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The Big Kiss-Off

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A Screenplay
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Kenny F. Glaser
This graduate paper, written by

______________________________
Kenny F. Glaser

under the guidance of his Faculty Committee, and
approved by all its members, has been presented to
and accepted by the Council on Graduate Study in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

______________________________
MASTER OF ARTS

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Dean

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Secretary

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Faculty Committee

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THE BIG KISS-OFF

written by

Ken F. Glaser

April 26, 1976
CAST

JOHN ROOK - a private detective
MILDRED STANFORD - a lady with a past
Q. HUNTINGTON STANFORD - multi-millionaire and candidate for Governor
MONTY CRAVEN - political kingmaker
MALCOM de MENDOZA CRISP - a very confidential secretary to Q. Huntington Stanford

DOLORE KEENING - torch singer, a lady of pain
NORMAN CONQUEST - a fading Adonis
ROCCO and TONY - Chicago's finest hoods
MRS. QUATREMAIN - landlady of tattered refinements

PHYLIS STINE - a Hollywood columnist
LT. MOE SCHRECKER - world-weary homicide detective

SGT. FRANCIS C. "POG" MAHONE - his sadistic sidekick
LAZLO CABB - an Hungarian film director
SIDNEY - Lazlo's yes-man
BELITZIA VERICUNDA - glamorous film star and wife of Lazlo
RANDY - a handsome young film star
SPIKE - a grinning killer
UNION OFFICIAL - a diamond in the rough
MACAW - a rasp-voiced news vendor
VERNON LAVON MELROSE - a nervous keeper of secrets
MASSEUR - an innocent bystander

ISHIMOTO - Japanese houseboy

DRUNK
CHAUFFEUR
MAID

THREE CHILDREN AT THE BEACH
Preface

This script eliminates all but the most pertinent camera set ups, angles, opticals and numbered editorial cuts. This has been done to facilitate ready readability of the story line. Therefore, a few notes regarding style of playing and visual presentation are in order.

As the reader will soon see the dialogue and story line are a parody of the Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler hard-boiled detective fiction of the 1930s. For this reason the "look" and style of the film must be that of the Warner Brothers black and white artificial melodramas of that period.

Color process: The picture is to be shot entirely in black and white. All properties, costumes, sets, etc., are to be actually black or white, eliminating all greys and intermediate tones. Lighting will also emphasize sharp contrasts, thus creating an over-dynamic color effect that is in itself satirical.

Sets: As in the classic films of this particular genre the sets are mostly interiors. Even the exteriors (street corners, building entrances, etc.) are interior sets shot at a tight angle.

Vericunda in white satin and maribou feathers a la West, Harlow and Dietrich. Only Mildred appears in silver lame, sequins and bugle beads, giving a shimmering luminescent glow.
Character Studies

MONTE CRAVEN - is smooth. A little too smooth to ever be a candidate for public office on his own. The voters would never trust a man with that much savoir faire. Tall, lean, prematurely grey with a resonant baritone and mannered smile, he wears his double-breasted dinner jacket with the style and aplomb of an Otto Kreuger. Even on film, you just know that in 1936 this man was already wearing cologne.

Q. HUNTINGTON STANFORD - is middle-aged, of medium height and portly. When not dressed in evening clothes (which make him look rather like a smiling penguin) he favors the dark pin-striped suits and polka dot bow ties we associate with the late Robert Benchly. In fact, with his straight back slightly pomaded hair and sparse moustache he is a ringer for Benchly. Naive, easily befuddled, he is always a couple of steps behind in the conversation. Had he not inherited the Stanford millions he would be smiling jovially behind a tie counter in a first-class department store.

DOLORES KEENING - wears a long backless black velvet gown and perches on an upright Steinway in the best Helen Morgan tradition. Her features and blonde marcelled hair style bring to mind Ruth Etting. But off-stage she is perfect casting for Glenda Farrell. Dolores has lost track of just where she is and just what is going on owing to her two little weaknesses. The bottle, which she belts regularly, and Sicilian men, who belt her regularly. Luckily, perhaps - that's the way Dolores likes it.
RANDY CURRIER - is young. Too handsome, sensuous, a baby Boyer. Robert Taylor's No. 1 rival - the forerunner of Tyrone Power.

BELITZIA VERICUNDA - take the bone-white hair and jet-black beaded lashes of Harlow - the suck-cheeked, waxen beauty of Dietrich and the sighing, throbbing eroticism of Garbo and you have Belitzia Vericunda. One of Hollywood's greatest stars and most adaptable nymphomaniacs.

LAZLO GABBO - our old favorite, the flamboyant self-indulgent European film genius. (See Erich Von Stroheim, read Max Reinhardt, check Josef Von Sternberg). Ten years in Hollywood have taught him all there is to know about U. S. Currency and next to nothing about the English language.

LT. SCHRECKER - is all the tired, overworked and underpaid plainclothes police lieutenants portrayed on screen in the '30s by all the tired, overworked and underpaid character actors of that decade. Remember Sam Levine?

SGT. MAHONE - No Warner Bros. "Crime and the City" flick would be complete without him. Too big and mean to be overlooked by the crooks and too pugnacious and dumb to be of any use to the cops.

NORMAN CONQUEST - you can still see that ten years ago he was the all-American athletic type. But now there is a fine layer of flab over it all. His walk is a cocky strut and he smiles too much. Everyone says he looks just like Jack Carson.
SONNY MELROSE - Like Elisha Cook, Jr., Sonny Melrose resembles an elderly boy. He wears thick bifocals that magnify his eyes out of all proportion to the rest of his features. The nervous wreck, the squirming little coward, the small-time blackmailer and stool pigeon that Hollywood knocked off in picture after picture, because nobody, not even an audience, likes a squealer.

PHYLLIS STINE - wears tailored suits and smart hats even while typing up her column at her news desk. She speaks in a sly, insinuating slur. Phyllis could tell you that grey was her favorite color and make it sound risque.

SIDNEY - is of medium height, thin, horn-rimmed glasses. Sidney tries hard. Tries to be a competent assistant director. Tries to make love to a movie star. Tries to assert himself when he is pushed around. Sidney fails. Sidney is a jerk.

MALCOM de MENDOZA CRISP - is taller than Peter Lorre, but only slightly and thinner than Sidney Greenstreet, but just a bit. If he's a little less dapper than Adolph Menjou it's not because he doesn't try. Alone in his room in the Stanford mansion he listens to Orson Welles on his Atwater-Kent radio and has almost mastered that voice of doom. Crisp speaks with an ominous authority that makes one feel he is about to reveal the darkest secrets of the human soul. And he would -- if anyone would ever tell him what's going on.
MILDRED SCHMETTERLINK — fought for everything she's got. Fought like a tiger. You almost wouldn't know that to look at her. Not with the shoulder-length ash brown hair and slender do-nothing-lady-like hands. And yet there's something in those wide slightly neurotic Joan Crawford eyes that says, "Look out." Something in the Bette Davis chain smoking that warns, "This woman is dangerous." Something in the throaty seductive Ida Lupino voice that tells you, "I've been around, baby. So take me as I am."

Somewhere along the road Mildred learned that men will let you down sooner or later. But maybe that's something that only she and Barbara Stanwyck understand.

JOHNNY ROOK — Although it is important that all the characters in THE BIG KISS OFF resemble, to greater or lesser degree, the film actors who would have been playing the parts in the 1930s, the prototype then must not include Johnny Rook. That is to say, it can, under no circumstance, be a Bogart impression. The best possible description of Rook would be Dashiell Hammett's first chapter portrait of Sam Spade in THE MALTEST FALCON. "Sam Spade's jaw was long and bony. His chin a jutting V underneath the more flexible V of his mouth. His nostrils curved back to make another smaller V. His yellow grey eyes were horizontal. The V motif was picked up again by the thickish brows rising outward from twin creases above the hooked nose. And his pale brown hair grew downward — from high flat temples — in a point
on his forehead. He looked, rather pleasantly, like a blond Satan. The steep, rounded slope of his shoulders made his body seem almost conical - no broader than it was thick."
THE BIG KISS-OFF

FADE IN:

1 EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT - LONG SHOT

A small, heavy-set MAN is running down an alley. He is pursued by SPIKE, a large gunman wearing a butcher's cap. The victim reaches the end of the alley and, finding his way blocked, turns in panic to face his pursuer.

CUT TO:

2 REVERSE ANGLE - ON SPIKE - CLOSE SHOT

as he opens his gun, all six bullets, into the other man.

3 SPECIAL EFFECT - SPINNING NEWSPAPER

CAMERA ZOOMS IN as newspaper stops spinning TO REVEAL headline: "MAN SHOT SIX TIMES IN ALLEY."

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

4 NEWSPAPER ON DESK

WE PULL UP TO REVEAL JOHN ROCK reading newspaper. Reverse lettering on window reads, "John Rock, Investigations." A bottle half-full of Irish Whiskey is on the desk, next to it is a tumbler of whiskey. It's a rundown office, a license on the wall, old set of law books, filing cabinet, old desk and swivel chair, stand-up phone, standard typewriter on typing table, bullet hole in the window just behind Rook's desk and above his head, a visitor's chair facing the desk.

