

The Black Dahlia

Screenplay by
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from the James Ellroy novel

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10/14/03

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.

We freeze on a still photograph of the counterpuncher.

END CREDITS

EXT. BOYLE HEIGHTS - EVERGREEN AND WABASH - DUSK

The palm trees are on fire.

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 at a full-scale RIOT:

CAPTION: Los Angeles. 1943. The Zoot Suit Riots.

HUNDREDS OF IN-UNIFORM GI'S use baseball bats and two-by-fours to beat the shit out of ZOOT SUIT-WEARING MEXICANS.

And if you think the cops are gonna jump in and break this thing up...well, you don't live in L.A...

The cops exit the carrier with a surprising nonchalance, most of them mingling in amongst the MP's who stand on the sidelines watching the GI's in action.

MP

(to a Shore Patrol)

Sawbuck on the Private chasin' that skinny one over there! C'mon Private!

ANGLE ON: A zoot suiter ducking the Private's billy club--

COP

Wooie that spic's quick!

MP

Jesus Christ!

Then the Private smashes the zooter with a backhand club.

SHORE PATROL

Double or nothing on that black boy over there...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE OVER

I'd almost finished the Police Academy when the background check turned up my father's German-American Bund membership.

Sailors shatter streetlights and shop windows, a large pane of glass exploding at the feet of LAPD OFFICER BUCKY BLEICHERT, 26. He's one of the last off the carrier and seems clueless as to how to proceed.

We recognize him as our counterpuncher from the newsreels. Up close we see he has BUCK TEETH (hence the nickname).

BUCKY (CONT'D) (V.O.)

Pressured by FBI goons to confirm my patriotism, I gave the Alien Squad Sam Murakawa, a guy I'd gone to middle school with, in order to secure my LAPD appointment.

Bucky's minus his gun but plus a WWI tin helmet and a three pound truncheon. Darkness falls quickly on what Bucky rightly realizes is fucking chaos.

VOICE OVER

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

Bucky sees three or four of his fellow cops edge into the action, taking cheap shots at Zoot Suiters otherwise entangled with GI's.

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. He sees:

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. Our heavyweight from the fight reels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

HEAVYWEIGHT/COP

Bleichert! Code Three Bleichert!

Bucky hesitates, drifting reluctantly towards the scene.

VOICE OVER

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

Finally Bucky commits, running into the courtyard and wading in, fending off the marines' blows to jab at them with his stick. He's ineffective with the truncheon, not sure whether he's supposed to be offensive or defensive. One of the marines clips Bucky slightly with a 2x4. That decides it:

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

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

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

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)

In our first year at Central Division Station we'd never spoke.

The marines reduced to rubble, Blanchard turns his attention to the Zooter: the Mexican puts his hands in front of him, happy to be handcuffed. Lee 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 towards the riots. Gunshots can be heard. Palm trees blaze up into the night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BUCKY

Who's this?

LEE

(re the Zooter)

Officer Bleichert, meet Senor Tomas Dos Santos, subject of an all-points fugitive warrant for manslaughter during the commission of a Class B Felony.

BUCKY

Meaning?

LEE

Snatched a purse off an old lady in the Mid-Wilshire and she keeled of a heart attack.

Lee grabs Dos Santos roughly by the neck and leads him down a quiet street.

BUCKY

You come all the way down here to roust--

LEE

I came down here same as you.
 (jerks a finger to the riots)
 Keep from gettin' killed. Happened to see jarheads beatin' on a good collar--
 (nudging Dos Santos)
 Habla Ingles, Tomas?

The man shakes his head "no". Blanchard's head is on a swivel, casing houses as he walks. Bucky follows...

LEE (cont'd)

He's dead meat. Manslaughter Two's a gas chamber jolt for spics. He'd have been better off getting a couple cracked ribs from our Privates First Class back there.

Lee pulls the Zooter up onto someone's porch. KICKS IN THE DOOR. Bucky's about to say something when he spies a pile of uncollected newspapers in the corner of the porch.

LEE (CONT'D)

(re Bucky's unasked question.)
 We'll never get him booked tonight.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN - LATER

A "Home Sweet Home" needlepoint sampler hangs over 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

Nice hook you got.

BUCKY

Well, you know, old habits.

LEE

My girlfriend saw you fight a couple times over at the Olympic. Said you were somebody.

BUCKY

Big fish, small pond. Never made it up to the big boy's division like you.

LEE

(dismissive)

Aaah. My first twenty fights were stumblebums handpicked by my manager. I was lucky to survive.

(re the zooter)

More'n I can say for Tom here. My ninth hard felon of the month. Six weeks he'll be sucking gas. There's a Jewboy Deputy D.A. over in Central Warrants wets his pants for fighters. Promised me the next spot he can wangle.

Bucky nods, doesn't know what to say. Lee looks on the window at the flaming city.

LEE (CONT'D)

We'll take 'em in the morning.

BUCKY

You'll take him.

LEE

He's half yours.

BUCKY

No thank you.

TO BE CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Lee shrugs.

DISSOLVE TO:

A CLOSE UP OF TOMAS DOS SANTOS' FACE

screaming in silence.

AS WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Tomas Dos Santos dying in the porthole of a GAS CHAMBER.

IN THE FRONT ROW

Lee watches. Barely.

IN THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE GAS CHAMBER

Bucky loiters by himself, unable to go inside. Finally the doors open. Lee exits first, his face a blank mask. He's quickly engulfed by other cops and politicians who shake his hand and brush imaginary lint off of his NEW SUIT. Lee glances to Bucky briefly before Bucky retreats to daylight...Lee mouths something to him:

LEE

No thank you...

EXT./INT. RADIO PATROL CAR - MOVING

Bucky drives as a ROOKIE 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...yeah not much action there but lots of action there if you get my meaning...You get my meaning?

BUCKY

I...get your meaning.

INT. THE CENTRAL MUSTER ROOM - DAY

The rookie prattles on as Bucky fills out a form.

ROOKIE

...where were you stationed again?...

BUCKY

I wasn't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROOKIE

Right. Keep forgettin'...

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.

BUCKY

What's' up?

COP

Don't you know? Brass is bringin' back the inter-departmental boxing team.

BUCKY

So?

COP

So.

(off Bucky's look)
You know Lee Blanchard--just got bumped to Central Warrants?

Bucky nods.

COP (CONT'D)

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

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

BUCKY

Isn't his old man Fritzie a Central Dick?

COP

(chucking Bucky on the chin)
But who was on the cover of Ring Magazine, 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...

ROOKIE

Thing about the locals in the zone, see, is they treated their women like shit and it wasn't nothing to pull a girl in with a nickel flower and a dime beer...

VOICE OVER

Warrants was local celebrity as a cop. Warrants was plainclothes without a coat and tie and a mileage per diem on your civilian car. Warrants was chasing real criminals and not rousting winos and wienie wagers in front of some Midnight Mission.

INT. BUCKY'S APARTMENT GARAGE - NIGHT

Bucky rummages through a junk box. Finds AN OLD SPEED BAG.
VOICE OVER

I told myself I didn't care.

He hooks the bag up. He taps at it. Once. Twice. Again.

INT. THE CENTRAL MUSTER ROOM - DAY

Bucky walks in and a desk officer snags him.

DESK OFFICER

They want to see you at city hall.

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, this is Bucky Bleichert.
Bucky, Chief Thad Green, Deputy District Attorney Ellis Loew.

CONTINUED:

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

CHIEF GREEN

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

BUCKY

(monotone)

"Before the war, the City of the Angels was graced with two local fighters, pugilists with styles as different as fire and ice. Lee Blanchard was a--

Lee grabs it, dissatisfied with Bucky's lack of enthusiasm.

LEE

(moving past the Bucky part)

"Mr. Fire and Mr. Ice never fought each other, but duty brought them to the Los Angeles Police Department." Blanchard cracked the Boulevard-Citizens bank robbery case in 1939 and captured thrill-killer Tomas Dos Santos;

(Lee eyes Bucky)

Bleichert served with distinction during the '43 Zoot Suit Wars--"

Bucky looks at his shoes.

CHIEF GREEN

Skip to the end.

LEE

On Election Day, voters are going to be asked to vote on a 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.

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLIS LOEW

Prop. B's a loser right now. But if we can drum up some publicity we may be able to get it passed in next month's election. We need to build up morale in the department. Impress voters with the quality of our clean good men. *Wholesome*. Our boxing team.

Bucky looks to Lee. To Loew. He's puzzled.

LOEW

Are you hearing me, Bleichert?

LEE

Fire and Ice.

LOEW

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

CHIEF GREEN

Are you in, Bucky?

LEE

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

Bucky eyes Lee quickly, assessing his larger but slightly softer physique. All the remaining eyes are on him.

BUCKY

I'm in.

Back slaps all around. Loew leans in to Bucky.

LOEW

I'm betting on great things from you, Bleichert.

BUCKY

Yes sir.

EXT. THE CITY HALL PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

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

LEE

Bucky I'd like you to meet Kay Lake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY

Hello.

KAY

Hello.

LEE BLANCHARD

I was just telling Kay about our new hobby.

BUCKY

Oh, you a fight fan?

KAY

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

Lee puts his arm around her.

LEE

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

BUCKY

I promise not to hurt you.

A flicker of amusement in her eyes.

LEE

That won't make Loew very happy.

BUCKY

He's got money on me?

LEE

Seems that way. You win you get warrants.

Bucky shakes his head. Turns to Kay.

BUCKY

What do you think of all this Miss Lake?

KAY

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

Bucky and Lee laugh. Bucky sticks out his hand. Lee takes it.

BUCKY

Luck short of winning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 desk sergeant 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 jabs.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

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

Bucky slips in late to roll call; people pretend not to notice. He sees Lee. Lee nods and smiles.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

Fire and Ice. I was local celebrity.

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 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

English, papa.

DOLPH

Englisch ist Schiesse! Amerikanisch ist Scheisse!

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...

Bucky sees AN AGED FRAMED PHOTO OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. He picks it up and brushes it off, puts it on the table.

BACK ON THE PORCH

Dolph leans on the porch rail. Bucky returns.

BUCKY

Say something, Papa. Tell me.

Bucky grabs his father by the shoulders, angry.

BUCKY (cont'd)

How you can fuck this place up so bad in one month?

DOLPH

Du, Dwight? Du?

CONTINUED:

BUCKY
Speak...English.

DOLPH
Fuck. Kikes.

INSIDE THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Bucky on the phone.

BUCKY
...I think maybe he's had another stroke.
If you could just come by and clean the
place up and keep an eye on him for a
week or so...I know I still owe you from
last year...No more than ten days. I
promise. I do. Thank you.

Bucky takes in the house. It's so...unrepentantly pathetic.
Irreversible. And Bucky knows it. He starts to clean up the
house.

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.

EXT. THE GOOD LUCK BAR - NIGHT

Bucky stands across the street, watching. A man comes
outside, throws a lit cigarette on the ground and grinds it
out. Goes back inside. Bucky crosses the street to the bar.

INT. THE GOOD LUCK BAR - NIGHT

Bucky slides into a booth across from PETE LUKINS, the man
who signaled Bucky with the cigarette.

PETE
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. Full of cash.

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CONTINUED:

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: 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.

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

I was trading Warrants for a close-out on bad old debts, the eight grand I was gonna clear was enough to maintain the old man in a good clean rest home for three years;

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

VOICE OVER (cont'd)
the late round tank job enough to
convince myself I wasn't a complete
coward.

INT. THE BOXING GYM - DAY

Bucky watches as Lee tucks his elbows too tight and opens up his ribcage...Kay approaches Bucky, breaking his reverie.

