Robert Johnson, we are demonstrating that they are the legitimate owners of the rights to his music.

DEVIL'S LAWYER

Which would be relevant if Mr. Robert Johnson had not signed a
(MORE)

DEVIL'S LAWYER (CONT'D)
contract with my client. This case
is about whether or not my client's
contract is valid.

JUDGE
Sustained.

Virginia, son, grandson, lawyer, and Nepenthe groan. Devil
and his team of lawyers smile.

LAWYER
Your Honor, we request a recess.

Judge slams the gavel.

INT. BATHROOM

Nepenthe finishes up at the urinal and walks to the sink to
wash his hands as Devil combs his hair.

Devil knows he's not in the presence of a mortal.

DEVIL
How's the great Zeus?

NEPENTHE
Still ruling the heavens. So you
really have a contract?

Devil slaps his chest and stops combing his hair.

DEVIL
Signed and dated soon after his big
show. You have no case and you know
it. Very clever what you did at the
crossroads.

NEPENTHE
Just wanted to give him a push in
the right direction.

DEVIL
I don't own his soul, but I do own
his music, which is even better.

Devil slaps Nepenthe on the back, winks, and laughs as he
exits the bathroom.

INT. COURTROOM

Virginia takes the stand and sits. Lawyer approaches.

LAWYER

Ms. Travis, what was your relationship to Robert Johnson?

VIRGINIA

We lived together--

DEVIL'S LAWYER

Objection -- relevance.

JUDGE

Sustained.

Lawyer struggles to think of another question. Nepenthe glances at Virginia and Devil.

NEPENTHE

That's it!

Everyone on the courtroom turns to look at him. The judge slams the gavel.

Nepenthe waves Lawyer over, scribbles something on a piece of paper, and hands it to him.

Lawyer reads it, shrugs, and walks to Virginia.

LAWYER

Ms. Travis, when did the late Robert Johnson die?

VIRGINIA

August 16th, 1938.

Nepenthe smirks at Devil. Devil removes the contract from his inside breast pocket and looks at the date (after Robert's death). Devil groans. His lawyers lean closer to confer.

Nepenthe gestures for Lawyer to continue.

LAWYER

Your honor, motion to void Robert Johnson's contract.

The judge, surprised, turns to Devil and his team. Much to his surprise, Devil and the lawyers nod.

JUDGE

The contract is void. The rights to Robert Johnson's music are hereby transferred to his living son.

The judge slams the gavel.

EXT. MARTINSVILLE - DAY (HD COLOR)

Robert, Virginia, and Nepenthe are watching the final stage of construction on a large, beautiful home.

VIRGINIA

Robert, do you remember this place?

ROBERT

This is the same place where your old house was. I walked down that road there to make a deal with the Devil at the crossroads.

Virginia touches Nepenthe's arm.

VIRGINIA

Can you give us a moment.

Virginia takes Robert by the hand and leads him to the house.

VIRGINIA

Do you remember the night you went to the crossroads? I asked you to come in the house because I had something to tell you.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. HOUSE (B&W)

He opens the door and starts walking.

VIRGINIA

Wait, Robert. I got something to tell you.

He stops and turns. She gestures for him to enter the house. He shakes his head.

VIRGINIA

It's nothing.

He turns and walks. A tear rolls down her cheek. She touches her stomach and watches him disappear into the darkness.

BACK TO PRESENT

Virginia stops and looks at him.

VIRGINIA

You have a son.

Robert stares at her.

VIRGINIA

I wanted to tell you, but I knew I could never live with you if you made a deal with the Devil.

ROBERT

I never made a deal with the Devil.

VIRGINIA

I didn't know that then. And then after the big show you--

ROBERT

I what?

Virginia pauses at the front door and looks at him.

VIRGINIA

Do you notice anything different about me?

ROBERT

You look older. I guess I haven't aged much.

VIRGINIA

Perhaps it would be best if we don't tell them who you are, at least not just yet.

Robert nods.

INT. HOUSE

An immaculate house with a southern feel.

Virginia leads Robert upstairs to a recording studio. An older man and a young man are playing guitar.

They stop when they see Virginia and Robert. Robert III rushes over to the computer and clicks on iTunes.

ROBERT III

Look, grandma. The songs are selling like crazy. We'll soon be millionaires!