ROOK (v.o.)

It was getting late on a cold November day in Los Angeles, with eighty percent promise of rain and no promise of ready cash. I was tired of looking at the walls of my office on the ninth floor of the Fleishacker Building. It had been a month without work. Not one wandering wife, philandering husband, or shifty business partner tampering with the books. What was going on out there? It began to feel as if the world had gone broke. Or gone straight.
A shadow appears at the glass doorway and stands listen-
ning. It is the silhouette of a man in a derby hat.

ROOK (v.o.)
(continuing)
Or maybe not.

Rook goes to the door, slips his hand under his jacket
and flings the door open, revealing MALCOM DE MENDOZA
CRISP, a distinguished-looking, well-tailored, slightly
prim man in mid-forties.

CRISP
Ah...you startled me------- I
didn't expect, ah---you're Mr.
Rook?

ROOK
Right.

CRISP
Mr. John Rook.

ROOK
Check.

Rook steps aside and closes door as Crisp enters
office.

CRISP
I am...uh...are we alone?

ROOK
Completely.

CRISP
My name is...you're certain we're
alone?

ROOK
What do you have in mind?

Crisp crosses to bathroom door and says-

CRISP
This door. Where does it...Oh!

ROOK
Have a chair, Mr. ah....

CRISP
Crisp, Malcom de Mendoza Crisp.
CONTINUED (2):

ROOK

Why not.

Crisp wanders about the office examining Rook's books and license on the wall.

CRISP

You were recommended as a private investigator bearing unimpeachable credentials.

ROOK

That's nice. Would you like a drink?

CRISP

Ah...I....think not.

ROOK

Suit yourself. What can I do for you?

CRISP

Well, actually it's not for me, Mr. Rook.

ROOK

Oh, of course not. How silly of me.

CRISP

(crossing to chair)

Mr. Rook, I represent a certain prominent party.

ROOK

Who for the moment will remain...

CRISP

Nameless. This party finds himself in a very delicate situation.

ROOK

Oh, sorry to hear that.

CRISP

Mr. Rook, ever since man emerged from the primeval darkness, the history of the human soul has been fraught with greed, wanton lust and the most unspeakable vices.
4 CONTINUED (3):

ROOK
Now you're talking my language.

CRISP
Ambition and the thirst for power, my dear sir, can lead man to the Promethean heights, but whom the gods destroy, they first make mad, bringing them low, even unto the dust, there to utter nothingness.

ROOK
Aha! Utter nothingness!

CRISP
Exactly. In the dime-a-dance ballroom of the human soul, it is the jazz-mad devil himself who calls the tune.

ROOK
Of course. We all know that.

CRISP
And he who plays the dizzy pantaloon must face the murky dawn confounded by his own confusion.

ROOK
Confusion. Now we're getting somewhere.

CRISP
And what mortal soul is impervious to...

ROOK
Hold it. Hold it. Are you telling me that your nameless party is a dizzy pantaloon?

CRISP
Well, I shouldn't like to be quoted...

ROOK
'Cause I don't take those kind of cases.

CRISP
No, no. I'm speaking solely in my capacity of confidential secretary to a party of the most unbesmirched reputation.
ROOK
Unbesmirched and still nameless.

CRISP
If you could make yourself available at eight o'clock tonight, this gentleman would like to see you.

ROOK
That's possible. But before we go any further, my rates are twenty-five dollars a day and expenses.

CRISP
(taking envelope from breast pocket)
I have here an advance of one hundred dollars. I trust that will be satisfactory.

ROOK
It'll do for openers. But I have to know who it comes from.

CRISP
Well, as I say, a certain prominent party......

ROOK
Yes, yes, I heard you. But when I take a man's money, I have to know his name. So, let's stop horsing around.

CRISP
The address is on the envelope. It's 823 Fairoaks Road, Pasadena.

ROOK
Fairoaks Road. I'm impressed. I'm dazzled. But that still doesn't tell me who my client is.

CRISP
Very well, Mr. Rook. Does the name Q. Huntington Stanford mean anything to you?

ROOK
Bingo!
5 INT. CAR - NIGHT

Rook, in trench coat and snap-brim hat, is at the wheel of his black Ford coupe. Lights flash by. The thunder of an impending storm is heard.

ROOK (v.o.)
Q. Huntington Stanford was certainly a prominent party. The Huntington Stanfords were still sitting on land they stole from the Spaniards. Their sprawling real estate empire, Long Beach oil fields and three generations of California banking made Q. Huntington Stanford sole heir to one of the fattest fortunes in the country. And for the man who has everything there’s only one place to go - politics. Which explained why Q. Huntington Stanford was running for Governor.

5A Rook pulls up in driveway of the sprawling Huntington Stanford mansion just as the thunder gives way to rain. It begins to fall lightly. The house door is opened by a Japanese houseboy.

HOUSEBOY
Hurro.

5B INTERIOR - Mansion

ROOK
Hurro...Hello.

Malcolm de Mendoza Crisp comes behind the houseboy, beaming.

CRISP
Ah, Mr. Rook, you found us.

ROOK
Yes, I...

CRISP
So many people take the wrong turning.
           (as houseboy takes Rook's coat and hat)
Thank you, Ishimoto. Right this way, Mr. Rook.
           (gesturing to a staircase and leading Rook up)
           (MORE)
CRISP (Contd)
Mr. Stanford is waiting for you in his sanctum sanctorum. Along with Mr. Craven.

ROOK
Craven...Craven. Would that be Monty Craven?

CRISP
Yes, but of course. Naturally, you'd know that, wouldn't you? Mr. Craven's name is well known to...

Crisp's voice faces out, going up stairs.

ROOK (v.o.)
Mr. Craven was known to anybody who could read between the lines in State politics. Monty Craven moved politicians around like Connie Mack moved outfielder. He had put more men in power than Catherine the Great. Kingmaker. Manipulator. In the State Capitol they called him Boss...

Crisp's voice comes up.

CRISP
Don't you agree?

ROOK
Yes, I certainly do. But what's to be done about it?

CRISP
Oh, I have no idea.
(opening library door)
Here we are.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT - MED. SHOT

Book-lined room. Fireplace. Pictures on the wall. Polo trophies. Autographed photo of Herbert Hoover on desk. Q. HUNTINGTON STANFORD rises as Rook and Crisp enter. Facing Stanford's desk are two high-backed leather chairs. One is obviously empty. From the other, cigar smoke rises.
CONTINUED:

CRISP
Mr. Stanford, Mr. Rook.

STANFORD
(offering hand)
Ah, yes, Mr. Rook. Mr. Rook, Mr. Craven.

MONTY CRAVEN rises from easy chair.

CRAVEN
Mr. Rook.

ROOK
Mr. Craven.

STANFORD
Thank you...er...ah...Crisp.

Crisp closes the door as he leaves, bowing his way out of the room. The three men seat themselves. There is a long silence as they stare at each other.

CLOSE SHOT - STANFORD

CLOSE SHOT - CRAVEN

CLOSE SHOT - ROOK

CLOSE SHOT - STANFORD

He pulls himself out of his reverie with an attempt at conviviality.

STANFORD
Nice weather we're having.

CLOSE SHOT - ROOK

ROOK
It's starting to rain.

CLOSE SHOT - STANFORD

STANFORD
Well...yes...er...ah...Rook, Rook. That's a Welsh name, I believe.

CLOSE SHOT - ROOK

ROOK
I don't think so.
14 CLOSE SHOT - STANFORD

STANFORD
No...oh...well...that is...ah... did you have any trouble finding the house?

15 CLOSE SHOT - ROOK

ROOK
No.

16 CLOSE SHOT - STANFORD

STANFORD
Good...well!...yes. It looks like this fellow Roosevelt thinks he can...

17 THE SCENE

CRAVEN
(breaking in)
I think, Q., we'd better get down to the matter at hand.

STANFORD
Well...yes...eh...ah...of course. Sure. That is...well, Mr. Rook, we...that is, I, so to speak. Or rather we...Well, we've asked you here this evening, Mr. Rook, in your capacity as a qualified detective, so to speak.

ROOK
Oh, rats. I thought you were going to ask me to co-chair the Spring cotillion.

STANFORD
Oh, no. That won't be for several months.

Craven clears his throat.

ROOK
Of course.

STANFORD
No, we...ah...there is a certain matter that requires, so to speak...investigation.
CONTINUED:

ROOK

Yes.

STANFORD

In fact, one might say, an investigation of a... private nature.

ROOK

(carefully pronouncing each syllable)

A private investigation.

STANFORD

Exactly.

ROOK

And you thought of me.

STANFORD

Yes. In my youth, my salad days, as Longfellow said, I was not always the discreet, judicious man of the world you see before you. I had...

CRAVEN

He’s being blackmailed.

ROOK

So to speak.

STANFORD

Were we going to tell him that part?

CRAVEN

I give you a name, Mr. Rook.

ROOK

It might help.

CRAVEN

The name of a young lady.

ROOK

Even better.

CRAVEN

The name I give you, Mr. Rook, is Chi Chi Wild.