KAY
At least he looks good with his shirt
off.

She waves to Lee between rounds. He blows a kiss back. He sees Bucky and points his glove at him, good-naturedly pretending to intimidate.

BUCKY
Where's your sketch pad?

KAY
I was never any good. Ended up with a
Masters in History.

BUCKY
Education's an expensive habit.

KAY
Lee paid for it.

BUCKY
He shouldn't have quit fighting.

KAY
I asked him to. Besides, police work
gives 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. Lee steals a quick look towards Bucky and Kay. Bucky nods appreciation.

BUCKY (cont'd)
Quits fighting for you. Puts you through
school. Quite a guy. Quite a pair. Why
aren't you married?

Kay shrugs, keeps watching Lee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Shacking's against the regs. Probably cost him a stripe. So where's the diamonds and the bassinets?

KAY

(a throwaway)

Well you'd have to sleep together for that, Dwight.

(smiles)

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

She walks out. 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 and a late-night clerk in the newspaper's morgue. The clerk thumbs the volumes of newspapers.

CLERK

Boulevard-Citizen's bank robbery...

BUCKY

Whatever you got.

CLERK

I "got" it all.

BUCKY

So. All of it.

INT. THE MORGUE - LATER

Bucky flipping through old papers. We finally see one:

"Boxer Cop Blanchard breaks B-C Bank Job...Kills One, Captures Other in Shootout.

ECU: A photo of Lee inside a small beach apartment holding up A BANK GUARD UNIFORM and a BANK BAG. In the background we see A BODY UNDER A SHEET.

Another photo: a hatchet-faced man in handcuffs.

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CONTINUED:

VOICE OVER

One of Lee's snitches fingered Bobby DeWitt, a small-time pimp with a yard long rap, as the brains behind the job.

Bucky examines ANOTHER CLIPPING: Lee leading Kay from the courthouse.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

DeWitt never spoke the entire trial, never coughing up the dough, even after damning character testimony from some of his "girls", including one Katherine Lake, formerly of Sioux Falls, South Dakota and looking to go straight.

A yearbook-type photo of KAY with the caption "Prosecution Witness Katherine Lake"

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

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

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

INT. THE ACADEMY GYM DRESSING ROOM - THE BIG NIGHT

Bucky sits on the corner of a table, an old fight hack wrapping his hands. The trainer pulls on the gloves, laces them up. Bucky buries his head in the gloves, smelling the leather.

Ellis Loew, sticks his head through the door, salutes to Bucky...Just outside the door, the slightest hint of women dressed to the nines...

INT. THE PACKED ACADEMY GYM - LATER

Cops and mobsters sit shoulder to shoulder, cigar smoke like L.A. haze as Bucky weaves his way through a snaky path up to the ring.

Lee's already there, playing to the crowd. Bucky climbs into the ring. The referee beckons the two men to the center of the ring. They touch gloves, Lee winking at Bucky.

The bell rings and WE FIGHT...

The first few rounds begin tentatively but quickly build to flurries of brutality, the bigger Lee wading in on Bucky and head-hunting him with wild rights and big left hooks.

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CONTINUED:

Bucky's quicker and spends most of the middle rounds trying to slip Lee's haymakers and counterpunching deftly to the ribs and the head. The classic confrontation between boxer and puncher.

All the while, Bucky keeps an eye on the round count, waiting for the eighth to come, trying to get in some good shots on Lee but not so many as to slow him down too much. For that matter it doesn't seem like anything's gonna slow Lee down. He's not as fit as Bucky, but he's determined--playing to the crowd and winking at Bucky while all the while trying to take Bucky's head off...

DING! And finally the EIGHTH ROUND...

And Bucky slowly makes his way to the middle of the ring, maybe appearing a little more fatigued than he really is...he trades punches, moving in closer and closer, starting to go toe to toe.

This is new for him, the crowd sees it...The buzz amongst them is louder now, anxious. Bucky seems determined to fight and not box...He takes one big punch to the ribs, another. Swings wildly back at Lee but misses. A flurry of savage exchanges between them, and BUCKY OPENS UP HIS CHIN TO LEE--not much but just enough...

LEE THROWS A WICKED RIGHT UPPERCUT TO BUCKY'S JAW AND SUDDENLY BUCKY'S MOUTHPIECE FLIES FROM HIS MOUTH ALONG WITH HIS BIG FRONT TEETH.

The crowd screams as Bucky HITS THE CANVAS.

INT. BUCKY'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

OFF SCREEN VOICE

All right, open up and try this...

The scene widens and we see A DENTIST sitting at Bucky's bedside. In his hand is A BRIDGE. He slides into Bucky's mouth, fitting it into the gap where his front two teeth used to be...

DENTIST

Gimme a smile.

Bucky painfully opens his mouth. The bridge fits perfectly. And guess what? The buck teeth are gone. He's a NEW MAN...

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

Bucky exits. The scene widens behind him and we see the sign on the facility:

KING DAVID VILLA

Jewish stars adorn the sign. Bucky smiles widely this time.

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 leaning on a 1943 Indian Motorcycle.

LEE

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

BUCKY

Gettin' there.

LEE

(re bucky's teeth)
Nice chompers. So. Wanna work Warrants?

BUCKY

What? I lost. Loew's deal--

LEE

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

Bucky's taken aback...After a second...

BUCKY

Tell me one thing: Why'd you really quit
fighting? You're better'n I thought.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

(beat)

Tell me one thing: how much you get for
takin' your dive?

Bucky's face drops.

LEE BLANCHARD

You're *much* better than I thought.

(beat)

Never mind. We'll just keep that between
partners, won't we? Partner?

Lee smiles a devilish smile.

VOICE OVER

Mister Fire. Mister Ice. The straw champ
and the canvasback snitch.

INT. CENTRAL WARRANTS - MORNING

A door marked "DETECTIVE'S MUSTER ROOM". Bucky, wearing his
best SPORTS COAT AND SLACKS, shoots his cuffs and 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. Lee even makes a point at showing everyone Bucky's new
teeth...

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIERNEY (cont'd)

Enough horseshit. This is the felony summary for the week ending November 14, 1946. First, two liquor store stickups...Broadway and 7th, Hill Liquor in Chinatown, that one comes with a pistol whipping my personal favorite...

Bucky's eyes wander the room, taking in his new surroundings...Older men, coats and ties...

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 two large unpleasant looking men (FRITZ VOGEL and BILL KOENIG) approach.

FRITZIE

Officer Bleichert. Fritz Vogel. This is Bill Koenig. You know my son Johnnie from your previous duty--

(And you fucked him out of this job). But just now 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY
I lost my head, sir.

ELLIS LOEW
And some of your patron's money. You want
to play things smarter. Don't blow this.

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

LEE
Ready to roll, canvasback?

He grabs Bucky and they head out the door. As they do Harry
Sears pulls Lee over...Still stuttering...

HARRY
And Lee--(an aside) 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.

BUCKY
"A" number?

LEE
It means you get paroled sooner rather
than later. (switching quickly) You want
pot roast tonight?

EXT. A BEAUTIFUL DECO HOME - NIGHT

Lee and Bucky pull up in front of the house.

INT./EXT. THE CAR - SAME

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

They exit the car and Lee leads Bucky up the walk. Bucky's
impressed with the house.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

BUCKY
Nice place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEE
Fight stash.

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

KAY
Hello, Dwight. Glad you could make it.
How was your first day? Mostly backslaps
and paperwork if I know those boys...
(just noticing)
And look at your smile now...

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

INT. THE DINING ROOM - LATER

The three of them are eating and drinking. The mood is festive.

KAY
Nice, isn't it?

BUCKY
Hm?

KAY
You and Lee partners. Nice. Couldn't have
turned out better if you'd planned it
could it Dwight?

Is she implying anything here? Naah...

BUCKY
Well, I could've beat him.

LEE
'Cept you didn't.

Does she know he threw the fight?

KAY
I don't know, sweetie. Bucky was somebody
back in the day. (beat) And here we all
are.

BUCKY
It's "nice".

KAY
It's more than nice, Dwight. Might even
be worth those front teeth of yours.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kay pops a bottle of champagne, hitting Lee in the chest with the cork. They laugh, fill the glasses again.

BUCKY
A toast...To Proposition B!

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

KAY
To my...supercops!

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.

KAY
Nice.

INT. MANN'S CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

Lee, Bucky and Kay watch "Notorious", Kay in the middle. She instinctively grabs both of their wrists...

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

INT. THE BROWN DERBY - NIGHT

Bucky and Lee corner a perp on the dance floor, tackling him amongst the swing dancers and then slamming him brutally to the floor.

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 out on the town.

INT. THE OLYMPIC BOXING STADIUM - NIGHT

Kay stands over the two men carrying three beer bottles in her hands while they ignore her, engrossed in a fight between two Mexican bantamweights.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE OVER

Always she'd be there, never between us,
always in the middle.

EXT. BALBOA ISLAND - NEW YEAR'S EVE

A banner saying "Welcome 1947" stretches in front of a pier as the Stan Kenton band plays in the year...Bucky and Kay dance a fast swing as Lee watches them from the outdoor bar, a beer in his hand and a smile on his face.

As the clock strikes twelve the scene shifts to slow-motion as Kay falls into Bucky's arms and they twirl fantastically around and around...both waving to Lee...

VOICE OVER

It was the best time of my life.

Kay kisses Bucky on the lips--pretending to taunt Lee--he takes it with the spirit it's meant--his eyes bright with booze and the love of friends.

INT. THE MUSTER ROOM - MORNING

Lee and Bucky wait with Russ Millard and Harry Sears. Loew walks into the room and hands Russ a photo and a rap sheet.

RUSS

(re the photo)

Raymond "Junior" Nash. Statutory rape,
armed robbery, felony mayhem...Texas
State Prison...Alcatraz...

The cops are impressed.

ELLIS LOEW

Mr. Nash pistol-whipped a man at a
stickup near Leimert Park Tuesday
morning. He died last night.

RUSS MILLARD

(studying rap sheet)

Anything common in the sex beefs?

ELLIS LOEW

Negro girls. Young ones. All the
complainants have been colored. Seems
like a good one for Mr. Fire and Mr. Ice.

Lee and Bucky nod, happy for the action. As they walk out...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIS LOEW (CONT'D)
Sergeant Blanchard? Hurt him a little,
but I'm gonna want him in good enough
shape for the press.

Ellis smirks.

INT. THE SQUAD ROOM - CONT.

Lee talks to another cop who hands him a piece of paper. Lee reads it quickly and shoves it in his pocket. Perhaps if we knew him well enough we'd see that he'd just tightened up an extra crank.

Bucky approaches.

BUCKY
Everything good to go?

LEE BLANCHARD
Leimert Park here we come.

EXT. CRENSHAW BOULEVARD - DAY - LATER

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

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.

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

Lee seems to fidget in his car, impatient. Tense. Finally--

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

Lee pulls 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.

INSIDE THE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Bucky fiddles with the radio, watching Lee at the payphone. The big man looks agitated, leaning from one side of the booth to the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bucky returns to the radio, fiddling between Judy Garland and Duke Ellington. Settling on the Duke.

BACK IN THE CAR - MINUTES LATER

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

LEE

Got a tip. Snitch a mine says Nash's got some known acquaintances at a bar near Slauson and Hoover.

BUCKY

It's all colored down there--

LEE

We fuckin' roll.

He pulls out.

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

Lee and Bucky roll up on THE HICKOX BAR AND GRILL.

INT. THE HICKOX BAR AND GRILL - SAME

Almost pitch black inside. A serious dive for serious drunks. Lee gestures to a back booth with four guys squeezed into it. Three black and one white.

