

The Black Dahlia

Written by

Josh Friedman

Based on the novel by

James Ellroy

CREDITS ROLL OVER

Black and white newsreel footage from the 1930s. Clips from prize fights featuring two different boxers against various opponents. One a light heavyweight--pure finesse, a counterpuncher; the other, stouter and stronger, a headhunting puncher.

The intercutting of the two fighters suggests a possible showdown at the end of the newsreel. No such luck.

END CREDITS

CLOSE UP ON:

A TRIPLE CARBON LAPD "INCIDENT REPORT" FORM trapped in an old Corona typewriter. The keys pound letters into the blank spaces.

**INCIDENT: THE ZOOT SUIT RIOTS...JUNE 10, 1943...
REPORTING OFFICER...DWIGHT "BUCKY" BLEICHERT**

EXT. BOYLE HEIGHTS - EVERGREEN AND WABASH - DUSK

A WORLD WAR II ERA PERSONNEL CARRIER transports twenty silent LAPD officers into the heart of downtown Los Angeles. The sounds of glass breaking and men screaming serves as backdrop for their arrival.

We focus in on BUCKY BLEICHERT, 26, (The counterpuncher from the newsreels) as he jumps from the carrier.

Bucky's minus his gun but plus a WWI tin helmet and a three pound truncheon.

BUCKY'S POV:

Hundreds of in-uniform GI's use baseball bats and two-by-fours to beat the shit out of Zoot Suit-wearing Mexicans.

Most of the cops wander to the edge of the race riot and hobnob with the pockets of MPs and Shore Patrol who've chosen to "restore order" by cheering on their countrymen against the outnumbered but equally fierce zooters.

Sailors shatter streetlights and shop windows. Darkness falls quickly on what Bucky rightly realizes is chaos.

Suddenly Bucky's RUNNING--

away from the action...

down a side street and onto a

QUIET RESIDENTIAL BLOCK.

He slows to a jog, trying to gather his thoughts. And then a voice:

VOICE

Bleichert! Bleichert!

EXT. A BUNGALOW COURTYARD - SAME

A POLICE OFFICER has THREE MARINES IN DRESS BLUES and ONE ZOOT SUITER cornered in a center walkway.

The marines swipe clumsily at the officer with their two-by-fours as he bobs back and forth on the balls of his feet, dodging the blows like the ex-fighter he is.

VOICE OVER

I already knew him by reputation, had our respective records down pat: Lee Blanchard, 43-4-2 as a heavyweight, formerly a regular attraction at the Hollywood Legion Stadium.

The terrified Mexican stands frozen on one side of Blanchard, trying to avoid the entire mess as the policeman parries the marines' blows with his own truncheon.

LEE BLANCHARD

Code three, Bleichert!

Bucky runs into the courtyard and immediately wades in, fending off the marines' blows to jab at them with his stick.

VOICE OVER

And he knew me, Bucky Bleichert, light-heavy, 36-0-0, ranked tenth by Ring magazine in 1937 fighting no-name opponents in no-man's-land division.

On instinct, Bucky drops his baton and begins wailing on the marines with his fists, connecting hard punches with soft midsections.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

In our first year at Central we'd never spoke--but people spoke of us. Opinions about a fantasy Bleichert-Blanchard fight, and who would win.

And now Blanchard moves in, lashing vicious truncheon blows to the shoulders of the marines, sending them one by one into a heap.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

I'd heard almost all of 'em: Blanchard by early KO; Bleichert by decision; Blanchard stopped on cuts--everything but Bleichert by knockout.

The marines reduced to rubble, Lee Blanchard turns his attention to the Zooter: he slaps handcuffs on him and leads him away. He motions for Bucky to follow.

Lee turns back to the marines:

LEE

To the halls of Tripoli, shitbirds.

One of them flips Lee off. The Zooter kicks him in the chest as Lee pulls him away from them, laughing.

The three men start back toward the riots. Gunshots can be heard. Palm trees blaze up into the night.

LEE (cont'd)

(re the Zooter)

Bucky Bleichert, meet Senor Tomas Dos Santos, subject of an all-points fugitive warrant for manslaughter committed during the commission of a Class B Felony. Snatched a purse off a hairbag and she

keeled of a heart attack.

BUCKY

You come all the way down here to roust--

LEE

(smiling)

I came all the way down here same as you did.

(jerks a finger to the riots)

Keep from gettin' killed. Happened to see those jarheads beatin' on a good collar--

(nudging Dos Santos)

Habla Ingles, Tomas?

The man shakes his head "no".

LEE (cont'd)

He's dead meat. Manslaughter Two's a gas chamber jolt for spics. Hepcat here's about six weeks away from the Big Adios. Been better off getting a couple cracked ribs from our Privates First Class back there.

Blanchard spies a home with newspapers stacked on the front porch.

LEE (cont'd)

We'll never get him booked tonight.

CUT TO:

LEE JIMMYING THE FRONT DOOR...

INT. THE KITCHEN - LATER

Tomas Dos Santos cuffed by his ankles to a radiator. The three men are on their second fifth of Cutty Sark swiped from the kitchen cupboard.

Dos Santos sings a drunken Spanish version of "The Chattanooga Choo Choo" before slumping to his side and passing out.

Bucky covers him with a blanket.

LEE

Tom here's my ninth hard felon of the month. Six weeks he'll be sucking gas. In three years I'll be working Central Warrants. Jewboy Deputy D.A. over there

wets his pants for fighters. Promised me the next spot he can wangle.

BUCKY

(not impressed)
Impressive.

LEE

(not impressed either)
Wanna hear something more impressive? My first twenty fights were stumblebums handpicked by my manager. My girlfriend saw you fight a couple times over at the Olympic. Says maybe you could take me.

Lee gets up and wanders into the living room. From the kitchen Bucky watches Lee stare out at the flames.

BUCKY

Whatta we do about the Mex?

LEE

We'll take 'em in the morning.

BUCKY

You'll take him.

LEE

He's half yours, partner.

BUCKY

He's all yours. And I'm not your partner.

LEE

(without turning)
Someday.

DISSOLVE TO:

A CLOSE UP OF TOMAS DOS SANTOS' FACE

screaming in silence.

AS WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Tomas Dos Santos dying in a large Plexiglas GAS CHAMBER. Bucky stands in the back of the room, forcing himself to watch. He can't stand it and leaves.

IN THE FRONT ROW

Lee also watches, elbows on knees and chin in hands. He can't

stand it, either. He stays.

IN THE HALLWAY AFTERWARDS

Bucky watches from afar as men in suits shake Lee's hand and brush imaginary lint off of his BRAND NEW SERGEANT'S STRIPES. Their eyes meet briefly as Bucky retreats to daylight.

Another TRIPLE CARBON FORM FILLED OUT ON THE CORONA...

Transfer and Promotion...Sergeant Lee Blanchard...
Highland Park Vice to Central Warrants...Effective
10/14/46

EXT. 2ND AND BEAUDRY - DAY

An extremely bored Bucky Bleichert gives a man a speeding ticket and sends him on his way.

EXT./INT. RADIO PATROL CAR - MOVING

Bucky drives as a ROOKIE COP chatters in the seat next to him.

ROOKIE

Yep, three years in the Canal Zone.
Nothin' but skeeter bites and drunk
fights over three-dollar skank tail...

INT. THE CENTRAL MUSTER ROOM - DAY

Bucky sits at his desk filling out a form as the rookie cop prattles on in the background.

ROOKIE

...fights over three-dollar skank tail...

AN OLDER OFFICER

walks by the rookie and rolls his eyes. Catching Bucky's look, the cop throws him a shadow punching one-two. Bucky smiles thinly. Returns to his paperwork. Then another cop passes by and breaks into a bob-and-weave. Bucky looks puzzled and annoyed.

He grabs a third cop walking by (TOM JOSLIN).

BUCKY

Somethin' up, Tommy?

TOM

You, that's what.

(off Bucky's look)
You know Lee Blanchard over at Central
Warrants?

Bucky nods.

TOM

His partner's toppin' his twenty and
goin' for early retirement. Word is the
felony D.A.'s lookin' for a bright boy to
fill the spot. Christ knows why but it's
down to you and Johnny Vogel for the
spot.

Bucky takes a surreptitious peek across the room at JOHNNY
VOGEL, fat, slick-hair and bad skin.

BUCKY

His old man Fritzie's a Central Dick.

TOM

(chucking Bucky on the chin)
But who'd look better when they bring back
the boxing team, eh Buckaroo?

Bucky shakes his head, dismissing the whole thing.

INT. THE RADIO PATROL CAR - ANOTHER DAY

Bucky drives on as the rookie talks and talks...

VOICE OVER

Warrants was local celebrity as a cop.
Warrants was plainclothes without a coat
and tie, romance and a mileage per diem
on your civilian car. Warrants was going
after the real bad guys and not rousting
winos and wienie wagers in front of the
Midnight Mission.

INT. BUCKY'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Bucky hits a speed-bag, building up a sweat.

VOICE OVER

I told myself I didn't care.

He hits the bag faster and faster.

INT. THE CENTRAL MUSTER ROOM - DAY

A desk officer hands Bucky a note.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HALL - CHIEF OF DETECTIVES OFFICE - LATER

A secretary leads Bucky into an office with CHIEF OF DETECTIVES THAD GREEN etched on the pebble glass door.

Inside the office: Lee Blanchard, ASST. D.A. ELLIS LOEW, and CHIEF THAD GREEN. They all sit in matched leather chairs.

SECRETARY

Officer Bleichert.

She exits. An awkward silence.

LEE

(getting to his feet)
Gentlemen, Bucky Bleichert. Bucky, Chief Thad Green, Deputy DA Ellis Loew.

Bucky shakes their hands, nodding to each. Chief Green gestures for him to sit.

CHIEF GREEN

Read this aloud, Officer. It's running in Sunday's Times.

BUCKY

"Before the war, the City of the Angels was graced with two local fighters, born and raised a scant five miles apart, pugilists with styles as different as fire and ice. Lee Blanchard was a bowlegged windmill of a leather slinger--

CHIEF GREEN

Skip down to the fire and ice part.

BUCKY

(searching, finding)
"Mr. Fire and Mr. Ice never fought each other, but a sense of duty brought them together in spirit, and both joined the Los Angeles Police Department." Blanchard cracked the baffling Boulevard-Citizens bank robbery case in 1939 and captured thrill-killer Tomas Dos Santos; Bleichert served with distinction during the '43 Zoot Suit Wars--"

A glance to Lee...

CHIEF GREEN

Skip to the end.

BUCKY

"Both men made great sacrifices to serve their city, and on Election Day, voters are going to be asked to do the same thing--vote on a five million dollar bond proposal to upgrade the LAPD's equipment and provide for an eight percent pay raise for all personnel. Keep in mind the examples of Mr. Fire and Mr. Ice. Vote "Yes" on Proposition B."

CHIEF GREEN

Whattya think?

BUCKY

Subtle.

Blanchard and Green smile; Loew frowns.

ELLIS LOEW

Prop. B's looking like a loser right now. But if we can drum up some publicity we may be able to get it passed in the '47 Special. We need to build up morale in the department. Impress voters with the quality of our men. Wholesome white boxers are a big draw, Bleichert. You know that.

Bucky looks to Lee.

LEE

Fire and Ice.

LOEW

Ten rounds. The Academy Gym. Three weeks from now. Right before the election. All the gate to charity. After that, we bring back the interdivisional boxing team. Wholesome fighters.

LEE

Wholesome.

CHIEF GREEN

Are you in, Bucky?

LEE

It's not like you'll last the ten rounds
anyway.

Bucky eyes Lee quickly, assessing his larger but slightly
softer physique.

All the remaining eyes are on him.

BUCKY

I'm in.

Back slaps and congratulations all around.

LOEW

I'm betting on great things from you,
Bleichert. And if I don't miss my bet we
may be colleagues soon.

BUCKY

Uh, yes sir.

EXT. THE CITY HALL PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATEER

Bucky exits and sees Lee leaning against an unmarked car
talking with a striking woman in an auburn pageboy cut.

Lee waves Bucky over.

LEE

Bucky I'd like you to meet Kay Lake.

BUCKY

Hello.

FAY

I saw you fight a couple times. You won.

BUCKY

I always won. You a fight fan?

KAY

Lee used to drag me. I was taking somme
art classes so I'd sketch the boxers.

Lee puts his arm around her.

LEE

Made me quit fighting the smokers. Didn't
want me doin' the "vegetable shuffle."

He staggers around like a punch-drunk fighter.

BUCKY

I'll try not to hurt you.

A flicker of anger in her eyes.

LEE

Sure make Loew happy.

BUCKY

He's got money on me, I gather?

LEE

Seems that way.

BUCKY

And if I win I get Warrants?

LEE

Seems that way.

Bucky shakes his head. Turns to Kay.

BUCKY

What do you think of all this, Miss Lake?

KAY

For moral reasons I hope the LAPD gets ridiculed for perpetrating this farce. For financial reasons I hope Lee wins. And for aesthetic reasons I hope you both look good with your shirts off.

Bucky and Lee break into laughter. Bucky sticks out his hand. Lee takes it.

BUCKY

Luck short of winning.

LEE

You, too.

Bucky tips his hat to Kay and turns to go.

KAY

Luck, Dwight.

He stops at hearing his real name. But he knows she's waiting to see his reaction so he keeps walking...

BUCKY'S BOXING MONTAGE

--Bucky hits the heavy bag in the police gym while Lee spars

in the background

VOICE OVER

The 77th Street lieutenant tapped as official LAPD bookmaker had Lee as an early 3 to 1 favorite...

--Bucky runs through Elysian Park with two pound weights on his ankles.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

...while the real bookie line had Mr. Fire favored by knockout at 2 1/2 to 1, and decision by 5 to 3.

--Bucky spars with a fighter, peppering him with jab after jab.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Even the dicks in Ad Vice had suspended bookie shakedowns because Mickey Cohen was raking ten grand a day and kickin' back five percent to the advertising agency promoting the bond issue.

--Cops exchange betting markers during roll call...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

I was a local celebrity again.

EXT./INT. BUCKY'S CAR - LINCOLN HEIGHTS - DAY

Bucky pulls up in front of a small ugly house in a tired neighborhood. He exits the car carrying a cardboard box full of canned goods and old girlie magazines.

ON THE PORCH OF THE HOUSE

a bony old man sits in a broken chair, aiming a BB pistol at some balsa wood airplanes scattered in the yard.

ON BUCKY'S FACE

disgust and sadness.

This is DOLPH BLEICHERT, Bucky's father. Bucky approaches, pulling a chair up next to his father. Up close it's even worse: white skin stretched tight over blue veins, yellow rimming his rheumy eyes. Flecks of dirt and vomit on a filthy shirt.

BUCKY

Papa?

DOLPH

Guten tag, Dwight.

BUCKY

Speak English, papa.

DOLPH

Englisch Schiesser! Amerikan Schiesser!

He aims the BB gun and fires at an airplane: the gun's empty.

Bucky enters the house. Half-eaten cans of beans on the dining room table, an entire legion of broken balsa wood airplane kits. Alley cats wander in and out of the kitchen, nosing their faces into open tuna fish cans...

BACK ON THE PORCH

Dolph leans on the porch rail. Bucky returns.

BUCKY

Say something, Papa. Get me mad. Tell me how you can fuck this place up so bad in one month.

DOLPH

Du, Dwight? Du?

BUCKY

Speak...English. Papa, please.

He searches his father's eyes for a response and gets none.

He surveys the house again. Somewhere in the corner of his eye we see the glint of an idea...

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Bucky on the phone.

BUCKY

...He's had another stroke. If you could just come by and clean the place up and keep an eye on him for week or so...a hundred dollars is fine. No more than ten days. I promise. I do. Thank you.

INT. THE POLICE BOXING GYM

Bucky leans against a wall watching Lee spar. Studying him.

Mentally fighting the sparring partner's fight.

VOICE OVER

He was better than I thought. It made
what came next easier.

INT. A BANK - DAY

Bucky sits at a desk with an assistant manager and fills out forms. The manager counts out approximately \$4,500 in cash. Bucky slides him the forms. The manager slides him the cash.

INT. THE GOOD LUCK BAR - NIGHT

Bucky slides into a booth across from PETE LUKINS.

PETE

So...I'm surprised but I'm not so
surprised. I hear you been lookin' good.
Better'n people think.

Bucky pushes an envelope across to Pete. He looks in it.

PETE (cont'd)

I guess what I hear is correct. Then
you'll be wantin' to place this with
Mickey Cohen's indie. He's got Blanchard
2 to 1--

BUCKY

I'm not bettin' on me, Pete.

PETE

(a beat)
Oh.
(another beat)
Then as a friend I feel it's my duty to
tell you this: you better make it look
good.

BUCKY

Knockout between rounds eight and ten.

Pete nods his head, thinking.

PETE

Dragna's got a guy really sold on you.
Even money. Best you're gonna get.

BUCKY

Thanks, Pete.

Pete sticks out his hand.

PETE

Luck.

BUCKY

Short of winning?

PETE

Luck.

Bucky takes his hand.

INT. THE BOXING GYM - DAY

Bucky takes apart his sparring partner with a series of lightning quick counterpunches.

VOICE OVER

I'd almost finished the Police Academy when the background check turned up my father's German-American Bund membership. Pressured by the FBI goons to confirm my patriotism, I gave the Alien Squad Sam Murakawa, a guy I'd grown up with, in order to secure my LAPD appointment.

EXT. DOLPH BLEICHERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bucky watches from across the street as AN OFF-DUTY NURSE tries to get Papa Bleichert to eat a sandwich.

VOICE OVER

The old fuck never knew any better. Never knew what he cost me. Or Sammy, who'd died at Manzanar. I was a good fit in the snitch's jacket and with a little alteration I slipped easily into the whole suit.

INT. THE BOXING GYM - DAY

Bucky watches Lee spar. His quick eyes spying:

--scar tissue over Lee's right eye

--Lee dropping his left when throwing the right hook

--Lee tucking his elbows too tight and opening up his ribcage

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

I had traded Warrants for a close-out on

bad old debts, the eight grand I was gonna clear enough to maintain the old man in a good clean rest home for three years; the late round tank job enough to convince myself I wasn't a complete coward.

INT. THE BOXING GYM - DAY

Kay approaches Bucky as he studies Lee.

KAY

At least he looks good with his shirt off.

She waves to Lee between rounds. He blows a kiss back.

BUCKY

Where's your sketch pad?

KAY

I was never very good. Ended up with a degree in History. Masters. Lee's fight money paid for it.

BUCKY

Education's an expensive habit to kick.
(beat)
He shouldn't have quit fighting.

KAY

I asked him to. Besides, catching animals gave him a sense of order. You have a girlfriend, Dwight?

BUCKY

Saving myself for Rita Hayworth.

A roar from the gym onlookers. Lee's sparring partner hits the deck, blood spraying from his mouth.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Quits fighting for you. Puts you through school. Quite a guy. Quite a pair.

KAY

(flirting)
We're not getting married if that's what you're wondering.

BUCKY

Why not? Shacking's against the regs.

Probably cost him a stripe.

KAY

I have to go, Dwight. Good luck tomorrow night.

BUCKY

You didn't answer my question--

KAY

(a throwaway)

Lee and I don't sleep together, Dwight.

She keeps walking. He just stares...

INT. BUCKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A half-eaten steak and two beers gone. It's six hours later and Bucky's still thinking about Kay's exit line. Restless. He grabs his jacket.

INT. HEARST BUILDING - HERALD-EXAMINER MORGUE - NIGHT

Bucky flashes his badge to a late-night clerk who escorts him into the newspaper's morgue. Pulls a bound stack of newspaper clippings and gives them to Bucky. He begins poring through them...

A newspaper photo of a BANK shifts into live action:

A GRAINY NEWSREEL-TYPE FLASHBACK (SLO-MO)

An armored truck idles in front of the Boulevard-Citizens Bank. Three men dressed in guard uniforms run out of the front of the bank, an alarm keening in the background.

Three police cars converge on the scene and a gun battle ensues... Two of the bank robbers are shot as the third man (the one carrying the money) jumps into the truck. The truck takes off, able to escape when someone from inside the truck throws open the doors and pushes the naked and bound legitimate guards out the back and into the line of pursuit...

VOICE OVER

With no lead on the two escaped men, the heist quickly went from page one to page five. Two weeks later...

A newspaper clipping headline: "Tip from Ex-boxer cop breaks B-C Bank Job"

A still photo of Lee which becomes live action as...

INT. A SMALL VENICE BEACH APARTMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A younger Lee and four other cops tear apart a small flat. In a closet they find BANK GUARD UNIFORMS, BANK BAGS, and a small stash of MARIJUANA.

VOICE OVER

One of Lee's snitches fingered Bobby DeWitt, a greasy little pimp with a yard long rap, as the brains behind the bank job.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: A HATCHET FACED MAN (DEWITT) LED BY HANDCUFFS THROUGH A GIANT CROWD...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

DeWitt howled frame-up the entire trial, never ID'ing the driver or coughing up the dough, even after damning character testimony from some of his employees, including one Katherine Lake, formerly of Sioux Falls, South Dakota and looking to go straight.

FLASHBACK: LEE LEADING KAY FROM THE COURTROOM, HAND ON HER ELBOW...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

DeWitt got ten to life at San Quentin; Lee got Kay, or maybe the other way around.

BACK TO PRESENT: Bucky walks through downtown L.A., hands stuffed in his pockets like James Dean...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

They both got a few weeks in the gossip pages before Kay dove into her college education and Lee down the hero's road ending in Warrants and a shack job with a woman he loved but wouldn't touch...

Bucky passes A WHORE on the corner, their eyes meet for a moment and he walks on.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

You come off a winning fight. Sweat-drenched, tasting blood, still wanting to

go. The handbooks who made money on you
bring you a girl. A pro, a semi-pro. You
do it in the dressing room, or a hallway.
The eleventh round of a ten round fight.
And when you go back to an ordinary life,
it's just weakness, a loss.

Bucky turns back to give the whore a second look but she's gone.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

To a fighter, sex tastes like blood and
resin and suture scrub. I wondered if
some day that would ever be different.

CUT TO:

A HAMMER HITTING A BELL

and the fight is on.

INSIDE THE PACKED ACADEMY GYM

Cops and mobsters sit shoulder to shoulder, cigar smoke like
L.A. haze as

LEE CHARGES BUCKY, the big man trying to cut of the ring.
Bucky engages, dodging Lee's thundering blows and peppering
back with counterpunches...

**The general fight storyline is this: a very even and brutal
match see-sawing back and forth, Bucky doing all he can to
make it into the middle rounds. Somewhere around the fourth
or fifth round his competitive juices take over and he begins
trying to win at all costs. The two men hurt each other
badly, and in the eighth round it's anybody's fight.
Bucky punches toe-to-toe with Lee, abandoning his strategy.
Lee knocks Bucky out.

INT. BUCKY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Bucky lies in bed, radio playing jazz. He looks horrible--
face swollen, lip split, stitches across his nose. He sips
whiskey from a bottle through a straw.

The phone rings and rings. He refuses to answer it...

INT. A REST HOME - ANOTHER DAY

Bucky, bruised but somewhat better, stands in the hallway of
a very nice rest home. He surreptitiously watches his father
as the old man tries to grab at a nurse.

EXT. THE REST HOME - MINUTES LATER

Pete Lukins waits outside on the porch for Bucky.

PETE

Well?

BUCKY

He'll catch on soon enough.

The scene widens behind the two men and we see the sign on the facility:

KING DAVID VILLA

Jewish stars adorn the sign.

INT. BUCKY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Bucky stands in front of his mirror clipping at his stitches with scissors. He hears a voice outside his window.

VOICE OVER

Hey. Canvasback!

Bucky recognizes the voice and goes to the window.

EXT. THE COURTYARD - SAME

Lee Blanchard, his own bruises fading, stands in the yard.

LEE

You gonna hide in there another week?
Ain't you bored yet?

BUCKY

Gettin' there.

LEE

Wanna work Warrants with me?

BUCKY

What?

LEE

Harrell's been callin' to tell you. You
been hibernating--

BUCKY

But I lost. Loew's deal--

LEE

Don't you read the papers? The bond issue passed yesterday. Want the job, partner?

Off Lee's devilish grin:

VOICE OVER

Mister Fire. Mister Ice. The hero and the snitch.

CUT TO:

INT. CENTRAL WARRANTS - MORNING

A door marked "DETECTIVE'S MUSTER ROOM". Bucky, wearing his best SPORTS COAT AND SLACKS, pushes through the door.

INSIDE THE MUSTER ROOM

Full of the LAPD's plainclothes hotshots. All stand and give Bucky a standing ovation. Lee's there, too, playing to the crowd.

On the blackboard at the front of the room: 8%!!!

CAPTAIN JACK TIERNEY is at the podium.

TIERNEY

(as introduction)

Officer Bleichert, the men of Central Dicks, Homicide, Ad Vice, Bunco, et cetera. I'm Captain Jack Tierney. You and Lee are the white men of the hour, so I hope you enjoyed your ovation. You won't get another one until you retire.

Everyone laughs. Tierney raps the podium and speaks again.

TIERNEY (cont'd)

Enough horseshit. This is the felony summary for the week ending November 14, 1946. First, three liquor store stickups...

Tierney begins the summary as Bucky's eyes wander around the room, taking in his new surroundings... Older men, coats and ties... He tunes back in...

TIERNEY (cont'd)

And here's a collar'd please Cap'n Jack to no end. Sergeants Vogel, Koenig, have you read the SID memos on the Bunker Hill burglaries?

FRITZ VOGEL AND BILL KOENIG, both hulking and unpleasant-looking (Fritzie being the elder version of his son Johnny). The two men shake their heads "no". Tierney disapproves.