ROOK

Chi Chi Wild! A fine old Philadelphia name.
CONTINUED (2):

STANFORD
(mumbling to himself)
Sounds like a chili sauce.

CRAVEN
Nevertheless, Chi Chi Wild was what is known in the parlance of the motion picture industry as a starlet.

STANFORD
(mumbling)
I hate that name.

CRAVEN
That was about nine years ago. Then she dropped out of sight.

ROOK
But now that Mr. Stanford is running for Governor, she pops up again.

CRAVEN
Like Venus arising from the mud.

ROOK
What's she got on him?

CRAVEN
Would you care to examine these photographs?

He picks them up from the desk and hands them to Rook.

INSERT - PHOTOGRAPHS

Night club photos of Q. Huntington Stanford and sexy-looking BLONDE with Cupid's-bow mouth, frizzy platinum hair and twenties-style straight-cut evening gown. One photo is of the couple seated at a table and two are of them dancing.

BACK TO SCENE

ROOK
All these prove is that before his marriage Mr. Stanford was something of a dancing fool.

CRAVEN
In themselves, perhaps. But I ask you, Mr. Rook, to examine these photographs.
20 INSERT - PHOTOGRAPHS

Two nude stills of the same frizzy blonde with portions of the photo blacked out.

21 BACK TO SCENE

ROOK

Same smile.

CRAVEN

While the first set of photographs are in themselves perfectly innocuous, authenticating nothing but Mr. Stanford's association with Miss Wild...

ROOK

And a certain weakness for the French tango.

STANFORD (o.s.)

(slamming desk)

Chi Chi Wild!

CRAVEN

The second set of pictures, however, set an opprobrious light on the young lady's character. And putting the two sets together...

ROOK

I see what you mean. And now she's peddling her pictures.

CRAVEN

No. The young lady has sunk back into the obscurity from whence she came. However, somebody is blackmailing Mr. Stanford. These notes have been arriving with distressing regularity.

(hands him a note)

22 INSERT - NOTE

Words and letter pasted on paper read: "Leave $5,000. Usual place. Friday at midnight. No cops."

23 BACK TO SCENE

ROOK

Usual place?
CONTINUED:

STANFORD
An isolated phone booth.

CRAVEN
On Outpost Road.

ROOK
How many deliveries?

CRAVEN
Five so far.

ROOK
Five grand a crack?

CRAVEN
Every time.

ROOK
Same place?

CRAVEN
Always.

ROOK
(to Stanford)
Who'd want to smear you?

STANFORD
Practically everyone.

ROOK
(to Craven)
That's all?

CRAVEN
Afraid so.

ROOK
Not much to go on.

CRAVEN
Sorry, Rook.

ROOK
Okay, okay. You boys from the north side of town want a lot for your fifteen cents, don't you?

Rook stands, puts photos in his breast pocket and walks to the door.
23 CONTINUED (2):

STANFORD
Fifteen cents?

ROOK
Figure of speech. I'll be in touch.

23A Rook opens the door to reveal Crisp standing bent over door listening at the keyhole. He straightens up.

CRISP
(fluistered)
Oh, there you are.

ROOK
Ah, yes. The confidential secretary.
Rook starts down the hall followed by Crisp.

CRISP
Let us say rather, Mr. Rook, a keen observer of the passing parade.

ROOK
See much of the parade through that keyhole?

CRISP
Enough to tell me that you, my dear sir, are about to be immersed in the most fascinating of all crimes.

ROOK
You mean blackmail?

CRISP
An ugly word.

ROOK
Maybe, but a handy way to get ahead, Crisp.

CRISP
Ah, yes, who can say how many men of means have founded their fortunes on the indiscretions of their fellows?

ROOK
I guess somebody could say.
For which of us, mere creatures of fleshy impulse and barely-bridled passions, can with impunity, cast the first stone? In the all-night cafeteria of the human libido, who can discern what bizarre selections are there made? Which of us, sir, can answer that question?

ROOK
Search me.

Ishimoto comes forward and helps Rook on with his hat and coat.

CRISP
The Scandal, sir, creeps on little kitty cat feet across the ever-resined floor of the dime-a-dance ballroom that is the human....

Off screen a door slams. Crisp turns to see Rook has gone.

CRISP
(turning to the houseboy)
Oh.....You know, Ishimoto, man is a strange species. Which of us can say...

Off screen another door slams as Ishimoto leaves too.

CRISP
(leaning on rail of stairway)
Oh!...I'm lonely....

EXT. CAR - NIGHT - TRUCKING CLOSE SHOT
Rook in car driving.

ROOK (v.o.)
Where do you start? Where do you start when somebody asks you to lay hands on some nine-year-old snaps of a tricked-up frail nobody remembers? In this town girls like Chi Chi Wild come and go like robins in May. It was too late to start (MORE)
ROOK (Contd)

so I stopped off at a bar and
grill for some steak and Jameson's
hundred proof. By the time I got
home it was after ten o'clock and
the Rolls Phaeton parked at the
curb stood out in my neighborhood
like a perfect pearl in a pretzel
dish. That should have told me
something right there.

24A Rock's car pulls up before a brick apartment house.
The street is wet with rain. The name of the apart-
ment house, The Chandler Arms, is on a brass plate
which Rook passes on his way in.

25 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator door is opened by the elevator boy and
Rook gets out. He walks to his apartment door, puts
his key in the lock and opens the door. The door is
open only a few inches when Rook reaches under his
jacket for his gun.

ROOK (v.o.)
I caught a whiff of it the second
I cracked the door. It was the
kind of perfume that went for twelve
bucks an ounce and said the lady
wasn't kidding around. It hung in
the air like musk in the jungle.

25A Rock opens the door, his .38 automatic out. Outside
the window a neon sign blinks, flooding the room with
alternating light and darkness. In darkness only a
glowing cigarette ember is seen. As the sign flashes
on it sends a shaft of light on a pair of beautiful
crossed legs seated in the easy chair facing the door.

MILDRED
Don't turn on the light, soldier.
I think I was followed.

A roll of thunder is HEARD.

ROOK
From what I've seen so far, I
can understand that.

MILDRED
My husband always has me followed.
ROOK
Husband, you said husband?

MILDRED
Yes. I'm Mrs. Q. Huntington
Stanford. So keep your hands
to yourself.

Rook steps into the room, crosses to the window.

ROOK
I'm sorry to hear that.

Rook looks out the window. A neon sign reading "Paradise" blinks on and off across the street. There is
nobody on the street.

ROOK
(continuing)
There's nobody there.

Rook pulls down the blind and turns on a light.

ROOK
(continuing)
Why does he have you followed?

MILDRED
For my own protection. He always
has. Ever since we were married.
He thinks the streets are full of
crime. My husband is a Republican.

ROOK
Elevator boy let you in?

MILDRED
Yes. He seemed to think it was
normal procedure. Do you often
receive women at this hour?

ROOK
Sure. Sometimes alone, late at
night, I get this strange craving
for a manicure.

MILDRED
You don't look like the manicure
type.

ROOK
Maybe not. You don't look like
the moving force behind the Jr.
League.
MILDRED
My life is devoted to good works.

ROOK
Is that what brings you to my part of town? Planning to throw me a charity ball?

MILDRED
You don't look like one of the needy.

ROOK
All any man needs is a good woman, now and again.

MILDRED
Back off, soldier.

ROOK
O.K. So much for the syncopated patter. What brings a garden party butterfly like you out on a night full of rain and crime?

MILDRED
I understand my husband has hired you.

ROOK
Did he tell you that?

MILDRED
Umm - it was bandied about the servants' quarters.

ROOK
Ah, Mr. Crisp. Not only a philosophizing server of the passing parade, but also a tittle-tattle.

MILDRED
Mr. Crisp is devoted to me.

ROOK
I'm sure you inspire devotion in many men. What else did he tell you?

MILDRED
That you're looking for a girl named Chi Chi Wild.
ROOK
Let's say I am.

MILDRED
I'll pay you double what they're paying to work for me.

ROOK
Why are you so interested in Chi Chi Wild?

MILDRED
She was my sister.

ROOK
Oh! That would mean Stanford did the town with her before you were married.

MILDRED
You might say that.

ROOK
That would mean a floozie like Chi Chi is a member of the family circle.

MILDRED
More or less.

ROOK
That would mean a cheap little bimbo is going to be the skeleton in the family closet in the Governor's mansion.

MILDRED
You don't have to put it like that.

ROOK
That would mean trouble, trouble for everybody, wouldn't it?

MILDRED
Yes, it would.

ROOK
If I bought it, but I don't.

MILDRED
What do you mean?
CONTINUED (4):

ROOK
Nine years and a few million bucks can do wonders for a girl. I like the hair a lot better. And bee-stung lips are out. But some things never change. I'd recognize those legs anywhere...Chi Chi.

MILDRED
Why, you...

She swings in an attempt to slap him, but he catches her hand in mid-air and draws her close to him.

MILDRED
(continuing)
Don't ever call me that again. My name is Mildred Schmetterlink.

ROOK
I'll call you anything you like, goddess. But somebody better start leveling with me pretty soon. I'm tired of people playing me for a sucker with half-truths and honeyed words. So, if we're going to play ball together, you'd better start giving me the straight goods.

