

HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN  
(SHORT)

Written by

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Inspired by, The Animals' 1964 Song

FADE IN:

**EXT. PARISH PRISON GATE, NEW ORLEANS, ESTABLISHING - DAYBREAK**

Sunlight struggles to break through dense, fast-shifting fog. An ornate thirty foot iron gate emerges from the ether.

**PARISH PRISON - NEW ORLEANS 1927**

Two FIGURES approach the gate from inside the prison yard.

JOHNNY "GOOD LUCK" JAMES, 20s, a real shark of a man, dressed in the finest threads of the time: fedora, pleated slacks, wife beater, loose bowtie, shirt slung over his shoulder.

JOHNNY

Butt me one, Army?

ARNOLD, 50s, prison guard, reaches into his pocket, shakes out a cigarette from an open pack. A bag in his other hand.

ARNOLD

Sure, Bo. Whatever you say.

Johnny takes it, pops it between his lips, nods. Arnold pockets the butts, pulls matches and fires one up. Johnny drags on the butt. It CRACKLES and SNAPS.

JOHNNY

Got the ole ball and chain?

ARNOLD

Sure you want it back? Supposed to mean something.

JOHNNY

It does, means I'm going home.

Arnold empties the bag into Johnny's hand, a gold band and a gold Rolex Marconi pocket watch. Johnny slips the band on his left ring finger. He studies the watch.

ARNOLD

Don't give it to the Butter And Egg  
Man, I don't care how much cabbage  
you lose, ya' hear?

Engraving reads, "After every sunset, the sun still rises."

Johnny nods, pockets the watch. Arnold unlocks the gate, it SQUEALS OPEN. Johnny nods back and heads down the road, disappearing into the mist.

**EXT. NEW ORLEANS, TOWN STREET - DAY**

Johnny walks up the steps of a small craftsman style bungalow, a dive that's seen better days. A sign reads:

**TAILOR MADE - ALTERATIONS AND DESIGNS**

The porch screen door slams open and a young WOMAN leaps into Johnny's arms, wrapping her legs around his waist. He spins her, locked in a passionate kiss-- he carries her inside.

**INT. JOHNNY'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - LATER**

BETTY JAMES, 20s, the face of a doll and the body of a pinup, lays half covered in a sheet-- basking in the afterglow.

Johnny reaches for his butts on the nightstand and lights one up. He heads into the shower. Betty watches him go.

BETTY

Headed out to the drum tonight?

(no response)

I wouldn't. Mary Jane said Billy Bob's been gunnin' for ya'.

She gets up, slips on a silk robe. She lights a butt, leaning back against the bathroom door frame.

BETTY

Says he's still sore with ya' 'bout last time. Wants to even the score.

(exhales)

You know the Butcher works for 'em, now, right? He's his new hatchet man, I heard the stories...

Johnny's grabs a towel from the rack. He opens the shower curtain, towel wrapped around his waist and steps out.

JOHNNY BOY

Can you spot me a few clams, doll?

BETTY

If I say, no?

JOHNNY BOY

You want me to go to the Butter And Egg Man?

BETTY

So you can get pinched an' end up in the cooler with a new set of bracelets? No, I don't.

(picks up purse)

(MORE)

BETTY (CONT'D)

I got a bad feeling in my gut,  
baby, like last time only worse.

JOHNNY

(kisses her)

Now don't you worry that pretty  
little head, none, if Billy Bob had  
a beef with me, he'd a done  
something while I's in the can.

BETTY

Less he wants to make it up close  
an personal-like.

JOHNNY

Nah, that's not his style, 'sides  
he's got bigger fish fry-- I heard  
he's bootleggin' as far north as  
Memphis. I'm small potatoes.

The candlestick telephone rings. She picks it up, speaking  
into the mouthpiece, holding the transmitter to her ear.

BETTY

Sure, Cha-lie, he's here. Just make  
sure you don't get my fella behind  
the eight ball, ya' hear? We got  
church on Sunday.