Lee and Bucky make it halfway across the bar when the foursome pick them up. One of the black guys jumps from the booth and takes off through the kitchen--

LEE BLANCHARD

Buck!

Bucky bolts after the guy, knocking a waitress down--

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

as the guy careens past a dishwasher, slipping on the wet floor. Bucky jumps on the guy, jerks him to his feet and twists his arm behind his back. He duck walks him back the way they came, the guy resisting all the way...

GUY

Get your fuckin' hands off me I ain't done nothin'--

BUCKY

Why'd you run, huh?

BACK IN THE BAR

as Bucky pushes the guy into the darkness he hears yelling--

LEE

Shut up shitbird! Don't even move!

BUCKY'S GUY

You motherfucker's crazy as all hell come
down to beat yourself some niggers--

Lee's got the white guy against the wall--gun to his head
while he frisks him--

WHITE GUY

What the fuck are you--Blanchard?

BUCKY'S GUY twists in his grip--trying to escape--for a
second Bucky loses control--

BUCKY

Stop your twisting or I--

And suddenly out of the corner of his eye, Bucky sees the
black man closest to Lee reaches for something in his belt--

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Partner!

Bucky pulls his .38...releasing his man just as the man near
Lee pulls a SHIV free--but not fast enough--Lee shoots him...

BUCKY'S FREED CAPTIVE goes for his trousers, fumbling for
something as Bucky shoots him three times before the man can
get a knife out--

LEE

Bucky duck!

LEE PUSHES BUCKY TO THE GROUND AS A BULLET WHIZZES PAST HIM!
From his upside down view Bucky sees Lee's three shots
cutting down the last black man before he can fire another
shot at Bucky from his tiny derringer...

Bucky sits up on the dark linoleum, blood beginning to soak
his pants...he looks to his left and sees that in the last
exchange THE WHITE GUY caught a stray bullet in the head.

FROM THE DISTANCE: THE SOUND OF SIRENS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 ground away from the blood.

INT. THE DIVE BAR - LATER

Bucky and a Detective sit in a booth. Bucky looks worn but composed.

DETECTIVE

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

Bucky looks to another booth where Lee sits alone. Lee looks terrible. He drinks a beer.

DETECTIVE (cont'd)

(re a disconsolate Lee)

He knew the white guy, I guess. Busted him once. Snitched for Blanchard a couple times.

(checks notes)

Baxter Fitch.

Bucky shrugs. The Detective shakes his head 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

What do you know, huh?

KAY

I know you--

A door slam. Bucky turns to see Lee's motorcycle come roaring out of the driveway and down the street. He turns back to see Kay walking to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KAY (CONT'D)
He knew one of the guys?

He nods.

KAY (CONT'D)
Was it them or you?

BUCKY
He...He saved my life.

She bites her lip, not realizing how close it was...

BUCKY (CONT'D)
Kay. Bobby DeWitt gets out in a week.

She nods, knowing already. She starts to cry.

KAY
He swore he was going to kill Lee.

Bucky nods. Puts his hand on her arm.

BUCKY
I'll take care of Bobby DeWitt.

She shakes her head.

KAY
You don't know Bobby.

Gets up and goes inside. Not knowing what to do, Bucky continues reading the paper.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Bucky lies on Lee and Kay's couch. Stares at the ceiling. From the back of the house Bucky hears the loud sounds of A SHOWER RUNNING. He sits up, curious.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The history of Bobby DeWitt. Bucky backs off, shuts the door.

BUCKY (V.O.)

Who are these men who feed on other? What do they feel when they scratch their names onto someone else's life?

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 yesterday. Feel like doing some police work?

BUCKY

Maybe.

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. They exit the car, pulling their guns and moving carefully towards the building.

There's an interior staircase jutting up through the middle of the building. They ascend, uncomfortable with how exposed they are...Lee taking the lead...Finally reaching the correct apartment...

Lee kicks the door open.

INT. RAYMOND NASH'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

No Raymond Nash. Just a filthy little flop littered with muscatel short dogs and used rubbers.

LEE

Okie trash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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.

((CONTINUED))

CONTINUED:

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

RUSS MILLARD (CONT'D)

Before this gets out of hand let's put the kibosh on something. With publicity, we get confessions. With confessions, we get crazies, liars and false leads. So we keep some things quiet. The ear-to-ear facial lacerations...The... disembowelment. You keep this information to yourselves. Not your wives, not your girlfriends, no other officers.

(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

I'll be the judge of that.

Millard and Bucky look down 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. Raymond Nash, remember?

LEE

He didn't do this.

BUCKY

No. He beat someone to death. That's why he's our priority warrantee.

Lee nods vacantly, not paying attention. Russ cuts in:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RUSS MILLARD
I need everybody right now.

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE OF QUESTIONING

Cops ring doorbells throughout Leimert Park:

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

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

ANOTHER OFFICER
(stopping cars in the street)
...young woman with black hair...

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

ANOTHER OFFICER
(to a milkman)
...on your route this morning?...

RUSS MILLARD
(to another officer)
You double back through this block and
make sure we've accounted for anyone
coming home from the job we might've
missed...

LEE
(to a woman)
And when your husband gets back he should
call at this number so we can ask...

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". And finally:

EXT. 39TH AND NORTON - DAY

We watch in slow motion as the body parts are moved onto a stretcher and marched to the coroner's van, a phalanx of cops guarding it from the photographers...

INT. THE OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA - NIGHT

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

EXT. 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 waits on the other side of the ropes, he doesn't want to go in there. Lee ignores him. Finally Bucky steps over the ropes and heads to Lee.

BUCKY

You were supposed to meet me at the fights.

LEE

Priority.

BUCKY

Priority for Homicide division. Not us.

LEE

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

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

BUCKY

I've had enough headlines.

LEE

With or without you, partner.

Bucky shakes his head and begins walking away.

LEE (cont'd)

With or without you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY
I heard you.

Bucky steps through the ropes, a fighter leaving the ring.

INT. THE SQUAD ROOM - NEXT DAY

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

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)
Anyone seen Blanchard?

OFFICER
In with Loew. (beat) And his 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 horrible nature of this crime makes it imperative to catch the killer as soon as possible as we are obviously dealing with an unstable individual. We are therefore creating a special unit which will include a number of highly trained officers, including Detectives Russell Millard and Harry Sears, our 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, Buck. 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

You think he'd return there with all the heat right across the way?

LEE

Come on! This is the main event. Junior's pure undercard. You know it. What's your problem with this?

Bucky looks cornered. Grits his teeth.

BUCKY

Letting Nash slip--

LEE

It's covered.

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 won't 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...

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 reads it and hands it to Bucky. Bucky does the same and gives it to Russ. The coroner steps back from the table.

CORONER (CONT'D)

Questions?

RUSS MILLARD

What's your best guess?

CORONER

Here's what she wasn't. She wasn't raped, she wasn't pregnant...In terms of the nitty-gritty...The cause of death is either the mouth wound or more likely she was beaten to death with something like a baseball bat.

LEE

What about her insides?

CONTINUED: (2)

CORONER

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

RUSS MILLARD

Did he know anything about medicine or anatomy?

CORONER

Maybe. Not a surgeon--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 reads from the slip of paper.

RUSS MILLARD

Elizabeth Ann Short. Date of birth, 7/29/24...Medford, Massachusetts.

CORONER

(saluting heaven)
God love you, Elizabeth.
(to Millard)
Russell, when you find the son of a bitch who did this, give him a kick in the balls and tell him it's from Frederick D. Newbarr, M.D. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a date with a jumper suicide.

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).

The bullpen is a feeding frenzy of cops. Bucky refocuses on Jack Tierney...

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 photos of her to the Herald.

Russ makes a noise of disgust.

RUSS MILLARD

How many confessions so far?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN JACK
Eighteen.

RUSS MILLARD
Double that by morning. More if Loew gets
the press excited with his purple prose.

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

Reveal Loew with Koenig and Fritz Vogel behind him.

RUSS MILLARD
Too much publicity is a hindrance, Ellis.
If you'd been a policeman you'd know.

Loew flushes and gives Millard a dark look.

ELLIS LOEW
(to Tierney)
Captain have you sent anyone 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
Russ, who do you think we should send?

Russ tips his head to Bucky and Lee.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 Jim Jeffries. (beat) As for Betty, she called the tune, she paid the piper. 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--

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLEO SHORT

They were all her boyfriends! Long as they wore a uniform. Betty believed in quantity before quality.

LEE

You calling your own daughter a tramp?

CLEO SHORT

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

BUCKY

But maybe...this time...she had a boyfriend?

Mr. Short waves his hand. Lee stands.

LEE BLANCHARD

Mind if I get a glass of water?

Short shrugs. Lee wanders around behind Mr. Short, flipping through bits of mail and junk. Lee goes through the den into the bathroom.

BUCKY

Any names, Mr. Short?

BUCKY'S POV: Lee chases a couple pills with water...

CLEO SHORT

Tom, Dick, Harry. Don't matter.
(he drifts for a moment)
Said she was looking for movie work
but...just paraded Hollywood 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 wouldn't?

EXT. CLEO SHORT'S APARTMENT - MINUTES LATER

The two men walk out, disgusted.

LEE

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

BUCKY

Flip to see who writes it up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEE

I'm staking Nash's pad tonight. See if we get any strange drive-bys at the murder sight. Do me a favor and stop by and check on Kay.

Bucky nods.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Bucky opens the front door to find Kay reading a book on the couch. Her back is to him.

KAY

Hi, Dwight.

BUCKY

How'd you know it was me?

KAY

Lee stomps.

Bucky appreciates her subtext.

KAY (cont'd)

Lee working late?

Bucky nods. She kisses him softly on the cheek.

KAY (CONT'D)

There's food in the fridge.

She heads back to the bedroom.

KAY (cont'd)

Good night.

INT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Bucky sits at their kitchen table filling out the police reports. He goes to the refrigerator and searches for food...he finds a meatloaf. Cuts off a piece.

Down the hall he hears the sound of the shower. He thinks for a second, considers following the sound back but hears THE BATHROOM DOOR CLOSE. The sound of the water disappears...He thinks on this a second and then returns to the meatloaf.

INT. THE HOMICIDE BULLPEN - MORNING

Bucky sees two detectives sorting through a trunk full of letters and assorted personal effects.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSS MILLARD (O.S.)
 (re trunk)
 Found it in storage down at the railway.
 Carbons of mash notes to sailors.
 Hundreds of 'em.

Russ shows him today's Herald front page: A picture of Elizabeth Short in a striking black dress. Underneath: "The Black Dahlia".

RUSS MILLARD (CONT'D)
 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
 Hollywood will fuck you when no else will. Whattya want to do?

BUCKY
 I want to go back to Warrants.

RUSS MILLARD
 No dice. You're a bright penny, Bleichert and I need you here.
 (hands him a piece of paper)
 Betty's last known residences and associates. 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 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?

CONTINUED:

KOENIG
Fritzie usually does the talking.
(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, Koenig behind him in the hall.

BUCKY
Miss Saddon?

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

SHERYL
You the RKO driver?

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 let me in and answer my questions or I bust you for the reefer you just flushed.

She lets him in and sits defiantly. Koenig leans heavily against the wall while Bucky talks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY (cont'd)

First question. Does...

(re to his paper)

Linda Martin or Marjorie Graham live here?

SHERYL

That's Betty's other place. On DeLongpre.

BUCKY

She moved around quite a bit. You know why? Was anybody 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

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

No. She fucking lied.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BUCKY
Your ride's here.

SHERYL
(grabbing her things)
I gotta go--

BUCKY
We're not done here--

SHERYL
Then arrest me 'cuz the truck don't wait--

But hesitates--he's got nothing--she walks out.