MILDRED
ALLRIGHT, ALLRIGHT! What do you want to know?

ROOK
That's better. All right, first of all, why are you trying to out-bid your husband? He's doing everything he can to buy up your checkered past. Why doublecross him?

MILDRED
It's not him, it's Monty.

ROOK
CRAVEN?

MILDRED
I don't trust him. He could use that film to make my husband do whatever...
ROOK
Film? What film?

MILDRED
 Didn't they hire you to get the film?

ROOK
They hired me to get back some old family snapshots...
(reaching in his pocket)
These. Somebody seems anxious to sell your husband the originals.

MILDRED
Oh, then they didn't tell you.

ROOK
Apparently they didn't tell me much. What's this about a film?

MILDRED
These are only stills.

ROOK
Stills?

MILDRED
Yes, they're just printed from the film.

ROOK
You keep saying "film."

MILDRED
Yes, a 16mm ten-minute film called "Tarzan's Wedding Night."

ROOK
"Tarzan's Wedding Night?"

MILDRED
That's what they called it.

ROOK
All singing, all dancing.

MILDRED
You remember '27, it was a job.

ROOK
Yeah, I remember '27. You're sure it's a film they're selling?
MILDRED
I ought to know. I paid through the nose to keep it from my husband ever since I got back from my honeymoon.

ROOK
Why the switch? From you to your husband?

MILDRED
I told him all about the film when he announced he was running for Governor. I didn't want to be the cause of his...

ROOK
And he took over the payments?

MILDRED
That's right.

ROOK
And you want to short-stop the film because you don't want Craven to get his hands on it.

MILDRED
Right.

ROOK
I see what you mean; it could really put him in the driver's seat after the election.

MILDRED
And besides, it's my responsibility.

ROOK
And you have no idea who could have been blackmailing you all these years?

MILDRED
No. None.

ROOK
Who else was involved in making the film? Who ran the camera?

MILDRED
A man with an eye-patch. A foreigner. I never knew his name.
ROOK
That's not much.

MILDRED
Well, I wasn't alone in the film.

ROOK
Who was he?

MILDRED
He was a dead-beat extra. Some back-lot cowboy. It was the closest he ever got to being a star.

ROOK
I don't suppose you caught his name?

MILDRED
Frank or Phil. Frank, I think.

ROOK
Thanks again, lady. You're a lot of help, aren't you?

MILDRED
But here's something. He had a girl friend. She was always hanging around. I see her picture in the papers now and then. A torch singer, works small rooms. Calls herself Dolores Keening.

ROOK
(getting his hat)
Thanks a lot, gorgeous.

MILDRED
When can I expect to hear from you, Johnny?

ROOK
(getting into raincoat)
Don't hold your breath......Toodles.

MILDRED
But you're working for me now, Johnny.

ROOK
Sorry, I only work for one client at a time.
CONTINUED (8):

MILDRED
Why, you son of a...

She slaps him.

ROOK
Watch your language, goddess.
Your past is showing.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

ROOK (v.o.)
It wasn't hard to trace Dolores Kenning. It cost me five cents for a Los Angeles Daily Herald. I found her in the Dining and Dancing section listed under Night Life. She was working in a two-by-four clip joint on South Adams called the Club Deja Vu, where business had tapered off after booze became legal.

The car pulls up to the club. Rook gets out and goes past doorman into club.

INT. CLUB DEJA VU - NIGHT

DOLORES KEENING is in mid-song. Rook makes his way past tables toward the exit sign. He passes a DRUNK.

DRUNK
Haven't I been in here last night?

Dolores finishes her song, falls off the piano, and exits. Rook follows her. He sees her go into a room backstage.

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - NIGHT

On the door a sign is thumbtacked. He reads: "D. Keening." He knocks.

DOLORES (c.s.)
Go away, Rocco. I don't want to do it any more and this time I really mean it.

ROOK
Miss Keening.
DOLORES (o.s.)
I told you a million times I
don't...don't...oh...

She opens door. Dolores is drunk and a little surprised
to find anybody at the door but the help.

DOLORES
Oh. Hi.

ROOK
Miss Keening?

DOLORES
Sure, why not?

ROOK
May I come in?

DOLORES
Are you a friend of the Gabuchi brothers?

ROOK
No. I'd like to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind.

DOLORES
I was right here in Los Angeles
all last year. And the previous
spring to that. I was living with
my sister in Azusa. She'll swear
to that. I was...

ROOK
No. This is about somebody else.
This is...

DOLORES
Were you just out front?

ROOK
Yes, I was.

DOLORES
Could you see this?

She points to a bruise on her arm.

ROOK
No. You looked charming.
DOLORES
Sometimes we get a lot of riff-raff in here. C'mon in.

ROOK
Thank you.

DOLORES
Sit down a sec while I touch up my abrasions.

Thanks.

DOLORES
So you're a friend of Salvatore's.

ROOK
Well, we're not as close as we used to be. Just a couple of questions, Dolores. Did you...

DOLORES
Are you from the papers? For if you are I have nothing further to say concerning Mr. Lyle G. Unger, Jr., of Pines Blight, Wisconsin. Mrs. Unger can say what she will but I'm not...

ROOK
Dolores!

...not a type who, simply because two people...

ROOK
Dolores!

...whose marriage has seen better days...

ROOK
Dolores!

What?

ROOK
Where's Frank?

DOLORES
Frank Besserman? Frank's in Heaven.
ROOK
Maybe. He used to hang around...

DOLORES
Frankie O'Connelly, I don't know what happened to him. He...

ROOK
This Frank was around eight or nine years ago. Wanted to be in the movies. I heard you two used to --

DOLORES
Oh. That Frank. His name is not Frank anymore.

ROOK
What is it now?

DOLORES
Who wants to know?

I do.

DOLORES
Oh. Well, Frank changed his name for his screen career. Which is some laugh. He didn't think Frank Schnell was glamorous enough.

ROOK
He had a point. What's his name now?

DOLORES
He calls himself Norman C....Did Mrs. Unger, Jr., send you here?

ROOK
No, Dolores. I swear to God. Norman what?

DOLORES
Norman Conquest.

ROOK
Norman....

DOLORES
Conquest. Don't you love it? Frank was always putting on airs.
ROOK
Know where I can find him?

DOLORES
Say, just who are you, anyway?

ROOK
My name is Johnny R...

DOLORES
Are you a copper?

ROOK
No, I'm not. I --

DOLORES
I don't want to talk to no cops!

ROOK
I'm not a --

DOLORES
I don't want no cops coming around here.

ROOK
Dolores, please.

DOLORES
That D.A. in Chi personally promised me if I turned State's evidence nobody's ever bother me no more.

ROOK
Dolores.

DOLORES
So how come you keep all the time showing up and pestering me?

ROOK
Dolores - now...

DOLORES
Everywhere I turn.

ROOK
Sweetheart...

DOLORES
In the roaring traffic boom...
28A CONTINUED (3):

ROOK
Dolores, baby...

DOLORES
In the silence of my lonely room...

ROOK
Dolores. Dolores.

DOLORES
Hounding me. Hounding me.

Rook whistles.

DOLORES
(continuing)
Always pestering me.

ROOK
Ho, oh. Dody, come on now.

DOLORES
Driving me crazy. Driving me mad.

ROOK
Hold it, sugar. Hold it, kid.

DOLORES
I can't take it any more.
    (mad laugh)

Rook slaps her.

DOLORES
(continuing)
I know you! Where do I know you from?

ROOK
Where can I find Frank?

DOLORES
Frank's in Havana.

ROOK
Not that Frank. Frank Schnell. Norman Conquest. Where can I find him?

DOLORES
Oh, him. He's down at the beach.
ROOK
Where at the beach?

DOLORES
Some old dump on Ocean Front.

ROOK
Ocean Front? At Arroyo Beach?

DOLORES
Yeah. He called me about six months ago to put the bite on me for a couple of bucks. The nerve of some pe--

ROOK
You know the address?

DOLORES
Nah. Just a rooming house. Some old flea bag next to the pier.

ROOK
Did you give him any money?

DOLORES
Are you kidding?

ROOK
How much did he want?

DOLORES
I'm sure I know you.

ROOK
Dolores, listen to me.

DOLORES
Hounding me, hounding me. Get out. Leave me alone.

ROOK
How much did he want?

DOLORES
I'm not alone here, you know. I got friends.

ROOK
Just tell me how much --

DOLORES
Rocco! Tony! Get this guy out of here! This guy's bothering me!
CONTINUED (5):

ROOK
I wish you hadn't done that,
Dolores.

Dolores wanders aimlessly about the room, screaming.

ROOK
(continuing)
You want to lower your voice,
kiddo?

Thundering footsteps outside the door. Two bruisers, ROCCO and TONY, break in. Rook takes them on in one hell of a fight. Finally, Rook knocks out Tony. Rocco pulls a huge .45 automatic. Rook shoots him in the arm and Rocco goes down.

DOLORES
(screams)
Rocco!

ROCCO
Ma!

DOLORES
Ma? Why, you crumby palooka!

She hits him with a whiskey bottle.