Betty hands the phone and transmitter to Johnny with a coy  
little smile. He takes it from her. Giving her a loving kiss.

JOHNNY

You make me dizzy.  
(into phone)  
Hey, Cha-lie, yeah, just got into  
town 'bout an 'our ago. You still  
got that ole jalopy?

**EXT. JOHN BOY'S HOUSE, FRONT PORCH - EARLY EVENING**

Johnny hops into Charlie's jalopy. Betty leans in through the  
window. Arms resting on the car window frame.

BETTY

You be careful, ya' hear, Cha-lie.  
I don't wanna hear no stories 'bout  
you being a sap, an' owing your  
first born or nothin' like that.

CHARLIE, 20s, pockmarked cherub dressed in knickers, an  
argyle vest and newsboy hat. His smile makes us smile back.

CHARLIE

Yes, ma'am.

BETTY

Now, I'ma gonna hold you to your word. You jus' remember, I know where yo' mama lives. And you, Mr. Johnny "Good luck" James...

(kisses him)

Before daylight, if you don't mind.

Johnny checks the time on his pocket watch. Snaps it shut.

JOHNNY

Yes, ma'am.

Betty crosses her arms and watches the car chug away.

**EXT. BACKWOODS COUNTRY ROAD, BAYOU - DUSK**

The jalopy passes the bayou as a blood-orange sun sinks behind a dark, silent swamp. The jalopy BACKFIRES, BAM!

A FLOCK OF BATS take flight.

Headlights hit a sign: HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

Charlie pulls around back. It's packed full of cars.

**INT. THE HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN, SPEAKEASY - NIGHT**

Charlie leads Johnny through the dark pharmacy to:

**BACK STAIRCASE**

He heads down the stairs, flicks on a flashlight.

JOHNNY

Where'd ya' get the torch?

CHARLIE

Won it in a game last Saturday night. You like it?

JOHNNY

It'd be dandy to get me one.

CHARLIE

Tonight's the night, Johnny. I feel it, it's gonna be a night to remember.

**DOWN THE HALLWAY**

A heavy wooden door awaits them. Charlie raps the lion's head knocker. A small peep door opens--

MUSCLE

Word?

CHARLIE

Clip joint.

The door creaks open revealing--

**PROHIBITION ERA SPEAKEASY**

Swanky and stylish. Velvet chairs and sofas, a lively craps table, bar and two poker tables.

ROSALIE, 20s, belts out a song on stage.

It's the roaring twenties and sexy FLAPPERS deliver drinks from the bar to a mix of PATRONS. Some with money to spare, some drowning their sorrows.

MUSCLEMEN deter any UPPITY TYPES thinking about flexing.

Johnny and Charlie post up at the bar. BARTENDER steps up.

BARTENDER

"Good luck" Johnny--  
(shakes his hand)  
Pick your poison.

JOHNNY

Two Old Foresters. We're feeling  
lucky tonight.  
(nods to Rosalie)  
Who's the canary?

Bartender chops ice with a pick. Drops two chunks into glasses and pours the drinks.

BARTENDER

Rosalie, a pro skirt. She'll cost ya'  
all your bank for a single night.  
That is, if Billy Bob lets ya'.

Johnny stares at Rosalie. She winks at him.

CHARLIE

She's Billy Bob's Moll. Great.  
(to Johnny)  
Don't go gettin' stuck on her.

JOHNNY

She's got a nice set of get away  
sticks. And the fire extinguisher?

THE BUTCHER, 30s, stands peeling an orange with a karambit. A curved blade designed to split a man open in a single swipe.

BARTENDER

That's The Butcher. He'll dry-gulch  
anyone who side-eyes Rosalie.

JOHNNY

Can we sit in on a few hands?

**POKER TABLE - SERIES OF SHOTS:**

-- BUTTER AND EGG MAN, a high roller, has stacks of chips before him. He plays opposite Johnny. Charlie's all smiles, in it for the fun, the chicks and the booze.