KOENIG
You want me to get her?

Bucky shakes his head.

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
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 nods, goes 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 someone wanted her to be.

BUCKY

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

MARJORIE

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

BUCKY

Did she say what the movie 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 her boyfriends.

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...I do remember...a couple times 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 Hollywood Boulevard. She had a man's suit and short hair like a man...Only that one time...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

BUCKY

Miss Graham are you saying they were talking to 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. I called it in. Loew said to keep it zipped cuz it looks bad.

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)

Would you show me 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

She's gone.

MARJORIE

That can't be...

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 (CONT'D)

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

BUCKY

(re card)

Lorna Martikova. Omaha, Nebraska. When'd you see her last?

MARJORIE

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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
(deadpan)
Good work officer.

INT. CENTRAL DIVISION BULLPEN - LATER

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", "Unsolved--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.

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.

VOICE OVER
Three days 'til Bobby De Witt hit LA.
Three days since we killed four men.

EXT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

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. She stares at Bucky intently, as if pleading for him to do something.

LEE

(wired, in mid-thought)
Guy who did this...hated her. Bad. It ain't a random job.

KAY

Hi, Dwight.

LEE

He wanted the whole goddamn world to know. Babe, you took pre-Med, whattya think? Mad doctor?

KAY

Lee, Dwight's here.
(to Bucky, sotto voce)
He's been like this since last night--

LEE

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

KAY

I told you before, 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

(humoring him)
Well. Just a guess. You could be right. 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...

LEE

(noticing Bucky)
Hey partner! Whattya think about that? You learn anything about our girl today?

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kay stares at Lee, then back at Bucky as if to say "See, I told you. Help!"

BUCKY
Nothing...nothing worth this.
(beat)
I gotta go. I'm...I gotta go.

Bucky turns and gets the hell out of the house.

ESTABLISHING SHOT - THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

as Ventura Boulevard stretches to eternity...

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
The Dahlia's a sister?

BUCKY
You tell me.

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

CONTINUED:

BUCKY
When "the ladies" 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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY

Don't fuckin' lie to me. She's fifteen fucking years old. Come clean or I slap you with a contributing beef 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 bathroom.

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.

BACK NEAR THE BATHROOMS...

Bucky sees AN EXIT DOOR slowly close...He slides through...

EXT. THE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The woman gets into a beautiful snow-white Packard.

CUT TO:

DISSOLVING SHOTS OF VARIOUS STREETS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

as Bucky tails the white Packard from three car-lengths back.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MUIRFIELD ROAD - HANCOCK PARK - NIGHT

THE CAMERA SWOOPS DOWN OFF OF OLD FASHIONED STREET LAMPS 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 illuminated by one of the large old lamps...He watches her walk 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 spinning through radio stations and finds:

ANNOUNCER

--major suspect in the murder investigation of Elizabeth Short, the raven-haired beauty known as the Black Dahlia. Spokesmen for the Hollenbeck Precinct had no comment regarding Robert "Red" Manley, a Huntington Park hardware salesman identified as one of the last men to be seen with the Dahlia...

Bucky takes a quick left.

INT. HOLLENBACK STATION JAIL - LATER

Bucky strides down a long hall, heading towards a bustle of cops...He sees Lee, already there.

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.

Bucky slides in next to Lee.

BUCKY

Get any sleep last night, partner?

Lee just smiles, gestures to the interrogation.

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 Mr. Manley here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 on 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

Let's go back. How you met Betty, what you did, what you talked about...

RED MANLEY

I've told you this three times.

MILLARD

Once more then.

RED MANLEY

I bought her dinner at an Italian restaurant in Old Town. We went dancing at the Sky Room in the El Cortez Hotel.

MILLARD

Then you took her back to the Cornucopia Hotel?

RED MANLEY

She had nowhere to stay.

MILLARD

And Betty slept on the bed and you slept in the chair?

RED MANLEY

She said she had her period.

All of the cops outside laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RED MANLEY (CONT'D)

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

After you left Kay slipped me a Mickey.
Slept for fourteen hours.

BUCKY

Your fault for buying her all those
chemistry classes.

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

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRY SEARS

You wanted some fresh gash, and you thought Betty was easy. You came on strong and that didn't work. You begged. 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. Tell me how you sliced her titties--

RED MANLEY

No no no. Not Betty--

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

HARRY SEARS

You knew what you wanted to do. You're an old cunt chaser, and you knew lots of places to take girls. You plied Betty with a few 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, who deserved to get a fine cooze like her--

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.

CONTINUED: (2)

RED MANLEY

No--

HARRY SEARS

Goldbrick, needle-dick, pussy-whipped--

RED MANLEY

No--

HARRY SEARS

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

RED MANLEY

No, please! God as my witness!

HARRY SEARS

God hates liars!

Harry SMASHES the sap onto a GLASS ASHTRAY, shattering it.

HARRY SEARS (cont'd)

Tell me, Red! Tell me!

RED MANLEY

I didn't hurt her--

HARRY SEARS

Tell me!

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

So? What next?

BUCKY

You send me back to Warrants?

RUSS MILLARD

Wrong.

Bucky is reluctant, but knows he has no choice.

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

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, 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

No, just a grandstanding son of a bitch.

RUSS MILLARD

You're brighter than I thought.

(hands him a sheet of paper)

Betty sightings. Wilshire Division.

Eliminate the phonies from the tip sheet.

CONTINUED:

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 the innocent man in that holding tank.

He pats Bucky on the shoulder and walks inside.

CUT TO:

BUCKY CANVASSING THE WILSHIRE DISTRICT

Restaurants, bars, juke joints. Bucky takes notes from old black woman with a gold wig...

VOICE OVER

Barflies...Daytime juicers...Hollywood Boulevard royalty.

...a hophead short order cook over the steam of his grill...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

The longer I listened the more I realized they were talking about themselves...

...a garbage collector on his route...

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

...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:

We see typewriter keys hit paper: "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. She goes back inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 will nail this guy, babe. I can--will--do this--

(noticing Bucky)

You tell her Bucky. Reason with her.

BUCKY

Lee she's right. There's at least three misdemeanors here. It's out of--

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

BUCKY (cont'd)

(to Kay)

I did promise him time on it.

KAY

Dwight, you can be so gutless sometimes.

She turns on them both and goes back inside. Lee begins picking up the papers. Bucky watches for a second and then walks away.

EXT. 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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)
I know you knew her so don't jerk me off
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.

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 chitchat.

BUCKY
Are you lez?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELEINE

I take it where I can find it.

A thin smile from Bucky.

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. Imagine the headlines. "Construction Tycoon's Daughter Questioned in Dahlia Case-- Footsie at Lesbian Nightclub". Get the picture?

BUCKY

Technicolor. What did you talk about?

MADELEINE

When?

BUCKY

When you played footsie.

MADELEINE

Linda talked about her stupid boyfriend back in Hicktown, Nebraska, or wherever. Betty talked about the latest issue of *Screen World*. Starlets, Hollywood dreams, the whole sad nine yards.

BUCKY

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

MADELEINE

On a conversational level they were right up there with you.

BUCKY

Cute. Answer the question.

MADELEINE

Look, I'm tired. You want my alibi so I can go home?

BUCKY

Be my guest.

She turns in the seat to face him directly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MADELEINE

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

Bucky writes a couple notes on his pad. She watches, waits for him to be finished.

MADELEINE (cont'd)

So. What do I have to do to keep my name out of the papers?

BUCKY

Whattya mean?

MADELEINE

That's not very convincing.

BUCKY

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

She touches his leg.

MADELEINE

You know it's not what I'm saying...

He knows exactly what she's saying. He pauses for a moment. Which way will he go? He smiles. A decision.

BUCKY

I might be convinced.

MADELEINE

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

BUCKY

I know the address.

MADELEINE

Not surprised. Pick me up. Like a gentleman. Not like a cop.

He starts to get out of the car.

MADELEINE (cont'd)

One more thing--What's your name?

BUCKY

Bucky Eleichert.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MADELEINE

I'll try to remember.

He gets out of the car 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.

LEE (cont'd)

I love tip duty.

BUCKY

How's Kay?

LEE

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 talk to him. Or 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...

LEE BLANCHARD

In Hancock Park?...Uhm hm...We can send someone around to talk to you, certainly.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LEE BLANCHARD (cont'd)

We know the area, yes ma'am...third lamp
on the left. Sure thing...

Bucky looks up--trying not to be conspicuous. Lee looks up
and catches his eye--makes the "looney" sign with his finger.
Bucky relaxes imperceptively...Just then A SLIGHT EARTHQUAKE
RUMBLES THE STATION. Lee looks at Bucky in typical L.A.
fashion, assessing the quake as not much and returning to
business...Bucky's phone rings. He shrugs and picks it up.

BUCKY

Bleichert. Homicide.

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

INT. THE BULLPEN - LATER

Bucky finishes writing up a report. He gets up to leave.

VOICE OVER

I logged forty-plus phone tips, about
half of which were reasonably coherent.
Ellis Loew stuck me writing up the
summary report, most of which concerned
the numerous dead end leads, bogus
confessions and three hundred new Dahlia
sightings per day. Which all 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".

EXT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - NIGHT

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

MADELEINE

Look. I didn't know you were a boxer.
Daddy has heard of you and insists 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.

She leads him inside.

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Thick Persian rugs, 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.

BUCKY

Who's this?

MADELEINE

(re the dog)

Balto. The paper is the LA Times for August 1, 1926. Balto was bringing in the paper when Daddy found out he'd made his first million. He 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. 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 might've been.

BUCKY

Thanks.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

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

BUCKY

Heroin overdose.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Too bad. He shamed his family. (beat) Speaking of families--Ramona, Martha.

CONTINUED:

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 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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 introduced me to Mack Sennett and I helped him build that housing project he was putting up-- underneath that godawful sign.

MARTHA
Hollywoodland.

BUCKY
I always loved the Keystone Kops.

MARTHA
Me, too.

EMMETT SPRAGUE
Old Mack knew how to squeeze a dollar dry. He had extras moonlighting as laborers and vice versa. Georgie and 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 us movie credits a couple times--

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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. 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.

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.

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...I should've warned you--

Bucky grabs her hair, drawing her to him.

BUCKY

Shhh.

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

You kept your name out of the papers.

MADELEINE

Until the wedding?

BUCKY

Your mother would love that.

MADELEINE

She's a snob. The kind who takes pills the doctor gives her so just doesn't have to admit to being a hophead. You know how Daddy really made his money?

BUCKY

How?

MADELEINE

He bought rotten lumber and old movie sets from Mack Sennett and built houses out of them! He's got firetraps all over LA...His "good friend" Georgie? Maimed in a car crash while running Daddy some errands. Now he throws him scraps--odd jobs tending Daddy's rental property--

BUCKY

You don't have to tell me this--

MADELEINE

I like you Bucky.

CONTINUED:

She looks at him earnestly.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

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

BUCKY

You didn't?

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. 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 mean that?

MADELEINE

No. I don't.

He strokes her dark hair.

BUCKY

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADELEINE

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

BUCKY

How do you mean?

MADELEINE

I don't know...when you're rich sometimes you romanticize the poor...

BUCKY

No I don'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...

INT. BUCKY'S CAR - DAY

Bucky cruises in his car when the police radio crackles:

RADIO DISPATCHER

"Possible sighting on previous issued APB Lorna Martikova aka Linda Martin..."

Bucky cranks the radio.

EXT. THE CALEDONIA LOUNGE - DAY

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 flies over the curb and down another side street.