ROOK
You got a lot of heart, baby.

DOLORES
We killed him.

ROOK
Naw. I just winged him. He'll be around in a minute or two. So long, baby.

DOLORES
Hey. How's about it. One for the road?

ROOK
Sure. Why not?

Rook slaps her.

INT. CAR - DAY

ROOK (v.o.)
Shortly after dawn I headed out for Sunset Beach in search of
ROOK (v.o.) (Contd)
Norman Conquest. Nobody who was making it lived at Sunset Beach. At Sunset Beach you could walk out into the Pacific Ocean until your hat floated. And many people did. It was a colony for the has-beens and the never-would-be's, that had flourished during the tinseled days before somebody pulled the plug in '29 and everybody went home. The house by the pier was right where Dolores said it was and the landlady couldn't have been sweeter.

CLOSE SHOT – LANDLADY

She is dressed in chenille robe, her hair in clips, with dark shadows under her eyes. A limp hand-rolledd cigarette hangs from her lips. She speaks in a very fruity whisper.

LANDLADY
(fake English accent)
Mr. Rook, yes. How do you do? I'm Mrs. Quatermain. Actually, I'm more of a concierge than a landlady. In what possible way may I be of assistance to you, my dear Mr. Rook?

ROOK
I wonder if you can help me. I'm looking for a certain party.

LANDLADY
And whom might that be?

ROOK
The name is Norman Conquest.

LANDLADY
I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Rook. But we make it a practice never to reveal the name or whereabouts of any of our tenants. It is a precaution designed to...

ROOK
Tell me where he is or I'll knock you down and kick you.
CONTINUED:

LANDLADY
That's him standing right over there.

ROOK
Thank you.

LANDLADY
Oh, not at all.

Rook turns and leaves.

ANGLE - ROOK'S POV - LONG SHOT

NORMAN CONQUEST is lifting an old-fashioned ball-type barbell as a group of small children in sunsuits kick sand at him. Rook approaches.

MED. SHOT - CONQUEST AND CHILDREN

NORMAN
You kids cut that out or I'm really gonna let you have it.

The kids give him a raspberry and throw more sand at him.

NORMAN
(continuing)
I'm warning you!

ROOK
Conquest!

The kids see Rook and run.

NORMAN
(lifting; grunting and straining)
Yeah, what is it?

ROOK
I want to talk to you.

NORMAN
What about?

ROOK
Your career in pictures.

NORMAN
Go on. Who're you kidding?
ROOK
That's beside the point.

NORMAN
I haven't worked in two years. Not since "The Last Days of Pompeii."

ROOK
I'm not talking about your recent career.

NORMAN
All that lava!

ROOK
I want some information about a little private number you worked in about nine years ago.

NORMAN
Huh? (stops lifting to think)

ROOK
You had the lead.

NORMAN
Oh!

ROOK
Yes. Oh. And it's against the law.

NORMAN
Oh, yeah, wise guy? I know for a fact the Chief of Police showed it at the Chamber of Commerce smoker. So don't hand me that baloney.

Conquest goes back to lifting and grunting.

ROOK
Baloney, is it?

Rook punches Conquest in the belly. Conquest grunts and sinks to the ground.

ROOK
(continuing)
I don't take that kind of talk from anybody, Tarzan.
CONTINUED (2):

NORMAN
(trying to rise)

Why, you...

Rock pushes him down.

ROOK

Don't try it, Norman. I got a lot of reasons not to like you. You're cheap. You're vulgar. You live off women. I got sand in my shoe from walking out here. And Norman Conquest is a stupid name. So start talking and talk fast.

NORMAN

Take a walk.

ROOK

Come on, Norman, I've got ways to make you talk.

NORMAN

What are you gonna do, torture me?

ROOK

Something like that.

NORMAN


ROOK

O.K., Norman. I hate to do this, but you asked for it.

(he tickles Norman)

Who bankrolled the film?

NORMAN

I don't know.

(giggling)

ROOK

Norman. Idzy, Bidzy Boo!

He continues to tickle Norman throughout the scene.

NORMAN

Cut it out. I don't know. The guy who shot it, I guess.

(giggles)

...Oh!
ROOK
The cameraman?

NORMAN
I think so, ho-ho. He's the ... he's the ... he's the guy who paid me.
(giggles)

ROOK
What's his name?

NORMAN
Stop it, stop it... I don't know.

ROOK
C'mon, Norman. Boody, boody, boody.

NORMAN
Oh please! I tell you I don't know. He was a Hunga... a Hunga... a Hunga- garian.

ROOK
(stops tickling)
A one-eyed Hungarian?

NORMAN
Yeah. He was just off the boat whew... trying to get some dough together.

ROOK
Thanks heaps, Norman. You've been a pal.

Rook gives him a not-too-chummy chop on the jaw. Norman flinches.

ROOK (v.o.)
He wasn't much of a clue. More like a hint. But maybe I could parlay it into a payoff.

NORMAN
Nerts to you.

ROOK
(turns and makes tickling gesture in Norman's direction)
Itzy, Bitzy, Boody.
CONTINUED (4):

Norman in B.G. collapses again and giggles.

CLOSE SHOT - PHONE BOOTH

Rook dials a number.

ROOK (v.o.)
There was this old dame I knew.
Turned out a red-hot Hollywood column for one of the local sandal sheets. She knew enough dirt to bury half the town.

OPTICAL EFFECT - VERTICAL WIPE

Rook in one half, PHYLIS STINE, Hollywood gossip columnist in other half. Phylis wears a large hat and smokes from a long cigarette holder. There's a name-plate on her desk. It reads, "Phylis Stine."

ROOK (v.o.)
I'd tailed a couple of people for her. She owed me a favor.

PHYLIS
You want me to find a Hungarian for you in Hollywood? Johnny, darling, you can't be serious.

ROOK
All right, Phylis. Then how about a Hungarian with only one eye.

PHYLIS
(thoughtfully)
A - one - eyed - Hungarian.

ROOK
Good.

PHYLIS
(mulling over it)
Mmm.

ROOK
A cameraman.

PHYLIS
Now you're talking, darling. But if you're thinking of who I'm thinking of, he's not a cameraman anymore.
ROOK
Who's not?

PHYLIS
Lazlo Gabbo. You don't go to the movies much, do you, darling? He's only the most sought-after director in Hollywood. Very artsy. But very strong at the box-office. What's he done?

ROOK
Maybe nothing. Where can I find him?

PHYLIS
Right now he's filming "Sappho" over at the Monolith lot. C'mon, baby, what have you got on him?

ROOK
Can you get me past the front gate?

PHYLIS
I can get you into Greta Garbo's bathroom. But if you find out anything, call me any hour of the day or night.

ROOK
You'll be the first to know, beautiful. If I have to get you out of bed myself.

PHYLIS
Oh, Johnny, you're so basic. I love it.

34 TIGHT TWO SHOT - BELITZIA AND RANDY

BELITZIA VERICUNDA, Lazlo's wife, and her leading man, RANDY CURRIER, are in mid-scene. IT IS NOT REVEALED THAT THEY ARE IN THE MIDST OF A FILMING. However, costuming is Paris - 1864.

RANDY
Shameless, utterly shameless.

BELITZIA
Jean, please. Jean!
CONTINUED:

RANDY
How do you think I felt when I
gazed upon that infamous statue
standing there in the rotunda
for all of Paris to see!

BELITZIA
No — you don't understand. You're
so young. Too young.

RANDY
Too young am I ... And yet not too
young to understand the meaning
of passion. To feel it burning in
my veins like liquid fire. To
feel it throbbing in my temples
til I'm blinded. Wanting you,
starving for you til I'm driven
nigh to obsessive madness by my
all-consuming lust for you.

BELITZIA
Oh, my goodness.

CLOSE SHOT — LAZLO GABBO

GABBO
Cut! Randy, more intenseness...

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal movie set, camera, lights.
SIDNEY, Lazlo's assistant director, stands with Rock
in b.g.

(in Hungarian to
Belitzia as she
leaves the set)
Belitzia, dear, leave the boy
alone...let him eat his lunch.

Belitzia sneers at him as she exits.

GABBO
(shouting)
Rosemary, Rosemary.

ROSEMARY
(scriptgirl)
Yes, Mr. Gabbo.

GABBO
Rosemary, my little puddle...Bring
me from the commissary a light lunch,
only some salty crackers and a nice
hot bowl of soap.
CONTINUED:

ROSEMARY
Yes, Mr. Gabbo.
(she exits)

GABBO
(turns to set dresser
in the distance)
You! You!!

ROSEMARY (o.c.)
You want the tomato soap or the
split pea soap?

GABBO
(to Rosemary)
Astonish me.
(then to set Dresser)
You...short fat man...Put more
candle tapers...

SIDNEY
Mr. Gabbo.

GABBO
(ignores him)
...put by the door.

SET DRESSER
Put 'em yourself, ya fat hunky
...we got a lunch hour going here.

GABBO
(to the heavens)
Unions!
(to someone off camera)
You see how they talk to me....
(turning and shouting,
off camera)
Bolshevikie Unions!

From off camera we hear a disgusting raspberry.

GABBO
(in Hungarian)
Oh my God!