The download count for the original Robert Johnson recordings are going up by the second.

VIRGINIA
I'd like you to meet a friend.

The two look at Robert and the poster on the wall.

ROBERT III
He looks just like grandpa.

Robert is speechless as his heart pounds. Virginia gestures to the older man.

VIRGINIA
This is Robert Jr. And this is his
Robert III.

Robert tips his hat and shakes their hands, then hugs Virginia and wipes his tears.

Robert Jr. and Robert III sense something unusual.

ROBERT JR.
We're recording a new song.

Robert can't stop staring at his son and grandson.

VIRGINIA
Perhaps you can play some time.

ROBERT JR.
That would be cool.

Robert hugs them. His glow fills the room.

EXT. CEMETERY

Robert, Virginia, and Nepenthe are walking.

ROBERT
This is where I practiced with Ike,
and then there was the night you
arrived and scared us.

Virginia and Nepenthe laugh and look at the tombstone. Robert turns to see his name.

ROBERT
How about that. Guess I got my fame
and fortune after all.

He tugs his lapels, sits on the tombstone, and strums a chord as a tear rolls down his cheek.

Virginia blows him a kiss. He glows and fades away.

INT. CATACOMBS - EVENING (B&W)

Nepenthe slides the marble tomb marker shut, descends the ladder, and starts the climb up to Muse palace.

Before entering Muse palace, he stops in Zeus' old palace in the catacombs. The place is a mess -- furniture tipped over, broken ceramic wine chalices on the floor.

At the entrance to the library, the marble couch that rotates 180 degrees is locked open with a steel rod.

INT. MUSE PALACE

Rock music echoes in the palace.

Nepenthe walks through the library. Some of the workers are burning books in a barrel to stay warm. Librarian is passed out in a chair holding a chalice of wine.

Nepenthe enters the messy throne chamber -- robes hanging on the marble thrones, jeweled chalices tipped over.

The doors to the 10 inspiration chambers are open. The clear glass globes are on with HD color images -- crowds of screaming fans flashing the Satan sign and smoking pot.

Nepenthe walks down the grand hall and passes by the dining room and personal chambers. No one is in sight, but the music gets louder, with some laughing.

Nepenthe enters the concert hall. The Muses are rocking out and partying with Dionysus.

Euterpe sees Nepenthe and rushes over to kiss him.

EUTERPE

There you are!

Dionysus waves, chugs some wine, and shreds a guitar solo. The other Muses are dancing and drinking wine.

Euterpe pulls him to the group and hands him a guitar. Nepenthe plays a few notes then stops.

NEPENTHE

(yells)

Stop!

The room falls silent.

NEPENTHE

This place is a mess; you're
ignoring your inspiration chambers;
and you're all drunk.

Calliope finishes her wine and laughs.

CALLIOPE

We're having fun!

Dionysus smirks and drinks his wine.

DIONYSUS

What can I say -- even Calliope is
having a good time!

Nepenthe grabs Dionysus by the arm and pulls him to the side.

NEPENTHE

Where's Zeus and Mnemosyne?

Dionysus points to Mnemosyne's chamber.

NEPENTHE

(to Dionysus)

Find Apollo.

Dionysus salutes dutifully and grabs Nepenthe's arm.

DIONYSUS

This is what happens when I arrive.
Zeus knew this would happen. This
is what I do.

NEPENTHE

Find Apollo.

Nepenthe storms off and knocks on Mnemosyne's door. He opens
the door to see Zeus and Mnemosyne under the sheets drinking
wine and laughing. He covers his eyes and turns.

ZEUS

Come in.

Nepenthe approaches and sits on the bed. Mnemosyne caresses
his cheek.

NEPENTHE

What's happening?

Zeus chugs his wine and belches.

ZEUS

I couldn't be happier, my son.

NEPENTHE

Have you seen the palace? It's a mess -- did you say son?

Zeus nods. Nepenthe leaps into Zeus' arms. Mnemosyne caresses his hair.

ZEUS

Only the son of Zeus could bring this family together and make the mortals worship me again.

NEPENTHE

I've been to the land of the mortals, father, but many mortals actually worship--

Mnemosyne glares at him. Zeus awaits the answer.

NEPENTHE

You, father. The mortals worship you. As they should.