Bucky's fast but the girl's quick--his feet slide out from under him and then he's up again--

She dodges out into traffic again--almost getting hit by a car but oblivious to it--Bucky chases again--making up a little ground until finally the girl smashes into a man coming out of a shop--sending her sprawling to the ground.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LINDA MARTIN

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

He takes her purse. Surprised by the heft, he opens it and pulls out A METAL FILM CAN. Her demeanor changes to fear:

LINDA MARTIN (CONT'D) (cont'd)

(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.

RUSS MILLARD

What kind of movie?

BUCKY

Something tells me it's not David O. Selznick.

Her head still down...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 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". THE DOOR OPENS and Lee slips silently, in...Leans against the wall behind her.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 anyone look at it?

Now its the cops turn to look away.

EXT. THE MUSTER ROOM - AFTER

Russ and Bucky. Lee in background at a desk.

RUSS MILLARD
Whattya think?

BUCKY
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 seems sound, though.

RUSS MILLARD
TJ's a haystack without a name.

BUCKY
Let's detach Meg Caulfield from Wilshire Clerical to play cellmate for a day. See if she'll cry on Meg's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSS MILLARD

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

He walks off. Bucky turns to find Lee, but Lee walks off without saying a word. Bucky spies the newspaper on the desk. The headline: "Bank Theft Mastermind paroled after 8 Years". Bucky folds the paper and slips it into his coat.

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. The lights dim and a blurred image hits the screen. It begins to focus.

Note: film will be intercut with reactions from attending cops--solemn, knowing, but occasionally pretty fucking shocked...Bucky and Lee especially...

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 cuts 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.

ON BUCKY who shakes his head sadly...

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.

ON LEE: who rocks back and forth in his chair. Agitated.

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. Except Lee, who seems clenched with tension. 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 and runs out.

CHIEF HORRALL

What's that about gentlemen? Your boy can't hold his water?

ELLIS LOEW

Officer Blanchard's a little passionate--

Lee kicks over his chair as he storms out.

INT. THE LOCKER ROOM - LATER

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

BUCKY

You forget the popcorn, buddy?

LEE

Yeah. The popcorn.

Ellis Loew and Russ Millard enter.

ELLIS LOEW

Goddammit, boys! I got you Warrants. You're *my* men, and you made me look like a fool in front of the two most powerful men in the Department.

(to Lee)

If you weren't *Mr. Fire* you'd be suspended from duty already. Punch drunk, washed-up fighter--

BUCKY

Mr. Loew--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLIS LOEW
Stay out of it, Bleichert.

Bucky stares at the floor.

RUSS MILLARD
Ellis--

ELLIS LOEW
(ignoring Russ; back to Lee)
You're back on Warrants as of tomorrow.
Report to me at 0800 with letters of
apology for Green and Horrall. You're a
political animal--for the sake of your
pension I'd suggest you grovel.

LEE
I want to go to TJ--

ELLIS LOEW
No!

Poison hangs in the air. Ellis turns on his heels. We watch as Ellis Loew walks away, falling out of focus in the distance. The camera stays on him as moments later he turns and walks back in our direction, finally coming back to the fore, back into focus. But we're no longer in the locker room. Instead we're in:

INT. THE SQUADROOM - NEXT MORNING

Loew stands over Bucky.

ELLIS LOEW
It's now eight-fifteen in the morning.
Where's your partner?

BUCKY
I was hoping he'd be here.

ELLIS LOEW
Well it's eight-fifteen and he's not
here. Neither are his letters of apology.

Bucky nods, not knowing what to say. Loew stares him down, unable to fight an unarmed man.

ELLIS LOEW (CONT'D)
Vogel and Koenig went to Tijuana an hour
ago so I need you to check out a radio
car and get out of here. Out of my sight.
Go try to be a police officer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Loew walks off.

EXT. THE EL NIDO MOTEL - DAY

Bucky cruises by, looking for Lee's sedan. Nothing.

INT. A DINER - DAY

Bucky sits with a sandwich. He's been there a while.

INT. A PHONE BOOTH OUTSIDE DINER - DAY

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Hello.

BUCKY

It's me. You want to get together?

MADELEINE (V.O.)

When?

BUCKY

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

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Not at the house. Six o'clock. The motel.

Loud voices can be heard in the background...

BUCKY

I have an apartment, you know.

MADELEINE (V.O.)

Room 11. Six o'clock tonight.

She hangs up.

INT. RED ARROW MOTEL - ROOM 11 - SUNSET

They lie naked in the bed, Madeleine lightly sleeping. She wakes up to find Bucky lost in thought. She watches him.

MADELEINE

Smile at me. Look soft and sweet.

He looks anything but.

BUCKY

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

Madeleine sits up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE

Did she mention me?

BUCKY

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

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

MADELEINE

Sugar, Betty and I made love once, that one time we met last summer.

BUCKY

Jesus Christ.

MADELEINE

I just did it to see what it would be like to do it with someone who looked like me and--

He jumps from the bed and pulls on his pants.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

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

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

BUCKY

You stupid slut--

MADELEINE

Stay sugar stay--

--and slams the door on the way out.

INT. THE POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

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

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--they're wrapped in gauze bandages.

LEE
I beat up a wall. For messing up Nash--

BUCKY
Not good enough.

Bucky steps into Lee and punches him in the ribs. He drills him again, Lee offering no resistance--

LEE
I'm sorry--

BUCKY
Not good enough!

A punch in the side--Lee staggers and begins to slide down. Bucky hits him again. And again...

EXT. 39TH AND NORTON - NIGHT

Bucky sits in his car, his wrist bandaged. He watches as people cruise the death site like its a tourist attraction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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* right.

EXT. LEE AND KAY'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Bucky walks into the house and finds Kay there. She points to 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. 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. With Loew.

She nods. He strokes her hair.

BUCKY (cont'd)

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

KAY

(nods)
Lee always said I'd be safe.

BUCKY

You will be.

She nods again. Hems and haws. Something to say...

KAY

Bucky. He had a sister.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY

What?

KAY

A little sister. She was killed when Lee was fifteen. They never caught the guy.

BUCKY

Why didn't--?

KAY

He made me promise never to tell you. He thought it make him too easy to figure. Psych 101 and all.

BUCKY

Well it sure explains some things--

She puts her fingers on his mouth.

KAY

No. It doesn't.

EXT. CENTRAL STATION PARKING LOT - LATER

Bucky walks towards the building when Russ and Harry intercept him.

RUSS MILLARD

We've been looking for you.

HARRY SEARS

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

BUCKY

He...what?

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky. Blanchard's in Tijuana, too.

(off Bucky's shock)

A border cop spotted him with a bunch of rough-looking Rurales.

Bucky exhales hard.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

Go.

EXT. TIJUANA - VARIOUS SHOTS - DAWN

Bucky cruises the Tijuana streets: child beggars dig for breakfast in trash cans, taco venders stir pots of dog-meat stew, sailors and marines stumble out of whorehouses. Something catches his eye and Bucky parks at a big pink Art Deco hotel (The Divisidero).

EXT. THE DIVISIDERO PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Bucky checks out a late model sedan with California plates.

INT. THE DIVISIDERO - CONTINUOUS

Bucky badges the clerk and gets a room number.

INT. THE SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Bucky walks slowly down the hallway, hand on his gun. He approaches the door, hears voices in English. A phone slam in its cradle--

VOICE

Goddamnit! What in the hell do we do now?
Linda Martin let slip that her "Mex" was
actually a local named Walter Wellington--

ANOTHER VOICE

Did he pop the Short cooze?

FIRST VOICE

No he's got an alibi--

Bucky rolls his eyes, pushes open the door--

BUCKY

But I can't see any of that stopping you
from rousting spics all over town for a
possible Dahlia frame-up.

INT. A DIVISIDERO HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fritz Vogel and Bill Koenig stare at him.

VOGEL

Bleichert.

BUCKY

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

KOENIG

Fuck Blanchard. He's suspended.

CONTINUED:

Bucky charges at Koenig but Vogel intercepts him, pushing him roughly back out in the hall. Koenig hovers in the middle of the room.

VOGEL

You know what, kid? I got a soft spot in 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.

Vogel 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. He returns to Bucky.

VOGEL

No Lee. But guess what? They got another American busted on a drunk and disorderly. Might be someone special.

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.

VOGEL

Bobby DeWitt...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEWITT

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

VOGEL

Don't 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's head bobs up and down.

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 son, and address me as sir.

DeWitt pisses his pants.

VOGEL (cont'd)

Now Blanchard's scared of you. Why?

DEWITT

Man o Manieschewitz, what a laugh. He 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 the fucker killed them niggers--

CONTINUED:

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 have no love for Sergeant Blanchard but he is a fellow officer and I will not have a fuckbag 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. Please. Don't hurt me no more.

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 about you and Blanchard. What's going on?

DEWITT

I don't know what his version is, I don't.

BUCKY

What's your version?

DEWITT

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

IN SLOW MOTION--

Bucky leaps on De Witt and begins beating the shit out of him--turning his face into a fucking speed bag--

BEHIND BUCKY, VOICES IN SPANISH

and then hands on his shoulders as Bucky 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 empty cell. Bucky struggles to his feet, pulling himself up on the bars. He exits the cell and stumbles down the hallway.

INT. THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He sees Vogel running down the hall towards him.

BUCKY

What?..Fritz? How long have I been out?

VOGEL

We gotta go--

BUCKY

What--

VOGEL

I let DeWitt go on his drunk and disorderly so we could tail him to this Casco spic. He blew his tail but we've got a bead on Casco's place--

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. AN UNMARKED STUDEBAKER - NIGHT

Vogel, Koenig, a Rurale, and Bucky, who tries to orient himself and holds an ice pack to his head. They speed their way along the coast and up into the hills.

EXT. A HOUSE ON THE CLIFFS - NIGHT

The Studebaker pulls around the corner of a long driveway. Up ahead two cars are in the driveway. Back about twenty yards is another car. Bucky sees it.

BUCKY

Blanchard's.

Just then we hear faint yelling coming from the house. Bucky jumps out of the Studebaker before it's even stopped--

VOGEL

Bleichert!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But Bucky's running up the house, gun drawn and reckless. Vogel and Koenig and the Rurale are way behind...

AT THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE

The door is slightly ajar and Bucky swings inside, his gun moving from side to side.

BANG! A gunshot from upstairs. Bucky takes the steps two at a time just as he hears

BANG! BANG!

Bucky flattens against the wall--waiting for another shot. Or a voice. ANYTHING. He hears nothing. Slowly he moves through the upper hallway and into the MASTER BEDROOM.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT/INT

A slaughterhouse reeking of cordite. Bobby De Witt and a Mexican man lay dead on the floor, bullet holes oozing blood all over them.

Bucky senses movement to his left...he looks out towards a cliffside deck which extends from the bedroom.

LEE. Holding a gun in his hand. Face covered in blood. The two men stare at each other.

BUCKY

Lee--

AS A MAN DROPS FROM THE ROOF AND LANDS ON TOP OF LEE!

Before Bucky can register what's happening the man has kicked Lee's gun out of his hands and has gotten leverage on the big man, choking him with a garrotte.

BUCKY (cont'd)

Stop!

He rushes towards them, gun raised. But the man has Lee against the railing, using Lee as a shield as he tears at his throat with the garrotte.

Bucky dives in, trying to grab his partner but the other man whips his arms back and forth, throwing AN ELBOW into Bucky's face--staggering him...

Lee struggles mightily, but the wire digs deeper and deeper into his throat as the man keeps his head buried between Lee's shoulder blades, making it impossible for Lee to get ahold of him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A COMMOTION is heard downstairs as ALL THE OTHER COPS race up the stairs...