SIDNEY
Mr. Gabbo.

GABBO
Yes, what? Who? What?

Sidney whispers in Lazlo's ear. Lazlo listens intently
and finally motions Rook over.
(continuing)
Mr. Cook?

ROOK
Rook.

GABBO
Rook. Rook. Yes. Did you see the scene? Wasn't she a smack hit?

ROOK
Yeah, she's a charmer.

GABBO
Charmer? ... you're talking about Belitza Vericunda. She's magic ... Magic. She's money in the bank. She's also my present wife. Let's step out on the fire escape and talk face to face.

They step out onto fire escape and close the door behind them.

36. EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

GABBO
What is it? What can I do for you? I'm a rich busy man.

ROOK
I'll get right to the point. A few years back, nine to be exact, fresh from the old country, and short on the long green, you ground out a naughty blue quicky entitled "Tarzan's Wedding Night." Don't bother to deny it. Too many people know about it.

GABBO
Why would I deny it? It was a masterpeice of its genre.

ROOK
Yeah, we'll, the young lady in that picture over the years has managed to wiggle her way into the chips and now she's being blackmailed.

GABBO
Blackmail!
Sidney opens fire escape door and peeks out.

SIDNEY
Mr. Gabbo...the trainer is here with the cock-a-too. Could you...

GABBO
Go away. Can't you see I'm engaged to this man?

(slams the door in Sidney's face; continues, getting confidential)

Blackmail. You don't think that I....

ROOK
Why not, sweetheart?

GABBO
Because I'm rich! I'm filthy rich from talking pictures.

ROOK
Somebody's doing it.

GABBO
What about Tarzan?

ROOK
Nuh-uh. I looked him up. He's one step away from the WPA. Besides, he hasn't the moxie.

GABBO
But who then?

ROOK
Who else was in on the film?

GABBO
There was me, Lazlo, and of course the charming couple. And that was all...

(beat)

...except...

ROOK
Except who?

GABBO
The film was develop, you know. Who do you think develop the film?
ROOK
I always thought it just fermented.

GABBO
No! No! No! A laboratory technician. I slipped him a few buckeroos.

ROOK
Who was he?

GABBO
A nervous little fellow, strung very high.

ROOK
What was his name?

GABBO
You say you are a private dick.

ROOK
That's right.

GABBO
Who is employed you?

ROOK
I never divulge the identity of my clients.

SIDNEY
(through door)
Mr. Gabbo, this cock-a-too is becoming very....

GABBO
Fall silent and depart. I'm occupied.

Sidney departs.

ROOK
The name of the technician. What was it?

GABBO
I think, the name, I have it in my personal handwriting someplace in my palacial home. I check. Also I check on you, Mr. Rook.
ROOK
That's just fine, Maestro. Here's my card.

GABBO
Oh...Rook...Rook.

ROOK
Call me later.

SIDNEY
(timidly through door)
Mr. Gabbo, please...

GABBO
Gabbo, Gabbo, Gabbo all the same, all the time. Ah, Mr. Crook, where does a genius go to cry?
(exits)

He bursts through the door flamboyantly.

INT. ROOK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rook opens the door to his apartment and enters, takes off his coat to reveal shoulder holster. He pours a drink and sits down with afternoon newspaper.

ROOK (v.o.)
That left me with nothing to do but wait for Lazlo's phone call. Wait and think. Think about a Hungarian immigrant who'd come a long way in a short time and an over-the-hill screen extra who went nowhere just as fast. Think about a boozed-up torch singer who couldn't help asking for trouble. Think about the coming election, and just how colorful it could become. Think, think, think. But no matter what I thought about, I always came back to her. She was the kind of woman who stuck in your thoughts like a hophead's dream. The kind of woman who got inside your head and made trouble - big trouble!

37A OPTICAL EFFECT - TIME LAPSE - WHISKEY BOTTLE
The level of whiskey in the bottle goes down.

ROOK (v.o.)
Like it or not, I had plenty of time to mull it over. Lazlo didn’t seem to be in any hurry to call. I was beginning to think he’d given me the old Budapest run-around.

Door opens and Mildred walks in.

MILDRED
Hello, soldier. What do you hear from the bottom of the barrel?

ROOK
Not much. Everybody asked for you.

MILDRED
I’ve lost touch. May I come in?

ROOK
Why not?

MILDRED
Thanks.

ROOK
What brought you here?

MILDRED
A Rolls Phaeton.

ROOK
Oh, yes. Sometimes I forget.

MILDRED
Don’t.

ROOK
It won’t happen again.

MILDRED
I just wondered what progress you were making.

ROOK
Not much. And you didn’t help.

MILDRED
Meaning what?
ROOK
You didn't tell me your Hungarian
was in the big time.

MILDRED
Is he?

ROOK
Sure. He's Lazlo Gabbo. He
directs legit flickers these
days. Big ones. That play right
out in public. You going to tell
me you never heard about it?

MILDRED
I don't follow the movies much.

ROOK
Yeah, that's right. Your film
career was gaudy but brief.

MILDRED
That bothers you, doesn't it?

ROOK
Maybe.

MILDRED
Well, that's just too bad. I
guess I figured you wrong, Johnny.
I took you for the sort of guy who
wouldn't throw the past in a lady's
face.

ROOK
Some past. "Tarzan's Wedding
Night."

MILDRED
Okay, okay. Nobody's perfect. I
wasn't exactly knocking 'em dead
in '27 and somebody had to get
the rent up.

ROOK
I met your boy friend. He calls
himself Norman Conquest these days.

MILDRED
Who?

ROOK
Tarzan.
MILDRED
Oh, him. I never saw him before or after, but he seemed like a pleasant enough type at the time.

ROOK
So long as he was a pleasant type. That makes it all...

MILDRED
Will you knock it off? Quit ragging me about it, will you? Look, I was poor, Johnny. Poor. Do you know what that means? My mother used to scrub floors for the rich folks on the right side of the tracks. I saw them - fat, sleek. Saw how they lived. Walking around in rooms. Sitting in chairs. And getting up again for next to no reason. Breathing. In and out. In and out. Sucking up all the air in town. Choking me. Strangling me. Suffocating me. But men liked me, Johnny, and why not? I was cute and I knew it. The minute I was old enough I got out. I was going to go places. I decided I would do anything. Be anything. But never poor. Never again.

ROOK
So you came to Hollywood.

MILDRED
Ha, ha. Yes. Hollywood. That was a laugh. It was the same thing all over again. Pinched. And mauled. And pushed around. Men. They were all alike. They promised me the moon. But they wouldn't put me in their stinking pictures. And when the Hungarian asked me to play the lead in a naughty, naughty, I said "why not." it wasn't like I was Mary Pickford or anything.

ROOK
And then you met Pasadena's favorite son.
MILDRED
He was a round haircut but he treated me like a lady. He took me dancing every night where dancing was permitted. He was fun at first and then he asked me to marry him. I didn't know what to do. I figured playing around in a blue film is one thing but marriage is an invasion of privacy...But...why am I telling you all this?

ROOK
Beats me, goddess. Why are you?

MILDRED
Maybe because I didn't want you to think...Ah, give a lady a drink, will you, soldier?

ROOK
Sure thing, kid.
(gives her drink)
So, you married the little guy.

MILDRED
He kept after me til finally I said what the hell. He was nice enough and harmless. I was a good wife to him, I was. I was. In my own funny way.

ROOK
I guess a girl with a story like that would go straight for someone like Stanford. Someone who could give her all the things she'd always wanted without asking too much in return. A girl could be grateful. A girl could keep her nose clean. A small time actress could play the great lady in the swank house on the swell hill for a long time. Unless, of course, somebody didn't come along and mess things up.

MILDRED
Why, what do you mean?
ROOK
Somebody smooth, who knew his
way around the big town. Some-
body with a fast line and a
reputation for monkeying around
with other men's wives. Somebody
who knew how to take you higher
and higher. Who knew how to push
all the buttons and pull all the
strings. To make little Mildred
Schmetterlink the first lady of
the Golden State. Somebody like
Monty Craven.

MILDRED
You son of a...

She splashes her drink in his face.

ROOK
You're kind of feisty tonight,
aren't you?

He pulls her toward him by her bodice and kisses her.

MILDRED
How did you know about me and
Monty?

ROOK
I didn't. It was just a guess.

MILDRED
I should have known. Anything
between Monty Craven and me was
over months ago. It never really
meant anything anyway.

He pulls her toward him again and they kiss. The
phone RINGS. He picks it up without letting go of
her.

ROOK
Yeah.

37E OPTICAL EFFECT - VERTICAL WIPE

Lazlo is on the end of the line.

GABBO
Mr. Rook. Speaking from this
end Lazlo Gabbo. I find, Mr.
Rook, I have that information
for you.
CONTINUED:

ROOK
The lab technician?

GABBO
Yes.

ROOK
What's his name? Where can I find him?

GABBO
Not now, Mr. Rook. Can we rendez-vous?

ROOK
If you promise to behave yourself. My office. The Fleishacker Building. Ninth and Figueroa. I'll see you there in half an hour.

GABBO
Very well, Mr. Rook. Half of an hour.