Zeus hugs Nepenthe as Mnemosyne exhales with relief.

There's a knock at the door. Apollo enters.

NEPENTHE

(to Zeus and Mnemosyne)
I'll take care of this.

Nepenthe gets off the bed and leads Apollo out of the room to the concert hall.

Nepenthe gestures for Dionysus to join them. Apollo and Dionysus shake hands.

APOLLO

Once again, brother, what I take centuries to build, you tear down in days.

DIONYSUS

What can I say -- I cannot be denied. The Muses can party!

Dionysus and Apollo embrace. Dionysus waves and exits.

APOLLO

Ladies, party's over. (claps) Back to work!

The Muses stumble out of the concern hall.

EXT. MARTINSVILLE - EVENING (HD COLOR)

Five years later.

The paved roads are lined with beautiful homes and green grass. A tombstone for Virginia is next to Robert.

INT. HOUSE

The house is immaculate and decorated with memorabilia for Robert Johnson and his platinum records.

In the recording studio, Robert Jr. and Robert III are each playing a guitar with a full band -- drums, bass, horns, and keyboard.

The music is crisp but safe.

Robert Jr. gestures to the sound technician behind the glass. He stops the recording.

ROBERT JR.
That's a rap, boys.

The musicians exchange handshakes and high-fives.

As the other musicians file out, Robert III checks music sales on iTunes.

ROBERT III
Unbelievable.

Robert Jr. pulls up a chair and sits.

ROBERT III
Grandpa's songs are still selling like crazy, but nothing for us.

ROBERT JR.
It's not all about the sales.

ROBERT III
I know. It's just frustrating. Our music is crisp and flawless, yet no one buys it.

Robert Jr. slaps him on the shoulder and smiles.

INT. FAMILY ROOM

The Johnson family (wives, kids, cousins) is watching the MTV Music Awards on a massive big screen TV.

On the TV, we see obnoxious kids in the crowd and untalented musicians on the stage.

Fans are screaming for musicians who lack talent.

Musicians are dancing to electronic music and rapping.

Celebrities are making crude jokes and giving awards.

The wives arrive with a tray of drinks for everyone.

CHILD
Smoothies -- not again.

Robert III gives him the evil eye.

ROBERT III
Don't talk to your mother like
that. They're good for you.

Robert III sips his and forces a smile. Robert Jr. sips his and laughs.

ROBERT JR.
It's not like a cold beer would
taste good right now.

Then men laugh. The women snarl.

The doorbell rings. One of the boys rushes downstairs and returns with an invitation written in calligraphy. He hands it to Robert III.

Robert III reads it, and looks up?

ROBERT JR.
What is it?

Robert III hands it to Robert Jr.

ROBERT III
It's an invitation for a wine
festival. Should we go?

Robert Jr. and Robert III look at their wives. They give the evil eye then wave them off.

INT. BAR

Standing room only at "Crossroads Bar."

A rock band is playing Crossroad Blues by Robert Johnson.

Robert Jr. and Robert III meet and greet the locals.

They accept a glass of wine and grab a table by the stage.

Dionysus (human size) is rocking out on stage -- vocals and lead guitar.

ROBERT JR.

That white boy can rock.

ROBERT III

No kidding.

Dionysus finishes with a short solo. The crowd goes wild.

INT. BAR (CLOSING TIME)

The bar has cleared out. The bartender is wiping the bar and the waiters are sweeping the floor.

Dionysus, Robert Jr., and Robert III are on the back patio, each playing guitar.

Dionysus fills their glasses with wine and drinks the rest of the bottle. They laugh.

DIONYSUS

No, no, no, it's not like that. Dig deep, really deep. Like this.

Dionysus plays a riff. Robert Jr. and Robert III give it a try -- not bad. They give high fives.

DIONYSUS

That's the spirit!

Robert Jr. and Robert III take turns -- perfect.

DIONYSUS

Sounds like you two done made a deal with the Devil!

ROBERT III

We can try this with the new song.

Robert III tries again. Robert Jr. nods approvingly.

Dionysus looks up the stars. We see the constellations.

Fast track to the cemetery, into the tunnel, and into the Muse palace. Nepenthe, the nine Muses, Zeus, Mnemosyne, and Apollo are looking down through a clear glass globe, waving and smiling.