Today blues from the source, as classical as a blues may be. Twelve-measure with three-versed lyrics. One of the most famous accomplishments of **Robert Johnson**, that is

I Believe I`ll Dust My Broom.

Johnson recorded it in November 1936 in San Antonio, Texas. It was his first of two recording sessions. The first song was ‘Kind Hearted Woman Blues’, and the second one was no other than ‘I believe I’ll Dust My Broom’, and a third one was ‘Sweet Home Chicago’. Johnson recorded in threes.

Similar like the case of 'Sweet Home Chicago' no one disputed Robert Johnson’s authorship. Yet Johnson borrowed much from Aaron and Milton Sparks who were nicknamed Pinetop and Lindberg respectively. Four years earlier, in 1932, they recorded an ‘I Believe I’ll Make A Change’ blues in Victor Records. The same blues was also recorded in 1934 by Leroy Carr.

I Believe I`ll Dust My Broom

‘I believe dusting the broom’ should be understood as an allegory of a ‘new beginning’ or a ‘beginning from scratch’. Johnson used the broom symbol to represent the woman that left him and that needs to be swept out of his life.

Robert Johnson

Robert Johnson's recording, as most of his songs apart from Terraplane Blues, did not become a hit during his lifetime. It was quickly forgotten after he died in 1938.

Eventually the blues was made famous by **Elmore James**. In 1948 James met Sonny Boy Williamson and Arthur ‘Big Boy’ Crudup with whom he played gigs in Arkansas. Crudup did perform his own version of ‘I Believe I'll Dust My Broom’ once and probably it was the moment when Elmore James heard the piece for the first time.

James worked out his own arrangement and introduced the whole blues as his own. He

shortened the name to **Dust My Broom**. In 1951 he recorded it for the first time in 'Trumpet Records' owned by Lillian McMurry. Trumpet was located in Jackson – the only meaningful label in the Mississippi Delta. The recording featured Sonny Boy Williamson (harmonica) and Odie Johnson (contrabass).

Luckily for James mrs. McMurry didn't know about Robert Johnson's recording. Luckily, because she cultivated a policy of accepting fresh and original pieces only.

A bit of gossip says that Big Boy Crudup recorded at hers in 1952 his first version under the nickname Elmer James (similarity is not accidental I think). It looks like Lillian must have found out from Crudup a thing or two about the truth.

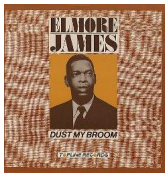
Elmore James

Elmore James did one terrific thing. He developed a theme, that Johnson only signalized, into a great guitar riff that commenced the piece. The riff became a banner strictly related to whole James' further career. He used it often in other songs too. Other guitar players also didn't avoid it. To this day it is considered to be one of the most popular bottleneck/slide riffs in the history of blues.

To Trumpet's total surprise Dust My Broom came to be a big blockbuster. In 1952 it reached the second place on the list of Rhythm & Blues hits. In 1998 it was inducted into Grammy Hall of Fame.

Elmore James recorded the piece again many times. It is present on almost every single disc he published. Only 'Sky Is Crying' had similar frequency

Dust My Broom or for Robert Johnson's followers I believe I'll Dust My Broom had many copycats. It was recorded by, among others, Robert Jr. Lockwood, John Littlejohn, Hound Dog Taylor, Homesick James, Frank Zappa, ZZ Top, Fleetwood Mac, R.L. Burnside, Freddie King, Peter Green.



Elmore James - Dust My Broom

I Believe I`ll Dust My Broom, Robert Johnson lyrics

I'm gonna get up in the mornin',
I believe I'll dust my broom (2x)
Girlfriend, the black man you been lovin',

girlfriend, can get my room
I'm gon' write a letter,
Telephone every town I know (2x)
If I can't find her in West Helena,
She must be in East Monroe, I know
I don't want no woman,
Wants every downtown man she meet (2x)
She's a no good doney,
They shouldn't 'low her on the street
I believe, I believe I'll go back home (2x)
You can mistreat me here, babe,
But you can't when I go home
And I'm gettin' up in the morning,
I believe I'll dust my broom (2x)
Girlfriend, the black man that you been lovin',
Girlfriend, can get my room
I'm gon' call up Chiney,
She is my good girl over there (2x)
If I can't find her on Philippine's Island,
She must be in Ethiopia somewhere

Vocalion Records - I Believe I'll Dust My Broom 1936