Bucky pulls himself up just as the other cops storm the room and just as LEE, WITH ALL HIS FURIOUS MIGHT, does the only thing he can do and the only thing you'd hope he wouldn't as he FLINGS HIMSELF AND HIS ATTACKER BACKWARDS, crashing them through the wooden railing and out into empty space!

Bucky grabs for Lee but he's slicked with blood and Bucky can't hold...And as the two men fall to their death the killer's face flashes to Bucky briefly: a blank death mask.

And then they're gone.

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Rurales, detectives. Our guys. Bucky sits on the bed. Can't believe what's just happened. Vogel sits down next to him.

VOGEL

They're going out in the morning when the tide's down. (beat) They're not going to find them. (beat) Casco must've had a Mex looking out on the roof. You say he had a burned face or something?

Bucky just shakes his head. It's all too horrible to contemplate. And frankly, it doesn't matter now...

INT. KAY AND LEE'S HOUSE - DAY

Kay sits on the couch, knees together, staring at nothing. She hears outside A CAR DOOR SLAM. She moves quickly to the front door, expectant.

She peeks out the window...Sees something which makes her open the door: Bucky sitting on the front porch, sobbing.

Kay moves to him, sits down next to him. She takes his hand, tears coming to her, as well. She leans into him, forehead against his head. She brings his hand to her face, wiping her own tears. She kisses his hand. Again.

But that's too much for Bucky. Not here. Not now. He loosens his hand from hers. Pulls away from her slightly. And so they sit there. A ghost between them. Grieving.

FADE OUT.

A NEON SIGN: THE EL NIDO MOTEL

CLOSE ON: ROOM 204

(CUT TO BLACK)

CONTINUED:

as a clerk unlocks the door for Bucky. Bucky goes inside.

INSIDE ROOM 204

Boxes of police photos and 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.

CLOSE ON: A PHOTO OF ELIZABETH SHORT DRESSED IN BLACK.

AND AS WE WIDEN WE'RE IN ROOM 204 -- ANOTHER DAY

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

RUSS MILLARD
Holy..holy shit, Buck.

BUCKY
(gesturing)
Wit reports on that wall. Medical on the bed. KA's to follow up over there.

Russ and Harry are overwhelmed by both Lee's mania.

RUSS MILLARD
Have you started going through it?

BUCKY
No. No I haven't.

Bucky walks out of the room.

EXT. THE EL NIDO - DAY

Bucky sits out on the curb and is joined by Russ.

RUSS MILLARD
Lee...he was your partner. Your friend.
I'm not even going to try.

Bucky nods absently. Uncomfortable.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)
But I want you to stick with me on this.

Russ gives him a hard look. The kind you can't say no to.

EXT. A CEMETERY - DAY

A POLICE CHAPLAIN addresses a group of officers in their dress blues at LEE BLANCHARD'S FUNERAL. Bucky stands with Kay as they try to keep a stiff upper lip. We can't hear what's being said. But we do notice this: THERE'S NO BODY being lowered into the ground. Lost to the sea and the rocks...

INT. THE EL NIDO - ANOTHER DAY

Russ and Bucky sift through the files. Bucky's checking through a list of women's names...

RUSS

You wanna know something? The more I work this town, the harder time I have telling a hooker from someone who's just making contacts with the right people.

Bucky smiles politely. Russ studies Bucky's demeanor...

INT. A MID-LEVEL HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

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. She blew this one guy for a pair of shoes. I said honey if you do it that way you might as well get married.

The woman laughs. Bucky looks like a zombie.

INT. THE PRECINCT BULLPEN - NIGHT

Bucky walks down the hall. Russ approaches.

RUSS MILLARD

I've got Harry collating the updated KA sheets for tomorrow. Anything new you need him to add?

Bucky shakes his head.

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

El Nido tonight?

BUCKY

No. I'm going to Kay's. Wednesdays were the night she'd make me and Lee a big dinner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Russ nods, sympathetic.

INT. KAY AND LEE'S HOUSE

The table is set beautifully with what looks like a roast duck and trimmings. Bucky and Kay stare at the food.

BUCKY

Should we...say something? We've...we haven't said anything.

She's quiet for a second. And then raises her glass. He does the same.

KAY

(trying not to cry)
To...my supercops.

Which is about the most painful thing she could say. They clink glasses, but it's just getting worse and worse...

She slowly sips from her glass. But he's not done--

BUCKY

Because I feel like...I haven't said anything right. Done anything right.

KAY

There's nothing to say--

BUCKY

There is! There is! He saved my life. Saved my life! And...I saw him there, just standing there...

KAY

Dwight--

BUCKY

What I've done, what I haven't done. Too little...too late! Never enough. Not smart enough, strong enough, good enough--

KAY

Dwight--

BUCKY

(losing it)
I'm sorry. God I'm sorry! I couldn't move. I didn't move. I never move! I never move! I'm so sorry--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And suddenly *she moves*. She's across the table in a flash, knocking his glass of wine over as she kisses him suddenly and passionately. And this time Bucky doesn't back down, or turn away. He *moves* into her, kisses her back hard and desperate and with everything he has...taking in her pain and her love and most of all *her forgiveness...*

INT. KAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bucky and Kay make love with a fierceness we've never seen from them before. It's more than sex. It's a fucking exorcism.

EXT. 39TH AND NORTON - THE MURDER SCENE

where Bucky and Russ stand in the empty lot.

VOICE OVER

Around the squadroom they always say: any dick worth his suit always takes a side: the perp or the vic.

EXT. ANOTHER VALLEY LESBIAN BAR - NIGHT

Bucky and Russ talk to two lesbians, showing them a photo of the Dahlia. He's going through the motions here.

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.

CUT 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. They fuck harder and harder, faster and faster.

BETTY SHORT

No...Please...

VOICE OVER

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

CUT TO:

BUCKY'S FACE

As he wakes from the dream. He's next to Kay. She rolls over and her arm drapes his cheek. He stares at the ceiling.

CUT TO:

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".

INT. EL NIDO - ROOM 204 - NIGHT

Russ Millard pores over a file in their private collection. Bucky sits on the bed, staring at a photo. Russ looks over at him, watching him carefully. Bucky looks horrible, a ghost.

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky. (beat) Bucky.

Bucky looks up--completely out of it. Russ understands that Bucky's fallen down the rabbit hole here...

RUSS MILLARD (cont'd)

You're fired.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE LAPD SCIENCE LAB - DAY

BUCKY IN HIS NEW JOB with plastic gloves on typing blood with an eye dropper and a test tube. Meticulous and boring. VIC CLEAVES, A SENIOR FORENSIC OFFICER, watches him.

VIC CLEAVES

You don't want to put too much in...

A Detective pokes his head in:

DETECTIVE

You guys got those prints for me? The shylock thing? The Stein thing?

Cleaves jerks his head to Bucky, who searches through a stack of files and pulls it out.

DETECTIVE (cont'd)

Thanks.

Bucky returns to his test tubes.

INT. AN APARTMENT - CRIME SCENE - DAY

Detectives comb through a murder scene as Bucky waits outside in the hallway. (Cleaves can also be seen working inside with the detectives).

HOMICIDE DICK
Bleichert.

Bucky moves to the doorway.

HOMICIDE DICK (cont'd)
Taxpayers paid for that fingerprint kit.
Maybe we should be using it. Run some
doorknobs for me.

Bucky nods. 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 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
I cut my foot on a chipped bathroom tile.
You got it in you to replace a few?

BUCKY
(relieved)
Yeah, of course.

The phone rings. Kay answers it. Hands it to Bucky.

BUCKY (cont'd)
Hello...Hey Vic...Yeah. I'm always here.

Bucky writes something on a piece of paper. Hangs up.

CONTINUED:

BUCKY (cont'd)
Gotta go. Work-up on a probable gunshot
suicide. Vic wants me to handle it solo.

KAY
Congratulations. Where is it?

BUCKY
Hancock Park.

EXT. A COLONIAL MANSION - JUNE STREET - MORNING

Two cop cars already there. Bucky's dressed plainclothes and carries a technician's canvas bag. The front door's open and he tentatively steps in.

An attractive woman in her early fifties comes down the hall.

WOMAN
Yes?

BUCKY
I'm Officer Bleichert. LAPD. My I express
my condolences, Mrs.--

WOMAN
Jane Chambers. Condolences accepted. Are
you a detective?

BUCKY
No. I'm the lab man.

She nods and lets him in.

JANE CHAMBERS
It's the study in back. 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.

A couple cops are there, nod to Bucky as he comes in. DONALD, a Homicide dick, approaches Bucky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY

Suicide?

DONALD

Yeah. Man of the house. Pretty routine. Eldridge Chambers. Big real estate honcho. Widow said he was depressed, failing health. The terrible burden of all that money'll get you every time.

Gestures to Bucky's lab kit.

DONALD (cont'd)

Let's make it official.

Bucky nods.

INT. THE HALLWAY - TIME CUT - LATER

as Bucky leaves he steps over the police rope and walks back towards the main foyer. Bucky eyes 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 reconsiders what he was going to ask and retreats.

BUCKY

I'm sorry.

JANE CHAMBERS

Thank you for being so nice, Mr.--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY
Bucky. Good-bye, Jane.

JANE CHAMBERS
Good-bye, Bucky.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Bucky has the newspaper in front of him. Kay enters carrying
A HAMMER AND CHISEL.

KAY
Hi. Looking for these?

BUCKY
Well...Of course I am.

He casually flips over the paper and gets up. Takes the
hammer and chisel from her.

INT. THE BATHROOM - LATER

Bucky kneels on the ground near the sink, toolbox next to
him. He chips up the old tile piece by piece. Suddenly his
hammer breaks through INTO A HOLE as a large section of tile
drops away. Something 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?

INT. THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She carries the scotches into the bathroom and finds Bucky on
the floor, staring at thousands of dollars in cash.

He holds a paper money band inscribed: "\$100...Boulevard-
Citizens Bank..."

Kay exhales softly through her teeth. Ohhhh shit.

KAY
I...always wondered where he kept it.

Bucky leans back against the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY

Were you ever going to tell me?

KAY

He'd given all his money to Ben Siegel.
(beat) He wanted to give us a home. I
didn't know there was any left...

Bucky looks straight up into the ceiling light...

BUCKY

Were you ever going to tell me?

Bucky staring back into the hole in the floor...

KAY

...Bobby *did* do the bank job, Bucky.
Don't get the wrong idea.

BUCKY

I don't know what kind of idea I "got"
right now.

This is pulling teeth now...but she's determined to explain--

KAY

Things were...getting really bad with
Bobby and me. I had to get out. I knew
this guy...I'd...Bobby'd made me be with
him once...he was a hophead and let slip
he sometimes snitched to the cops for
dope money.

BUCKY

And that's how you met Lee?

KAY

I told him what Bobby was doing to
me...How he'd cut on me...pimped me to
his friends...I told him about the bank
job. Where Bobby was hiding the money...

Kay sits down the edge of the tub, continuing.

KAY (CONT'D)

Then last year...the guy--

BUCKY

The hophead...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KAY

Lee'd given him a thousand dollars for introducing us...The guy heard Bobby was getting out. He threatened to tell him that we stole from him. He wanted money we didn't have. Ten thousand dollars.

Bucky sits in silence, his mind whirring...

KAY (CONT'D)

Promise me this: Forgive him for DeWitt. Forgive him for the bank. It doesn't matter anymore. Not to us.

BUCKY

Who was the guy, Kay? Tell me. Tell me!

He's in her face now. Suddenly it dawns on him.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

(almost hoarse)
It was Baxter Fitch.

KAY

You are so, so good at some things.