TIERNEY (cont'd)

Set of latents at the last break-in ID's one Maynard Coleman, two sodomy priors. A surefire baby raper. Highland Park's got four child sodomy unsolveds. Maybe he's our boy, maybe not. But between that and the B&E's I'd put Maynard as a high priority lamster right now. There's a list of his known associates on the bulletin board. Let's all take a look...

INT. THE MUSTER ROOM - LATER

The meeting's breaking up. A tall, elegant man (RUSS MILLARD) and a squat disheveled man (HARRY SEARS) approach Bucky.

RUSS MILLARD

(introducing himself)

Russ Millard, homicides. Wife and kids thank you for the raise, Officer.

Bucky smiles a dumb smile, not knowing what to say.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

(re the other man)

My partner, Harry Sears.

HARRY

(stuttering)

Y-y-y-yes. Th-th-thanks Officer B-B-Bleichert.

Before Bucky can answer ELLIS LOEW grabs him by the elbow and leads him away.

ELLIS LOEW

Officer Bleichert. Welcome to Central Warrants--

When he gets him out of ear shot:

ELLIS LOEW (cont'd)

You shouldn't have slugged with him. You were ahead on all three cards.

BUCKY

The proposition passed, sir.

ELLIS LOEW

Yes but some of your patron's lost money.
Play things smarter here. Don't blow this
like you blew the fight.

Bucky's about to respond when Lee saves him--

LEE

Ready to roll, canvasback?

He grabs Bucky and they head out the door.

INT. LEE'S CAR - LATER

Lee cruises them through downtown, rambling about the job
description.

BUCKY

Why'd you really quit fighting?

He pulls the car into a parking lot of a Mexican restaurant.

LEE

(matter of fact)
Benny Siegel bought out my contract,
scared off my manager. Said he'd get me a
shot at Joe Louis if I'd take two dives
for him. I said no, joined the Department
'cuz Jew syndicate boys won't kill cops.
Anything else?

BUCKY

(as they exit the car)
One more. What are we doin' here?

LEE

While you were dancing with Ellis at
muster I checked Maynard Coleman's KA's
on the bulletin and recognized the name
of a fence. Think he tends bar here...

INSIDE THE RESTAURANT

Lee and Bucky slide into a booth on either side of BRUNO
ALBANESE, halfway through plate of huevos rancheros.

LEE

Bruno Albanese?

BRUNO

Who wants to know?

LEE

Police officers, Bruno. Let's make this fast so I don't have to watch you eat.

Lee slides the Maynard Coleman mug shot to Albanese.

LEE (cont'd)

We know he sells to you and we don't care. Where is he?

Albanese burps.

BRUNO

Never seen 'em before.

Lee sighs. And then grabs Bruno by the back of the neck and jams his face into the hot cheese and goo of his food. Bruno's arms flap back and forth as Lee drowns him in his food.

Finally Lee shrugs and pulls Bruno's face out of his food, blood from his nose mixing with the grease of the enchiladas.

BRUNO

Versailles apartments. Sixth and St. Andrews.

EXT. THE VERSAILLES APARTMENTS - MINUTES LATER

Lee and Bucky pull up and look for a parking spot just as MAYNARD COLEMAN trots down the front stairs and gets into a car.

BUCKY

Right there!

They ease the car back into traffic and follow Coleman's car from a safe distance. Bucky picks up the two-way radio. Lee gestures for him to put it back:

Coleman's pulling into the parking lot of THE POLAR PALACE, an ICE SKATING RINK. They follow.

Coleman exits his car, eyeing a group of kids carrying ice skates and heading into the Polar Palace. He follows them inside...

The two men follow...

INSIDE THE POLAR PALACE

Children skate around on the ice with a giant polar bear suit. Lee and Bucky scan the area--not an adult in sight. Lee spots some stairs leading to the restrooms and gestures to Bucky, who hustles down them.

ON THE STAIRCASE

Maynard Coleman, carrying a stuffed bunny rabbit, walks up the stairs toward Bucky. Just as the two men pass Bucky PULLS HIS GUN and puts it to Coleman's head.

BUCKY

Police officer. You're under arrest.

Coleman throws his hands in the air; the bunny drops to the ground. Bucky cuffs Coleman and leads him up the stairs as Lee comes down from above.

A small voice from below Bucky:

VOICE OVER

Let go of him! Let go of him!

Bucky looks down to see A SMALL BOY pounding on his leg. The kid's hysterical.

BOY

Let go a my daddy! Daddy!

The resemblance is unmistakable. Two generations of Okie white trash. Bucky continues marching Coleman the elder up the stairs as Lee snags the kid, both the father and the son crying like babies.

INT. THE HALL OF JUSTICE JAIL - LATER

Lee and Bucky fill out a release form for the desk officer.

Bucky looks up to see BILL KOENIG and FRITZ VOGEL march by with barely a nod.

LEE

They got here fast.
(off Bucky's look)
The confession.

INT. CENTRAL WARRANTS - LATER

Lee finishes typing up a report on a manual typewriter while Bucky talks on the phone. He hangs up as Fritz Vogel and Bill Koenig return.

LEE (cont'd)
(re the two meatheads)
Play nice. They've got juice with Loew.

KOENIG
(stupid and proud)
He confessed. Kiddie porks and the
burglaries. Fritzie says we're all
getting commendations.

Bucky's POV: both Koenig and Vogel have small bits of
blood spattered on their white dress shirts.

VOGEL
Ellis loves the kid angle.

LEE
You talk to Ellis?

VOGEL
He's only "Ellis" to lieutenants on up,
Blanchard.

LEE
Least I don't call him "kike".

VOGEL
(flushing)
C'mon, Billy.

The two men push by with barely a nod in Bucky's direction.

BUCKY
Play nice. Hm.

LEE
Shitbirds.

HARRY SEARS approaches their cubicle. He looks a little
drunk. (And when you get to know him you'll realize that when
he's drunk he doesn't stutter.)

HARRY
Russ says good collar today.

The men nod thanks. Bucky notes the lack of stutter and the
presence of a liquor smell.

HARRY (cont'd)
And Lee--I heard something you oughta
know--I was over at County Parole--Bobby
DeWitt got an "A" number. He'll be
released to LA around mid-January.

Lee bobs his head slightly as Harry moves off. He's disturbed but covers quickly--

LEE

You like pot roast?

EXT. A BEAUTIFUL DECO HOME - NIGHT

Lee leads Bucky up the walk. Bucky's impressed with the house.

LEE

Don't say anything to Kay about DeWitt.
It'll upset her.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A doll's house of Danish Modern furniture, fresh flowers and polished mahogany wainscoting.

BUCKY

You takin' bribes, partner?

LEE

Fight stash.

Kay arrives from the kitchen, smiling broadly at Bucky. She takes his hand.

KAY

Hello, Dwight. Glad you could make it.

And holds his hand about two beats than usual...

INT. THE DINING ROOM - LATER

Kay brings in the food. Bucky walks around the room, checking things out.

FAY

Fairy tale come true, isn't it?

BUCKY

Hm?

FAY

The house. You and Lee partners. Fairy tale.

BUCKY

Can't say I believe in fairy tales.

KAY

Then you've never really had to. Lucky man. (beat) Lee! Dinner!

INT. THE DINING ROOM - LATER

The food is finished. So is a bottle of champagne. Kay pops another one, hitting Lee in the chest with the cork. Everyone laughs hysterically. They fill the glasses again.

LEE

A toast...To Proposition B!

BUCKY

To the Bleichert/Blanchard rematch!
Bigger than Louis/Schmeling!

KAY

To fairy tales!

BUCKY

(abruptly, drunk)
To...us!

He's referring to all three of them--something which doesn't escape or displease anyone. They clink glasses and drink.

ANOTHER LAPD TRIPLE CARBON INCIDENT REPORT:

JANUARY 10, 1947...Raymond "Junior" Nash...

INT. ELLIS LOEW'S OFFICE - MORNING

Lee and Bucky enter the Loew's inner sanctum where they are joined by Russ Millard and Harry Sears. A stack of L.A.

Heralds sit on the desk, the top one folded to the headline: "Criminal Division's DA to try for Boss's Job in '48 Primary?"

Bucky's look of disgust says it all just as Loew walks into the room--

LEE

Goin' into politics, Ellis? Give us a quote. (as FDR) "The only thing to fear is fear itself."

Loew smiles thinly and hands over a photo and a rap sheet.

ELLIS LOEW

Here's the man to fear.

ANGLE ON THE MUG SHOT AND RAP SHEET:

RAYMOND "JUNIOR" NASH: Statutory raps, armed robbery, felony mayhem...Texas State Prison...Alcatraz...

The cops are impressed.

BUCKY

Give us the good news. He's in LA and actin' uppity?

ELLIS LOEW

Witnesses made him at a stickup near Leimert Park over the weekend. Pistol-whipped an old lady. She died about an hour ago.

RUSS MILLARD

Anything common in the sex beefs?

ELLIS LOEW

Negro girls. Young ones. All the complainants have been colored.

LEE

Seeya in Leimert Park.

As they walk out...

ELLIS LOEW

Sergeant Blanchard? Try not to kill the man. I'd like to do it in court.

Lee flashes a demon smile.

EXT. CRENSHAW BOULEVARD - DAY - LATER

A montage of shots as Lee and Bucky cruise south on Crenshaw Boulevard. The beginning of the post-war boom.

VOICE OVER

From November through the New Year, Lee and I captured a total of eleven hard felons, eighteen traffic warrantees and three parole and probation absconders...

On Crenshaw's northern end, once grand and now dilapidated houses in the process of demolition, their faces replaced by giant billboards advertising department stores, jumbo shopping centers and movie theaters.

VOICE OVER

After tours of duty, Lee and I would go to the house and find Kay. Sometimes she made dinner for us, other times the three of us would go dancing, or see a flick.

Southbound, older wooden structures looking more and more unkempt. Empty lots...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Always she'd be there, never in between us, but always in the middle. It was the best time of my life.

EXT./INT. THE CAR - A FILLING STATION - CONTINUOUS

Lee pulls the car into the parking lot. Jumping out of the car--

LEE

This grand tour stuff's for shit. I'm callin' in some favors.

He heads to a payphone and begins pumping coins into it.

BACK IN THE CAR - MINUTES LATER

Lee gets back in the car. He's pale, sweating.

LEE

Got a tip. Snitch a mine says he's shacking with some poon in a crib near Slauson and Hoover.

BUCKY

It's all colored down there--

LEE

We fuckin' roll.

He pulls out.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. THE CAR - HOOVER AVE - MINUTES LATER

Lee and Bucky roll up on four men loitering on a corner. Three are black and one is white.

LEE

Hopheads. Let's shake 'em for an address or a name.

As Lee and Bucky exit the car, the four men immediately start the slow walk to the wall, arms over their heads. The white guy glances at Lee:

WHITE HOPHEAD

What the---Blanchard?

LEE

Shut up, shitbird.

Lee pushes him closer to the wall and starts frisking him. Bucky starts with one of the other men, pulling out some marijuana cigarettes.

Out of the corner of his eye, Bucky sees the black man closest to Lee reaches for something shiny in his belt--

BUCKY

Partner!

Bucky pulls his .38...

THE WHITE GUY swings around and LEE SHOOTS HIM twice in the face--

THE FIRST BLACK MAN pulls a SHIV free and BUCKY SHOOTS HIM in the neck--

ANOTHER OF THE MEN goes for his trousers, fumbling for something as BUCKY SHOOTS HIM THREE TIMES.

LEE

Bucky duck!

Bucky hits the cement and gets an upside down view of Lee and the last man drawing guns on each other--Lee's three shots cutting down the man before he can fire his tiny derringer.

Bucky pulls himself to his feet, stumbling past the blood-covered sidewalk and vomits in the gutter.

FROM THE DISTANCE: THE SOUND OF SIRENS.

Bucky pulls out his badge and pins it to his jacket pocket. Behind him, Lee is busy turning the dead men's pockets inside out--scattering shivs and reefers onto the sidewalk away from the blood.

All the while Lee cries like a baby.

INT. THE 77TH ST. DETECTIVES' STATION - LATER

Bucky and a Detective exit a de-briefing room. Bucky looks worn but composed.

DETECTIVE

Thank you for your time, Officer. And your police work, as well.

They pass another de-briefing area where Lee sits with another Detective. Lee looks terrible, muttering and shivering.

DETECTIVE (cont'd)

Your partner's taking this hard.

BUCKY

He knew one of the guys. Baxter Fitch. Busted him once for loitering. Sort of liked the guy.

The detective nods sympathetically.

EXT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Lee and Bucky walk up the front steps where they're met by Kay. She runs to Lee and embraces him.

KAY

Oh baby. Oh babe.

She escorts him into the house. Bucky sees a newspaper on the front porch railing. The evening edition of The Mirror.

"Boxer Cops in Gun Battle. Four Crooks Dead."

Publicity boxing photos accompany a full-page article. Bucky begins to read it when he hears from inside:

LEE

Leave me alone! You'll never fucking understand--

A door slam. Soon after the sound of Lee's motorcycle roaring off... After a beat Kay comes outside and sits down next to Bucky.

BUCKY

He knew one of the guys.

She nods.

BUCKY (cont'd)

It was them or us.

She nods again.

BUCKY (cont'd)
Tomorrow's off-duty so treat him nice--

KAY
Bobby DeWitt gets out in a week, Dwight.
We're on edge. He swore at the trial he
was going to kill Lee.

BUCKY
We can take care of Bobby DeWitt.

KAY
Lee's scared. You don't know Bobby.

BUCKY
I know as much as I need to know.

Kay gives him a look: that's what you think. She gets up and goes inside. Not knowing what to do, Bucky continues reading the paper.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - LATER

Bucky wanders inside, obviously fidgety and not wanting to go home. He putters around their living room. From the back of the house Bucky hears the sound of A SHOWER RUNNING.

Bucky walks back to the bathroom, drawn there by the sound of the drumming water. The bathroom door is open, an invitation.

He stops at the threshold of the bathroom. His POV:

Kay stands in the shower, curtain open for Bucky's benefit. She faces him and he takes in the view of her nakedness.

Her attitude is not one of seduction, however, her expression passive and fixed even when their eyes meet. She pirouettes for him, showing:

A SERIES OF OLD KNIFE SCARS CRISS-CROSSING HER BACK FROM THIGH TO SPINE.

The history of Bobby DeWitt.

Bucky backs away, retreating as he chokes back tears.

INT. BUCKY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Bucky's awakened by the phone ringing. He pulls the receiver off the cradle but leaves it on the nightstand. From the receiver he barely hears:

LEE

Rise and shine partner!

Bucky grabs the phone.

BUCKY

Lee? You okay?

LEE

Sure. Ran Mulholland at a hundred and ten. Played house with Kay all day yesterday. Feel like doing some police work?

BUCKY

Keep going.

LEE

Junior Nash's got a fuck pad on Norton and Coliseum.

EXT. THE CORNER OF COLISEUM AND NORTON - SOON AFTER

Bucky and Lee pull up to a mangy apartment building.

INT. RAYMOND NASH'S ROOM - SOON AFTER

They push the door open to reveal a filthy little flop littered with muscatel short dogs and used rubbers.

LEE

Okie trash.

They poke around for a minute, finding nothing. The smell is awful. Bucky goes to a window and pulls it open.

HIS POV OUT THE WINDOW:

IN A VACANT LOT ACROSS THE WAY

A cluster of uniformed cops and men in civilian clothes stare at something in the weeds. A CORONER'S VAN parks next to three black and whites and two detectives' sedans.

BUCKY

Lee.

Lee goes to the window.

LEE

Is that Millard and Sears?

An LAPD PHOTO VAN pulls up next.

Lee and Bucky sprint out of the room.

EXT. THE VACANT LOT - 39TH AND NORTON - SECONDS LATER

Photo men have already begun fanning out and taking photos. Bucky sees Harry Sears take a shot from a hip flask in full view of other officers. Lee and Bucky elbow their way to the front and see:

The nude, mutilated body of a young woman, cut in half at the waist. Another wide cut down her center reveal an empty cavity--her organs have been removed.

Her face has been bashed in and her mouth cut ear to ear in a leering smile.

Even the experienced cops are rattled by the scene. They point and whisper and generally begin to fall into disbelief and disorder when

RUSS MILLARD

whistles harshly with his fingers in his mouth.

RUSS MILLARD

Before this gets out of hand let's put the kibosh on something. If this gets a lot of publicity we're going to get a lot of confessions. So we keep some things quiet. This girl was disemboweled. You keep this information to yourselves. Not your wives, not your girlfriends, no other officers.

The men all nod, coming together as Millard takes control.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

No reporters view the body. You photo men, take your pictures now. Coroner's men, you put a sheet on the body as soon as they're done. Set up a perimeter six feet back. Any reporter crosses it, arrest him.

(noticing Bucky)

Bleichert. What are you doing here?
Where's Blanchard?

Bucky indicates Lee, crouched down by the body taking notes.

BUCKY

Nash is renting a room in that building
over there.

RUSS MILLARD

Blood on the premises?

BUCKY

No. This isn't him.

RUSS MILLARD

The lab'll be the judge of that.

Millard and Bucky look dawn the street to see cars swinging
onto Norton, beelining for the commotion. Reporters and
photographers begin pouring out of their cars, quickly coming
up against a line of cops keeping them from the body.

Bucky makes his way over to Lee, unable to stop staring at
the body.

BUCKY

Hey. Junior Nash, remember?

LEE

He didn't do this.

BUCKY

No. He beat an old woman to death. That's
why he's our priority warrantee.

LEE

Not anymore.

BUCKY

This ain't ours, partner--

LEE

(on edge)
It is now, partner.

EXT. THE CRIME SCENE - LATER

Too sheet-covered stretchers are shoved into the coroner's
wagon. The doors slam shut and the car pulls away.

CUT TO:

RUSS MILLARD DIVIDING A STREET ATLAS INTO FOOTBEATS

as fifteen officers (including Lee and Bucky) wait for their assignment.

A MONTAGE OF QUESTIONING

Cops ring doorbells throughout Leimert Park:

OFFICER

(to an old woman)
Have you heard female screams...

BUCKY

(to an off-duty serviceman)
...anyone discarding women's clothing?

LEE

(to a little kid)
...seen anyone in the lot on 39th...

BUCKY

(to a housewife)
...and what about this man?
(holds out a photo of Junior
Nash)

To all of these questions a big fat "no".

INT. THE OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA - NIGHT

Bucky watches two Mexican bantamweights beat each other bloody. An EMPTY SEAT next to him. Irritated, he gets up and leaves.

ENT. 39TH AND NORTON - NIGHT - LATER

Bucky gets out of his car and finds Lee standing inside the crime scene rope watching lab techs poke around in the weeds. The entire area is lit up by arclights, illuminating the two quicklime outlines of the body parts.

BUCKY

You were supposed to meet me at the fights tonight, remember?

LEE

Priority. Remember.

BUCKY

Priority for the Bureau. Not for us.

LEE

Nice white girl gets snuffed. Gotta show the voters they did the right thing passing the bond issue. It's a showcase. It's A-plus, Buck. We don't miss this.

BUCKY

We've had enough headlines for the week.

Lee points to the body outline. His hand shakes a bit and maybe for the first time we sense he's wired on something.

LEE

With or without you, partner.

Bucky shakes his head and begins walking away.

LEE (cont'd)

With or without you.

BUCKY

I heard you.

INT. THE SQUAD ROOM - NEXT DAY

Bucky enters a mob scene. One cop holds up a front page headline: "Hunt Werewolf's Den in Torture Slaying"

Along a bench, five derelict-looking men are manacled to a bench. A cop walks by, notes Bucky's confusion:

OFFICER

Confessors.

Just then the interrogation room door opens and Bill Koenig leads a doubled-over fat man out of the door.

KOENIG

He didn't do it.

A couple officers clap satirically at their desks.

BUCKY

(to another cop)
Blanchard?

OFFICER

In with Loew. (beat) And reporters.

Off Bucky's concerned look we

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIS LOEW'S OFFICE - MORNING

Bucky walks in to see Loew holding a press conference, Lee dressed in a suit and sitting at his side.

ELLIS LOEW

...and the heinous nature of this killing makes it imperative to catch this fiend as soon as possible. A number of specially trained officers, including Mr. Fire and his partner Mr. Ice...

ON BUCKY'S FACE

Disbelief. Disgust.

BACK IN THE WARRANTS CUBICLE - LATER

Lee catches up with a pissed off Bucky.

BUCKY

You got us detached?

LEE

Slow and easy, Bucky. First I gave Loew a memo saying Nash blew our jurisdiction--

BUCKY

You did what?

LEE

It's all right. The APB still stands. We've got the pad staked. He's covered.

Bucky's face says he's not sold on Lee's reasoning.

LEE (cont'd)

One week. Just one week. After that, it's back to Junior. I promise.

Bucky studies Lee's resolve; he relents.

LEE (cont'd)

Copacetic.

CUT TO:

INT. PATHOLOGY ROOM - LATER

Antiseptic white with metallic slab tables. Two objects covered in sheets lay on the table.

Bucky, Lee, Russ Millard and Harry Sears sit on benches facing the table. THE CORONER and a STENOGRAPHER NUN stand over the body. The coroner pulls the sheets off.

LEE

Jesus, Bucky.

CORONER

On gross pathology, we have a female Caucasian between sixteen and thirty. Cadaver is presented in two halves with bisection level with the umbilicus.

The nun scribbles furiously to keep up. The officers are torn between staring at their shoes and at the body.

CORONER (cont'd)

...Through-and through laceration from both mouth corners...no visible signs of neck bruises...massive depressed skull fractures...Inspection of upper half abdominal cavity reveals no free-flowing blood. Intestines, stomach, liver and spleen removed.

The doctor stops to allow the nun time to catch up. Russ Millard clears his throat.

RUSS MILLARD

Is it...all right to smoke, doctor?

CORONER

She's not going to mind.

Both Russ and Harry light up.

CORONER (cont'd)

Lower half of the cadaver reveals removal of reproductive organs...Both legs broken at the knee, and healing, light lash marks on the upper back and shoulders...

The door opens and a police officer enters, handing a sheet of paper to Millard and speaking to him briefly. Millard reads the sheet and hands it to Harry, who then hands it to Lee.

LEE

(reading)
Bingo.

He hands it to Bucky.

The note: "Girl ID'd as Elizabeth Ann Short, DOB 7/29/24, Medford, Mass."

The coroner steps back from the table.

CORONER

Questions?

RUSS MILLARD

What's your best guess?

CORONER

Here's what she wasn't. She wasn't raped, she wasn't pregnant, dried semen indicates voluntary intercourse within the last week...She took what I'd call a gentle whipping in the last ten days...In terms of the nitty-gritty...She was probably tortured with a knife for thirty-six to forty-eight hours before death. The cause of which is either the mouth wound or more likely she was beaten to death with something like a baseball bat.

LEE

What about her insides?

CORONER

They came out after death. Then I'd say he drained the blood from the body and washed it clean, probably in a bathtub.

LEE

Did the guy know anything about medicine or anatomy?

CORONER

Maybe. Probably not a surgeon type--but that doesn't rule out veterinary training, biological training, or my Pathology for Beginners class at UCLA. Has she got a name yet?

The cops look to each other, hesitant to speak her name.

RUSS MILLARD

Elizabeth Short.

CORONER

(saluting heaven)
God love you, Elizabeth.

(to Millard)
Russell, when you get the son of a bitch
who did this to her, give him a kick in
the balls and tell him it's from
Frederick D. Newbarr, M.D. Now all of you
get out of here, I've got a date with a
jumper suicide in ten minutes.

INT. CENTRAL DIVISION BULLPEN - LATER

Jack Tierney posts mug shots of Elizabeth Short as Russ,
Harry, Lee and Bucky look over his shoulder. (In the
background we can hear the by-now constant droning of Ellis
Loew to reporters, both in person and over the phone)

CAPTAIN JACK

Cops popped her in '43. Santa Barbara.
Underage drinking. Other than that she's
clean. Four sisters. Parents divorced.
Father's here in LA. Hear he sold some
old portrait photos of her to the Herald.

Russ makes a noise of disgust.

RUSS MILLARD

How many confessions so far?

CAPTAIN JACK

Eighteen.

RUSS MILLARD

Double that by morning. More if Loew got
the press excited with his purple prose.

LOEW

(he's been eavesdropping)
I'd say my prose fits the crime,
Lieutenant.

Reveal Loew with Koenig and Fritz Vogel behind him.

RUSS MILLARD

Too much publicity is a hindrance, Ellis.
If you were a policeman you'd know that.

Loew flushes and gives Millard a dark look.

ELLIS LOEW

(to Tierney)
Captain have you sent men to talk to the
victim's father?

CAPTAIN JACK

Not yet, Ellis.

ELLIS LOEW

How about Vogel and Koenig?

Tierney looks to Millard. The second in command shakes his head ever so slightly. We understand that even though he's second in command to Jack he's in charge.

CAPTAIN JACK

Aaah, Russ, who do you think we should send?

CUT TO:

EXT. WILSHIRE DISTRICT - DUSK

A garage apartment at the rear of a big Victorian house. Lee and Bucky amble up and ring the buzzer.

A skinny man (CLEO SHORT) in his fifties opens the door, eyeing them narrowly.

CLEO SHORT

Cops, huh?

He leads them inside. The apartment resembles its resident, soiled, worn and ugly.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

I've got an alibi, just in case you think I did it. Tighter than a crab's ass, and that is air tight.

The two cops sit down, sizing up his hostility.

BUCKY

I'm Detective Bleichert, Mr. Short. This is Sergeant Blanchard. We'd like to express our condolences for the loss of your daughter.

CLEO SHORT

I know who you are. Neither of you'da lasted a round with Gentleman Jim Jeffries.

(beat) As for Betty, c'est la vie. She called the tune, she paid the piper.

(beat) You wanna hear my alibi?

LEE

Since you're so anxious to tell it.