OPTICAL EFFECT WIPE OFF

As Lazlo wipes off, Rook hangs up.

ROOK
Sorry, goddess.
(checking his automatic)
Business.

MILDRED
Be careful, Johnny.

ROOK
Keep the ice cubes warm, goddess. Be back soon.

He leaves.

38 EXT. FLEISHACKER BUILDING - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Rook pulls up in car, goes in.

ROOK (v.o.)
Downtown L.A. was like a ghost town at that hour of the night. A perfect place to whisper secrets
(MORE)
CONTINUED:

ROOK (v.o.)
in the dark. Riding up to my
office I thought I caught a
glimpse of somebody ducking
out.

Rook sees a shadowy Spike peeking from behind column
and quickly exiting.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT
to include Rock's office door.

ROOK (v.o.)
It looked like Lazlo Gabbo had
beaten me to it. A light was
under the door.

Rook enters office.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Gabbo is seated in the customer's chair. He pitches
forward as Rock approaches him. Rook lifts him from
floor, observing the bullet hole in his back.

ROOK
The lab technician. The name.
Give me the name.

GABBO
The door was open...I couldn't...
a fellow behind...I was...the light...
...I couldn't...the picture busi-
ness today is...I...Oh, oh...

ROOK
Lazlo. The lab technician. Who
is he?

GABBO
Oh, boy.

ROOK
Where can I find him? Where does
he live?

GABBO
Mel...Melrose.

ROOK
Melrose?
CONTINUED:

GABBO

Mel... ugh.

He dies.

ROOK (v.o.)

It was a raw deal for Gabbo getting it like that. On the other hand, Melrose was the first real clue I had. But the night wasn't over yet.

INT. THE SAME - NIGHT - LATER

Flashbulbs pop. Police crew at work. Photographers, fingerprint experts. All very busy. Rook is seated. Hovering over him are two detectives, LT. MOE SCHRECKER and SGT. FRANCIS "POG" MAHONE. They are grilling Rook.

MAHONE

(snarling)

C'mon, cookie. Come clean.

ROOK

Lay off, Mahone. I already told you three times.

MAHONE

Tell me again.

ROOK

All right. I came back to my office at 10:15 to make sure the window was closed.

MAHONE

Sure ya did. Why?

ROOK

Well, it was threatening to rain and I worry so about the rug.

MAHONE

I'll bet.

ROOK

I walked in and found this stranger sitting in my official client chair. I thought at first it was my old pal, Thurlow McQuartle, who used to be a fan tan dealer in a gambler's barge

(MORE)
ROOK (Contd)

off San Pedro back in the old
days. Of course Thurlow was
somewhat taller, but this sport
was sitting down at the time
which made him somewhat shorter.
Anyway I greeted him with "Hi ya,
Thurlow, how's tricks and fan tan
dealing." He answered me in a
foreign tongue I took at the time
to be Lebanese. I said, "I'm
afraid you have me at a disadvantage."
and he fell on his kisser. Where-
upon I cradled his head in my lap
and sang a few bars of "Mood Indigo".
His lips moved and he mumbled "Honi
Soi Que Mali Panse" and expired.

MAHONE
Oh yeah? Well, I don't buy it.

ROOK
Seems simple enough to me.

MAHONE
Okay, cookie. You keep giving
us this song and dance, we're
going to haul you downtown.

ROOK
We are downtown.

MAHONE
Well, you know. Downtown is just
a whatchyoucallit...of speech.

SCHRECKER
Figure.

MAHONE
Yeah! Figure of speech.

SCHRECKER
Come on, John, level with us. We
been at this two hours now. I'm
getting gastric acidity.

MAHONE
The only way to get anything out
of this wiseacre is to bounce him
off the wall.
CONTINUED (2):

SCHRECKER
Sergeant Mahone, please.

MAHONE
Come on, Lieutenant. Let me take him down in the alley and pistol whip him.

SCHRECKER
Not yet. Pog. Come on, John, have a heart. If you don't come up with a story pretty quick - you're in trouble - big trouble.

MAHONE
I'd like to twist him by the ears and give him the knee.

SCHRECKER
I told you, not now.

Mahone mumbles under his breath and keeps mumbling throughout the scene. Only a few words are coherent from time to time.

SCHRECKER
You don't seem to realize I can have your license lifted for holding out on us John. So why don't you make it easy on yourself.

ROOK
I've told you all I know, Lieutenant Schrecker.

SCHRECKER
You don't expect us to swallow that line of bull, do you? We weren't born yesterday, you know.

MAHONE
I'll give him a fat lip.

SCHRECKER
I'm a tired man, John. I got a family to feed, taxes.

MAHONE
...mouth full of knuckles...

SCHRECKER
Mortgages. Kids. A mother-in-law I don't want to talk about.
CONTINUED. (3):

MAHONE
...a kick in the slats...

SCHRECKER
My captain doesn't understand me.

MAHONE
I'd like to feel my fist in his
gut till my elbow disappears.

ROOK
Why, Sergeant, I call that poetry.

MAHONE
Yeah, well, I call you...

SCHRECKER
Will you shut up. C'mon, John, get
your things.

ROOK
Where to, Lieutenant?

SCHRECKER
Headquarters. You can tell your
story about the Lebanese fan tan
dealer to the Captain. I'm not
about to.

INT. ROOK'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

A bottle of milk by the door. Next to it a folded
newspaper. Rook picks up both and reads headline;
"SCREEN DIRECTOR SLAIN". Subhead: "Detective
Questioned." He opens the door and goes in.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

All is disorder. The phone is ringing.

ROOK (v.o.)
After a night of grilling at police
headquarters, I returned to my
apartment. Needless to say, it had
been ransacked.

He goes to phone and answers. It is Craven.

OPTICAL EFFECT - VERTICAL WIPE

ROOK
Yeah.
CRAVEN
Rook, Craven here.

ROOK
Good morning.

CRAVEN
Don't good morning me. What's the meaning of this story in the early editions? These lurid headlines? We hired you to keep us out of the papers.

ROOK
I didn't see your name there.

CRAVEN
Yeah, but yours is. How much did you tell them?

ROOK
Keep your shirt on, Craven.

CRAVEN
Answer my question.

ROOK
I didn't spill a thing.

Mildred appears in doorway behind Rook. He smells the perfume.

ROOK
(continuing)
Not now. Call you later.

43B Rook hangs up. Mildred walks into room, left to right, and WIPES CRAVEN OFF SCREEN.

MILDRED
Johnny, Johnny, what happened here?

ROOK
Somebody didn't like me and took it out on my lovely things. I suppose you don't know anything about it.

MILDRED
Why, what do you mean?
43B  CONTINUED:

ROOK
You were here when I left.

MILDRED
I went right home.

ROOK
And you knew where I was going.

MILDRED
What's that supposed to mean?

ROOK
Don't play me for a chump, angel. You had time, plenty of time, to rip this joint apart and look for the film. To see if I'd found it. To see if I was holding out.

MILDRED
No, Johnny. I told you I went right home.

ROOK
Can you prove it?

MILDRED
I had dinner with my husband and went right to bed.

ROOK
With your husband?

MILDRED
What kind of a crack is that?

ROOK
I guess it doesn't matter with a woman like you. As long as he's pleasant enough.

Mildred slaps him. He slaps her. She slaps him twice. He slaps her three times. They stare at each other with smoldering desire. Then they fall into a passionate embrace. MUSIC and THUNDER fill the night.

44  LEADER

On screen a LEADER is seen with the traditional markings: END PART I, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, X, X, crossed lines of a tick-tac-toe game, a few scribbled numbers.
Rook comes into bedroom buttoning up his shirt; underneath is 30's underwear top. Mildred is sitting in bed, smoking, with the sheet pulled up over her bosom.

MILDRED
You're a low type, soldier.

ROOK
So I've been told.

MILDRED
But we're two of a kind.

ROOK
You may be right, angel-face.

Rook puts on shoulder holster.

MILDRED
Where are you going?

ROOK
I'm going to look for a blackmailer with a taste for homicide.

MILDRED
Why, Johnny, why? What's in it for you?

ROOK
Twenty-five dollars a day and expenses.

MILDRED
Chicken feed. That's a sucker play, Johnny.

ROOK
Maybe.

MILDRED
You're a smart guy, Johnny. Why don't you quit this racket?

ROOK
Quit?

MILDRED
Why not? You're getting in deep, too deep. And nobody cares. Nobody's going to go to bat for you. What will it get you? A slab in the morgue. And for what? For who? (MORE)
CONTINUED:

MILDRED (Contd)
Men like Monty Craven and my husband?
(pulls him down to bed)
Can't you see they're just using you?

ROOK
Why this sudden concern for my welfare?

MILDRED
It's just that I don't want anything to happen to you, soldier.

ROOK
Don't go soft on me now, goddess.

MILDRED
Oh, Johnny. I'm worried.

ROOK
Come here.

They kiss.

INT. CAR - DAY
Rook is driving.