On Bucky's anguished face:

KAY (cont'd)

He loved you Bucky. He loved both of us--

She reaches for his face and he pulls away.

KAY (cont'd)

It has nothing to do with us! Nothing!

But he's grabbing his coat--

KAY (cont'd)

Don't run away, Dwight. Don't you dare run away from us! Not you!

But he's gone...

SLO-MO CLOSE-UP...A FLASHBACK

As we see the Baxter Fitch shootout from a new angle: Lee does push Bucky out of the way, does shoot the man with the derringer...but most importantly we see Lee's body blocking Bucky's view as he *intentionally blows away an unarmed Baxter Fitch*...Cold blooded murder.

And we GO TO BLACK...AND FADE UP TO:

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky enters the motel room/Dahlia shrine carrying a duffel bag full of clothes. He drops the bag on the floor.

VOICE OVER

Fire and Ice. The hero and the snitch.
Triggerman. Stooge. Weak point in a fairy
tale triangle.

EXT. KAY AND BUCKY'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Kay sits on the porch crying. Finally she goes inside and slams the door behind her.

INT. THE EL NIDO - SAME

Bucky lies on the bed, staring at the ceiling.

VOICE OVER

The basic rule of Homicide applied:
Nothing stays buried forever. Corpses.
Ghosts. Nothing stays buried forever.
Nothing.

Elizabeth Short stares back at him, over and over...Agitated, Bucky grabs his coat and heads out.

EXT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - NIGHT

Bucky sits in his car, watching. Waiting...

ACROSS THE STREET

Madeleine's Packard pulls out of the driveway 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. A JAZZ BAR - NIGHT

Bucky sits listening to a jazz quartet. He's...empty. Walks through the bar and goes to the payphone. 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.

MADELEINE

Family's in Laguna. But you know that.
You've been watching.

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...

CONTINUED:

They tear each others clothes off...

INT. MADELEINE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Madeleine sleeps in the bed as Bucky stands over her, dressing. He walks quietly out of the room.

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - MORNING

Bucky stands in the living room, examining family photos. A photo of two young, handsome proud WWI vets: George Tilden and Emmett Sprague standing on either side of a beautiful young Ramona. The scene may even echo to Bucky of his own situation, his own *triangle*...Especially with the way Ramona's looking slightly in Georgie's direction. There's something about this guy. His face. His look. What?

Madeleine wanders in wearing a robe, Bucky smiles at her.

MADELEINE

What?

BUCKY

Nothing.

She runs her hands over his shoulders.

MADELEINE

(her Scottish brogue)

You miss 'em? Mother's insults? Martha's pornography...

BUCKY

(re photo)

I never imagined Georgie so...the way your father describes him...

MADELEINE

They were young (beat) He died last year. Angina. Daddy paid to have him buried at the family plot in Scotland.

BUCKY

That's very nice of him.

MADELEINE

(dismissive)

Eh. Daddy's big with the grand gestures. Pretty piss-poor with the every day ones.

She slides her hands into his waistband, her robe opening to reveal her nakedness.

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

You don't have to go just yet, do you?

She begins to undo his belt, pulling him across the room. She unties his tie, biting at his neck. At his ear. They're near the front of the house now, getting hot and heavy.

BUCKY'S POV: out a bay window and into the front yard:

KAY STANDS ON THE FRONT PORCH, WATCHING THEM!

BUCKY

Oh Jesus.

He pulls away. Madeleine turns and sees Kay, as well. And Kay sees Madeleine for the first time. Kay's eyes go wide.

EXT. THE FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Bucky comes out the front door.

BUCKY

Kay what in the hell are you--

KAY

What am I? *How could you! How could you!*

BUCKY

(defensive)

You follow me? After what you've done--

KAY

What have I done? What have I done? I did nothing to you! Nothing!

BUCKY

You lied to me--

KAY

I lied for you! For us! What could I do but lie, Dwight? Because I loved you! And him! Yes! Him. And so did you!

BUCKY

You should have told me--

KAY

No! No! *He gave us life!* But you. What have you done? Whoremonger! *Necrophile!*
(pointing at Madeleine)
She looks like that dead girl, Dwight! How could you? How sick are you! After all she did to us!

((CONTINUED))

CONTINUED:

And it's almost like Bucky's seeing Madeleine for the first time. Seeing *himself* for the first time. Realizing how much it's all gotten under his skin.

KAY (cont'd)
You'll end up like him. You will. *But I will not.*

And she's gone before he can respond, leaving him outside. Madeleine behind him, Kay disappearing in front of him.

MADELEINE
Bucky--

He holds his hand up to her. Shut the fuck up.

EXT. HANCOCK PARK - DAY

Bucky drives down the street, disconsolate. He stops his car in the middle of the street. Backs up a little and turns onto another street.

EXT. JANE CHAMBER'S HOUSE - DAY

Bucky strides up and knocks on the door. Jane opens the door.

JANE CHAMBERS
Officer Bleichert?

BUCKY
Hi. I was...in the neighborhood.

EXT. JANE CHAMBER'S GARDEN - DAY

Bucky and Jane drink iced tea. A glorious garden behind them. Bucky's wearing the same clothes (he's just walked here).

JANE CHAMBERS
So. What brings you around again?
Considering courtin' old rich widows?

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANE CHAMBERS

Eldridge had cancer. I more than half expected it. We weren't that close anymore...You married?

BUCKY

No. Not...Really no.

JANE CHAMBERS

There's a girl, though?

Bucky's face betrays his difficulties.

BUCKY

There was. But there's not.

He shifts in his seat. Still trying to process what happened.

JANE CHAMBERS

I'm sorry.

He nods, a little comforted. He toasts with his iced tea.

BUCKY

To love.

She toasts back with him. Confused by him but happy for the company. They sit in silence. Enjoying a temporary peace.

INT. JANE CHAMBER'S HOUSE - LATER

She's walking him out.

BUCKY

By the way...do you know Madeleine and Martha Sprague? The next block over?

JANE CHAMBERS

(disdainful)

Those girls. How do you know them?

BUCKY

I did a little work for them once.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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 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.

JANE CHAMBERS

You're very accepting of other people's frailties. You're young. You should have ideals.

BUCKY

I'm a cop. Ideals 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?

CONTINUED: (2)

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 he stops short.

ON THE OPPOSING WALL SOMETHING HE'S NEVER NOTICED BEFORE:

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. As they stop in front of the scary clown painting:

BUCKY

Spooky.

JANE CHAMBERS

Valuable, too. Eldridge bought it for my birthday last year. 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.

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky stares at an Elizabeth Short autopsy photo. Her wound is similar.

BUCKY (V.O.)

I couldn't escape her. But why should I? She was all I had.

EXT. AN AERIAL VIEW OF LOS ANGELES - DAY

ANGLE ON: THE HOLLYWOODLAND SIGN.

EXT. 39TH AND NORTON - DAY - LATER

Bucky stands at the murder site. Willing himself to have an idea.

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

The door 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, actually looks much better than last time Bucky saw him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEO SHORT

Came into a little change, sold my little story, 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. 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 outside.

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 have solved 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.

CONTINUED: (2)

BUCKY

I just thought...There's something you might have forgot...Anything she might have said...I thought...You were the first person I ever spoke to about this case. I wanted...

(means more than Cleo knows)

I wanted to start over.

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. 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

Is 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 (CONT'D)

That's how it goes, isn't it?

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--

CONTINUED:

CLEO SHORT
 Get a life, Bleichert.
 (to Christine)
 You, too. But get me a sandwich first.

He grabs 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. The Hollywood sign mocking the city's dreams.

His attention turns to Christine's *Photoplay* on the seat next to him; it's 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.

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...

And there's a shot of the porn set--the Keystone Kops running around in it like they're solving a crime in ancient Egypt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE OVER

Walter Wellington had admitted making it.
Linda Martin had said it was shot in
Mexico.

The short ends with a pie throwing scene on the porn set. The credits roll: "Director--Mack Sennett. Scenerist--Mack Sennett. Assistant Director--Emmett Sprague"

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

People lie.

On Bucky's face as one last piece of information hits him:
"Filmed in Hollywood, USA."

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

Look, Russ...I think...I may have it. I--

RUSS MILLARD

It?

Bucky whirls around, gesturing to the room--

BUCKY

Her! Her! 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.

BUCKY

Sprague helped Sennett build that housing project he was putting up--

RUSS MILLARD

Hollywoodland.

CONTINUED:

BUCKY
Hollywoodland. And Madeleine--
(so angry at himself)
The way she worked me...What I've...done
for her--

RUSS MILLARD
Easy, on yourself, kid. So maybe they're
good for the B-movie, but that kind of
killing...we'll need more for that--

BUCKY
That's why we're going 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 drive up Beachwood Canyon. The Hollywoodland sign
looms high above them.

EXT. A PARK AREA AT THE NORTH END OF BEACHWOOD DRIVE

Bucky and Russ leave the car there and split off down a dirt
side road into the woods.

BUCKY
The key is we gotta stop trying to figure
out who killed Elizabeth Short and focus
on *where*.

RUSS MILLARD
You're the expert. Lead on.

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.

INT. THE BUNGALOW - NIGHT

The men scan it with their flashlights.

BUCKY
There's about twenty of these up here.
Condemned. Isolated. Abandoned.
(laughs ruefully to himself)
Madeleine wanted to come up here one
night. Thought it'd be...fun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Russ looks at Bucky--you got yourself mixed up with some kinky folk. Bucky gestures for them to leave.

BUCKY (cont'd)

We've gotta move closer to the stream.

(off Russ's look)

The killer needed to drain the blood.

Russ is impressed.

EXT. A STREAM - WOODS - LATER

Bucky shines the light in a running stream as they follow it deeper into the night...There's another bungalow...

INT. THE BUNGALOW - NIGHT

The two men search carefully through it, trying not to disturb anything but at the same time knowing the need to dig deep under the trash...Another dead end...

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

As the two men hike deeper and deeper up the hill. Bucky stops at the stream and scoops some water out of it. Splashes it on his sweaty face. Russ plays his flashlight ahead revealing:

THE SKELETON OF A BUNGALOW

teetering on the edge of the stream. Empty windows hover over a rotting porch like eye 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 room, each closet and corner creeps with potential violence. Still, nothing.

From the living room:

RUSS MILLARD

Bucky.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - SAME

As Bucky joins Russ in the living room. Russ points to a corner of the room: THE OLD REMAINS OF ONE OF THE SNAKE-COLUMN PROPS FROM THE STAG FILM.

The two men begin whipping their flashlights back and forth across the room, looking for other evidence.

BUCKY

Not in here. It didn't happen in here.

Bucky walks through the kitchen to the rear of the property.

INT. THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Russ joins Bucky at the back door, the screen rotted off. Through the empty window they see:

AN ALUMINUM GARDENING SHED, the door hanging off. They look at each other. They know it before they even get there.

INT. THE GARDENING SHED - CONTINUOUS

As the two men step slowly into the shed, their flashlights playing ahead of them...

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. Bucky fills up another test tube with dark hair tweezed from the caked blood on the mattress.
3. Under the mattress Russ finds small pieces of rope...
4. Bucky measures a bloody sole print and traces it onto a piece of paper.
5. 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 HOLLYWOOD SIGN - LATER

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.

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

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.

INT. EL NIDO - ROOM 204 - DAWN

Bucky sitting amongst the materials recovered from the shed. Gray's Anatomy, the pornographic pictures.

BUCKY

I stayed with her that night and dreamed of all the bullshit that would never happen. Because there was no way for me to make the arrest without admitting that I'd suppressed evidence. The case would always be open.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY (cont'd)

And so while it killed me to wait 'til morning, in some ways...this was our last night together.