CLEO SHORT

Johnny on the spot at my job. Twenty-seven straight hours. Refrigerator repairman. Twenty-seven straight and the last seventeen overtime. Call my boss. He'll alibi me up tighter than a popcorn fart, and that's air tight.

BUCKY

When was the last time you saw your daughter?

CLEO SHORT

Betty came west in '43 with stars in her eyes. I promised her three squares and a five-spot if she kept the house tidy.

The cops look around at the squalor.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

Gave her the boot in July. She moved to Santa Barbara. Sent me a postcard couple weeks later. Some soldier beat her up bad. Last I heard from her.

BUCKY

Was that soldier her boyfriend?

The old man lets out a hoot.

CLEO SHORT

They were all her boyfriends! Not so ugly and wearing a uniform, can't go wrong there. Betty believed in quantity before quality.

LEE

You calling your own daughter a tramp?

CLEO SHORT

Got five daughters. One bad apple ain't so bad.

Lee's about to burst. Bucky motions for him to take a walk. Lee goes through the den into the bathroom. From his view Bucky can see Lee chase a couple pills with a glass of water...

BUCKY

Any names, Mr. Short?

CLEO SHORT

Tom, Dick, Harry. Don't matter.
(he drifts for a moment)
Said she was looking for movie work
but...just paraded the Boulevard in those
black get-ups of hers.

Lee returns to the room.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

Who wouldn't get herself killed doin'
that? Who? Who wouldn't?

EXT. CLEO SHORT'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

The two men walk out, disgusted.

LEE

Jesus fuck. We just got handed the entire
U.S. Armed forces as suspects.

BUCKY

Flip to see who writes it up?

LEE

I'm staking Nash's pad for the night. See
if we get any strange drive-bys at the
murder sight. Do me a favor and drop in
on Kay. She's worried about me.

BUCKY

She's a smart woman.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bucky opens the front door to find Kay reading a book on the
couch. She doesn't even look up.

KAY

Hi, Dwight.

BUCKY

How'd you know it was me?

KAY

Lee stomps, you tread lightly.

Bucky appreciates her subtext.

BUCKY

Lee's--

KAY

Let me guess...Lee's up all night--
probably on Benzedrine again--working
that poor girl's murder--

She says this as fact, not judgement. She knows him.

KAY

You're worried about him. And he's
worried about me.

(beat)

But who's worried about you? Is that left
for me?

BUCKY

No need for that.

KAY

For such a cautious man you're quite a
hardcase.

BUCKY

It's just...He's done a lot for me.

Kay smiles, sweeps her arms around the perfect living room as
if to reinforce to Bucky all Lee's done for her.

The point is not lost on him.

She crosses to him and kisses him softly on the cheek.

KAY (cont'd)

Good night.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bucky sits at their kitchen table, eating a ham sandwich with
a glass of milk and filling out the police reports.

INT. THE HOMICIDE BULLPEN - MORNING

Bucky walks in reading the Herald front page: A picture of
Elizabeth Short in a striking black dress. Underneath:"The
Black Dahlia".

He stops at a room where two detectives are sorting through
a steamer trunk full of letters and assorted personal effects.

RUSS MILLARD (O.S.)

(re trunk)

Found it in storage down at the railway.

Carbons of mash notes to sailors.
Hundreds of 'em.

Bucky shows him the newspaper.

RUSS MILLARD

Thank our friend Bevo Means at the Herald. Bevo's painting Betty and her black dress like some actress in that Alan Ladd movie, The Blue Dahlia. Should triple our confessions.

BUCKY

Great.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)
Hollywood will fuck you when no else will. What do you think?

BUCKY

I think I want to go back to Warrants.

RUSS MILLARD

No dice. You're a bright penny and I want you here.

(hands him a piece of paper)
Betty's last known residences and KA's. Go to University Station and pick up Bill Koenig. Fritzie's sick. Keep Bill on a tight leash, and you write the report because Billy's practically illiterate.

BUCKY

Lieutenant--

RUSS MILLARD

Call me Russ and get out of here.

Millard gestures for him to leave.

EXT. AN APARTMENT HOUSE - LATER

Bucky and Koenig walk up to the steps of an apartment house.

BUCKY

How do you want to play this, Sarge?

KOENIG

Fritzie usually does the talking and I stand back up.

(re a leather sap in his belt)
Muscle job?

BUCKY

Let's try talk job.

Bucky checks names on the doorbells against a couple names on his piece of paper. He stops at "S. Saddon".

INT. THE HALLWAY UPSTAIRS - LATER

Bucky knocks on the door.

BUCKY

Miss Saddon?

A young woman dressed in a metallic Egyptian costume opens the door.

SHERYL

You the driver from RKO?

BUCKY

Police.

The woman shuts the door. Seconds later the TOILET FLUSHES. She returns and opens it again.

SHERYL

If this is about those jaywalking--

BUCKY

It's about Elizabeth Short.

SHERYL

I did all this on the phone this morning. Nine thousand questions about Betty's nine thousand boyfriends and I don't remember any of the names. Can I go now? The extras truck is due any minute.

BUCKY

How about you sit dawn and answer my questions or I bust you for the reefer you flushed.

She lets him in and sits defiantly.

BUCKY (cont'd)

First question. Does a...

(re to his paper)

Linda Martin or a Marjorie Graham live here?

SHERYL

That's Betty's other place. DeLongpre and Orange.

BUCKY

She moved around quite a bit. You know why? Was somebody threatening her?

SHERYL

Betty's problem wasn't enemies. It was too many friends.

BUCKY

I've gathered that. Let's change the subject.

SHERYL

How 'bout "the world of high finance"?

BUCKY (cont'd)

How about movies? You girls are all tryin' to break in, right?

SHERYL

(re her extras costume)
I'm in mister.

BUCKY

Congratulations. What about Betty?

SHERYL

Maybe once. Maybe not. 'Round Thanksgiving she showed up bragging about gettin' her big break...Had one of those viewfinders around her neck? But who knows where she really got it. Betty had a tendency to--

BUCKY

...stretch the truth?

SHERYL

Lie.

A CAR HORN HONKS. Bucky walks to the window and looks outside: A FLATBED TRUCK FULL OF CLEOPATRAS waits.

BUCKY

Your ride's here--

But she's already gone.

INT. THE CAR - MOVING - HOLLYWOOD - CONTINUOUS

They cruise to the next address.

KOENIG

What'd the cooze say 'bout me?

Bucky just stares at him; the guy's an idiot.

EXT./INT. DELONGPRE APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Two men lounge on the stoop. Koenig gives them the eye as he passes.

Bucky checks his piece of paper against the doorbells again. Finds "M. Graham" but no Linda Martin.

KOENIG

I'm bored.

BUCKY

This'll just take a minute.

KOENIG

I'm gonna take those two guys outside.
Maybe they knew the cooze--

BUCKY

I'll handle 'em Sarge--

KOENIG

No! I'm gonna do it! (beat) Now what do I
roust 'em about?

BUCKY

I dunno. Ask 'em anything. Alibis. See if
Betty ever engaged in prostitution...

Koenig goes running outside. Bucky shakes his head.

INT. A COMMUNAL SITTING ROOM - LATER

Marjorie Graham sits on a couch with a dog-eared back issue
of Photoplay in her hands. She's mild but well-traveled.

MARJORIE

...Betty had this gift, you see. She was
so sweet and eager to please...a bit
dumb, maybe. But she'd do anything to be
liked, become whatever you wanted her to
be. She'd walk like you, or talk like
you...but she wasn't...she was still her.

BUCKY

Did she ever tell you she was in a movie?
Sometime around November?

MARJORIE

Sure. She had this viewfinder and showed
it around to all the guys. Said it was
from the director. A co-starring role.

BUCKY

Did she say what it was?

MARJORIE

Once she said it was for Fox. Another
time Paramount. I think she was just
fibbing. You know, for the boys.

BUCKY

Do you remember the names of any of the
guys?

MARJORIE

Don and Harold--sitting outside. She
dated both of 'em once or twice. Other
than that...I just...didn't really pay
attention to who she was with.

Marjorie looks down, fidgeting.

BUCKY

What is it? You can tell me.

MARJORIE

Well...Right before she moved out...I saw
her and Linda...

BUCKY

Linda Martin?

MARJORIE

Yeah. Her and Linda Martin--talking to
this older woman up on the Boulevard. She
had a man's suit and short hair like a
man...Only that one time...

BUCKY

Are you saying the woman was a lesbian?

Marjorie nods yes.

Bucky's about to press her for more when Bill Koenig barges

in, all sweaty.

KOENIG

Them guys talked. Said the stiff peddled her twat when she got strapped bad. I called it in. Mr. Loew said to keep it zipped cuz it don't look as good.

Bucky looks at Marjorie. Back to Koenig.

BUCKY

Take their statements, Bill. I've got a little more here.

Bill disappears back to the porch.

BUCKY (cont'd)
Linda Martin's room?

INT. LINDA MARTIN'S ROOM - LATER

Bucky pushes open the room and finds it empty. He checks the closet. Empty.

Bucky runs his hand under the bed. Finds something and pulls it out. A small red vinyl purse. He opens the purse. Inside is an ID. He shows it to Marjorie.

MARJORIE

That's her. God...She's only fifteen.

BUCKY

(re card)
Lorna Martikova. Omaha, Nebraska.
Runaway. When'd you see her last?

MARJORIE

This morning. I told her I'd called the police to come talk to us about Betty. Was that the wrong thing to do?

BUCKY

You couldn't have known.

EXT. THE APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

Bucky emerges. Koenig stands on the stoop with the two men, both of whom look like they might have seen the wrong end of Koenig's less-than-subtle interrogation style.

KOENIG

(re the men)

They didn't do it.

BUCKY

No shit Sherlock.

INT. AN ANONYMOUS CASTING OFFICE - DAY

Clapsticks come down in front of the camera: "Elizabeth Short...Screen Test #1."

Elizabeth Short sits on a tiny chair in a cheap office. She's dressed for an audition, overly made up and nervous.

MAN (O.S.)

Your name please?

ELIZABETH SHORT

Elizabeth Short. Betty. Beth...Elizabeth.

MAN (O.S.)

Relax, Elizabeth.

She nods, can't relax.

ELIZABETH SHORT

Sorry. Can we try it again?

MAN (O.S.)

We haven't even started yet.

ELIZABETH SHORT

Oh.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOLLYWOOD STATION - LATER

Bucky fills out forms.

VOICE OVER

I used a Warrant cops special prerogative and issued an APB on Lorna Martikova aka Linda Martin. I wrote up my day's report, omitting Marjorie Graham's lead on the old dyke. I didn't need Ellis Loew quashing it along with the skinny on Betty as the part-time prostie.

EXT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bucky pulls up in front of the house. Heads inside...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

To be honest, I'd pretty much overdosed on Betty Short's low-rent last months on earth and decided to kiss off the rest of the day and head to Lee and Kay's for a sandwich.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UPS OF BLACK DAHLIA CRIME SCENE PHOTOS

spread out on Lee and Kay's dining room table.

Bucky stands just inside the door watching Lee study the photos, Kay a pace or two back, smoking nervously. Neither of them seem to notice him. Finally Kay sees him:

KAY

Hi, Dwight.

LEE

(wired)

It ain't a random job. Horseshit. Guy who did this...hated her. Bad. Wanted the whole goddamn world to know. Babe, you took pre-Med, whattya think? Mad doctor?

KAY

Lee, Dwight's here.

LEE

Oh, hey partner. Bucky listen to Kay. Babe's got ideas. Good stuff--

KAY

This kind of theorizing's nonsense, but I'll give you a theory if you'll eat something to calm yourself down.

LEE

Theory on, teach.

KAY

Well. Just a guess. But maybe there were two killers. Because the torture cuts are crude, while the bisection and the cut on the abdomen are neat and clean...

CLOSE ON: Lee's face, somehow both intense and unfocused...

VOICE OVER

Three days 'til Bobby De Witt hit LA.

Three days since we killed four men.

BACK ON: BUCKY, who turns on his heels and exits, catching Kay's eye as he goes.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Maybe nobody cared. Maybe they cared too much.

EXT. 39TH AND NORTON - DUSK - LATER

Bucky cruises by the crime scene. Rubberneckers gawk around the vacant lot while vendors peddle greasy food and cheap portrait glossies of the Dahlia in a black dress.

INT. CENTRAL DIVISION BULLPEN - BUCKY'S DESK - NIGHT

Bucky sits at his desk staring at RAYMOND NASH'S MUGSHOT.

HIS EYES DRIFT TO:

A WAGER POOL SIGN-UP LIST POSTED ON THE WALL: a crude felt craps table with various betting spaces: "Solved--2 to 1", "Random Sex Job--4 to 1", "Uhsolved--Even Money", "Boyfriend(s)--1 to 4"...

Next to it are TWO HALVES OF A BLACK DRESS on separate hangers...a crude joke.

Bucky opens up his desk drawer and drops the Nash mugshot inside. He dials the phone:

BUCKY
Administrative Vice Squad?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE SWANK SPOT LOUNGE - THE VALLEY - NIGHT

Bucky pulls his car up to a low-slung building with a log-cabin facade and swinging Western doors. He enters.

INT. THE SWANK SPOT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

A dimly lit LESBIAN BAR. Butch women in GI khakis mix with soft girls in cashmere skirt suits.

Bucky approaches a bartender. The woman sizes him up and slides him a whiskey.

BARTENDER
Beverage Control?

BUCKY

(downing the whiskey)
LAPD Homicide.

BARTENDER

Who got snuffed?

Bucky slides her a photo of the Dahlia and Linda Martin's ID.

BUCKY

Seen either of 'em?

BARTENDER

Huh. The Dahlia's a sister?

BUCKY

You tell me.

BARTENDER

Never seen her 'cept in the papers. And the little schoolgirl twist I've never seen. We don't truck with underaged stuff. Capice?

BUCKY

Capice when your girls tell me that.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BAR - SOON AFTER

as the photos are passed from patron to patron. Aside from a few raised eyebrows over the Dahlia, nothing to indicate anyone knows anything.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A DIFFERENT LESBIAN BAR - LATER

This time an Olde English motif. Bucky sips another free whiskey as a dozen more women pass the photos around. Bucky watches their reactions closely but doesn't see anything out of the ordinary.

He takes another shot of whiskey and heads out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAVERNE'S HIDEWAY - LATER

A tropical motif. Faux bamboo wrap-around booths shield women

snuggled deep into the dark corners.

A bit buzzed and embarrassed to have to go booth to booth and break up couples, Bucky slowly makes his way around the bar with the two photos. More of the same...

He approaches a woman polishing glasses at the bar. Slides over the photos.

BUCKY

Black Dahlia.

BARTENDER

No shit.

He taps a finger onto Linda Martin's ID.

BUCKY

What about this girl?

The bartender picks up the card and squints at it. Bucky sees a flicker of recognition in her eyes. She hesitates--

BARTENDER

Never seen her.

He leans over the counter.

BUCKY

Don't you fuckin' lie to me. She's fifteen fucking years old. So you come clean or I slap a contributing beef on you, and you spend the next five years servin' raisinjack to bulldykes in Tehachapi.

The bartender looks again at the ID card.

BARTENDER

A couple times. Two, three months ago. Just to cadge drinks off the sisters, though. She liked boys, I'm sure. And not the Dahlia. Never.

Out of his peripheral vision Bucky sees another woman just starting to sit down on a bar stool but at the last minute, change her mind and make for the door.

A baby spotlight catches her face; a fleeting resemblance to Elizabeth Short.

Bucky takes a deep breath, counts to ten and then goes out

after the woman.

EXT. THE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The woman gets into a beautiful snow-white Packard.

CUT TO:

SHOTS OF VARIOUS STREETS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

as Bucky tails the white Packard from three car-lengths back. He follows her all the way from the Valley to Hancock Park.

CUT TO:

EXT. MUIRFIELD ROAD - HANCOCK PARK - NIGHT

As the woman parks her car in front of A HUGE TUDOR MANSION, Bucky cruises by, catching her license plate and writing it on a pack of matches from LaVerne's.

In his rear view mirror he sees her exit the car, a striking figure in a sharkskin suit. He watches her walk up the enormous lawn and into the home.

EXT. A PAY PHONE - MINUTES LATER

Bucky reads the license plate into the phone. He receives information back and writes it onto the matchbook, as well.

INT. BUCKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bucky lies in his bed, staring at the ceiling. His bedside light reveals a still life: Elizabeth Short's mug shot photo tucked underneath the matchbook. The cover is flipped open and we can see written: "Madeleine Cathcart Sprague".

INT. BUCKY'S CAR - MORNING

Bucky's listening to The Dexter Gordon quartet on the radio when the tune is interrupted by a feverish voice:

ANNOUNCER

We interrupt our regular broadcast to bring you a bulletin. A major suspect in the investigation of Elizabeth Short, the raven-haired beauty known as the Black Dahlia, has been captured! Red Manley, a Huntington Park hardware salesman and one of the last men to be seen with the Dahlia, was captured early this morning.

Currently being held at Hollenback
Station--

Bucky takes a quick left down another street.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLLENBACK STATION JAIL - LATER

Bucky runs into Lee as he enters the station.

LEE

Dahlia left San Diego six days before we found her. Dago cops got a witness puts her in a tan Dodge with a partial plate ident. Finally got a cross-check that matched on Red here.

INT. OUTSIDE THE INTERROGATION ROOM - CONT.

Seems like every cop in town has jammed themselves into a small corridor, watching Russ Millard interrogate RED MANLEY through a one way mirror. Manley is carrot-topped, 25, and scared shitless.

Millard's soothing voice can be heard through speakers.

MILLARD

Like I said, Robert. We're doing this because you didn't come forward.

RED MANLEY

I've told it three times now. I didn't want my wife to know I was chipping her.

MILLARD

But you said you didn't chip on her. Betty wouldn't put out. That's no reason to hide from the police.

RED MANLEY

I dated her down in Dago. I slow-danced with her. It's the same thing as chipping.

MILLARD

And you wanted to fuck her, didn't you?

RED MANLEY

I wanted...to test my loyalty to my wife.

MILLARD

Come on, son!

RED MANLEY

I wanted to fuck her. Yes.

MILLARD

But she cock-teased you.

RED MANLEY

She said she had her period--

All of the cops outside laugh.

RED MANLEY

Said the father of her child would be a combat veteran--

MILLARD

And you were in the Army band. You get angry?

RED MANLEY

I told you. I didn't kill her.

MILLARD

You drove her back to LA with you on...December tenth? And dropped her at the Biltmore Hotel?

RED MANLEY

I've told it how many ways? How many more ways do you want to hear it?

Millard straightens up and turns to the one-way mirror. He tugs at the knot of his tie. Soon after he slips out of the room and Harry Sears slips in.

Bucky turns to Lee.

BUCKY

Welcome back to earth, partner.

LEE

Your fault, really. After you left Kay slipped me a Mickey. Slept for seventeen hours.

BUCKY

Your fault for buying her all those chemistry classes.

LEE

Learn anything interesting?

BUCKY

No.

LEE

(re the interrogation)
Now you'll see why Russ keeps Harry
around.

INT. THE INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME

Harry circles Red Manley, lightly tapping a metal-studded sap
in his hand.

LEE

(re the sap)
Russ's only rule. No actual hitting.

BACK INSIDE THE INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME

Harry leans close to Red, tapping the sap on the table. His
stutter completely gone.

HARRY SEARS

You wanted some fresh gash, and you
thought Betty was easy. You came on
strong and that didn't work. You offered
her money. She told you she was on the
rag, and that was the final straw. You
wanted to make her bleed for real--

RED MANLEY

No no no. Not Betty--

Harry SMASHES the sap onto a glass ashtray, shattering it.
Red bites down on his lip, cutting it.

HARRY SEARS

You plied Betty with drinks, got her to
talk about her old boyfriends and came on
like a pal, like the nice little corporal
willing to leave Betty to the real men,
the men who saw combat--

RED MANLEY

No--

Harry SMASHES the table again.

HARRY SEARS

You took her to a toolshed, maybe one of

those abandoned warehouses out by the old Ford plant in Pico-Rivera. There was some twine and lots of cutting tools lying around, and you got a hard-on...

RED MANLEY

No no no--

Again Harry smashes the table. Red almost topples his chair backwards out of fear, only Harry's hand on the back slats keeping it from going over...

HARRY SEARS

Yes, Reddy, yes. You thought of every girl who said "I don't suck", every time your mommy spanked you, every evil eye you got from real soldiers when you played your trombone in the army band.

RED MANLEY

No--

HARRY SEARS (cont'd)

Goldbrick, needle-nick, pussy-whipped--

RED MANLEY

No--

HARRY SEARS

That's what Betty had to pay for wasn't it?

RED MANLEY

No, please! God as my witness!

HARRY SEARS

God hates liars!

Smash!

HARRY SEARS (cont'd)

Tell me, Red! Tell Betty! Tell God!

RED MANLEY

I didn't hurt her--

HARRY SEARS

Tell God!

Harry smashes the sap down the table once more and then hurls the whole thing over onto its side.

Red fumbles out of the chair onto his knees. He clasps his hands together--

RED MANLEY

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...

He begins to weep. Completely broken.

Harry turns to the one way mirror, looking straight out at his audience: self-loathing etched into his flabby, juicehound face.

He gives the thumbs-down sign and walks out of the room.

OUTSIDE IN THE HALLWAY

Russ Millard meets him at the door and leads him away from the general crowd of officers.

BACK IN THE INTERROGATION ROOM

Bucky watches as Lee and another officer handcuff Red and take him outside. Lee has his hand on Red's shoulder like a kindly uncle.

OUTSIDE THE STATION

Bucky stands on the steps, taking fresh air. Russ steps out.

RUSS MILLARD

Good report yesterday, Bleichert.

BUCKY

Thanks.

RUSS MILLARD

What next?

BUCKY

You send me back to Warrants?

RUSS MILLARD

Wrong again. But keep going.

BUCKY

Canvass around the Biltmore. If Red dropped her off there on the tenth maybe we can start reconstructing the last days before she got snatched.

RUSS MILLARD

Bright penny. You're doing well, Bucky.
Run with the ball.

BUCKY

All I know is you should keep an eye on
Loew and his boys.
I didn't put it in my report, but Betty
sold it outright when she needed money
bad enough, and Loew's been trying to
keep it kiboshed so it'll look better if
he ever takes it to trial.

RUSS MILLARD

(smiles)
You calling your boss an evidence
suppressor?

BUCKY

And a grandstanding son of a bitch.

RUSS MILLARD

You're a brighter penny than I thought.
(hands him a sheet of paper)
Betty sightings. Wilshire Division. I
need smart pennies to eliminate the
phonies from the tip sheet.

BUCKY

What are you gonna do?

MILLARD

Keep an eye on the evidence suppressor
son of a bitch and his minions to make
sure they don't try to coerce a
confession out of that innocent man in
the holding tank.

He pats Bucky on the shoulder and walks inside.

CUT TO:

BUCKY CANVASSING THE WILSHIRE DISTRICT

Restaurants, bars, juke joints. Bucky interviews every drunk
on Western and Normandie...

VOICE OVER

Barflies. Daytime juicers...The longer I
listened the more they talked about
themselves, interweaving their sad tales
with the Black Dahlia, who they actually
believed to be a glamorous siren headed

for Hollywood stardom...

Bucky cruises in his car into Lee and Kay's neighborhood.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

It was as if they would have traded their own lives for a juicy front-page death. I decided my report would consist of two words: "All bullshit".

IN FRONT OF LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bucky pulls up just as Kay storms out the door and down the steps, hurling an armful of paper onto the lawn. Lee storms beside her, shouting and waving his arms as they go back inside.

Bucky walks over and kneels down besides the papers: carbons of LAPD report forms, tip sheets, evidence tickets, the autopsy...all with "E. Short" typed at the top.

BUCKY

Oh Jesus.

Kay and Lee come back out again, Kay tossing out more files.

KAY

It's sick and it's insane! After everything...And all that might happen--

LEE

I need this, babe. You know it. I'll rent a room for the stuff but--
(noticing Bucky)
You tell her Bucky. Reason with her.

BUCKY

She's right, Lee. You've pulled at least three misdemeanors here. It's out of control--

Bucky stops himself short, studying Lee's strained face.

BUCKY (cont'd)

(to Kay)

I promised him a week on it. Four more days and it's over.

KAY

Dwight, you can be so gutless sometimes.

She turns on them both and goes back inside. Before Lee can

make a wisecrack Bucky kicks his way through the LAPD papers back to his car...

INT. LAVERNE'S HIDEAWAY - NIGHT

Bucky sits low in his car, watching THE WHITE PACKARD parked near the front of LaVerne's. He's been there awhile...

Finally the woman from the night before exits and heads for her car. He jumps out and walks quickly to intercept her while she's fumbling for her keys.

BUCKY

Slumming, Miss Sprague?

She sighs, exasperated.

MADELEINE

I am now. Daddy spying on me again?

She pulls a wad of cash out of her purse. Switching to a very deft imitation of a Scotchman's burr:

MADELEINE (cont'd)

Maddy, girl, ye shouldn't be congregatin' in such unsuitable places--

BUCKY

I'm a policeman.

MADELEINE

Well that's a new one--

She peels off another bill. Hands it to Bucky. He counts it out. Over a hundred dollars.

BUCKY

Homicide.

He hands the money back.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Let's try Elizabeth Short. Linda Martin.

All of her bravado drops. Bucky sees it immediately. He grabs her purse and keys and tosses them on the hood of her car.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Here or downtown? I know you knew her so don't jerk me off on that or it's downtown and a whole lot of publicity.

She opens the door to her car and slides in. Bucky gets in next to her. By the roof light he can see that her similarity to the Dahlia is more in her clothes and hair, but the resemblance is still there nonetheless.

MADELEINE

(gathering herself)
This is all a fluke. I met them at LaVerne's last fall. Betty maybe one time. Linda a couple. She'd come in to cadge a drink or a meal off a sister.

