

The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas

ACT ONE

SCENE I

START

BANDLEADER. It was the nicest . . . little Whorehouse you ever saw. It lay about a mile down this old dirt road, and if you happened to stumble on it, you couldn't help but notice that the barns were painted and the fences were up and you might think to yourself 'why these folks would probably do to run the river with.'

(As the music begins the stage begins to come alive, as if in the memory of the SPEAKER. Ceiling fans in the upstairs rooms begin to turn and we are seeing a romanticized vision of the 1930's Chicken Ranch. A warm night in the Texas countryside. The director may adjust this scene to the space available but, generally, the following occurs:

THREE GIRLS appear in their rooms upstairs, check their makeup and adjust their assets. ONE comes downstairs, ready for the evening, looking for non-existent customers. Disappointed.)

BANDLEADER. *(Continued.)*

OH THE LITTLE HOUSE LAY
IN A GREEN TEXAS GLADE
WHERE THE TREES WERE AS COOLIN'
AS FRESH LEMONADE
THE SOFT SUMMER WIND
HAD A TRACE OF PERFUME
AND A FAN WAS TURNIN'
IN EVERY ROOM.

TWENTY FANS WERE TURNIN'
THEY WERE TURNIN'
TWENTY FANS WERE TURNIN'
IN EVERY ROOM
FEVERS WERE A BURNIN'

THEY WERE BURNIN'
AND THEY HAD TO HAVE
A WAY TO COOL DOWN.

(Meanwhile a FARMER, in coveralls, straw hat, carrying a burlap bag, enters, smiles gleefully, sneaks up on her and grabs her from behind in a playful embrace. SHE is spooked, but sees HE's a friend and THEY sit down together.)

BANDLEADER. *(Continued.)* Since the 1890's this has been one of the better pleasure palaces in all Texas. In fact, they say that some of our Lanville County boys celebrated here before going off to fight with Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill.

(A SHY KID gawks into the room, obviously for his first visit. HE is gazing around like a hick in the city, at the same time holding a wad of dollar bills. As his gaze lands on the FIRST GIRL and the FARMER his mouth drops open and his money floats to the floor. HE recovers and quickly falls to his knees and picks it up.

GIRL 2 has come down and appears behind SHY KID, scaring him. SHE calms him and sits with him, beginning work on him quietly.

GIRL 3 appears, looking provocative and holding a fan over her mouth, slinks by the farmer, who notices, but GIRL 1 grabs him and takes him up to her room. — UP CENTER. HE leans back at GIRL 3 but clutching his burlap bag.)

BANDLEADER. *(Continued.)* At first it was right on Main Street, up above the hardware store. But about 1915 some of the local Jesus bunch got on their high horses and the girls moved out of the city limits, just past the "Bad Curve" sign.

(MISS WULLA JEAN is pushed on in a wheel chair and makes a grand tour of the room, stopping to talk to GIRL 2. As SHE is distracted, GIRL 3 slips over and whispers something shocking, but not unpleasant to the shy kid. GIRL 2 turns back, catching her and tells her off in no uncertain terms. GIRL 4 retreats with her fan to the steps.)

BANDLEADER. *(Continued.)* It was during the Hoover depression that Miss Wulla Jean come along. She put in a set of rules



just a shade less rigid than the ten commandments. You see, Miss Willa Jean didn't appreciate perversions. So, she cut out all the exotic extras. But she did like for her ladies, as she called them, to treat her customers real nice.

(A TRAVELING SALESMAN rushes onto the stage and looks around hungrily. HE sees GIRL 3, looking beautiful and makes an approach. HE tells her a quick joke, SHE laughs, exposes her mouth. No teeth. HE grimaces. GIRL 4 is conveniently there to ask him to dance and HE goes with her.)

"20 FANS"

BANDLEADER. (Continued.)
 IT HAD NICE WATERMELONS
 ALL COVERED WITH VINES
 AND A VEGETABLE GARDEN
 A FEW SLENDER PINES
 WHITE PAINTED FENCE
 WITH THE ROSES IN BLOOM
 AND A FAN WAS TURNIN'
 IN EVERY ROOM.

She put a jukebox in the parlor to sorta help break the ice. A feller could ask a girl for a dance, or if he held back a little, she'd ask him. And pretty soon they'd get a little business on. Three dollars worth. You see, that was back in the old days . . . when Roosevelt nooky was cheaper than Carter coffee.

(SLICK DUDE enters. The SLICK DUDE swaggers into the Center of the room. HE sees himself as Rudolph Valentino, Marlon Brando, or probably Elvis since this is rural. HE looks around, focuses on GIRL 2, who is beside him. Does a sleight of hand and takes a cigarette from behind her ear. SHE giggles. HE strikes a kitchen match on his fly, lights up and holds the match for her to blow out. The SHY KID is watching and SLICK DUDE hands him the hot match, which HE takes, and reacts in pain as Slick Dude swaggers over to the juke box.)

BANDLEADER. (Continued.)
 WHEN THE SUN WOULD GO DOWN
 IN A WILD BLAZE OF LIGHT
 THEN THE LITTLE HOUSE LAY
 IN THE STILLNESS OF NIGHT

FIREFLIES WOULD FLICKER
AND FLOAT IN THE GLOOM
WHILE A FAN WAS TURNIN'
IN EVERY ROOM

(EVERYONE Onstage freezes. We hear the CHOIR in the distance and approaching. Then THEY appear, saint-like, in robes, as if THEY were in another part of town.)

CHOIR.

TWENTY FANS WERE TURNIN'
THEY WERE TURNIN'
TWENTY FANS WERE TURNIN'
IN EVERY ROOM
FEVERS WERE A BURNIN'
THEY WERE BURNIN'
AND THEY HAD TO HAVE
A WAY TO COOL DOWN.

(MISS WULLA JEAN sees GIRL 3 exposing her legs to the SHY KID and signals to be pushed over to confront and correct her. SHE shakes her cane at her and signals to be pushed Offstage.)

BANDLEADER. Miss Wulla Jean had a strict rule against competing for customers. And if she caught one of the girls flashing her wares a little more than she thought was ladylike, she raised nine kinds of hell. And she insisted that each girl check her customer real good for the clap and wash him off with soap and warm water. Some of the fellas claimed that was the best part.

(In the upstairs room behind venetian blinds, GIRL 1 is washing the FARMER's privates in a hand basin. His back is to the audience and He is wearing long johns as well as his straw hat. When SHE has finished her task, HE grabs her from behind.)

BANDLEADER. *(Continued.)* But you didn't have to worry about catchin' nothin' here like you did with them freelancin' girls down in Galveston.

(SHE pushes him away.)

END