In Bucky's hands is THE VICTOR HUGO BOOK. It's open to a color plate at the beginning of the book featuring: **A PICTURE OF A SLASH-MOUTHED CLOWN ALMOST EXACTLY LIKE THE ONE IN JANE CHAMBERS'S HOUSE.**

Titled underneath: "GWYNPLAIN".

And surrounding him are dozens of Elizabeth Short morgue photos: she wears the Gwynplain smile over and over again.

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

Bucky hears voices. 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? Or is that what you needed?

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Aaah, laddie.

He eyes the gun.

BUCKY

You killed Elizabeth Short and the two of you covered it up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUCKY (cont'd)
 (to Madeleine)
 You helped Linda and Betty make that stag
 film. I found the set. I found it all.

On the Spragues, trying to maintain their upper-class cool.

EMMETT SPRAGUE
 Put that gun down, laddie. You're not the
 shooting type and I'm not the dying type.

Bucky fires his gun into a Ming Vase and explodes it.

BUCKY
 Yeah, you're probably half right.

EMMETT SPRAGUE
 Jesus and Mary, Bleichert. That's a Ming--

BUCKY
 Great. Let's talk art. I've just been to
 Jane Chambers's house.

Out of his pocket he pulls what looks like a bill of sale.

BUCKY (cont'd)
 (re the bill of sale)
 You sold a painting to her husband the
 week after the murder. \$3500 for a
 Frederick Yannatuono original inspired by
 Victor Hugo's *The Man who Laughs*. I've
 got the book, too. And now I've got you.

The Spragues make a big show of NOT reacting. He levels the
 gun at Emmett. Rock steady.

EMMETT SPRAGUE
 So I sold a painting. Maybe a little
 high, that's the only crime you can make
 me for--

Bucky blows away the Ming's twin right next to Emmett's head--

EMMETT SPRAGUE (cont'd)
 Stop! (beat) Georgie did it!

BUCKY'S GUY
 Ohh. That's rich. Blame it on the poor
 dead gardener.

Bucky points the gun--

MADELEINE
 No! Bucky! It's true! Believe him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Bucky holds the trigger.

MADELEINE (cont'd)

Georgie was always...sneaking around
Daddy's properties. He saw them make the
movie...He...got crazy about Betty.

Emmett stands but doesn't speak.

BUCKY

More.

She hesitates. Looks to Emmett. No one wants to continue.
Bucky shoots THE CHANDELIER over their head and it CRASHES
down on the floor. He points the gun back at Madeleine:

BUCKY (cont'd)

So many pretty things here.

MADELEINE

All right. All right. 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.

BUCKY

You must've known he was a sick fuck then-

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. We didn't
know he'd go crazy like that--

RAMONA (O.S.)

Liar! (beat) LIAR!

A red wave of sweat washes over Bucky as the matriarch of the
family walks into the room. Ramona's face puffy and her eyes
dark, her gray hair frizzy. Completely insane.

RAMONA (CONT'D)

You did him enough damage Emmett. Now you
let him go!

She turns to Bucky, a weird politesse.

CONTINUED: (3)

RAMONA (cont'd)

I'd appreciate it if you'd stop shooting things, Officer. The rich don't own art just for themselves; we safekeep it for future generations.

BUCKY

(focusing hard now)

How did Emmett damage him, Ramona? What did he do to make him so crazy?

RAMONA

What made who crazy?

She smiles at him again, loving his need. He waits her out.

RAMONA (CONT'D)

Madeleine was eleven. She looked just like Georgie--

EMMETT SPRAGUE

Ramona--

RAMONA

Shut up, Emmett.

She returns to Bucky, a creepy calm. Bucky's mind races. His eyes flash to the photo on the wall of Ramona, Georgie and Emmett. Now its Bucky's turn to smile. He gets it.

RAMONA (cont'd)

(watching him)

That's right, Officer. George and me...not that Emmett cared about that.

(re Madeleine)

But George was her father. For that he ruined George's face.

Emmett leans ever so slightly as if he might go after Ramona-- Bucky flicks the gun in his direction. *Sit.* He does.

RAMONA (cont'd)

When George got out of the hospital I gave him the Hugo book as a present. My Gwynplain. Yes. My book. My painting. I bought that, too. And told Emmett to sell it. But he didn't know what I'd done to her. To her face.

Oh my God. This woman is a spider.

BUCKY

Betty Short.

CONTINUED: (4)

Her face hardens.

RAMONA

(with venom)

It was the cruelest of jokes. He'd become
obsessed with her...That filthy film.

A FLASH: A SHADOWY FIGURE WATCHES LINDA AND BETTY MAKE THE
PORNOGRAPHY FILM IN THE BUNGALOW...

BUCKY

Your husband bought her for George.

RAMONA

Emmett never stopped hating me.

BUCKY

For George--

RAMONA

For being richer than he was.

EMMETT SPRAGUE

You crazy cunt.

She looks over her nose at him.

BUCKY

What did you do, Ramona?

A FLASH: Ramona following behind a gardener's truck as it
snakes its way up into the hills...to the bungalow...

RAMONA

She was drunk.

ANOTHER FLASH: Ramona picks up an old baseball bat leaning
against the bungalow porch. Betty sees her--sees murder in
her eyes. She pulls away from George and tries to run from
Ramona. Her high heels catch and she falls down.

Ramona smashes her in the back of the head.

ANOTHER FLASH: Ramona stands over an unconscious Betty as
George ties her to the mattress...

RAMONA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The second swing woke her up.

As she SMASHES down on Betty Short's stomach. The girl wakes
up screaming...

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - PRESENT

Emmett pleads with her--

EMMETT SPRAGUE

It wasn't you, Ramona. It was Georgie--

RAMONA

Go to hell you peasant.

AND WE'RE BACK IN THE BLACK DAHLIA DEATH FLASHBACK:

As Georgie crouches off to one side and Ramona leans over Betty Short with a knife. She cuts one side of her mouth...

RAMONA (V.O.)

She looked so much like my Maddy. It was...the cruelest of jokes.

And Ramona cuts the other side of her mouth, creating the Gwynplain wound...She moves to the rest of the body...

CUT TO:

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - PRESENT

Ramona stares at Bucky. Insane. In fact, the whole family stares at him...Now what? Bucky is still trying to recover from Ramona's horrific tale.

MADELEINE

We'll ruin you in court, you know that.
Over what? Some little slut--

RAMONA

(hissing)
Don't be an idiot, dear.

And as everyone refocuses attention on her we see that she has A TINY PISTOL in her hand.

And before Bucky can get his gun up into position Ramona just sticks the gun in her mouth and pulls the trigger.

BAM.

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. Bucky and Russ step outside. Russ lights a match and tosses it inside. Flames begin to eat the bloody mattress...Bucky kicks the tin door shut, sealing the fire inside Elizabeth Short's private hell.

INT. THE LAPD SCIENCE LAB - DAY

Bucky sits at his desk. In front of him a newspaper piece:
"Society Matron Dies from Accidental Gun Shot"

Bucky throws the paper in the trash.

INT. THE EL NIDO - NIGHT

Bucky sits on the bed, packing up the last Dahlia files. He pulls files out of a box labeled **"TIP SHEETS"**. At the bottom he finds a scrap of carbon paper which had slipped through the file folders. He glances at it: scrawled on one corner in Lee's handwriting: **"428 So. Muirfield/MS"**

Bucky looks at the date and suddenly has A FLASH: LEE TAKING A TIP ABOUT HANCOCK PARK DURING THE EARTHQUAKE...

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - LUNCHTIME

Young women take their lunch breaks outside in the sun. Bucky stands off to one side, watching them. He focuses in on one in particular: MARTHA SPRAGUE. There's little hesitation as he approaches her. She looks up and sees him. Actually smiles. He returns the favor...

EXT. THE RED ARROW INN - NIGHT

Madeleine Sprague and a 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

standing behind the door, his silenced gun to the back of the soldier's head so he can't see him. He flashes his badge in the soldier's face.

BUCKY

(quoting Lee)

Adios yourself back to the Halls of
 Triopoli, shitbird. I've got business
 with the lady.

You don't have to tell him twice. The soldier runs out.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

I've been pointing my gun at a lot of
 people this week. Haven't had much of a
 chance to shoot anybody. Whattya think?

CONTINUED:

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

I talked to Martha.

Off Madeleine's look--

BUCKY (cont'd)

She called in a tip about you and Betty at LaVerne's...

MADELEINE

(shrugging)

She...wanted to see me smeared in the papers...she...that's all she knew.

BUCKY

But she called it in to *Lee Blanchard*.

And now she's a little shook. Bucky takes aim on Madeleine.

BUCKY (CONT'D)

Lee knew about you and Elizabeth. He knew everything, didn't he?

INT. THE SPRAGUE MANSION - NIGHT - A FLASHBACK

Lee Blanchard beats the hell out of Emmett Sprague while a terrified Madeleine looks on.

BUCKY (VO)

He blackmailed your father--

INT. THE BATHROOM OF THE POLICE STATION - MORE FLASHBACK

Bucky bursts in on Lee with his bloody fists bandaged.

LEE BLANCHARD

(lying)

I beat up a wall. For messing up Nash...

BACK TO SCENE

She's against the door as he advances.

BUCKY

He was blackmailing your family...and lit out to Mexico...

A FLASH BACK:

Lee using Sprague cash to grease Rurales, showing them pictures of Bobby Dewitt...

BUCKY

New scores to settle old ones.

BACK TO THE SCENE:

Bucky pauses...he hates that Lee would abandon him and Kay. But he resets his hurt at Madeleine.

BUCKY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

And you...tracked him down like a dog.

She stares at him, trying to be defiant. Holding firm.

BUCKY (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Or should I say...you had Georgie do it.

Until now. Her eyes go wide and we're

IN FLASHBACK:

As Lee and his assailant are in their final death struggle on the balcony. A helpless Bucky watching as fall...

BUCKY (V.O.)

Emmett didn't cut him, dumb assumption on my part. He burned him.

And we finally see the assailant's face: the blank death mask is really one huge burn scar covering his features...

BUCKY (cont'd) (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Martha says it was hot cooking oil.

The two men disappear into the blackness...

INT. THE RED ARROW INN - PRESENT

Bucky advances towards her with the gun...

BUCKY

My guess is this was between you and Georgie. He wouldn't do it for Emmett. And you couldn't risk telling Ramona. Just you...and Daddy.

Madeleine leans her forehead into the muzzle. Daring him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADELEINE

You'll never do it. Never. Remember...I
look like her. *And she's all you have.*

She grins wickedly. Stares back into Bucky's face.

BUCKY

No.

He shoots her dead.

EXT. THE RED ARROW INN - NIGHT/EARLY MORNING

The door to number eleven opens and Bucky slips out. He pulls
the door shut. He walks down to the end of the parking lot.

VOICE OVER

Madeleine was wrong. I had others. Ones
I'd loved. And who'd loved me.

He gets into his car and pulls away from the motel.

VOICE OVER (cont'd)

People I'd betrayed. And people I needed
to protect.

WE QUICKLY FADE DOWN AND BACK UP ON:

ANOTHER DOOR - MORNING

As the camera focuses on the outside of a Deco door. We hear
the sound of A DOORBELL. And barely through the door:

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Just a minute...

VOICE OVER

And for the first time in my life, I had
people who knew that, for the briefest of
times, and in the darkest of places, I
had been so, so, good at some things.

THE DOOR OPENS AND WE FIND KAY. Her face is hard to read for
a second, her eyes searching the unseen face across from her.

Slowly she smiles.

WE GO TO BLACK.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Thank you Elizabeth.

THE END.