BUCKY

You sleep with either of them?

MADELEINE

No. Just cocktail lounge chitchat.

BUCKY

Are you lez?

MADELEINE

(Scotchman's burr)
Ye might say I take it where I can find it, laddie.

Bucky's charmed by her, but stays focused.

BUCKY

Why'd you rabbit last night?

MADELEINE

(exasperated)
Mister, my father is Emmett Sprague. The Emmett Sprague. He built half of Hollywood and Long Beach, and what he didn't build he bought. Imagine the headlines. "Tycoon's Daughter Questioned in Black Dahlia Case--Played Footsie with Dead Girl at Lesbian Nightclub". Get the picture?

BUCKY

In Technicolor. (beat) What did you talk about?

MADELEINE

Linda talked about her boring boy back in Hicktown, Nebraska, or wherever. Betty talked about the latest issue of Screen World. Hollywood dreams, the sad nine

yards.

BUCKY

Betty ever tell you about a movie she did? Show you a viewfinder? Anything specific?

MADELEINE

On a conversational level they were right down there with you, only they were better looking.

BUCKY

You're cute.

MADELEINE

You're not. Look, I'm tired. You want to hear my alibi so I can end this farce and go home?

BUCKY

That's all anyone ever wants to volunteer: the alibi. Go ahead.

MADELEINE

My family and I were at our house in Laguna from Sunday through Thursday along with our live-in servants. If you want verification, call Daddy. But be discreet about where we met.

She turns in the seat to face him directly.

MADELEINE (cont'd)

Don't suppose I can convince you to keep my name out of the papers?

BUCKY

I don't need your cash if that's what you're saying.

She touches his leg.

MADELEINE

Ah, Laddie... 'S not what I'm saying...

He knows exactly what she's saying.

BUCKY

Convince me.

MADELEINE

Tomorrow night. Eight o'clock. My address is 482 So. Muirfield.

BUCKY

I know the address.

MADELEINE

Not surprised. Pick me up. Like a gentleman.

He starts to get out of the car.

MADELEINE (cont'd)

One more thing--What's your name?

BUCKY

Bucky Bleichert.

MADELEINE

I'll try to remember.

He pulls the purse off the hood and tosses her the keys. As he walks away he lets out a deep breath, as if he'd been holding it the whole time...

INT. THE SQUAD ROOM - NEXT DAY

Bucky enters and finds Lee at a desk, manning the tip phones.

LEE

Yes, ma'am. I understand. A werewolf and Red Manley. Oh no. The werewolf is Red Manley. Yes that would be more efficient...

Lee dutifully writes down the crank on a routing slip. Bucky slides into a chair across from him, brushing imaginary dust off of the phone in front of him.

Lee rings off. Smiles at Bucky.

LEE (cont'd)

I love tip duty.

BUCKY

So...You smooth things with Kay?

LEE

Yeah. I rented a room for the stuff at the El Nido Motel. Nine scoots a week. Chump change if it makes her feel good.

BUCKY

De Witt gets out tomorrow, Lee. I was thinking maybe I should lean on him. Get Fritz Vogel and Koenig to do it--

Lee swings away in his rotating chair, knocking over a wastepaper basket.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Lee--

The phone in front of Lee rings. He snatches it--

LEE

Blanchard. Homicide.

Lee listens to the call, not saying anything. It goes on for some time. Finally Bucky catches Lee's eye. Lee makes the "looney" sign with his finger.

Bucky's phone rings. He picks it up.

BUCKY

Bleichert. Homicide.

The person on the other line starts rambling on. Bucky takes notes diligently as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE SQUAD ROOM - LATER

Bucky's on another call. His pile of tip sheets and routing slips have grown. Behind him Lee pulls on his jacket and gives Bucky a two-fingered salute as he saunters out.

VOICE OVER

I logged forty-six phone tips, about half of which were reasonably coherent. Lee left early, dodging any talk about De Witt. Ellis Loew stuck me with writing up the summary report, most of which concerned the numerous dead end leads, bogus confessions and three hundred new Dahlia sightings per day. It left me gut certain of one thing:

CUT TO:

A CLOSE UP OF THE BETTING POOL TABLE

as Bucky drops twenty dollars on "Unsolved - pay 2 to 1".

INT. ANOTHER CASTING OFFICE - DAY

Elizabeth Short in another dress, her hair fixed differently. Clapsticks come in again: "Elizabeth Short...Screen Test #2"

MAN #2 (O.S.)

Where are you from?

ELIZABETH SHORT

Boston. Massachusetts.

MAN #2

How long have you lived here?

ELIZABETH SHORT

Two years.

MAN #2

You've lost your accent.

ELIZABETH SHORT

Well, you know, when in Rome...

(looks nervously into camera)

Why? Do you want a girl with an accent?

FADE OUT

EXT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - NIGHT

Bucky rings the bell dressed in his Sunday best blazer. Madeleine answers, a knockout in a skirt and cashmere sweater.

MADELEINE

Look. I hate to pull this, but Daddy has heard about you. He insisted you stay for dinner. I told him we met at that art exhibit at Stanley Rose's Bookshop, so if you have to pump everybody for my alibi, be subtle. All right?

BUCKY

Sure.

She leads him inside.

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Thick Persian carpets, tapestries, giant rooms with a men's club atmosphere.

Next to the fireplace Bucky notices A STUFFED SPANIEL with a yellowed newspaper rolled into its mouth.

MADELEINE

(re the dog)

That's Balto. The paper is the LA Times for August 1, 1926. Balto was bringing in the paper when Daddy's accountant told him he'd made his first million. Daddy wanted to consecrate the moment so he shot him. Here we go--

INT. A SMALL SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Sprague family sits in matching easy chairs. No one stands up.

MADELEINE

Bucky Bleichert. May I present my family. My mother, Ramona Cathcart Sprague. My father, Emmett Sprague. My sister, Martha McConville Sprague.

Emmett Sprague jumps to his feet, pumping Bucky's hand.

BUCKY

A pleasure, Mr. Sprague.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Saw you fight Mondo Sanchez. Boxed the pants off him. Another Billy Conn you were.

BUCKY

Thanks.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Mondo gave a good show. What ever happened to him?

BUCKY

Died of a heroin overdose.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Too bad. Shamed his family. (beat)
Speaking of families--

Both Martha and Ramona stand up. Martha is 19, plain and serious, with a tenacious resemblance to Emmett. (Neither of whom look much like Madeleine.)

Ramona, on the other hand, possesses a pushing-fifty

resemblance to Madeleine combined with the flaccid face and unfocused features of a booze or drug addict.

RAMONA

(trace of a slur)
Madeleine says nice things about you.

MADELEINE

Daddy can we eat? Bucky and I want to catch a nine-thirty show.

INT. THE DINING ROOM - LATER

A black maid serves large portions of corned beef and cabbage.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Dig in, lad. Hearty fare breeds hearty people. Haute cuisine breeds degenerates.

Bucky smiles politely and begins eating.

MARTHA

I want to draw Mr. Bleichert, Daddy.

On Emmett's nod Martha pulls out a small sketch pad.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

You're in for a cruel caricaturing, Bucky. Maddy's my pretty one, but Martha's my certified genius.

A wince from Martha.

EMMETT SPRAGUE (cont'd)
What kind of name is Bleichert? Dutch?

BUCKY

German.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

A great people, the Germans. Hitler was a bit excessive, but mark my words that someday we'll regret not joining forces with him to fight the Reds. I killed a lot of your countrymen during the war.

MARTHA

Did you meet Balto out in the hallway?

BUCKY

Very realistic.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

An old friend stuffed him. We were in the Scots regiment together. Georgie Tilden. He wanted to work in the flickers.

BUCKY

So when did you come here?

EMMETT SPRAGUE

1920. Hollywood was a cow pasture, but the silent flickers was booming. Georgie got work as a lighting man, and me building houses. Georgie got me introduced to Mack Sennett and I helped him build that housing project he was putting up--Hollywoodland--underneath that godawful sign.

BUCKY

I always loved the Keystone Kops.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Old Mack knew how to squeeze a dollar dry, he did. He had extras moonlighting as laborers and vice versa. I used to drive 'em over to Hollywoodland after twelve hours on a Keystone Cops flicker and put in another six hours by torchlight. Even gave me as assistant director credit a couple times, so grateful he was for the way I squeezed his slaves--

A SCREECH interrupts Emmett's monologue. Bucky looks across the table to see Ramona trying to corral a potato with her fork (the source of the sound).

EMMETT SPRAGUE (cont'd)

Mother? Are you feeling well? Would you like to contribute to the conversation?

Ramona forks a small bit of food and chews it daintily.

RAMONA

Did you know, Mr. Bleichert, that Ramona Boulevard was named after me?

BUCKY

No Mrs. Sprague, I didn't.

RAMONA

When Emmett married me for my father's

money he promised my family that he would use his influence with the City Zoning Board to have a street named after me. But all he could manage was a dead-end block in a red light district in Lincoln Heights. Are you familiar with the neighborhood, Mr. Bleichert?

BUCKY

I grew up there.

RAMONA

Then you know that the Mexican prostitutes expose themselves out of windows to attract customers. I hear many of them know Mr. Sprague by name--

Emmett Sprague SLAMS the table. Plates rattle. Silence. Bucky stares into his lap as Madeleine grabs his knee tightly.

RAMONA (cont'd)

I'll sing for my supper when Mayor Bowron comes to dinner, but not for Madeleine's male whores. A common policeman. My God, Emmett. How little you think of me.

She struggles to her feet and leaves the room. Her husband follows.

MADELEINE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

MARTHA

(cheery)
Mr. Bleichert?

Martha tears a piece of paper out of her sketch pad. Bucky takes it as she walks away.

ANGLE ON THE SKETCH:

A caricature of a naked Bucky having sex with Madeleine.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE RED ARROW INN - LATER

A cinderblock auto court filled with pre-war jalopies. The camera closes on a dingy door. Room 11.

INT. THE RED ARROW INN - ROOM 11 - SAME

A single yellow light illuminates the dreary flop as Bucky and Madeleine fuck on the bed.

MADELEINE

I'm so...sorry. Don't hate my family--
don't--they're not so bad--

Bucky grabs her hair--

BUCKY

Not them, me. Do me. Be with me.

Focusing, Madeleine pins Bucky with her knees and pulls him deep into her until they're no longer common policeman and rich girl slut. They're one.

INT. THE RED ARROW INN - ROOM 11 - SAME

They hold each other, sweaty and spent.

BUCKY

Well. I think you kept your name out of
the papers.

MADELEINE

Until we announce the wedding?

BUCKY

Your mother would love that.

MADELEINE

She's a hypocrite. She takes pills the
doctor gives her, so she's not a hophead.
You know how Daddy really made his money?

BUCKY

How?

MADELEINE

He bought rotten lumber and abandoned
movie facades from Mack Sennett and built
houses out of them. He's got firetraps
all over LA registered to phony
corporations...His "good friend" George?
Disfigured in a car crash while running
Daddy some errands. Daddy throws him
scraps now--odd jobs tending some rental
property--

BUCKY

You don't have to tell me this--

MADELEINE

I want to. I like you Bucky.

BUCKY

I like you, too.

She looks at him earnestly.

MADELEINE

Bucky, I didn't tell you all about Betty Short.

BUCKY

Jesus--

MADELEINE

Don't be mad at me. It's nothing. I just don't want to lie to you.

BUCKY

What is it?

MADELEINE

Last summer I was bar-hopping a lot. Straight bars. I heard about a girl who looked like me. I got curious and left notes at a couple places: "Your lookalike wants to meet you", things like that. I left my number. She called. That's how I met her at LaVerne's with Linda.

BUCKY

And that's all of it?

MADELEINE

Yes. That's all of it.

BUCKY

Then be prepared, babe. There's fifty cops out there combing every bar in town looking for Dahlia info. You could be headed for the papers no matter what.

MADELEINE

Serve my family right.

BUCKY

You don't mean that.

MADELEINE

No. I don't.

He strokes her dark hair.

BUCKY

Tell me something. Why'd you want to meet Betty Short?

MADELEINE

I've worked pretty hard to be loose and free. But the way people described Betty. It sounded like she was a natural.

BUCKY

How do you mean?

MADELEINE

Hmmm...She was this poor girl...Came from nothing...But then she carried nothing with her, either. I don't know...when you're rich sometimes you romanticize the poor...

BUCKY

I wouldn't know.

An awkward silence as she considers her foot in her mouth. He studies her for a moment. Pulls her close, kisses her mouth...the arch of her neck...They begin to move together again...

Another LAPD FORM: "Witness Report: Lorna Martikova...aka Linda Martin..."

EXT./INT. BUCKY'S CAR - MOVING

Bucky weaves fast through traffic. He whips a right turn...

EXT. THE CALEDONIA LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Bucky's car screeches into the parking lot just as LINDA MARTIN bursts through the doors and takes off running.

Bucky jumps from the car and sprints after her, the girl clutching an oversized purse to her chest as she dashes in and out of busy traffic.

The girl runs like a fucking antelope as Bucky barely misses being hit by a large BEER TRUCK and gets to the other side of the street just as Linda stumbles over a curb--sending her sprawling on the sidewalk.

Bucky jumps on her, grabbing her tiny fists as she kicks and screams like a hell cat.

He cuffs her and pulls her up, dragging her to where she spilled her purse.

LINDA MARTIN

I'm an emancipated minor and if you touch me without a matron present I'll sue you!

He picks it up her purse. Surprised by the heft, he opens it and pulls out A METAL FILM CAN.

Her demeanor changes instantly to fear:

LINDA MARTIN

(near tears)

Please, mister...My...my parents.

INT. JUVENILE DETENTION HALL - INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Russ, Harry and Bucky sit opposite Linda Martin. She's pretty and small, and about to get smaller...

RUSS MILLARD

...and you don't recall any of the names Betty went out with last fall?

LINDA MARTIN

They were just pickups.

RUSS MILLARD

No one who would do her harm?

The girl thinks hard, shakes her head "no".

BUCKY

You made the casting rounds together. Ever get any movie work?

LINDA MARTIN

No.

BUCKY

So what about the film can?

Her eyes go to the floor, tears begin to drop.

LINDA MARTIN

It's...a movie.

BUCKY

A dirty movie?

She nods her head silently.

RUSS MILLARD

You have to tell us the whole thing,
sweetheart. So think it through.

Harry pours her a paper cup of water. She takes a sip.

LINDA MARTIN

I was...cadging at a bar in Gardena. This
Mexican man - Raoul or Jorge or something
- starting talking to me.

I thought I was pregnant, and I was
desperate wicked bad for money. He said
he'd give me two hundred dollars to act
in a nudie film.

She takes a large gulp of water.

LINDA MARTIN (cont'd)

He said he needed another girl so I asked
Betty. The three of us drove down to
Tijuana and we made the movie at this big
house outside of town. (beat) Then he
drove us back to LA.

Her head bowed. Russ and Harry stare at her impassively.

BUCKY

Was this around Thanksgiving?

She nods yes.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Did the Mex give Betty a viewfinder?

She raises her head in recognition and nods yes.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Did he seem particularly interested in
Betty? Did she see him again?

She shakes her head "no".

BUCKY (cont'd)

But you saw him again, didn't you? How
else could you have gotten a copy?

Linda looks sadly at Bucky.

LINDA MARTIN

After Betty...After I read about

Betty...I went looking for him in Gardena. He was about to go back to Mexico and I conned him out of a print.

RUSS MILLARD

Where was that?

LINDA MARTIN

I don't remember. On Aviation somewhere.

RUSS MILLARD

Why would you do that?

LINDA MARTIN

A Black Dahlia stag film? I thought...I could sell it if I had to. (ashamed) It was...a collector's item.

RUSS MILLARD

And he willingly gave you a copy of the film? For nothing?

LINDA MARTIN

No. Not for nothing.

She looks down again. The cops look at each other. Linda's harder and more desperate than they imagined.

LINDA MARTIN (cont'd)

You'll let me have it back, won't you?
You won't let people look at it?

Now its the cops turn to look away.

EXT. THE HALLWAY - AFTER

Russ and Bucky.

RUSS MILLARD

Whattya think?

BUCKY

I think she's covering on the Mex angle. Maybe she knows him and doesn't want him taking a smut rap. Maybe he's white. The TJ stuff is sound, though. I'd detach Meg Caulfield from Wilshire Clerical to play cellmate for a day.

RUSS MILLARD

Bleichert you are a very bright penny today. (beat) Well. Looks like it's blue

movie night at City Hall.

INT. THE MUSTER ROOM - LATER

A projector and screen has been set up. All the big-wigs are present: Ellis Loew, Jack Tierney, Thad Green and Chief of Police C.B. Horrall. Millard, Harry and Lee.

A clerical assistant threads the projector as Bucky settles into a seat next to Lee. On Lee's lap is a newspaper with the headline: "Boulevard-Citizen's Mastermind to be Released --LA Bound after 8 years of Custody"

LEE

(raggedy)
Gettin' any?

Bucky's about to respond when the lights dim and a blurred image hits the screen. It begins to focus.

A title: "Slave Girls From Hell"

The movie: A big high-ceiling room with Egyptian hieroglyphics on the walls. Pillars shaped like coiled serpents are stationed throughout the room; the camera zooms in for a close-up of two inset plaster snakes swallowing each other's tails. The snakes dissolve into Betty Short, wearing only stockings and doing an inept hoochie koochie dance...

An audible breath in the muster room.

A hand reaches into frame, passing Betty a large cylindrical object: a dildo, scales covering the shaft, fangs extending from the circumcised head. Betty puts it in her mouth, sucks it, eyes wide open and glassy.

An abrupt cut: Linda Martin, naked, lying on a divan. Betty enters the frame with the dildo; she puts it between Linda's legs, pushing it inside her. Linda rotates her hips, trying her best to fake ecstasy instead of pain and sadness.

Another cut: Betty mouthing the words "No, please" to the camera. A hand pushing her head down towards Linda's crotch. Betty tonguing next to the dildo...

BACK ON THE MUSTER ROOM

The atmosphere is somber, but calm. The film continues...

CHIEF HORRALL

Whattya think, Russ? This got anything to do with the girl's murder--

RUSS MILLARD

Long shot, Chief. Harry and I are headed down to TJ tonight. The Mex doesn't play as the killer. But maybe he showed it to someone--

Suddenly Lee jumps up, standing in front of the screen.

LEE

Who gives a fuck if he didn't kill her!
I've sent Boy Scouts to the green room
for less than this!

He yanks down the screen with a crash and storms out of the room. The movie continues on the chalked up blackboard.

INT. THE LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Lee sits on the ground, head in his hands. Bucky enters and sits on a bench next to him.

LEE

Did you see her face, Bucky? Did you see?

BUCKY

Yeah. I did, partner. I did.

Bucky notices Lee's still clutching the De Witt article in his fist. He pries it loose.

Ellis Loew and Russ Millard enter.

ELLIS LOEW

Goddammit, Blanchard! I got you Warrants. You're my man, and you made me look like a fool in front of the two most powerful men in the Department. If you weren't Mr. Fire you'd be suspended from duty already. You've gotten personally involved in the Short case--

BUCKY

(holding up the newspaper)
Mr. Loew, it's not just Betty Short--

ELLIS LOEW

Shut up, Bleichert.
(back to Lee)
You're back on Warrants as of tomorrow. Report to me at 0800 with letters of apology for Green and Horrall. For the

sake of your pension I'd suggest you grovel.

LEE

I want to go to TJ--

ELLIS LOEW

Blanchard!

Poison hangs in the air. Ellis turns on his heels.

INT. THE SQUADRON - DAY

Bucky sits in his cubicle searching the Dahlia files. The clock behind him reads "12:30". Loew approaches.

ELLIS LOEW

You've been skating around all morning, Bleichert. Vogel and Koenig went to Tijuana an hour ago so I need you to check out a radio car and get out there.

BUCKY

Yes, sir.

ELLIS LOEW

And if you see that phantom partner of yours, tell him this no-show's gonna cost him three days pay.

Loew walks off. Bucky dials the phone.

MADELEINE (VO)

Hello.

BUCKY

It's me. You want to get together?

MADELEINE (VO)

When?

BUCKY

I'll pick you up in forty-five minutes.

MADELEINE (VO)

Not at the house. Daddy's having a business soiree. The Red Arrow.

BUCKY

I have an apartment, you know.

MADELEINE (VO)

Room 11. Forty-five minutes.

She hangs up.

INT. RED ARROW MOTEL - ROOM 11 - LATER

They lie naked in the bed. Bucky's lost in thought.

MADELEINE

Smile at me. Look soft and sweet.

He looks anything but.

BUCK

They picked up Linda Martin yesterday.
She had a stag film of her and Betty
Short playing lez. Spooky stuff.

Madeleine sits up.

MADELEINE

Did she mention me?

BUCKY

No. And I checked through the case file.
There's no mention of that note-leaving
number you pulled. (beat) Babe, I'm
withholding evidence for you. It's a fair
trade for what I'm getting, but it still
shakes me. Is there anything you haven't
told me about Betty and Linda?

She runs her fingers down his ribcage, teasing his boxing
scars.

MADELEINE

Sugar, Betty and I made love once, that
one time we met last summer. I just did
it to see what it would be like to do it
with someone who looked like me and--

BUCKY

Jesus Christ.

He jumps from the bed and pulls on his pants.

MADELEINE

Bucky that's it, I swear. Please stay--

He pulls on his shirt, his handcuffs and his .38. Grabs his
jacket--

MADELEINE (cont'd)

Stay sugar stay--

--and slams the door on the way out.

INT. THE POLICE CRUISER - LATER

Bucky steamed in the car. He flips on the police radio, looking for distraction. Instead he gets:

RADIO DISPATCHER

Code four all units at Crenshaw and
Stocker. Two dead, suspect dead, Raymond
Douglas Nash, warrant number--

EXT. A KOREAN GROCERY - MINUTES LATER

RAYMOND NASH lies dead on the sidewalk. Off to one side, a short and wiry cop is describing for detectives how it all went down, pantomiming how he shot an escaping Raymond Nash.

Bucky stands over Nash, staring at his dead features. He walks inside.

INT. A KOREAN GROCERY - CONTINUOUS

Bucky's POV:

A robbery gone bad. A sixty-year old Korean shopowner lies dead behind the counter and his teenaged son lies dead in an aisle. Blood and green linoleum.

INT. THE SQUAD ROOM - SOON AFTER

Bucky bursts into the squad room, seeing red.

BUCKY

Blanchard!

A cop walking through the bullpen points to the bathroom.

INT. THE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bucky kicks in the door, finding Lee washing his hands in the sink. He holds his hands up to Bucky, blood oozes from Lee's knuckles.

LEE

I beat up a wall. Penance for Nash.

BUCKY

Not good enough.

Bucky steps into Lee with fists flying, a mad demon. He smashes him again and again, beating his only friend until Lee slides senseless to the floor...

INT. BUCKY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bucky drinks bourbon straight, his wrist heavily bandaged.

VOICE OVER

Losing the first Bleichert-Blanchard fight got me local celebrity, Warrants, and close to nine grand in cash; winning the rematch got me a sprained wrist, two dislocated knuckles and the rest of the day off. Whoever said winning isn't everything got that part right.

EXT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Bucky walks into the house and finds Kay there. She holds up a newspaper: The front page includes The Black Dahlia, Junior Nash, and Bobby De Witt.

KAY

(eyes red from crying)
We're famous, Dwight.

BUCKY

Notorious, maybe. Where's Lee?

KAY

I haven't seen him since you beat him up.

Bucky looks ashamed.

KAY (cont'd)

I don't blame you.

He walks to her and she holds him.

BUCKY

He's in trouble, you know.

She nods. He strokes her hair.

BUCKY (cont'd)

De Witt's probably in LA by now. If Lee doesn't show up by tonight I'll come over to stay with you.

KAY

I don't want you coming over here just to sleep on the couch again.

BUCKY

Kay. Lee--

She holds up a hand, waving him off. She knows all this.

KAY

You know Dwight? Fighting, cops, guns. To most people--that's the scary stuff. Not everything else.

She knows him to the core. She steps back, holding his hands.

KAY (cont'd)

Luck.

BUCKY

Short of winning?

KAY

Luck.

INT. POLICE STATION - BUCKY'S CUBICLE - LATER

Bucky's on the phone.

BUCKY

Thank you very much.

He rings off looking very disturbed as Russ and Harry arrive.

BUCKY (cont'd)

What happened in TJ?

HARRY SEARS

Checked for the smut pad. Goose egg. Peddlers--double goose egg--

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky. Blanchard's in Tijuana. A border cop spotted him hobnobbing with a bunch of rough-looking Rurales last night.

Bucky exhales hard.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

What is it?

BUCKY

(re his phone call)

That was County Parole. Bobby DeWitt bought a bus ticket at the Santa Rosa depot this morning. San Diego. Transfer Tijuana.

EXT. TIJUANA - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAWN

Bucky cruises the Tijuana streets: child beggars dig for breakfast in trash cans, taco vendors stir pots of dog-meat stew, sailors and marines stumble out of whorehouses. Rurales drive prewar Chevys wearing black uniforms...

VOICE OVER

Back in LA, Linda Short let slip that her "Mex" was actually a local named Walter Wellington, who copped to making the film but quickly provided the cops his alibi for the Dahlia's missing days.

Bucky parks at a big pink Art Deco hotel (The Divisidero).

INT. THE DIVISIDERO - CONTINUOUS

Bucky badges the desk clerk and gets a room number. He heads upstairs.

VOICE OVER

Not that this stopped Loew and his boys from rousting spics all over town for a possible Dahlia frame-up. The circus was becoming a farce.

INT. A DIVISIDERO HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ellis Loew, Fritz Vogel, and Bill Koenig arguing.