-- Flappers deliver a constant flow of liquor. The game gets serious. Charlie's out, flirting with Flappers. Music and drinks. Laughter and defeat as another player folds.

-- Johnny puffs on a cuban. His pile growing. He checks his pocket watch. Snaps it closed. Butter and Egg Man notices. Rosalie belts out another set. The Butcher watches Johnny.

-- A CROWD gathers around the poker table. Johnny slaps down a winning hand-- claims the huge pile, sweeping it to his side. The Crowd cheers.

-- Johnny wins another hand. More drinks. More cubans. Another PLAYER folds. Now it's The Butter And Egg Man and Johnny, and Johnny's pile is larger.

-- A Flapper steps up to Johnny with love and attention. Rosalie thwarts her efforts with a glance. The Flapper moves away quickly. Rosalie moves in, a panther to its kill.

Rosalie trails her hand across Johnny's shoulders.

ROSALIE

Now, ain't you a sheik fella.  
Lookin' for a Moll?

Johnny holds up his left hand thumbs his ring--

JOHNNY

If I wasn't hitched to a ball an'  
chain, we'd be watching the sun  
come up, doll.

She glances at his cards, discretely glances to the Butter And Egg Man. She gives Butter And Egg Man a look.

**ACROSS THE ROOM**

BILLY BOB, 40s, as tall as he is wide, steps into the room. The Butcher whispers to Billy Bob as he dead-eyes Johnny.

**AT THE POKER TABLE**

Charlie watches as Billy Bob and The Butcher head their way.

CHARLIE

Time to take a powder, Johnny.

The Butter And Egg Man shoves all his chips to the center.

BUTTER AND EGG MAN

All in.

Johnny shoves all his chips into the center. He checks his pocket watch. Snaps it closed.

JOHNNY

I call.

BUTTER AND EGG MAN

How 'bout you throw in that Marconi watch. It is a Rolex ain't it?

JOHNNY

Ain't up for grabs.

Rosalie leans down and gives Johnny a kiss on the cheek--

ROSALIE

Oh, what's that?

What's what? Rosalie reaches down under the table and produces a card.

ROSALIE

(innocently)

Looks like you lost a card, lover.

JOHNNY

Where'd you get that?

BUTTER AND EGG MAN

You a grifter? What kind of racket you runnin' here Billy Bob.

JOHNNY

No one calls me a cheat--



Johnny leaps over the table, clamping on his pipes, choking the life out of him. A brawl ensues. The Butcher pulls Johnny back, Musclemen hold back The Butter And Egg Man.

BUTTER AND EGG MAN

He owes me!

**EXT. BACKWOODS COUNTRY ROAD, BAYOU - TWILIGHT**

Musclemen hold Johnny upright, bloody and beaten. The Butcher stands beside Billy Bob who holds Johnny's pocket watch, checking the time. The Butter And Egg Man stands beside him.

JOHNNY

(emotional)

My wife gave me that.

BILLY BOB

(recites)

"After every sunset the sun still rises." Ya should'a stayed home tonight.

JOHNNY

What's it gonna be? Nevada gas?  
Lead poisoning? I ain't a cheat!

Billy Bob nods to The Butcher. He pulls his karambit and swipes across Johnny's gut-- clean through his clothes.

A SCREAM-- Johnny's eyes fill with tears as he stares at the horrified face of Betty collapsing to her knees, screaming hysterically as Musclemen hold her arms behind her.

BETTY

NO! No! Johnny! Please, Johnny--  
don't leave me, Johnny, please,  
please, baby, don't leave me...

As Johnny's dying body gives way, they release Betty-- she crawls to his side, cradling him in her arms-- she kisses him tenderly, chanting his name. He raises his eyes to meet hers--

JOHNNY

(a small smile)

You make me dizzy. The sun will  
still rise tomorrow, promise me--

BETTY

I promise, baby. I promise.

She kisses him as his final breath escapes him.