ELLIS LOEW

We can't do that! Wellington told Tierney he made the pic--

Bucky opens the door and the room falls quiet.

ELLIS LOEW (cont'd)

Bleichert.

BUCKY

Lee's down here and so is Bobby De Witt.

ELLIS LOEW

Fuck Blanchard. He's suspended.

Bucky charges the DA but Vogel and Koenig intercept him,

pushing him roughly back out in the hall. Loew retreats to the other side of the room.

VOGEL

You know what, kid? I got a soft spot in my heart for light heavyweights.

(chucks his chin)

You promise not to hit Billy and I'll help you look for your partner.

(re Bucky's ragged appearance)

I'll drive. You look like shit.

EXT. THE TIJUANA STREETS - VARIOUS SHOTS

Bucky and Fritz Vogel drive past beggars swarming tourists, hookers dispensing front seat blow jobs, zoot suit youths prowling for drunks to roll...

EXT. THE TIJUANA STREETS - VARIOUS SHOTS

The two men park the car in the middle of a car-choked street and decide to try walking. They're immediately swallowed up by kid beggars shoving crucifixes in their faces.

Bucky tosses handfuls of coins into the gutters and the children scatter, squabbling over the coins.

IN THE BACKGROUND

Fritz Vogel approaches a Rurale and talks to him. The Rurale nods yes, gesturing down an alley to a squat cinderblock building.

CUT TO:

INT. A FILTHY MEXICAN JAIL - SOON AFTER

Vogel and Bucky walk quickly down a corridor lined with empty cells. A Mexican jailer unlocks the last cell and the two cops walk in to face

BOBBY DEWITT

the hatchet-faced tough of 1939 now a grizzled and bloated well-used piece of work. He stands up, full of con bravado.

DEWITT

Cops, huh? Well at least you're American. Never thought I'll be glad to see you guys.

VOGEL

Why start now?

Vogel kicks in the balls, dropping him to his knees. Vogel smashes him with a thick backhand across the face.

CUT TO:

BUCKY HANDCUFFING BOBBY DEWITT TO A CHAIR

Vogel stands over him.

VOGEL

Lee Blanchard's here in TJ, and you came here flush out of Big Q. That's a goddamned strange coincidence and I don't like it. I don't like you and I don't like being down in this rat-infested country when I could be home with my family.

DeWitt pisses his pants.

VOGEL (cont'd)

Did you know Blanchard was in TJ?

DEWITT

Ain't seen Blanchard since my fuckin' trial.

Vogel smashes him across the face.

VOGEL

Do not use profanity with me, and address me as sir.

DeWitt's head bobs up and down.

VOGEL (cont'd)

Now Blanchard's scared of you. Why?

DEWITT

Man o Manieschewitz, what a laugh. Lee beauty gotta be scared of me 'cause of how I flapped my trap at trial, but all I know is what I read in the papers. Maybe I was thinkin' revenge, maybe talkin' trash to my cellies, but when Lee beauty killed them niggers--

Vogel topples DeWitt with a right hook and then picks him back up by the neck, squeezing the life out of him.

VOGEL

Bobby boy I do not like Sergeant Blanchard but he is a fellow officer and I will not have syphilitic scum like you defaming him. Now you risked a parole violation for a trip down here.

He lets go of his neck, the color returning to DeWitt's face.

VOGEL (cont'd)

Why are you here, Bobby. You tell me.

DEWITT

(a beaten dog)

I came down to cop some heroin and move it back to LA. I'm meeting a guy, Felix Casco, at the Gardena Motel. Please. Don't hurt me no more. Please.

Vogel claps his hands together, gleeful with this bonus bust.

VOGEL

(heading out of the cell)

I'm gonna call Ellis.

Bucky turns back to De Witt, who's much more relaxed now that Vogel's left the cell.

BUCKY

Finish up with you and Blanchard.

DEWITT

Sir, all that's between me and Blanchard is that I fucked this cunt Kay Lake--

IN SLOW MOTION--

Bucky leaps on De Witt, grabbing him around the neck and choking him. De Witt turns blue, his eyes bulging out--

BEHIND BUCKY, VOICES IN SPANISH

and then hands on his shoulders as Ducky is hurled backwards into the cell bars. And then

BLACKNESS

which slowly becomes grey, and then back to normal as Bucky finds himself awakening on the floor of the cell.

Refocusing on the scene:

Two Rurales in jodhpur boots pick their teeth with matchsticks as Fritz Vogel pulls Bucky to his feet.

BUCKY

How long--

VOGEL

I let Bobby boy go so we could tail him to his pal. But he blew his tail while you were catching up on your beauty sleep, which is too bad for him.

CUT TO:

A STUDEBAKER PATROL CAR WITH LIGHTS FLASHING

INSIDE THE STUDEBAKER

Vogel, Koenig, a Rurale, and Bucky (holding a piece of ice to the back of his head).

The car arrives at a horseshoe-shaped auto court. Two Mexican policeman stand guard outside one of its rooms.

INT. THE MOTEL ROOM - SECONDS LATER

As the American cops walk in on a cordite-reeking slaughterhouse. Bobby De Witt and a Mexican man lay dead on the floor, bullet holes oozing blood all over them.

Bucky notes the bruises on De Witt's neck from where he choked him. Bucky squints at the men, still a little disoriented...

VOGEL

The spic's Felix Casco, a known dope trafficker. Maybe it was other dope scum, maybe Lee, maybe it was God. I say let our Mexican colleagues handle their own dirty laundry and we go back to LA and find the son of a bitch who sliced the Dahlia.

INT. KAY AND LEE'S HOUSE - DAY

Kay sits curled into a corner of the couch, defensively. Bucky sits on a small chair next to Lee's large easy chair.

KAY

I spent the morning with Internal Affairs. I told them...everything I knew. I gave them so much...and in the end it

didn't seem like anything at all.

BUCKY

He'll come back, Kay. I'm sure of it.

KAY

You don't know anything, Dwight. But that's what I like about you.

BUCKY

Kay--

KAY

I've been offered a job. Teaching sixth grade at Fairfax Primary. With Lee gone now--

BUCKY

He's coming back.

She nods, mollifying him.

CUT TO:

A NEON SIGN: THE EL NIDO MOTEL

CLOSE ON: ROOM 204

as Bucky jimmys the lock and pushes open the door.

INSIDE ROOM 204

Boxes of police files scattered on the bed and desk. Photos of Elizabeth Short pinned up all over the walls: glamour glossies, newspaper photos, enlarged crime scene grotesquerie.

The amount of manpower represented here is staggering; so much work over one girl.

Bucky sits down at the desk and buries his head in his hands.

BUCKY

Lee.

CLOSE ON: A PORTRAIT PHOTO OF ELIZABETH SHORT

DISSOLVE TO:

FRITZ VOGEL AND BUCKY

interviewing a fortysomething TALENT AGENT in a slick suit.

He sits at a desk with yellowed starlets' headshots behind him. Vogel leans on the desk, intimidating the man.

AGENT

...okay, yeah. So I got her name from a producer friend of mine. Met her in a bar...

ROOM 204 -- THE EL NIDO

Russ Millard and Harry Sears stand goggle-eyed as Bucky shows them Lee's back-up files...

VOICE OVER

I wanted to believe it was all about Lee. Tracking Lee through her...through the files he had collected.

DISSOLVE TO:

RUSS MILLARD

meticulously sifting through the material along with Bucky.

DISSOLVE TO:

A PHOTO OF ELIZABETH SHORT DRESSED IN BLACK

VOICE OVER

Strangers' recollections of a girl's last days leading me to a partner...

DISSOLVE TO:

FRITZ VOGEL AND BUCKY interviewing a HOOKER in a hotel lobby...

HOOKER

...the other girls and me, we helped her out once in a while. Throw her a trick if she needed dough...But she was no pro.

DISSOLVE TO:

KAY AND LEE'S LIVING ROOM

where Bucky watches Kay grade papers, a gulf between them.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN AUTOPSY PHOTO OF ELIZABETH SHORT

VOICE OVER

But the deeper into her I got, the more I understood the detective's old saw: any dick worth his suit always takes a side: the perp or the vic.

DISSOLVE TO:

39TH ANMD NORTON - THE MURDER SCENE

where Bucky stands in the empty lot, alone.

VOICE OVER

Most cops'll tell ya...one day you wake up and you're in the head of the killer...Angry. Powerful. In control. You're the perp.

DISSOLVE TO:

FOOTAGE FROM BETTY AND LINDA'S PORN FILM

as the camera dances across Betty Short's naked body. WE CLOSE IN on her, the 16mm film becoming finer and finer as the sex scene transforms into

A LIVE SHOT OF BETTY SHORT, writhing in ecstasy underneath a man. She and the man fuck harder and harder, faster and faster.

BETTY SHORT

No...Please...

CUT TO:

BUCKY'S FACE

groaning with the ecstasy of ejaculation--

BACK ON BETTY SHORT BENEATH HIM-

but it's not Betty Short. It's Madeleine Sprague, staring up at Bucky as the two of them come simultaneously.

As soon as it's over, she looks for his eyes. He won't look at her. She grabs his chin and turns him face to face.

VOICE OVER

Few cops'll admit to walking the harder path...fear...pain...loss...Few will admit to waking up in the head of the vic.

He lower his face to the pillow...

INT. ANOTHER CASTING SESSION - DAY

Another clapstick: "Elizabeth Short...Screen test #3"

Elizabeth Short, looking a bit more worn down, holds a script up to her face.

ELIZABETH SHORT

(reading stiffly)

Don't just walk out on me, Richard. Say something. Say you care say you--

MAN #3 (O.S.)

I'm sorry. There's a pause there.

She stops, frustrated.

MAN #3 (cont'd)

Maybe with a little more sadness. Can you give me a little more sadness?

FADE OUT

CLOSE ON:

the "UNSOLVED" sheet at the LAPD betting pool. Handwritten on the sheet are the constantly dropping odds: "2 to 1" replaced by "3 to 2" which has been replaced by "Even Money".

THE CAMERA PANS UP FROM THE BETTING SHEETS:

"TRANSFER NOTICE...As of 2/6/47 these officers currently assigned to the Elizabeth Short investigation will return to their regular duties...

WIDE ON THE SCENE

as Bucky reads the list. Unfortunately his name is not on it.

He beelines straight to

RUSS MILLARD'S OFFICE

the quiet man looks up from his desk.

BUCKY

I wasn't on the transfer list.

RUSS MILLARD

I asked Jack to keep you on.

BUCKY

Why?

RUSS MILLARD

Because you're getting to be a damn good Detective, Bleichert. And Harry's retiring in two years. Need I spell it out?

BUCKY

No.

RUSS MILLARD

You been working this case pretty hard. Or is it the other way around?

Bucky smiles weakly; Russ knows him.

RUSS MILLARD

It's not as much fun once it moves to the back pages, is it? (changing subjects) I hear they arrested two Mexicans in Juarez for the Bobby De Witt murder.

BUCKY

I heard that, too.

RUSS MILLARD

You must be relieved.

BUCKY

They've rescinded the APB on Lee. If he doesn't show up in thirty days he's out.

RUSS MILLARD

He'll be found if he wants to be found.

BUCKY

Like the guy who killed the Dahlia?

Russ smiles grimly.

EXT. FRITZ VOGEL'S HOUSE - EVENING

Bucky rings the doorbell. Fritz Vogel answers.

VOGEL

Boyo! Glad you could make it.

He claps Bucky on the shoulder and leads him into the house.

INT. FRITZ VOGEL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The interior decorating equivalent of highballs and pretzels, which is exactly what Vogel, Bucky and Ellis Loew are consuming. Bucky drinks with the trepidation of the King's food taster.

ELLIS LOEW

I called this little meeting for a couple reasons, Bucky. We'd both like to see the Short case closed out and get back to normal business.

Bucky looks impatient and Ellis senses this.

ELLIS LOEW (cont'd)

We're both comers, Bucky. Fritzie wants you for his partner when he gets his lieutenantcy, and--

BUCKY

Russ Millard wants me when Harry retires.

VOGEL

You're too raw for him, boyo. Old Russ is a sob sister, and I'm much more your type.

Bucky considers the truth in this. To Loew:

BUCKY

What do you want, Ellis?

ELLIS LOEW

Very well, Dwight. I'll tell you. There are four confessors still being held at City Jail. They've got no alibis, weren't coherent when they were first questioned, and they're all violent, frothing-at-the-mouth lunatics. I want them reintegrated. It's a muscle job.

VOGEL

I wanted Bill Koenig--

ELLIS LOEW

But Bill's a bit too enamored with violence. So it's you, Dwight. Yes or no? Because if it's yes, I'll make sure you're back on Warrants tomorrow with an inside track to some stripes. If not,

it's Homicide shitwork until Russ Millard gets tired of you. We both know that Russ is a patient, forbearing man, Dwight. That could be a long time. Yes or no?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CITY JAIL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

as four manacled men are being loaded into a drunk wagon while Bucky flips through their rap sheets and mug shots.

INSIDE THE DRUNK WAGON

the four men sit in the back as Bucky drives the truck. The camera pans their faces. The first, LOREN BIDWELL, pale, old and palsied.

VOICE OVER

On my way over I played out their rap sheets in my head, trying to work up a head of hate...Loren Bidwell, three time Atascadero loser, falls for aggravated sexual assault on minors. Between prison jolts he confessed to all the big sex crimes.

EXT. AN OLD WAREHOUSE BUILDING

Bucky pulls the drunk wagon up to a building, its street facade illuminated: "KOUNTY KING LUNCH MEAT--SERVING L.A. COUNTY WITH INSTITUTIONAL FOOD SINCE 1923"...

THE CAMERA finds the second man, CECIL DURKIN.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Cecil Durkin--hophead, knife fighter and a jailhouse rape-o who played jazz drums with some good combos. He took two Quentin jolts for Arson and was caught masturbating at the scene of his last torch.

AT THE FRONT OF THE WAREHOUSE BUILDING

Fritz Vogel opens the door and leads the men inside.

INT. THE WAREHOUSE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A huge sawdust-covered roam, meathooks dangling from the ceiling. Beef dangles over half the hooks. The four men look terrified.

The camera finds the third man, CHARLIE ISSLER:

VOICE OVER

Charlie Issler was a pimp and a career confessor specializing in copping to hooker homicides. His three procuring beefs had netted him a year county jail time, his phony confessions two ninety day observation stints at the Camarillo nut farm.

And the fourth man, PAUL ORCHARD:

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

And finally Paul Orchard. Jack roller, male prostitute, and a former San Bernardino County deputy sheriff.

The group reaches a back wall of the warehouse where **FOUR UNUSED MEATHOOKS DANGLE OVER FOUR CHAIRS.**

Bucky studies the men's apprehensive faces as Vogel stands each one on a chair with their manacled hands hooked over their respective meathooks.

Bucky's gaze drifts back behind a large box where he sees A SHEET-COVERED TABLE sticking out. Before his curiosity draws him over Vogel addresses the prisoners.

VOGEL

You all confessed to killing the Dahlia. We can't prove you did, so you're gonna have to convince us... Query on, Bucko.

Bucky takes a deep breath and heads first to old man Bidwell. The man's palsy has him shaking and Bucky grabs the meathook above him to steady him.

BUCKY

Tell me about Betty Short, pops. Why'd you kill her?

Bidwell looks at him with beseeching eyes.

VOGEL

Don't be timid, boyo. That bird made little boys suck his hog.

Bucky's hand twitches on the meathook.

BUCKY

Come clean, pop.

BIDWELL

I didn't kill her mister. I just wanted a ticket to the honor farm. Three hots and a cot, that's all. Please, mister.

The man's weakened state makes his argument for him. Bucky moves on to Cecil Durkin.

BUCKY

Tell me about it, Cecil.

DURKIN

(laughing)

You get that line from Dick Tracy or Gangbusters?

Bucky catches Vogel out of the corner of his eye. Measuring...

BUCKY

One more time, shitbird. Tell me about you and Betty Short.

DURKIN

I fucked Betty Short and I fucked your mama! I'm your fucking daddy!

Bucky one-two's him in the solar plexus. His legs buckle, but he keeps his feet on the chair.

DURKIN (cont'd)

You think you clever, don't you. You the bad guy, your buddy the nice guy. Older than vaudeville.

BUCKY

I'm the nice guy, Cecil. Keep that in mind.

This shuts Durkin up. Bucky moves to Charlie Issler.

ISSLER

(sincere)

Please. I didn't kill Liz. I don't know why I do these things, and I apologize. So please don't let that man hurt me.

BUCKY

Convince me.

ISSLER

I...can't. I just can't.

BUCKY

You're a pimp. You know Betty Short?

ISSLER

No.

BUCKY

Why'd you confess to her murder?

ISSLER

She looked so...sweet and pretty and I felt so bad. I always confess to the pretty ones.

BUCKY

You feel guilty Charlie? You hit your girls, get 'em high on hop?

ISSLER

I do such nasty things I don't know why--

Vogel struts over, putting on brass knuckles.

VOGEL

This kid glove routine's gettin' old--

He kicks Issler's chair out from under him, the pimp screaming as his wrists snap. Vogel kicks the remaining three chairs out, punctuating each with a declaration:

VOGEL (cont'd)

Jack roller! Nigger! Baby fucker!

The men scream like dying animals as Fritzie zeroes in on Charlie Issler. He begins punching him in the gut with the brass knuckles.

VOGEL (cont'd)

Tell me about the Dahlia's missing days you whoremonger! Tell me!

ISSLER

I...don't...know...anything!

VOGEL

Tell me what you know!

He punches him in the crotch.

ISSLER

I knew you at Ad Vice!

Vogel ignores him, rabbit punching him, cracking one rib and then another--

ON BUCKY'S FACE

knowing this is getting out of control. He's mesmerized by A FIRE ALARM on the wall behind the men...

VOGEL

Tell me what your girls tell you!

Issler retches, coughing up blood. Bucky stares at the fire alarm as Fritz runs through his field of vision, cackling.

Bucky refocuses on the scene as Fritzie returns, wheeling the sheet-covered table Bucky'd seen before. He whips off the sheet revealing:

A NAKED FEMALE CORPSE, CUT IN TWO AND MADE UP TO LOOK LIKE THE DAHLIA.

Vogel grabs Issler by the scruff of the neck and jerks him down off of the meathook.

VOGEL (cont'd)

For your cutting pleasure, Jane Doe number forty-three. You're all going to slice her, and the best slicer buys the ticket!

Issler bites through his lip as Fritzie pulls out a switchblade and pops it open.

Bucky takes in the nightmare scene all in slow-motion, the men with their broken wrists, the pudgy naked corpse, Fritzie with the knife...

He runs for the fire alarm and pulls the lever, a piercing bell ringing out as Bucky runs out of the warehouse and jumps into the drunk wagon, tearing off into the night.

INT. KAY AND LEE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kay answers the door and finds Bucky sitting on the front porch, sobbing.

She moves to him, touching him on the back of the neck, the stroke of her finger enough to make him stand and face her.

INT. THE BEDROOM - LATER

Bucky tries to talk but she puts fingers to his mouth. Mouth to his fingers. She undresses him. Slowly she touches him, easing him, bringing him back to earth, back to humanity. To her.

And finally they are joined.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER TYPEWRITTEN SHEET: "LAPD Transfer orders: Officer Dwight Bleichert...From: Central Warrants...To: Foot Patrol, Swingwatch. Central Station..."

EXT. SKID ROW - EVENING

Bucky picks his way through passed-out drunks and bums. He's back in uniform.

VOICE OVER

East 5th Street from Main to Stanford.
Blood banks, liquor stores selling half pints and short dogs exclusively, fifty-cent-a-night flophouses and derelict missions...

DOWN THE STREET

two officers brutally herd winos into a drunk wagon. Bucky turns and walks the other direction, refusing to help. They see him and sneer.

VOICE OVER

Banished by Ellis Loew, who dared me to try my word against a twenty-two year man and the city's future District Attorney. I confined the truth to Russ and Kay, and determined to spend my shifts trying to be the worst foot hack in history.

He hands a quarter to a drunk as he passes, urging him with his nightstick to crawl back into a bar.

INT. EL NIDO - ROOM 204 - NIGHT

Russ Millard pores over a file in their private collection. Bucky sits with his feet up on the bed, flipping through a folder...

VOICE OVER

A month passed. The Dahlia leads dwindled to zero and every officer except Russ and

Harry were returned to their regular assignments. As for me, I'd been able to contain my Dahlia interests within the walls of the El Nido.

Bucky eyes a Dahlia photo pinned to the wall.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Still, I remembered what Madeleine said when I told her we were through...

INT. THE RED ARROW MOTEL - NIGHT

Madeleine sits on the bed fully dressed. Bucky stands in the doorway.

MADELEINE
You'll be back. (beat) I look like her.

Bucky turns and leaves as we

CUT TO:

INT. KAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

where Kay and Bucky sleep in bed, locked as spoons. Safe.

VOICE OVER
But sometimes Betty came to me...

INT. THE MEAT WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - A DREAM

Bucky watches Fritz Vogel beats the hell out of Charles Issler as he hangs off the meathook. In the background, Betty Short stands and screams:

BETTY SHORT
Bucky! No! Stop him!
(crying)
I'll do whatever you want...

ISSLER
I'll be okay....Liz...

Bucky turns and stares at her.

CLOSE ON BUCKY'S BLAZING EYES

MILLARD (VO)
Bucky. What is it?

INT. THE EL NIDO - SAME

as Bucky stares across the room at a picture of the Dahlia. Millard sits at the small desk, waiting for him to come back.

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky.

Bucky finally sees Russ again.

BUCKY

You ever hear anyone refer to Betty as Liz? Anyone at all?

RUSS MILLARD

Nope.

BUCKY

Issler did.

RUSS MILLARD

The pimp? I thought he said he'd never heard of her.

BUCKY

You know what else he said?

A FLASHBACK - THE WAREHOUSE

As Vogel cracks Issler's ribs.

VOGEL

What did you know about the Dahlia's missing days?

ISSLER

I knew you at Ad Vice--

INT. THE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Harry Sears cradles the phone in his ear as he flips through a large metal file cabinet. Behind him the glass door reads in reverse: "ADMINISTRATIVE VICE".

HARRY SEARS (INTO PHONE)

N-n-no, Russ. No file on Issler. Gone.

BACK AT THE EL NIDO - SAME

Bucky and Russ sit in silence, thinking. They know they're onto something...

BUCKY

Fritzie didn't give a damn about those other three. It was all about Issler. Never occurred to me before.

Bucky gets to his feet.

BUCKY (cont'd)
Meet me back here. Late.

RUSS MILLARD
Bright penny--

But Bucky's already out the door.

EXT. FRITZ VOGEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bucky stakes out the dark house.

EXT. VOGEL'S SERVICE PORCH - LATER

Bucky slips an oil dipstick into the narrow crack of the back door and flips the simple hook and eyehole lock. He slides into the house...

INT. FRITZ VOGEL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

as Bucky creeps through the house until he gets to a closed door. He opens it, entering

FRITZIE'S STUDY

He stumbles along the wall until he finds a standing gooseneck lamp and turns it on. The walls are covered with pictures of Fritzie in uniform, dating back twenty-five years.

Bucky bends down in front of the small mahogany desk and begins rifling through its file drawers. What he finds surprises him:

--carbons of official LAPD intelligence reports, lists of account balances, financial dealings, payments made--all cross-referenced to each individual being investigated.

A veritable how-to primer on how to extort from criminals..

Bucky digs deeper into the files and pulls out:

ISSLER'S AD VICE FILE complete with mug shots.

BUCKY
Hello, Charlie. Get lost?

Bucky scans the file, running his finger down the list of names, looking for something familiar. He stops at one: "SALLY STINSON". Beside her name a handwritten note: "Biltmore Hotel".

He writes it down and moves to another list of names: "Known Associates, no Prostitution Record".

And there it is: "Betty Short".

INT. BUCKY'S CAR - LATER

Bucky bops to jazz on his radio, pumped with adrenaline.

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky tears through a file as Russ watches.

RUSS MILLARD

So good ol' Fritzie's shaking down crooks, maybe sellin' 'em tip-offs before a roust.

BUCKY

I want him nailed.

RUSS MILLARD

Easy, penny. They'd have to testify against him first. And that's not likely after he burns those carbons. But this Issler business--why hide the Issler-Betty connection?

BUCKY

(finding a file)
Maybe Charlie pimped her out...to somebody Fritzie doesn't want us to know about...

A FLASHBACK - THE WAREHOUSE

as Fritz beats on Charlie--

FRITZIE

Tell me what you know about the Dahlia's missing days--

BACK TO THE EL NIDO

Bucky reads through a letter.

BUCKY

I knew it. Here. Betty writes to one of her phantom servicemen boyfriends:

(reading aloud)

"...had drinks with a great girl, Sally Stinson, who thinks she way be able to help me get a job cocktailing..."

RUSS MILLARD

Cocktailing.

BUCKY

Yeah, I know. That's what made it stick with me...What next, padre?

RUSS MILLARD

You sit tight. Go hack to swingwatch. Me and Harry'll poke around.

BUCKY

(displeased)

I want him.

RUSS MILLARD

You'll get him, too. But you've got to cool your temper. It's all patience with the big fish or they wriggle off.

INT. KAY'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Bucky lies awake while Kay sleeps.

VOICE OVER

What kept me up that night wasn't the idea of Fritz Vogel extorting criminals, or Fritz Vogel bracing Charlie the pimp to see if Betty had told him something about one of her johns...maybe even Vogel, himself...No...

A FLASHBACK - FRITZ VOGEL'S HOUSE

Ellis Loew, Fritz Vogel and Bucky drink cocktails and eat pretzels...

VOICE OVER

...what kept me up was this thought: if Issler blabbed about Liz and her tricks I would have overheard. Fritz was confident he could keep me quiet.

Ellis and Fritz clink glasses...Smile at Bucky.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
And that was an underestimation I would
bleed him for.

BACK IN KAY'S BED

Her hand brushes against his cheek. He reaches for it.

**OVER THIS SCENE WE HEAR A PHONE RING AND THE FOLLOWING
EXCHANGE.**

BUCKY (VO)

Hello?

RUSS MILLARD

We've found her. Meet me at 1546 North
Havenhurst in half an hour.

INT. THE POLICE STATION - SAME

As Bucky hangs up the phone. Trying to look casual he sidles
over to a desk with FRITZ VOGEL on the name plate and snags a
photo of Fritz and Johnny off the desk...

INT. SALLY STINSON'S APARTMENT - DAY

A worn woman in her early thirties (SALLY STINSON) sits on a
stack of luggage, Russ and Bucky in chairs. She wears a cheap
kimono and too much makeup for the middle of the day.

She holds the photo of the Vogels. Shakes out her hair and
closes her kimono a little.

SALLY

I do a lot a cops, you know. Comes with
the territory. Charlie used to say it was
my union dues. Keep my operator's license.

She laughs a little, trying to loosen herself up.

BUCK

Ma'am. Please get to it.

SALLY

Anyway. It was a full-day job. C-Note and
a half. Kept talkin' about givin' me "The
Big Schnitzel"...more like a cocktail
frank once we got down to it...Well, we
screw the whole afternoon...Go down to
the lobby for some dinner and there's
Liz, sittin' by herself.

BUCKY

You'd hooked with her before?

SALLY

Three or four times. Conventioneers. And lemme tell you something, I'm pretty good at faking it. But Liz, she was good. A virtuoso, Academy Award kind of stuff--

BUCKY

--She do dyke?

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky--

SALLY

No. Nothing like that.

BUCKY

Any porn?

SALLY

No. But I bet she'd be goood...

RUSS MILLARD

Ma'am.

SALLY (cont'd)

Anyway, we all get to talking...Schnitzel takes a liking to her and Liz tells me she needs the dough. So I set up a trick within a trick...I take a breather and they go at it in the bedroom. A couple hours later Liz left.

BUCKY

Did anything unusual happen?

Sally thinks...

SALLY

I think it got a little kinky. He'd brought a couple toys...He may have...whipped her a bit.

Russ and Bucky glance at each other, remembering lashmarks at the autopsy.

BUCKY

Did Vogel say anything about Liz? Was he gonna see her again? Anything?

SALLY

He said...she liked the Big Schnitzel.

RUSS MILLARD

Anything else, Miss Stinson?

Her face clouds over.

SALLY

Two days...after...Liz got in all the papers...

She has a hard time going on.

BUCKY

(helping her out)

Is this when your pimp Charlie confesses?

SALLY

(composing herself)

Yeah. Bad habit. Anyways, Fritzie V. shows up and shakes me hard about Charlie, whether he'd say anything about Liz to the caps. Beat me bad. Real bad.

She lifts her head. Taps her nails on the suitcases underneath her.

BUCKY

One last time to be sure.

(pointing to Fritzie's picture)

You are sure this is the man that you tricked with? And tricked with Liz Short?

A puzzled look covers her face.

SALLY

No mister you got it all wrong.

BUCKY

But you said--

SALLY

Fritz just beat me. It was Sonny me and Liz did. Sonny.

She taps her finger on John Vogel's face.

SALLY (cont'd)

I'd recognize that lousy fuck anywhere.

Off Bucky and Russ' shock we

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. RUSS MILLARD'S CAR - LATER

as they cruise the streets of skid row. While Russ talks Bucky fills a HYPODERMIC NEEDLE with an amber liquid...

RUSS MILLARD

I'll be a chimp's priest, Buck. A chimp's priest--watch the air bubbles--I shoulda known that Johnny I d need a pro to lose his cherry...Never had 'em for a kink and a cherry, though...

Bucky points out the window.

BUCKY

There.

OUTSIDE ON THE SIDEWALK

Johnny Vogel wrestles with two drunks, kicking at them as they scamper into some trash.

BUCKY

(exiting the car)
Johnny--

Johnny ambles over to Bucky.

JOHNNY VOGEL

Whatcha doin' in civvies, Bleichert?

Bucky drills him in the solar plexus, doubling him over. He grabs Vogel by the hair and slams his head into the roof of the car as Johnny's lights dIm...

CUT TO:

THE BACKSEAT OF THE CAR - SECONDS LATER

as Russ Millard injects the needle into Johnny's arm.

CUT TO:

INT. THE EL NIDO - DAY

Johnny Vogel handcuffed to a radiator, his head bobbing back and forth. His eyes trying to focus on Russ and Bucky.

RUSS MILLARD

Pentothal's good for another couple hours. No way he can lie.

Johnny's eyes drift to the pictures on the walls.

BUCKY

Elizabeth Short, shitbird. Elizabeth fucking Short!

Russ touches Bucky's arm, urging him to sit back.

RUSS MILLARD

There's a method to this, Bucky.
(focusing on Johnny)
What's your name, son?

JOHNNY

(slurring)
You know me, loot.

RUSS MILLARD

Answer me anyway.

JOHNNY

Vogel, John G.

RUSS MILLARD

What's sixteen and fifty-two?

JOHNNY

Uhhmm. Sixty-eight. Why'd you hit me Bleichert? I didn't do you no dirt.

RUSS MILLARD

Focus on January, Johnny. Your father--

JOHNNY

Friedrich Vogel. Fritzie.

RUSS MILLARD

Yes. Fritzie. He wanted you to lose your cherry. He bought you a woman for two days. Is that right?

JOHNNY

Not a woman. Not a real one. A hooer.

Johnny turns the syllable into a long laugh.

RUSS MILLARD

This was at the Biltmore?

JOHNNY

Daddy got a good rate on the room. He
knew the house dick...This ain't right...

RUSS MILLARD

We'll be done soon, Johnny. You met Liz
Short at the Biltmore, too?

JOHNNY

What's her name introduced me...the
hooper.

RUSS MILLARD

And what did you and Liz do?

JOHNNY

We...played horse and rider. Gave her the
Big Schnitz.

RUSS MILLARD

Did you whip her?

Johnny thinks back, his head lolling to and fro...

JOHNNY

Softly. So so softly. Horse and Rider.

RUSS MILLARD

Johnny. Did you kill Liz Short?

Johnny jerks back spasmodically.

JOHNNY

No no no no! I didn't kill her!

RUSS MILLARD

Easy son--

JOHNNY

I didn't slice her!

RUSS MILLARD

It's all right...Do you know who did?

JOHNNY

No! No!

Johnny's starting to sweat. Russ and Bucky lean in...

RUSS MILLARD

When your Daddy found out you'd been with
her, he tried to fix things didn't he?

Johnny nods yes.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

He found out Charlie Issler had been picked up and he knew Charlie had this confessing problem, right?

JOHNNY

Daddy...went to Ellis...to the Jewboy. Wanted to get Charlie released...but the Jewboy said no...Daddy had a morgue friend owed him a favor and got this DOA cooze...Daddy wanted Uncle Bill but Ellis Jewboy said take Bleichert.

(looking right at Bucky)

Daddy said you'd do it cuz without Blanchard you were jelly. Said you were a sob sister, weak sister...

Johnny starts laughing hysterically, shaking his chained hands like a zoo animal trying to get loose. Russ steps in front of a red-hot Bucky--

RUSS MILLARD

(to Bucky)

I think you should go outside.

EXT. THE FIRE ESCAPE - LATER

Bucky sits out on the fire escape watching cars drive by. Russ leans out the window and hands Bucky the statement.

RUSS MILLARD

His statement. Signed.

Bucky reads it and slips it into his pocket.

RUSS MILLARD

We should sit on this for a little bit. Until I can talk to a legal officer.

Bucky shakes his head no, climbs back inside the window.

INT. THE HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Bucky handcuffs Johnny's hands behind his back as the big man cries...

JOHNNY

Daddy...

RUSS MILLARD

(to Bucky)

It's the shithouse until you retire, you know that.

BUCKY

I owe her this one.

He squeezes Johnny's handcuffs tighter.

INT. HOLLYWOOD STATION - BOOKING - NIGHT

Reporters follow Bucky and Johnny inside, piqued by the sight of a plainclothes officer escorting a cuffed uniform inside.

BUCKY

No comment...No comment...

(whispering in Johnny's ear)

Tell your Daddy I know everything.
Including his extortion deal. Tell him
I'm goin' to the papers tomorrow.

He approaches the desk sergeant.

DESK SERGEANT

What the hell is this?

A flashbulb goes off in their faces. Johnny sobs.

BUCKY

I'm Officer Dwight Bleichert and this is
Officer John Vogel.

He hands over Johnny's signed statement.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Book him.

Another flashbulb.

EXT. CENTRAL STATION - LATER

Bucky jogs up the steps inside.

INT. THE LOCKER ROOM - LATER

He dresses in his blue uniform, preparing to go back to work.

INTERCOM

Officer Bleichert, go to the watch
commander's office immediately.

Bucky brushes imaginary dust off his shirt and grabs his hat.

INT. LIEUTENANT JASTROW'S OFFICE - SOON AFTER

Bucky walks in, saluting like an idealistic rookie. Jastrow stands, ignoring the salute.

JASTROW

You're on two weeks vacation leave as of now. When you return to duty, report to Chief Green. He'll reassign you to another division.

BUCKY

Why?

JASTROW

Fritz Vogel just blew his brains out. That's why.

All Bucky can think to do is salute again, rock firm. He walks outside and crosses into

INT. THE MUSTER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crammed with blues awaiting roll call. They all stare at Bucky; he meets the eyes that seek his, making them look down. Defiant.

As he passes he can hear the hisses: "Traitor". "Bolshevik". He continues towards the door, almost out when suddenly he hears applause.

Bucky turns to see, Russ Millard, Harry Sears and Thad Green clapping good-bye...

INT. THE CASTING OFFICE - DAY

Clapstick: "Elizabeth Short Screen Test #4"

She sits on an ugly brown sofa, sides in her hands. Silence.

MAN #4 (O.S.)

Are you all right, Miss Short?

She looks up, seeing the camera as if for the first time.

MAN #4 (cont'd)

Why don't you just...talk.

ELIZABETH SHORT

What do you mean?

MAN #4

Put the sides down. Just...talk to me.

ELIZABETH SHORT

What would you like to talk about?

MAN #4

I don't know...Anything...Do you have a boyfriend?

FADE OUT

EXT. THE SANTA MONICA PIER - NIGHT

Kay and Bucky sit on a bench, looking out at the water.

KAY

I could take sick days. Maybe a trip to Santa Barbara, or even a drive to San Francisco...

BUCKY

Kay.

FAY

You don't owe him a thing, Bucky. I know you won't believe me. But you've more than repaid him already.

He looks at her and she knows it's useless.

KAY (cont'd)

When?

BUCKY

First thing.

She takes his hand.

KAY

You're a fool, Dwight.

EXT. THE SAN DIEGO FREEWAY - LATE MORNING

as Bucky crosses the border into Mexico.

VOICE OVER

I closed out my glory days the only way I knew how--I chased the gone man.

EXT. TIJUANA STREETS - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAY

Bucky hands out pennies and nickels to locals, flashing both his badge and snapshots of Lee.

CUT TO:

BUCKY AND AN ENTOURAGE OF TRAILING LOCALS

as Bucky tries to shake them, pulling out his pockets to show them he has no more coins.

CUT TO:

BUCKY QUESTIONING TIJUANA COPS

graduating from small change to one dollar bills. Some of them seem to have stories to tell.

VOICE OVER

I got headshakes, bullshit broadsides and a strange series of tales that rang true. One had "el blanco explosivo" beating the shit out of three jack rollers, then buying off the cops with double-saws peeled from a large roll. Another had Lee donating 200 scoots to a leper ministry priest and then driving to Ensenada.

EXT - THE COASTAL ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

as Bucky drives South, passing a sign which says "ENSENADA 60 MI."

He passes a cluster of families walking on the side of the road. They carry suitcases and head North.

EXT. THE COAST ROAD - NEAR ENSENADA

Bucky approaches Ensenada. The trickle of families headed north has now becoming a roadside migration march. Every fifth or sixth marcher carries a torch or lantern.

EXT. THE CITY LIMITS OF ENSENADA - NIGHT

Bucky cruises slowly into town and the most blatant shakedown he's ever seen:

Rurales in brownshirts walk from peasant to peasant in the northbound migration line, taking money and attaching tags to their shoulders with staple guns; plainclothes cops sell bags of beef jerky and dried fruit, putting coins into dispensers

attached to their belts.

Two Rurales pull a man out of line and beat him senseless with the butts of their sawed-off shotguns.

VOICE OVER

I decided it would be wise to check in with the law before going out to question the Ensenada citizenry.

EXT. THE ENSENADA POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Bucky stands outside a converted church with the word POLICIA painted in black over religious scenes.

INT. THE POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Velvet wall hangings depicting Jesus decorate the entrance hall. Blackshirts lounge on converted pews, a huge carved cross on the front desk betrays its altar origins.

Bucky slides the Rurale at the desk his badge and a dollar. The man saunters off down the hall.

INT. THE POLICE CHIEF'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

as Bucky is escorted in. The man sitting behind the desk looks up. In flawless English:

CAPTAIN VASQUEZ

Officer Bleichert. Come in, please. I'm Captain Vasquez. How can I help you?

Bucky exchanges his badge for a photo of Lee.

BUCKY

This man's LAPD. He's been missing in Mexico since January. He was last seen headed here.

Vasquez studies the photo. Bucky senses a twitch...

CAPTAIN VASQUEZ

No. I'm afraid not. I'll ask my men, however. Staying the night?

BUCKY

At least.

VASQUEZ

Are you here alone?

BUCKY

I have two partners waiting for me in Tijuana.

Vasquez nods, hard to know if he believes Bucky any more than Bucky believes him.

BUCKY (cont'd)

If you don't mind I'll check back in the morning.

CAPTAIN VASQUEZ

Please.

CUT TO:

INT. A FLEABAG MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Bucky squeezes a bit of brown water onto a handkerchief and wipes his brow off. He kicks his travel bag underneath the bed and heads out.

EXT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

as Bucky pulls two hairs from his head and spit-glues them to the door jamb.

EXT. THE ENSENADA STREETS - NIGHT

Garish neon, military personnel. Brownshirts packing serious weapons keeping the mostly white street crowd in order.

HIS POV: An adobe streetfront with a neon sign: "CLUB BOXEO". Bucky goes inside.

INT. THE CLUB BOXEO - CONTINUOUS

Bucky finds a brightly lit room filled with sailors and half-dressed Mexican strippers. He stands on his tip-toes trying to see over the crowd to find somebody with the air of proprietor.

On a far wall: boxing publicity stills. He wanders over.

CLOSE ON THE WALL OF STILL:

A row of light-heavies: Gus Lesnevich, Billy Conn, and Bucky. Three stills over, next to Joe Louis, is Lee's photo. They all look so young...So good...

An old voice in English breaks his reverie:

OLD MAN

Bleichert? Jesus. First Blanchard, then you. Who's next? Willie Pep?

Bucky wheels and finds himself face to face with an old man.

BUCKY

Blanchard? You've seen him? When?

OLD MAN

Couple months ago. Heavy rains in February. Musta talked fights for ten hours straight. You know Blanchard thinks the feathers are the best division? me, it's the middies for sure. La Motta, Graziano--

BUCKY

Is he still in town?

OLD MAN

Don't think so. I own this place. He ain't been back. You lookin' for a rematch?

BUCKY

I'm looking to get him out of a shitload of trouble.

The old pug looks him up and down.

OLD MAN

Well. I'll tell ya the little I know. Heard he caused a ruckus over at the Club Satan, had to bribe his way out big with Captain Vasquez. Talk to Ernie the cook. Tell him I said to be kosher with you.

BUCKY

Thank you.

OLD MAN

You ain't been in there.

INT. CLUB SATAN - LATER

Bucky walks into the biggest sewer you have ever seen. The bar is a urinal trough where marines and sailors masturbate while going down on nude women squatting on the bartop. Blow jobs are being dispensed underneath tables facing the bandstand.

Up on the stage a man in a Satan costume is fucking a woman on a mattress. Next to him, a donkey with red velvet horns pinned to his head eats hay out of a bowl while drunken servicemen shout "Donkey! Donkey!"

Bucky is accosted by a disgusting old woman.

OLD WOMAN

You wan' the bar, handsome? Breakfast of champions, one dollar. Round the world, two dollars.

BUCKY

Ernie. I need to see Ernie.

OLD WOMAN

Vamanos!

And grabs him by the arm...

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ERNIE, a half-Mexican half-Chinese man, stands next to a huge vat of stew. Bucky flashes Lee's photo.

BUCKY

I heard this man gave you some trouble a while back.

ERNIE

Who wants to know?

Bucky flashes his badge, giving him a glimpse of his gun.

ERNIE

You his friend?

BUCKY

He's my best friend.

The chef tucks his hands into his aprons, fidgeting.

ERNIE

Your friend drink fourteen shots of my best Mescal, a house record. That I like. He make toasts to dead women. That I don't mind. But he try to fuck with my donkey show, and that I don't take.

BUCKY

What happened?

ERNIE

Four of my guys he take, the fifth he don't. Rurales take him home to sleep it off.

BUCKY

That's it?

Ernie casually pulls a switchblade out of his apron and scratches the back of his neck with it.

ERNIE

Finito.

EXT. THE CLUB SATAN - LATER

Bucky walks outside and begins weaving his way back through the crowds. Out of the corner of his eye he catches a couple Rurales who seem to have taken an interest in him.

He dodges down an alley and cuts down another street, breaking into a slow jog.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - SECONDS LATER

Bucky walks backwards, checking the crowd. He's lost them.

INT. THE FLEABAG MOTEL - LATER

Bucky stands in front of his door. He runs his finger up and down the door jamb. The hairs are gone.

With one swift kick he breaks down the door.

INT. THE MOTEL ROOM - SECONDS LATER

A white man stands with his hands raised.

MAN

Whoa, Bleichert. I'm a friend--

Bucky gestures with his gun for the man to hit the wall. He frisks him, pulling out a wallet and tossing on the bed.

MAN (cont'd)

Milton Dolphine, citizen of San Diego and a licensed private dick. I got seventy bucks in there but that money's jackshit compared to what Blanchard was holding. You go partners with me and it's easy street--

Bucky kicks the man's legs out and pushes his to the floor.

BUCKY

You tell me all of it and you watch what you say about my partner, or it's a B&E roust and the Ensenada jail.

Dolphine pulls himself up.

DOLPHINE

You mean Vasquez? How do you think I knew to follow you? He's got a vested interest in you not finding out about Blanchard.

Bucky eyes the door.

BUCKY

Does he know I'm staying here?

DOLPHINE

No.

Bucky steps back from Dolphine.

BUCKY

So. Let's hear it.

DOLPHINE

About a month ago this Mexican woman shows up at my office in Dago. Chubby, ten tons a makeup, but dressed to the nines. Offers me five hundred to find Blanchard. Just like you I track him here where he's playing the rich gringo--

A FLASHBACK - LEE TEARING UP AN ENSENADA BAR

DOLPHINE

I even see him beat up two spics who insult this Senorita--Rurales stand by and do nothing. So I know he's paying protection dough. A lot of it. Then I hear he paid off two plainclothes Rurales to snuff a coupla guys in TJ--

A FLASHBACK - BOBBY DE WITT AND FELIX CASCO BLOWN AWAY...

DOLPHINE

I leave a message in Dago for the woman tellin' her what I know...

BUCKY

What's her name?

DOLPHINE

Delores Garcia. But it was obviously a phony. Casco ran with some rich bimbos and I'm betting she's one of his. Revenge on Blanchard for offin' Felix.

Bucky tightens his grip on the slats of a wooden chair. This is hitting him hard.

BUCKY

Go on.

DOLPHINE

I come back to Ensenada on my own, thinking about all that cash he was flashing.

Bucky's jaw clenches.

DOLPHINE (cont'd)

You wanna hear this?

BUCKY

Go on.

DOLPHINE

Blanchard's dead. Bullet in the cabeza. (beat) Rumor is they never found any money.

Bucky's head begins to reel...

DOLPHINE (cont'd)

Maybe the Rurales. Maybe that woman or friends of hers. Who knows? I figured Blanchard was rogue, figured someone like you'd come lookin' for him. Maybe have a line on where the cash was. You knew Blanchard, maybe we can--

Bucky backhands Dolphine hard, knocking him off the chair.

DOLPHINE (cont'd)

Look I didn't know it was personal! Don't hit me again--

Bucky has his gun out, leveled at Dolphine.

BUCKY

Prove it to me. Prove it!

EXT. THE BACKROADS OF ENSENADA - NIGHT

Dolphine drives his car while Bucky trains his gun on him.

They come over a ridge and find themselves on a big bluff overlooking the ocean. A HUGE WOODEN BURNING CROSS marks the spot.

DOLPHINE

The locals keep the damn thing lit up.
They got a lotta missing relatives.

BUCKY

You got a shovel?

DOLPHINE

Gardening tools--

BUCKY

Good enough.

EXT. THE BLUFF - LATER

Bucky scavenges a spare piece of picket fence, wraps it in a rag and lights a torch off of the cross. Dolphine kicks at a filthy American flag in the sand.

DOLPHINE

Here. Supposed to be near el bannerero.

CUT TO:

A SMALL SHOVEL PUSHING INTO THE GROUND

as Dolphine digs at gun point. After a few strokes the crunch of the shovel hitting bone.

Bucky terrified to look but has to know--

--a white jumper--

DOLPHINE

Sailor's uniform. It's a sailor...

Bucky breathes out hard. Unbearable. Dolphine digs on, pushing the corpse out of the way and digging further into the sand.

Bucky can't stand the suspense. He tucks his gun into his waistband and grabs the shovel. After a few more strokes the thump of something solid.

And suddenly it's there--sunburned pink skin, blond hair and stitch scars on the eyebrows.

Lee Blanchard. Lee Blanchard. Lee Blanchard.

And Bucky's in Dolphine's truck while Dolphine's screaming for him to wait and Bucky slams the truck in reverse, knocking the burning cross to the ground and grinding out out of the sand onto the road, heading north and leaving Dolphine and Lee alone at the grave...Heading north like a refugee...

EXT. KAY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Bucky's car rolls up slowly as he kills the engine, trying not to make any noise.

The sun comes up, illuminating Bucky's filthy face as he watches the picture-perfect house, wishing time would stand still. Or better yet, wishing it would go back...

Finally he gets out of the car and begins a long walk into the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

A LAPD CHAPLAIN READING SOLEMNLY FROM A BIBLE

But as the camera PULLS BACK we see Bucky in his dress blues standing next to Kay in a wedding dress.

EXT. THE BACKYARD OF KAY'S HOUSE

Russ Millard and Harry Sears stand by as the only two guests.

VOICE OVER

Lee and Kay had lived in sin; not because their shack job was against department regs, but because the ghosts of their past had forced them to choose between love and passion, the veneer of a "fairy tale" only a band-aid for a fractured life.

DISSOLVE TO:

LEE AND KAY DANCING TOGETHER

as Harry and Russ drink from a punch bowl...

VOICE OVER

Our true vows were made in private; bury

the past, bury our ghosts, and as Kay said, "bury that fucking girl"...

ANOTHER LAPD TRANSFER FORM: "Officer Dwight Bleichert...Reassigned to: Scientific investigation Detail"

INT. THE LAPD SCIENCE LAB - DAY

Bucky with plastic gloves on typing blood with an eye dropper and a test tube. Meticulous and boring.

News radio plays in the background...

A Detective pokes his head in:

DETECTIVE

Bleichert? You got those prints for me?

Bucky pulls a file out of a stack and gives it to him. The nonchalance of a man whose job has become routine.

DETECTIVE (cont'd)

Thanks. We gotta hot one I think.

Bucky smiles politely and returns to his desk. The radio:

ANNOUNCER

...results in the 1948 Republican primary are final...John Dougdale trouncing D.A. Ellis Loew 64% to 36%...In county primaries...

This gets a smile from Bucky as he returns to his test tubes and beakers.

INT. AN APARTMENT - CRIME SCENE - DAY

Detectives comb through a murder scene as Bucky collects latent fingerprints off doorknobs. No one pays him any attention. He's been relegated to the worst kind of purgatory.

INT. THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Bucky and Kay drink coffee and read the morning paper. She absently strokes his free hand.

Bucky intently reads the front page.

The headline reads: "CITY COUNCIL INVESTIGATES '20s BOOM BARONS FOR SHODDY HOME CONSTRUCTION".

Underneath, a picture of Sprague and Mack Sennett posing in front of the HOLLYWOODLAND sign.

He's startled by Kay tapping her finger on the photo.

KAY

That reminds me of something, Dwight.

Bucky tries to hide his panic.

BUCKY

What?

KAY

Floorboard's loose near the closet. Think you could fix it?

BUCKY

(relieved)

Sure, babe.

The phone rings. Bucky answers it.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Hello...Hey Vic...

Bucky writes something on a piece of paper. Hangs up.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Gotta go. Work-up on a probable gunshot suicide.

KAY

Sounds lovely. Where is it?

BUCKY

Hancock Park.

EXT. A COLONIAL MANSION - JUNE STREET - MORNING

Bucky rings the bell. He's dressed plainclothes and carries a technician's canvas bag.

An attractive woman in her early fifties opens the door.

WOMAN

Yes?

BUCKY

I'm Officer Bleichert. LAPD. My I express my condolences, Mrs.--

WOMAN

Jane Chambers. Condolences accepted.
You're the lab man?

He nods yes. She lets him in and he follows.

JANE CHAMBERS

It's the study in back of the dining
room. You'll see the police rope. If
you'll excuse me, I'll be in my garden.

He notices for the first time she's dressed for gardening.

INT. THE STUDY - MORNING

Bucky steps over the police rope and into the study. A large
desk chair lies overturned on the ground next to A TAPE
OUTLINE OF A BODY. Three feet away lies A SHOTGUN.

Behind the chair the brown spattering of blood and brains
decorates the white wall and crown mouldings.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

as Bucky measures the splatter marks on the walls, scrapes
tissue from the muzzle of the gun, dusts it for latent
prints, etc. At the end he wraps the gun in a plastic bag.

INT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

as Bucky steps over the police rope and walks back towards
the main foyer. He stops short.

ON THE OPPOSING WALL

hangs a disturbing PAINTING: the portrait of a clown, a young
boy done up in court jester's garb. His body is gnarled and
hunched. He wears a stuporous ear-to-ear smile that looks
like one continuous deep scar.

It is eerily reminiscent of Elizabeth Short's death wound.

Spooked, Bucky pulls his eyes away and settles them on nearby
family photos--two young women linked arm in arm.

JANE CHAMBERS

The other survivors. Pretty aren't they?

She arrives next to him, dusty with soil.

BUCKY

Like their mother. How old are they?

JANE CHAMBERS

Twenty-one and twenty-three. Are you finished in the study?

BUCKY

Yes. Tell whoever cleans it up to use pure ammonia...

(looking at the two girls)

Mrs. Chambers--

JANE CHAMBERS

Jane.

BUCKY

Jane, do you know Madeleine and Martha Sprague? The next block over?

JANE CHAMBERS

(snorts)

Those girls and that family. How do you know them?

BUCKY

I did a little work for them once.

JANE CHAMBERS

Consider it lucky if it was a brief encounter.

BUCKY

How do you mean?

The hallway phone rings. Jane moves to answer it.

JANE CHAMBERS

Back to condolences. Thank you for being so nice, Mr.--

BUCKY

Bucky. Good-bye, Jane.

JANE CHAMBERS

Good-bye.

INT. THE CRIME LAB - LATER

Bucky writes up a report. VIC pokes his head in.

VIC

You finish working up the suicide, Bucky?

BUCKY

Yeah. Pretty routine. Whattya know about the husband?

VIC

Eldridge Chambers? Widow said he was depressed, failing health. The terrible burden of all that money'll get you every time.

BUCKY

Wonder how he made it?

VIC

No mystery there. Real estate.

BUCKY

Oh really?

INT. THE GARAGE - EVENING

The garage door is open to the evening air. Bucky's heavy bag and speed bag hang on hooks. Bucky leans against a stool, a large box open on the work bench.

INSIDE THE BOX

Bucky brushes aside a clutter of junk and pulls out A PHOTO ALBUM. He opens it and begins flipping through: articles and photos concerning Elizabeth Short. MOSTLY PHOTOS.

It's like a man in a mid-life crisis fantasizing about his high school sweetheart.

OFF ONE OF THE PHOTOS WE DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER ELIZABETH SHORT CASTING SESSION

"Elizabeth Short...Screen Test #5"

She rambles on, almost oblivious of the camera.

ELIZABETH SHORT

...I had a fiance, Captain Matt Durand. He was in a tank battalion. A Commander. He had...the fiercest blue eyes. Like the deep water you see from a fishing boat...

She's lost in thought...we're not sure whether this is a

scene, her real life, or just a sad lie...

THE NOISE OF A CAR APPROACHING

BACK TO SCENE

Bucky drops the album back in the box as Kay's car pulls into the driveway. He covers it back up.

KAY

(getting out)
What're you doing?

BUCKY

I'm...looking for the hammer.

She points over his shoulder to the hammer hanging in plain view.

INT. THE BEDROOM - LATER

Bucky kneels on the ground near the closet, toolbox next to him. He pulls on the floorboard, it flexes and squeaks.

He uses the hammer to pull the board completely off. He squeezes wood glue around the edges and is about to replace the board when something under the floor catches his eye.

He reaches into the hole, pulling out **STACKS OF HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS BOUND WITH RUBBER BANDS.**

He spies another scrap of paper in the hole...

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME

Kay pours two scotches.

KAY

Dwight?

She carries the scotches into the bedroom and finds Dwight sitting on the floor, staring at thousands of dollars in cash.

He holds a paper money band inscribed: "\$100...Boulevard-Citizens Bank..."

KAY (cont'd)

Oh. I...always wondered where he kept it.

THE BOULEVARD-CITIZENS BANK HEIST - A FLASHBACK

A SHOTGUN BLAST shatters the back window of the armored truck. In the front seat, LEE BLANCHARD ducks down as the driver hits the gas...

BACK ON THE SCENE

as Bucky leans back against the bed.

BUCKY

Were you ever going to tell me?

KAY

He'd given all his money to Ben Siegel.
(beat) He wanted to give me a home.

A FLASHBACK - LEE'S CAR

Lee and Bucky, their first day as partners...

LEE

...said I'd get a shot at Joe Louis if
I'd take two dives for him. I said no...

BACK ON THE SCENE

as Bucky looks straight up into the ceiling light...

BUCKY

Were you ever going to tell me?

KAY

He knew what Bobby was doing to me...How
he'd used a razor on me...pimped me to
his friends...

INT. DEWITT'S APARTMENT - A FLASHBACK

as Lee plants the incriminating bank bags in DeWitt's closet...

BACK ON THE SCENE

Bucky staring back into the hole in the floor...

KAY

...Bobby know nothing about the bank job.
He and Lee, they never even met. After
Lee and his driver got away, Lee figured
framing Bobby'd give me a way out...

EXT. DEWITT'S TRIAL - FLASHBACK

Lee leads Kay out of the courtroom.

BACK ON THE SCENE

as Kay leans down next to Bucky, gently putting her hand on his shoulder...

KAY

Then last year...the fourth man--the driver--he heard Bobby was getting paroled. He threatened to tell DeWitt that Lee framed him. He wanted money we didn't have. Ten thousand dollars.

BUCKY

Ever. Were you ever...?

KAY

Promise me this: Forgive him for DeWitt. Forgive him for the bank. It doesn't matter anymore. Not to us.

BUCKY

Who was the driver, Kay? Tell me. Tell me!

He's in her face now. Okay, pal, you asked for it.

KAY

Baxter Fitch.

EXT. THE STREET - A FLASHBACK

Three black man and a white man get roused by Lee and Bucky.

BAXTER FITCH

Blanchard?

Chaos erupts as Lee executes Baxter Fitch and Bucky kills two others...

BACK TO THE SCENE

on Bucky's anguished face:

KAY (cont'd)

He used you, Dwight. He did. Forgive him everything else. But don't forgive him for that. Ever.

She reaches for his face and he pulls away.

SLO-MO CLOSE-UP...

as the crumpled money drops down into the hole in the floor,
into the blackness...

WE FADE UP TO:

INT. THE GARAGE - NIGHT

Bucky, stripped to bare chest, attacks the heavy beg.

VOICE OVER

Fire and Ice. The hero and the snitch.
Bank robber and his best friend the
bumfuck detective. Triggerman. Stooge.
Weak point in a fairy tale triangle.

He lashes into the heavy bag with a series of brutal left
hooks. Kay stands in the door, watching him. Her eyes red
from crying.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

I would forgive Lee the bank job. And I
thought I'd forgive Kay her role in
keeping it from me. But the basic rule of
Homicide applied: Nothing stays buried
forever. Corpses. Ghosts. Nothing stays
buried forever. Nothing.

Kay turns around and shuts the door behind her.

EXT. JANE CHAMBER'S GARDEN - DAY

Bucky and Jane drink iced tea. A glorious garden behind them.

JANE CHAMBERS

So. What brings you around again?
Considering a courtin' the old rich
widow?

BUCKY

You're not that old. And you're not very
widowed.

JANE CHAMBERS

You either are or you aren't.

BUCKY

You seem to be doing all right.

JANE CHAMBERS

Eldridge had cancer. I half expected it.
We weren't that close anymore...You married?

BUCKY

Little over a year.

JANE CHAMBERS

God. Newlyweds. Nothing better, is there?

Bucky's face betrays his difficulties.

JANE CHAMBERS (cont'd)

Sorry.

BUCKY

So how well do you know the Spragues?

JANE CHAMBERS

Eldridge and Emmett went way back. They served on the California real estate board together. But Emmett was a bit of a crook. My husband got him kicked off the board for building dangerous buildings under phony corporations.

BUCKY

Your husband sounds like a good man.

JANE CHAMBERS

He had his moments. Most of it was out of guilt. He owned slum blocks in San Pedro. When he learned he had cancer, he really started feeling guilty. He voted Democratic last year. Even went in and had meetings with the City Council. I'm sure he gave them dirt on Emmett.

BUCKY

I read an article in the paper.

JANE CHAMBERS

Same day Eldridge killed himself. Apropos, I guess.

BUCKY

Maybe your husband--

JANE CHAMBERS

My husband was rich and did a mean Charleston. I loved him until I found out he was cheating on me. Now I'm starting to love him again. How strange.

BUCKY

It's not so strange.

They watch each other, enjoying each other's company. A strange emotional peace.

JANE CHAMBERS

You're very accepting of other people's frailties. You're young. You should have illusions.

BUCKY

I'm a cop. Illusions aren't standard issue.

JANE CHAMBERS

So how'd a cop get mixed up with Madeleine Sprague? It was Madeleine, I assume?

Bucky's gut clenches.

BUCKY

I stopped her at a red light. One thing led to another. Why do you assume it was Madeleine?

JANE CHAMBERS

Don't play dumb, Bucky. The girl's a roundheels. Always has been.

BUCKY

Jane. Don't be catty.

JANE CHAMBERS

I'm sorry. She can't help it I'm sure. She probably inherited it from her mother.

Before Bucky can press Jane stands up with the tray of iced tea. The visit is over.

JANE CHAMBERS

You figure out the rest, officer.

He follows her back inside.

INT. THE HALLWAY - SAME

As they stop momentarily in front of the scary clown painting.

BUCKY

God that is spooky.

JANE CHAMBERS

Valuable, too. Eldridge bought it for my birthday a couple years ago. I hate it. Want to take it with you?

BUCKY

No thanks.

JANE CHAMBERS

Thank you, then. You were my best condoler.

BUCKY

And you mine.

Jane gives Bucky a warm handshake.

EXT. THE STREET - HANCOCK PARK - SOON AFTER

Bucky pulls out of June Street, and passes Muirfield. He slows for a moment, squinting down the street, trying to discern the Sprague mansion. He drives on.

We hang on the sign for Muirfield Avenue as the day turns to night...

And down Muirfield Road, we see Bucky's car parked in the shadows. Watching the Sprague house. A voyeur.

INT. KAY AND BUCKY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Bucky sleeps soundly as Kay readies herself for work. She watches him for a moment, considering whether to wake him. She decides not to and leaves.

The minute she goes, Bucky opens his eyes...

EXT. MUIRFIELD ROAD - HANCOCK PARK - EVENING

Bucky spies on the Spragues. He digs back into his seat as Madeleine comes down the walk and puts mail in the mail box. Just for a second it looks like she sees him...maybe not...

INT. CRIME LAB - DAY

Bucky dozes, his tie almost catching on fire in a Bunsen burner.

EXT. THE MUIRFIELD ROAD STAKEOUT - EVENING

Bucky leans against the window, propping himself up.

ACROSS THE STREET

Madeleine's Packard pulls out and roars up the street. Bucky guns his car to follow...

EXT. THE ZIMBA ROOM - NIGHT

Bucky follows the Packard into a crowded GI bar parking lot. He parks a distance away. But as he watches Madeleine get out of her car he is staggered:

It's ELIZABETH SHORT.

Or, more accurately, it's Madeleine dressed up exactly like the Dahlia in one of her famous portrait photos. Slinky black dress, upswept hair, down to the yellow barrette. She strides into the bar...

INT. THE ZIMBA ROOM - NIGHT

Bucky ducks into a smoke-filled GI bar where a commotion is already taking place.

Madeleine is surrounded by soldiers fawning all over her. Other men simply point and whisper--her Dahlia act isn't lost on anybody. Bucky slides into a booth in the corner to watch. He signals for a drink.

INT. THE ZIMBA ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Four bourbons later. Bucky watches as Madeleine settles into a more intimate conversation with one soldier. Bucky downs his drink as Madeleine grabs the GI's elbow and escorts him out of the bar.

EXT. THE RED ARROW INN - LATER

Bucky sits in his car in the parking lot watching the soldier loiter outside of A motel room. Madeleine returns from the office with the key and lets the two of them in.

He watches as the light goes on; and then off.

INT. KAY AND BUCKY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bucky comes into the bedroom to find Kay waiting up for him.

KAY

Dwight--

He moves to her, pulling off his clothes as quickly as he can.

KAY (cont'd)

Dwight--

He's on top of her, his bourbon stained kisses go and down her neck and her breasts.

She responds, but not quickly enough for him. He rushes into her before she's ready. Still, she tries to be there for him, hoping to catch up with his lust.

She doesn't. And they both know it. They embrace, trying to cover up the hollow awkwardness with familiar affection.

It doesn't work...

INT. THAD GREEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Bucky sits at Thad Green's desk, penitent.

THAD GREEN

SID's not a bad beat, Bucky. At the time it was better than you deserved.

Bucky nods.

THAD GREEN (cont'd)

The blues hate you, Bucky. Vogel was their pal. I do this for you, you better be fucking supercop.

Bucky just sits silent.

ANOTHER LAPD TRANSFER ORDER: "Transfer order...Officer Bleichert...From SID...to Newton Street Division, Nightwatch.

EXT. NEWTON STREET - MIDNIGHT

Bucky back in uniform again. This time, the black slums. Heroin hookers, hard-core dealers, gangs.

VOICE OVER

Newton Street Division. Footbeat hacks carried metal-studded saps; squadroom dicks packed .45 automatics loaded with unregulation dum-dums.

INT. A LIQUOR STORE DOORWAY - NIGHT

Bucky and a large black man come tumbling out of the liquor store throwing vicious punches at each other.

Bucky takes three to land six, eventually knocking the guy out. He looks across the street to see to cops watching him, measuring him.

INT. AN ALLEY - NIGHT

As Bucky chases two men towards a chain link fence at the end of the alley. One of them gets to the fence and scrambles up it. Bucky yanks the other one off the fence, slamming him to the ground.

VOICE OVER

Kay. Lee. Madeleine. Betty Short. For one month I escaped them all.

INT. KAY AND BUCKY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Kay sleeps alone in the bed.

VOICE OVER

A fucking supercop.

INT. A JAZZ BAR - EARLY MORNING

Bucky sits in his uniform listening to a jazz quartet.

INT. KAY AND BUCKY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Bucky sleeps on the couch as Kay leaves for work.

VOICE OVER

I escaped them all. Almost.

EXT. A STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Bucky in his patrol car. The night a hot sweat. He listens to music on his radio and watches two hookers dance on the corner, waving at cars.

A SCRAGGLY OLD WINO staggers up to the women, stumbling around them, dancing with them. They sneer at him, tell him to beat it.

INSIDE THE PATROL CAR

Bucky flashes his headlights at the bum. The bum ignores him. Bucky flashes them again, annoyed.

The bum looks into the glare and flips Bucky off.

And suddenly Bucky snaps, jumping from his car. In three big strides he's on the bum, clobbering him with roundhouse lefts and rights.

The women are screaming. The drunk is screaming.

OLD DRUNK

Pleease!

Bucky drops him, staggering into a phone booth. He drops a nickel in the phone. Dials a number. Ring. Ring. Ring...

He hangs up. Dials another. A woman's voice answers.

BUCKY

It's me.

EXT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - NIGHT

Bucky's just onto the porch steps when Madeleine answers the door. She's dressed like the Dahlia.

He pushes her inside.

VOICE OVER

It was a reunion of avowed tramps, old rutters who knew they'd never have it as good with anyone else...
Afterwards we'd talk through the night.
The Spragues...Crazy Papa Bleichert...

INT. AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Sixth graders write in silence. Kay sits at her desk, sadness in her eyes as she watches the children.

VOICE OVER

Mostly, though we'd talk about Betty. Her utter malleability, a chameleon eager to please anybody...and the disrupter of every life close to me...It would last a month.

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - MORNING

Bucky stands in the living room, examining family photos. A photo of two young, proud WWI vets: George Tilden and Emmett Sprague...A photo of the dark-haired Ramona and the ruddy and fair-haired Emmett...Photos of Madeleine and Martha, the brunette and the ruddy blond...Back to the first photo: George Tilden's dark hair.

Madeleine wanders in, Bucky smiles at her.

MADELEINE

What?

BUCKY

Nothing.

She runs her hands over his shoulders.

BUCKY (cont'd)

I thought the family came back from
Laguna this week.

MADELEINE

(her Scottish brogue)
You miss 'em, laddie? Mother's insults?
Martha's pornography...

BUCKY

Your father's Georgie Tilden war stories?

He scans her for a reaction. If she has one it ripples
through her almost undetectable. Almost.

EXT. JANE CHAMBER'S HOUSE - LATER

As Bucky cruises by, grinning. He salutes the house.

VOICE OVER

In the scheme of things it wasn't much.
Rich old lady gossip, as Jane put it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCKY'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

as he drives onto his own modest street.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

But combine it with banging Madeleine in
all twenty-two rooms of their mansion, it
was good enough for me.

EXT. KAY AND BUCKY'S HOUSE - DAY

A moving van in the driveway and Kay's Plymouth stuffed with
boxes. Bucky double-parks and bolts up the steps.

The van pulls away behind him.

BUCKY

(to the van driver)

Hey! Goddammit! Get back here!

The van driver ignores him; Bucky turns as Kay walks out onto the porch.

KAY

I didn't touch your things. You can have the furniture.

BUCKY

Babe--

KAY

Did you think I'd let my husband disappear for three weeks and do nothing about it? I've had detectives following you, Dwight. Detectives. She looks like that fucking dead girl, so you can have her--not me.

BUCKY

Babe. Goddammit.

He reaches for her and she backs out of grabbing range.

KAY

Whoremonger. Coward. Necrophile.

She spins out of his grasp and makes for her car. She guns the engine and disappears.

INT. THE HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Bucky stands in the middle of the living room, cataloguing the little things. No periodicals on the coffee table, half the record collection gone, no candlesticks.

He picks up the largest chair (Lee's favorite) and throws it at the wall. Next, Kay's rocking chair shatters the glass cabinets. The coffee table goes through the front window.

IN THE BEDROOM

Bucky yanks out all the drawers, turns over the bed.

IN THE BATHROOM

he takes a pipe wrench to the sink, crushes the mirror with one blow...

In a terrible ten rounder with the ghosts of his past Bucky demolishes the dream house, pulls his uniforms out of the closet and bolts out of the house, leaving the door open so scavengers can pick the place clean...

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky sits on the bed, his back pushed up against the wall. Eyeball to eyeball with Elizabeth Short, Betty, Liz, the Black Dahlia.

A collage of photos and file folders...

VOICE OVER

It came on then, big and ugly: bye-bye
Bleichert at the bus stop, adios
shitbird, has-been, never-was, stool
pigeon harness bull.

EXT. THE SLUMS - LATE NIGHT

Bucky stands in the worst of slums, his blue uniform a beacon to anyone who would do him harm.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

You traded a good woman for skunk pussy,
you've turned everything that's been
handed you to pure, undiluted shit, your
"I will's" amount to the eighth round at
the Academy gym when you stepped into a
Blanchard right hand--pratfalling into
clover that you turned into horse dung.

ANOTHER ELIZABETH SHORT CASTING SESSION

No clapsticks this time. Just Betty Short sitting on the couch. She reaches down and pulls off her pumps. Now she reaches under her dress and begins unrolling her stockings. Not sexy. Empty and resigned.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Bye-bye Betty, Beth, Betsy, Liz, we were
a couple of tramps, too bad we didn't
meet before 39th and Norton, it just
might have worked. Maybe us would've been
the one thing we wouldn't have fucked up
past redemption...

EXT. 39TH AND NORTON - NIGHT - LATER

An apartment complex has been erected at the murder site.

EXT. AN AERIAL VIEW OF LOS ANGELES - DAY

ANGLE ON: THE HOLLYWOODLAND SIGN. As we watch the sign changes, the "D" dropping off the end. It now reads "HOLLYWOODLAN".

EXT. WILSHIRE DISTRICT - DAY

Bucky, unshaven and out of uniform, leans against his car on a working class residential street. He stares across at a modest Victorian house and the garage behind it. We recognize it hopefully; we've been here before.

EXT. A GARAGE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

It's Cleo Short's apartment. Or at least it used to be. Bucky peers in a window and sees it's filled with junk.

He walks back towards the street, intent on heading back to his car. on a hunch, he walks up onto the porch of the Victorian house and rings the bell.

EXT. THE PORCH - SAME

Footsteps at the door. It opens to reveal another identical twin to Elizabeth Short.

Bucky is stunned and can't find his tongue.

GIRL

(Boston accent)

Can I help you? (no response). Great.
Take a hike you big sicko--

BUCKY

Wait--

She begins to shut the door but someone behind her pulls it back open.

Cleo Short, Elizabeth's father.

CLEO SHORT

It's all right, dear. I know this pug.

INT. THE SITTING ROOM - LATER

The two men arrange themselves in chairs while the Betty look-a-like makes herself busy in the kitchen behind Cleo.

Bucky tries not to stare. He forces himself to focus on Cleo, who, while five years older, looks much better than last time

Bucky saw him.

CLEO SHORT

Came into a little change a while back, managed to trade in that shit shack out back for these digs. (beat) And I don't give a fuck what you think, you and your partner ain't much to look at now. I read the papers.

Bucky can't deny that.

The young woman brings in two beers for Bucky and Cleo. Bucky checks her out again. Cleo knows why.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

My youngest, Christine.

He squeezes her hand affectionately.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

Best housekeeper of the bunch. Can't cook a damn, though. Got her sister's star-eyes for the pictures, damn straight. Thinks she's gonna be another goddamn Jayne Mansfield. Get out of here, Chrissie...

She rolls her eyes, picks up a newspaper and heads out on the porch.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

Used to be dozens'd stop by, you know. Drive up from Dago or San Berdoo just to snap a shot of the goddamn garage back there. Thought maybe they'd find one of Betty's dresses in the garbage. Jackals.

BUCKY

You didn't move far.

CLEO SHORT

Wouldn't a mattered if I did. (beat) Whatcha here for, mug? I know you ain't smart enough to solve the case, and you ain't dumb enough to still think I did it...I had an alibi.

BUCKY

Tighter'n a popcorn fart.

CLEO SHORT

And that's air tight, mug. Air tight.

Bucky takes a swig of his beer. Cleo's eyes scour Bucky.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

You're hooked on her still, ain't ya? Ha.
That's a plug nickel you can't spend,
ain't it, mug? Ha. Yea. Betty'll do that
to a fella. Especially someone like you.

(off Bucky's look)

Like I said, I know you mug.

BUCKY

I just thought...Maybe after all this
time...There's something you might have
forgot...Anything she might have said...

Cleo studies him, knows Bucky's a lost soul. He softens for
the first time. Leans forward, elbows on knees. Almost
looking like a father who'd lost a daughter.

CLEO SHORT

She was a terrible actress. I'm sure
folks've told you that. She'd practice in
front of the john mirror.
Once or twice she got me in on
it...Reading parts with her for some
audition. She stunk. Even a parent could
tell. What Beth was good at was writing.
All her teachers used to say that. Not
that a grease like me'd know the
difference. Maybe she coulda written for
the pictures. But she wanted to be an
actress like every other silly girl.

His gaze drifts outside to his youngest daughter.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

Your folks still alive?

BUCKY

My father.

CLEO SHORT

(poking)

He proud of his son, the ace copper? Or
maybe he thought you'd end up champ?

Bucky shrugs off any talk of his father. Cleo gets it.

CLEO SHORT

Your momma?

BUCKY

She killed herself a long time ago.

Cleo takes a swig of his beer.

CLEO SHORT

Probably better off then.

INT./EXT. THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cleo follows Bucky out onto the porch. Christine reads a copy of Photoplay. The cover touts the current Mack Sennett Revival in honor of the revised Hollywoodland sign...

BUCKY

Thank you for your time, Mr. Short. if--

CLEO SHORT

Get a life, Bleichert. Don't dream it all away. Dreamin'll kill ya.

(to Christine)

You, too. Get me a sandwich.

He snatches away the Photoplay and slaps it into Bucky's hands.

CLEO SHORT (cont'd)

Clean up some dog shit with this for me, willya?

The man winks. Bucky takes the magazine and salutes him with it. He heads back down the walk. Behind him Cleo Short watches him go.

EXT./INT. BUCKY'S CAR - HOLLYWOOD - DUSK

Bucky sits at a light, staring north. Scaffolding drapes the Hollywoodland sign. Movie lights have been set up, capturing the event on film.

His attention turns to Christine's Photoplay on the seat next to him; the weekly rag is open to an ad for the Mack Sennett revival:

A reproduction of the Hollywoodland sign across the top of the page, and below it the words "Keystone Kops at the Admiral Theater--Air conditioned!"

Below that a still from a Keystone Kops movie, registering huge and loud and wrong: Three Keystone Kops standing between pillars shaped like snakes swallowing their own tails; a wall

inset with Egyptian hieroglyphics was behind them.

Unmistakably the background that appeared in the Linda Martin/Betty Short porn film.

Cars honking behind him. Bucky's transfixed by the image. The light is green.

He jerks upright and squeals out of the intersection.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ADMIRAL THEATER - SOON AFTER

Bucky buys a ticket underneath a marquee which reads **MACK SENNETT REVIVAL**".

INT. THE THEATER - CONTINUOUS

A Keystone Kop short in progress. Bucky can barely sit down to watch...

VOICE OVER

I tried to keep calm. I told myself that just because Emmett Sprague helped Mack Sennett build sets in the twenties didn't mean he had anything to do with a smut film twenty-five years later.

And there's a shot of the porn set--the Keystone Kops running around in it like they're solving a crime back in ancient Egypt.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Duke Wellington had admitted making it. Linda Martin had said it was shot in Mexico.

The short ends with a large pie throwing scene on the porn set. The credits begin to roll: "Director--Mack Sennett. Scenarist--Mack Sennett. Assistant Director--Emmett Sprague"

On Bucky's face as one last piece of information hits him: "Filmed in Hollywood, USA."

EXT. THE MOVIE THEATER

as Bucky bursts out into the evening, the lights on the Hollywood hill catching his attention.

INT. A FLASHBACK - THE SPRAGUE HOUSE

Bucky at dinner with the Spragues.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Mack Sennett? Helped him build that housing project he was putting up-- Hollywoodland--

BACK TO THE SCENE

as Bucky stares up at the sign.

INT. EL NIDO - ROOM 204 - NIGHT

Bucky tears through it, pulling out files. The door opens - it's Russ Millard.

RUSS MILLARD

I got your message, Bucky.

BUCKY

Look, Russ...I think...I may have it. I--

RUSS MILLARD

It?

Bucky whirls around, gesturing to the room--

BUCKY

Her! Her! I've got a hot one, padre. It's just...

Bucky flops onto the bed, almost frantic.

RUSS MILLARD

Calm down, son. Tell me.

Bucky meets his eyes: forgive me my sins.

INT. BUCKY'S CAR - NIGHT

Bucky drives with Russ in the car next to him.

VOICE OVER

I told him everything. Me and Madeleine, the Spragues. Withholding evidence for her. Everything. Even Lee. After all of it he only had one thing to say:

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

On Russ:

RUSS MILLARD

All right, then. It's your ball. What do you wanna do?

BUCKY

I want to search every fucking inch of every goddamn acre of Emmett Sprague property if it takes the rest of my shitty career. And I know exactly where we start.

INT. BUCKY'S CAR - BEACHWOOD CANYON - NIGHT

as they inch their way up into a huge traffic snarl in Beachwood Canyon. The sign looms high above them as the "A" is taken down.

VOICE OVER

Between my time with Madeleine and the local boom baron expose in the papers, I was practically an expert on Emmett Sprague's land deals...

EXT. A PARK AREA AT THE NORTH END OF BEACHWOOD DRIVE

A huge area is cordoned off as people watch the sign being torn down.

Bucky and Russ leave the car there, badge the local blue doing crowd control, and split off down a dirt side road into the woods.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

For the first time since the beginning of the whole fiasco, I stopped trying to figure out who killed Elizabeth Short. Instead, I focused on where.

EXT. A WOODED AREA - NIGHT

Bucky and Russ play a flashlight over a piece of paper, like two men consulting a treasure map in the woods.

In the background is a tiny bungalow with the windows blown out and the door hanging off its hinges.

VOICE OVER

And if my hunch was right, we wouldn't have to look any further than one of Emmett Sprague's condemned bungalows. One that was isolated...abandoned...

They walk on, leaving this particular bungalow behind.

EXT. A STREAM - WOODS - LATER

Bucky shines the light in a running stream as they follow it deeper into the night...

VOICE OVER

...and most importantly, close to a water source...where one could drain a body of its blood.

Bucky and Russ round a bend in the stream and see

THE SKELETON OF A BUNGALOW

teetering on the edge of the stream. Empty window and doors hover over a rotting porch like skull sockets over a death leer.

Bucky and Russ feel it, tensing up as they approach. They pick their footsteps carefully through the broken porch and step into the abandoned house.

INT. THE BUNGALOW - SAME

A scattering of trash in the front room, animal shit, a bicycle tire, rags.

They move through the house, each roam, each closet and corner creeps with potential violence. Still, nothing.

From the kitchen:

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky.

Bucky joins Russ at the back door, the screen rotted off. Through the empty window they see:

AN ALUMINUM GARDENING SHED, the door wide open.

You know it before they even get there. But as soon as they step inside...

INT. THE GARDENING SHED - CONTINUOUS

They know something bad happened here...

Half the room is taken up by a mattress, its blue ticking stained dark brown with blood. A gas lantern sits in the

corner, leaning against a stack of blood-spattered books, including a copy of Gray's Anatomy and Victor Hugo's The Man Who Laughs along with a clutch of pornographic pictures.

RUSS MILLARD

God help her.

Bucky's already pulling on a pair of rubber gloves from his SID days. For the first time we notice he's carrying his forensic kit.

He opens it, revealing the test tubes, fingerprint powder, tweezers, etc.

BUCKY

(throwing Russ gloves)

Box up the books and papers. Maybe light that lantern.

Russ grants Bucky his take-charge attitude. He snaps on a pair of gloves.

A GRUESOME MONTAGE

1. Bucky scrapes blood off a wall and into a test tube.
2. Russ flips through the pornographic material--some of it very intense.
3. Bucky fills up another test tube with dark hair tweezed from the caked blood on the mattress.
4. Underneath the mattress, Bucky finds small pieces of rope...
5. Bucky measures a bloody sole print and traces it onto a piece of paper.
6. Bucky finger prints the whole fucking place, pulling good prints from the door jamb, the door, and the wall near the head of the mattress.

OUTSIDE THE GARDENING SHED

Russ fiddles with the books, making himself busy. Finally he walks back inside.

INT. THE GARDENING SHED - CONTINUOUS

Bucky sits on the floor, his hands shaking as he holds a fingerprint plate in one hand and a piece of paper in the other.

RUSS MILLARD

You all right?

Bucky hands him the fresh plate. Russ studies it. Bucky hands him the piece of paper with a blown-up set of prints on it. The two sets of prints are identical. Russ sees the name at the top of the paper: ELIZABETH SHORT.

He exhales deeply.

BUCKY

Thing is, Russ. Thing is...There's another set of latents up there on the doorjamb...And my hands're shaking so bad I can't transfer 'em.

CUT TO:

RUSS MILLARD HACKING A FOUR INCH SECTION OF THE DOOR JAMB OFF WITH HIS KNIFE AND SLIPPING IT INTO A PLASTIC BAG.

Bucky sits on the ground outside.

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE HOLLYWOODLAND SIGN - LATER

The last of the "LAND" letters has come down and a party has ensued. A marching band plays "There's No Business Like Show Business".

Bucky and Russ stumble out of the woods, carrying the evidence of Betty Short's death in their hands.

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky sits on the bed, the evidence spread out around him. Russ stands in the doorway.

BUCKY

We finally have it, Russ. All of it. All of her.

(gesturing around the room)

All right here.

RUSS MILLARD

Are you sure you don't want to come home? Mrs. Millard'll fix up the couch.

BUCKY

No. Thanks. I'll stay here.

(re the doorjamb piece)

I want to get up early and confirm these

prints.

Russ nods.

RUSS MILLARD

You're a very very bright penny, Officer.

He closes the door, leaving Bucky alone with Elizabeth.

INT. EL NIDO - ROOM 204 - NIGHT

Bucky lies on the bed, staring at the ceiling.

BUCKY (cont'd)

That night I pictured myself the way I wanted Elizabeth to picture me--her knight in shining armor, a reborn two-bit harness bull who cracked the biggest unsolved homicide in California history. A war hero, a heavyweight champion.

INT. EL NIDO - ROOM 204 - DAWN

Bucky flips through Gray's Anatomy, killing time.

BUCKY (cont'd)

I stayed with her that night and dreamed of all the bullshit that would never happen. Not if I wanted to keep my job at all. Because there was no way for me to make the arrest without admitting that I'd suppressed evidence years ago. The case would always be open. And so while it killed me to wait 'til morning, in some ways...this was our last night together.

INT. THE CRIME LAB - MORNING

Bucky transfers the killer's prints from the doorjamb to a plate.

INT. A LARGE ROOM WITH FILE CABINETS

Bucky pulls a fingerprint card from a cabinet. He shuts the cabinet. The tab on the outside reads: "City Employees".

EXT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - MORNING

Bucky edges his way along the side of the house. A side window is open and he pulls himself inside.

INT. THE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Moving boxes fill the front hallway. Bucky hears voices coming from the main hall. Madeleine and Emmett.

Bucky unholsters his gun; from his pocket he pulls out a SILENCER and screws it on the muzzle.

EMMETT SPRAGUE (O.S.)

...besides, one of my foremen said the goddamn pipes are spewing gas...There'll be hell to pay. It's about time I showed the three of you good ol' Scotland.

MADELEINE

I don't wanna go to Europe, Daddy. You're always talking about how dreadful and provincial it is.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

...they've got what you need, lassie.

Bucky steps into the main room, gun prominent at his side.

BUCKY

And what is that, Emmett? Saps like me? Direct line to the straight dope? Or is that what you needed?

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Aaah, laddie.

He eyes the gun.

BUCKY

George Tilden killed Elizabeth Short and the two of you covered it up.

On the Spragues, trying to maintain their upper-class cool.

BUCKY (cont'd)

(to Madeleine)

You helped Linda Martin and Betty make that stag film. Where was the set? In one of Daddy's old buildings?

He levels the gun at Madeleine. Rock steady. Madeleine sits on a divan.

MADELEINE

Georgie was always...sneaking around Daddy's properties. He saw them make

it...He...got crazy about Betty.

BUCKY

Of course. She looked like his daughter.

Off Emmett's shocked look:

BUCKY (cont'd)

He fucked your wife. But I don't think you cared about that. But he's her daddy. And that must have made you crazy. He was a handsome bastard, too. Somehow I don't think he was disfigured in a car wreck.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

In the Argonne, Georgie used to bayonet the dead Gerries. I saw it. Thrilled him, it did. He was...hmm...disturbed. I think Ramona found him...a good way to strike back at me.

Bucky points the gun at Madeleine again.

BUCKY

How'd it all go down?

She hesitates. He shoots a MING VASE next to her. She jumps.

BUCKY (cont'd)

So many pretty things here...

MADELEINE

It was Sunday I remember...Betty called...short of cash as usual. I put Daddy on, and he offered Betty money to date a nice man he knew. Georgie'd been driving Daddy crazy, wanting to get with Betty ever since the movie. Threatening to tell people he was my father. But we thought Georgie just wanted her for sex.

Bucky blows away another objet d'art. The two Spragues huddle on the couch.

BUCKY

He was a sick fuck and you knew it!

Emmett gestures vainly towards the stuffed dog Balto.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

He was passive. He liked to touch dead

things. His father was a surgeon, did you know that? Famous in Scotland.

BUCKY

What did you tell Betty? What did you tell her?

MADELEINE

We said he was a war hero. Because we didn't want her to feel like a whore.

BUCKY

Then?

MADELEINE

You know the rest.

BUCKY

Pretend I'm stupid. For old time's sake.

Madeleine exhales hate.

MADELEINE

I went looking for Linda Martin, and I found her at a motel in the Valley. I gave her money and told her to say the stag was filmed in Tijuana with a Mexican crew.

BUCKY

And then what? I come along? Daddy tell you to fuck me or was that your idea?

MADELEINE

Bucky--

Two more shots from the gun destroy another fifty grand worth of art. Bucky reloads.

BUCKY (cont'd)

The whole family have a good laugh at dinner that night? Pumping me for info about the case? Throwing me Georgie stories to see if I'd bite? A little hospitality and some cunt so I wouldn't check out your alibi--

MADELEINE

Bucky--

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Ramona didn't know a thing. Martha--

BUCKY

What about sweet little Martha?

MADELEINE

Martha knew I'd been with Betty. But that was all. But she's a demon, you know. She even called the cops with a tip on LaVerne's--just hoping I'd get smeared in the papers. I scratched her good for that.

BUCKY

Martha tell you this?

She nods yes.

BUCKY

Then she lied to get your goat, 'cuz no one ever called in a tip on LaVerne's.

MADELEINE

Figures.

Emmett clears his throat.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

What are you gonna do?

BUCKY

Passports. All four.

Emmett walks to a small desk. He reaches into the drawer--
Bucky puts his gun to Emmett's head--

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Don't insult me, lad.

He pulls out the four passports (not a gun). Bucky takes them.

MADELEINE

We'll ruin you in court, you know. If you go after us, we'll ruin you. Over what?
Some little slut--

Bucky blows a hole in a vase some six inches from her. He cocks his head at her, as if to say: the next one will be closer.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

You know, laddie. The rich don't

necessarily own art just for themselves;
we safekeep it for future generations.

The dig crosses through Bucky's mind for a moment before he
shooes it away. To Emmett:

BUCKY

I need to see it.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

It?

BUCKY

Just to be sure. I need to see it.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

I'm not sure I know...

Bucky puts the silenced muzzled half an inch from Sprague's
brain.

BUCKY

I need to see his grave, you tightass
kiltwearing motherfucker. Where'd you
bury George Tilden?

EXT. A PAUPER'S CEMETERY - DAY

Bucky stands in front of a plain grave marker: "George
Tilden. 1906 - 1948. War Hero and Loyal Friend"

VOICE OVER

When I'd pulled George's print card that
morning, I'd already laid fifty down with
Russ that he was our guy. Amateur
taxidermist, transient. If he was a cop
39th and Norton woulda been right in the
middle of his beat...

INT. THE ROOM WITH THE FILE CABINETS - FLASHBACK

Bucky pulls Tilden's card and we see the close-up: "George
Tilden". Added by hand: "Deceased"

VOICE OVER

But I'd be lying if I said I hadn't
wanted to nail the sicko myself, giving
him ten rounds of Bleichert rage.

EXT./INT. THE ALUMINUM GARDEN SHED - DAY

Bucky watches as Russ tips the gas lantern over on its side,
the gas leaking out into the tin shed.

VOICE OVER

Maybe he'd have gone for a gun or probably a knife, and the Bleichert fists would've given way to a full load of .45 in the chest.

Bucky and Russ step outside. Russ lights a match and tosses it inside. Flames begin to eat away the bloody mattress...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Sprague said they found him croaked in a parking lot downtown, just twelve blocks from where he'd dumped Betty Short. Just croaked. Natural causes, if anything about crazy Georgie was natural. I hoped the evil ate him from the inside out, filling him with blackness like the sawdust in Sprague's goddamn dog. (beat)

Bucky kicks the tin door shut, sealing the fire inside Elizabeth Short's private hell.

INT. JANE CHAMBERS HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

Bucky and Jane Chambers drink some iced tea.

JANE CHAMBERS

...and then Eldridge said: I'm sure that's the case Mr. Mayor, but that's not my dog and those sure as hell aren't my shoes!

They laugh, Jane a bit more than Bucky. She narrows in on him.

JANE CHAMBERS (cont'd)

It's so nice of you to stop by again. Of course you've been staking out the Sprague house. Four nights in a row.

(off his surprise)

I walk my dog every night. And I'm almost as nosy as you.

BUCKY

(covering)

Yeah, well. Old habits die hard.

He gets up from the table.

INT. JANE CHAMBER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bucky wanders over and stares at the slash-mouthed clown

painting, always transfixed by it.

JANE CHAMBERS

(re the painting)

I'd been thinking about giving it to charity, but it's too valuable. I found Eldridge's receipt...

She wanders into the study and fishes out some papers from her late husband's desk while Bucky continues to stare at the clown. She returns, reading from the sale slip.

JANE CHAMBERS (cont'd)

It's a Frederick Yannantuono original, inspired by an old classic novel--The Man Who Laughs by Victor Hugo.

A FLASHBACK - THE GARDENING SHED

A blood-spattered copy of The Man Who Laughs on the pile of pornography--

BACK TO SCENE

As the slash-mouthed clown towers over Bucky, his head buzzing...

JANE CHAMBERS (cont'd)

The clown in the painting is the book's main character, Gwynplain. When he was a child he had his mouth slashed ear to ear and then sold to the 16th century Spanish aristocracy to be used as a court jester.

Bucky steps back.

JANE CHAMBERS (cont'd)

Are you all right, Bucky?

BUCKY

Yes, I'm fine.

He focuses on her.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Where'd Eldridge get the painting?

JANE CHAMBERS

You'll appreciate the coincidence--

She hands him the receipt.

ANGLE ON THE RECEIPT:

"Received from Eldridge Chambers, \$3500 for the sale of the F. Yannantuono painting. Ramona Cathcart Sprague, January 15, 1947."

Speechless.

JANE CHAMBERS

What is it--

He's out the door.

EXT. JANE CHAMBER'S HOUSE - SAME

Bucky runs to his car, pulls out his gun. He sprints off down the street...

EXT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - SAME

Bucky waits outside, watching from behind a tree. He watches as the last of the cars, Madeleine's, pulls out of the driveway.

He crosses the street. He tries the front door, surprised to find it unlocked. He goes inside.

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Gun drawn, Bucky cases the downstairs. He hears a noise.

RAMONA

I'm in here, officer.

A red wave of sweat washes over him. He walks carefully into

RAMONA'S SITTING ROOM

where the matriarch sits on a tiny sofa, her arms lost in a silk dressing gown. Her face puffy and her eyes dark, her gray hair frizzy.

Bucky trains a gun on her.

BUCKY

I know what you did, Ramona. You and Georgia. I've seen the painting. You sold it the day of the murder. You know I've got the book. And now I've got you.

She smiles. Very slowly she withdraws one of her hands from the folds of her dressing gown. She holds a tiny ladylike

revolver in her fingers and drops it at her feet. When she speaks, it's with complete control.

RAMONA

We see you out there, you know. Every night. We see you. You don't fool us. You didn't hurt Georgie. You didn't hurt Madeleine. And as much as I wish you would, you didn't hurt Emmett. You're a voyeur. That's all the lesser classes have. Pressing their nose up against the glass.

BUCKY

So tell me. Let me see.

She smiles at him again, loving his need.

RAMONA

Emmett slashed his face, I'm sure you know. Madeleine was eleven and she looked just like Georgie. When he got out of the hospital I gave him the Hugo book as a present. My Gwynplain. But he was afraid of Emmett's rage...After that...we rarely spoke.

Bucky eases himself into a chair opposite her.

BUCKY

Tell me about Betty Short.

Her face hardens.

RAMONA (cont'd)

(with venom)

It was the cruelest of jokes. He'd become obsessed with her...That filthy film.

BUCKY

Your husband bought her for George.

RAMONA

Emmett never stopped hating me.

BUCKY

For George--

RAMONA

For being richer than he was.

She looks over her nose at him.

RAMONA (cont'd)

I followed them to the bungalow. There was a baseball bat under...under a tree...She tried to run from me...but she was drunk. The first swing knocked her out. I made Georgie tie her to the mattress....The second swing woke her up.

BUCKY

You tortured her.

She seems to drift.

RAMONA (cont'd)

She looked so much like my Maddy. It was...the cruelest of jokes.

Her thousand yard stare gradually returns to Bucky.

RAMONA (cont'd)

Martha mustn't know. She's all that's left of this family that isn't dying. You consider her when you decide whether we're worth it.

Bucky's not sure what to say next. She fills the space quite well.

RAMONA (cont'd)

Honestly, though. Sometimes I thought Martha was going to bring the whole family down around her by chance. Her little stunt about tipping the police to LaVerne's--

BUCKY

She lied about that. To get Madeleine's goat.

Ramona's eyes brighten up.

RAMONA

Oh is that so? You poor boy. Your life is worse than mine. Maybe the cruel joke is on you.

She speaks with such an insanity and calm it frightens him. And on Bucky's hungry eyes we

CUT TO:

BUCKY'S CAR peeling out of Hancock Park.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FAIRFAX PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Kay sits at her desk, grading papers. Bucky bursts in.

KAY

Dwight?

BUCKY

How much of the hundred grand did Lee let you keep?

INT. THE TIP DESK - POLICE DEPARTMENT - FLASHBACK

Bucky and Lee sit at the tip desk while Lee listens to a very long call, saying nothing...

BACK TO SCENE

Kay and Bucky stare each other down.

BUCKY

He knew about Madeleine Sprague. He knew about Laverne's Hideaway.

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - NIGHT - A FLASHBACK

Lee Blanchard beats the hell out of Emmett Sprague while Madeleine's looks on.

BUCKY (VO)

He blackmailed Sprague--

MADELEINE (VO)

--Don't come over. Daddy's having a business soiree--

INT. THE BATHROOM OF THE POLICE STATION - A FLASHBACK

Bucky bursts in on Lee washing his bloody fists.

LEE

--Penance for Junior Nash--

BACK TO SCENE

Bucky's leaning on the desk...

BUCKY

And you knew it, Kay! You knew it all! He took that hundred thousand and split to Mexico and you let him go!

Kay fingers the edges of an exam. She looks him in the eye.

KAY

You are so, so good at some things.

He absorbs the blow and waits for her to continue.

KAY

He was going to leave no matter what. I didn't know if I was ever going to see him again, and I wanted him to be comfortable if such a thing was possible. Dwight, he knew I was in love with you, and he wanted us to be together.

BUCKY

He didn't leave, he ran. He ran from the bank job, ran from the frame on DeWitt. He knew who killed Elizabeth Short and fucking ran away! This whole time. You both knew everything--

Kay slams down a book.

KAY

Goddammit, Dwight! That girl--that girl! I don't give a damn about that girl. She ruined our lives!

The room grinds to a halt.

KAY (cont'd)

He loved us. Don't take that away from him. And I love you. And if you hadn't seen so much of yourself in her you'd realize how much you loved me. (beat) So if you're aware of something more important than that...I'd like to hear what it is.

Bucky looks like he's about to burst. He wants to go to her, lock her in his arms and forgive. Instead, he just backs up three steps, slowly turns on his heels, and walks out.

INT. A BAR - NIGHT

Bucky sits in the back of the bar, shrouded in smoke and loud music. He drinks bourbon and watches Madeleine over at the

bar. She's got her hand on a soldier's knee.

EXT. THE RED ARROW INN - NIGHT

Madeleine Sprague and the soldier boy walk from the office over to the now familiar Room 11. They enter, shutting the door and flicking on the light to reveal

BUCKY

sitting on the back of a chair with his feet on the seat. He trains his silenced pistol on them. Flashing his badge, he points the soldier to the door:

BUCKY

(quoting Lee)

Adios yourself back to the Halls of Tripoli, shitbird. I've got business with the lady.

You don't have to tell the soldier twice. He backs out and shuts the door.

BUCKY

I've been pointing my gun at a lot of people this week. But I haven't had much of a chance to shoot anybody. Whattya think?

MADELEINE

I think you'd rather fuck me than kill me. But you don't have the guts to do either. You're a boxer. Not a puncher.

Bucky smiles.

BUCKY

(Scotchman's burr)

Aaaah, lassie. You wanna sell me short to the very end, eh?

Now she's curious.

BUCKY (cont'd)

It's not as good as yours, I'll admit. But then again you've got an ear for accents. Accents, dressing up in costumes...

Maybe a trace of fear in her eyes...

BUCKY (cont'd)

Do another one for me. Play someone else.
Rich little slut...Lez...Daddy's
girl...Dahlia...Play someone else. Do
another.

MADELEINE

I don't know what you're talking about--

He cocks the gun.

BUCKY

How 'bout the Mexican accent you used
when you hired the private dick to track
down Lee. Let's see the make-up job.
Let's see the fucking dress, mamacita,
that you wore when you chased after poor
daddy's money. Tell me something--you
shoot Lee yourself?

She steps back against the door as he advances.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Did you at least have the guts to shoot
him yourself?

He puts the gun to her forehead.

MADELEINE

You'll never do it. Never. Remember...I
look like her.

She grins wickedly.

He pulls the gun from her head and shoots her in the kneecap.

EXT. THE RED ARROW INN - LATER

Cap cars, flashing lights, an ambulance.

VOICE OVER

We took the fall together.

INT. A HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Madeleine is interrogated by Homicide dicks.

VOICE OVER

Ever the consummate actor, Madeleine
Sprague confessed to killing Lee by
concocting a love triangle from the three
of us...The Bleichert/Blanchard rematch
fought over her hand, with Lee beating

Emmett and demanding he "hand over" his daughter when she preferred me.

EXT. THE ENSENADA STREETS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

As Madeleine, dressed as a Mexican woman in heavy makeup and a large hat, tails Lee back to his motel...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Madeleine stalking Lee...Revenge-killing him in Ensenada to avenge the Sprague honor...No mention of the Black Dahlia murder case at all.

EXT. THE COURTHOUSE - DAY

Madeleine led away amongst a flock of photographers. Her family linked arm-and-arm in the background, crying, only Martha looking like she might survive...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Her story's enough to get her a psych tag as a delusional schizophrenic and ten years at Atascadero State Hospital.

INT. THE POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Bucky sits at a table, staring into the one-way mirror.

VOICE OVER

So the brass girl took the fall for the whole family. And I took the fall for me. IAD cleared me on the motel shooting--a cop's code make-good for Blanchard's snuff.

WE PULL OUT and see Bucky's cuffs, badge and gun sitting on the table in front of him.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
Afterwards I was fired from the Los Angeles Police Department on grounds of moral turpitude and conduct unbecoming an officer. I thought of turning over Ramona in hopes of pulling a grandstander's turnabout...

THE CAMERA DRIFTS THROUGH THE ONE-WAY MIRROR revealing RUSS MILLARD standing on the other side.

VOICE OVER

...but I had people to protect...People who already knew that, for the briefest

of times, and in the darkest of places, I
had been so, so, good at some things.

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky standing amongst the Dahlia files. He begins pulling photos off the walls...

INT. BUCKY AND KAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The destroyed fairy tale house is in mid-repair. Kay is in work clothes, painting a new trim in the living room.

The front door opens. Bucky stands in the doorway, carrying a box of Dahlia files. Kay watches as he crosses the room without a word and dumps the box of files into the fireplace. He tosses on a match and the box goes up in flames.

She moves to him.

INT. A CASTING OFFICE - DAY

We arrive just as she exits, the outline of her body quickly disappearing into the blackness beyond the office door...

VOICE OVER

Thank you Elizabeth.

FADE TO BLACK