ROOK (v.o.)
With Gabbo dead the only clue I had to go on was Melrose, one of the longest and most densely populated streets in L.A. It stretches from downtown Los Angeles to Beverly Hills. There were a lot of places on Melrose Avenue where a shifty little man could be developing his film. So I decided to pay Norman Conquest another visit to see if Melrose Avenue rung any bells with him. His landlady graciously informed me that he was taking the steam.

46A Rook's car pulls up in front of a steam bath. Rook enters.
47 INT. STEAM BATH RECEPTION - DAY

Rook approaches an attendant in white clothes at the desk who is reading a copy of "Black Mask" and eating a popsicle.

ATTENDANT
Hi, simply, hi.

ROOK
You got a guy named Norman here?

ATTENDANT
(loudly)
Norman Conquest?

ROOK
(wincing)
I'm afraid so.

ATTENDANT
He's back there sweating someplace. You a chum?

ROOK
Uhhh...yeah.

ATTENDANT
Go on back.

47A Rook walks back to lockers. CAMERA TRUCKS WITH HIM. Spike is putting on a turtleneck sweater. A tattoo on his arm reads, "What do you say?"

SPIKE
Hey, champ, what d'ya say?

ROOK
I'm looking for...

SPIKE
(hand on Rook's shoulder)
Hey, you're tense, champ. Get out of those rags and grab a towel. I'll work out those knots for yez.

ROOK
No thanks. I'm trying to find a guy.

SPIKE
C'mon. I'll give you the rock salt. Give you the towel burn. (MORE)
CONTINUED:

SPIKE (Contd)
Give you the witch hazel rub.
You'll feel like a million
bucks, champ. Feel like a king.

ROOK
Not just now. I'm looking for a
guy named Norman. Tall guy with
dark hair.

SPIKE
Ain't nobody here, champ. Just me.

ROOK
Mind if I look around?

SPIKE
Suit ya'self.

Rook goes back toward rear. Spike puts on cap and
jacket and goes out.

48 INT. MASSAGE BOOTH - DAY

Rook finds Norman Conquest stretched on a massage
table, his eyes crossed and staring out into space.
Rook shakes the dead body.

ROOK
Norman? Norman?

Rook runs out to attendant at front desk.

49 INT. STEAM BATH RECEPTION - DAY

ROOK
Where's the masseur.

ATTENDANT
I'm the masseur.

ROOK
No, the other one. The tall guy
in the back.

ATTENDANT
I'm the only masseur we got.

Rook runs out the front door just in time to see:

50 EXT. STREET - DAY

as Rook runs into scene, a black Dusenberg pulls away.
51  INT. STANFORD LIBRARY - DAY

Rook is facing Stanford and Craven.

STANFORD
I don't want to hear these things, Rook. I don't want to hear about it. Movie bums dying in steam rooms. Dead Hungarians on your floor. We hired you to shield my name from notoriety. All you do is bring us bulletins on the local mortality rate.

CRAVEN
Face facts, Rook. You've bungled it. All we asked you to do was get a roll of film.

ROOK
Yeah, a roll of film. That's what I mean. You never told me it was a roll of film. I had to find that out myself. You people have been giving me the run-around ever since I walked in the door. You haven't played square with me a minute. The whole set-up was a phoney from the start.

STANFORD
Be that as it may, we're taking matters into our own hands, Mr. Rook.

ROOK
Your own hands?

CRAVEN
You're off the case.

ROOK
What are you trying to hand me?

STANFORD
Your professional services are no longer required.

CRAVEN
You're off the case, Rook. That's all.

ROOK
No, that's not all! We're talking about homicide now. I couldn't get off this case if I wanted to.
CONTINUED:

CRAVEN

Very well then. As a matter of cold hard fact, the case is over. There is no case.

ROOK

How's that again?

CRAVEN

We've received a final letter from our secret penpal. He's willing to sell the negative.

ROOK

Oh, is he? For a slam-bang pay-off. I'll bet this time it's a big one.

STANFORD

You can say that again.

CRAVEN

The price is no object at this point. If everything goes according to plan, that film will be in our hands by tomorrow afternoon.

ROOK

That's swell, just swell. Except maybe I don't like holding the bag. I've already spent one night under the hot lights trying to explain to the coppers how a corpse happened to be in my office after business hours. It won't take them long to get a make on me from that guy at the massage parlor. I've been lied to, pushed around, had my apartment roust ed and set up for a murder rap. I got two bulls on my tail right now. One wants to lift my license and the other one's aching to put me in a plaster cast.

STANFORD

Nevertheless --

ROOK

Nevertheless my foot. Murder has been done, chums. I couldn't get off the case if I wanted to.
CONTINUED (2):

STANFORD
Mr. Rook, we are within our rights --

CRAVEN
Now hold on, Rook --

ROOK
So long, gents. I'll see you in the movies.

As Rook exits, Mildred enters.

MILDRED
Oh! I'm sorry, am I interrupting anything?

CRAVEN
It's all right, Mrs. Stanford. Mr. Rook was just leaving.

MILDRED
Oh, Mr. Rook, I don't believe we've met. I'm Mrs. Q --

MILDRED/ROOK
(together)
Huntington Stanford.

ROOK
How do you do?

MILDRED
Will you be joining us for highballs, Mr. Rook?

ROOK
Thanks, I'll have to take a raincheck. I have to get back to my paper route. Good night.

He opens the door and offstage we hear Crisp's voice.

CRISP
Oompfh
(and sound of him hitting floor)

ROOK
(glancing down)
How are ya?
CONTINUED (3):

CRISP (v.o.)
(placidly from floor)
Oh well enough I suppose --

Rook exits. Mildred and Craven exchange looks.

MILDRED
You can have them serve the high-balls now Mr. Crisp.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Rook walks down the stairs, picks up his hat and coat and exits. Before Rook leaves, de Mendoza Crisp observes him silently from behind a door.

ROOK (v.o.)
Melrose, Melrose rang in my head like a dirty curse on a lonely night. I had to find that lab technician. I had to. I had to nail him before things got any hotter for me than they already were. I had to find the one man who knew Melrose Avenue like he knew the back of his hand. And that meant Macaw. Melrose was his street.

EXT. STREET - DAY

CLOSE SHOT - MACAW, a blind news vendor, who is shouting headlines as Rook approaches him.

MACAW
Detective sought in massage parlor killing! John Rook hunted by police!

ROOK
How's it going, Macaw?

Macaw feels the features of Rook's face with his hand.

MACAW
(still shouting at the top of his voice)
Oh, hello, John! I was just talking about you!

ROOK
(wincing)
So I noticed.

I need some information, Macaw.
MACAW
(shouting)
Information! Information! Macaw, that's what they call me! What is it you want to know, John?

ROOK
(whispering)
I'm looking for a...

MACAW
(shouting)
It's going to cost you, John! You're a hunted man! You're on the lam! It's going to cost you! You're a fugitive, John!

ROOK
(whispering)
You mind keeping your voice down?

MACAW
(shouting)
Information comes high for a man on the run, John! Never forget that.

ROOK
(backing off)
Never mind. Some other time.

MACAW
(shouting)
I know this street like the back of my hand!

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOUSE - NIGHT

Rook is in his car in front of the house. He walks to the door and rings the bell.

ROOK (v.o.)
A five cent phone call to Phylis Stine and a few flattering words nudged her into parting with the address of Belitzia Vericunda, the widow bereaved of Lazlo Gabbo. With my picture in the papers and the law combing the town for me, I wasn't in any mood for a stall. I needed names, addresses and facts and I needed them fast.

Rook pushes past the maid at the door.
Rook strides into the living room and finds Belitzia and Sidney on a couch in front of the cocktail table, kissing.

BELITZIA
How did you get in here?

ROOK
I swam the moat and overpowered your guards.

BELITZIA
What is the meaning of this intrusion?

SIDNEY
I know you. You're the man Rook. The police are after you. You were at the studio. I remember. You came to see --

ROOK
That's right, lover boy. I remember you, too. You were the flunky with the clipboard.

SIDNEY
I was Mr. Gabbo's right hand man.

ROOK
Yeah. I noticed your right hand when I walked in. You're moving right into the driver's seat, aren't you?

BELITZIA
What is he saying, Sidney?

ROOK
I'm saying I admire the widow Gabbo's recuperative powers.

BELITZIA
How could anyone possibly remain unhappy with teeth like these.

ROOK
Sure, sure.

BELITZIA
My husband would have wanted me to carry on.
ROOK
Of course he would. And if little Sidney here-wants to carry on with you, so much the better.

BELITZIA
What does that mean, Sidney?

SIDNEY
It's just a play on words, Belitzia. Don't pay any attention to him. I'm calling the police.

ROOK
Sure. That's right. Call the cops, Sidney. I confess everything. Everything. Including what I've seen here tonight. I'm sure the papers would love to get hold of a red hot story about Belitzia Vericunda, Hollywood's number one box office bombshell being consoled by her late husband's yes-man with the body not yet cold.

SIDNEY
Why, that's blackmail!

ROOK
I don't care.

BELITZIA
But what can you want from me?

ROOK
The night he was killed your husband was on his way to meet me. To give me a piece of information. I have reason to believe that information may be in this house.

BELITZIA
Here?

SIDNEY
You can't bully us. I'll ask you just once to leave these premises.
CONTINUED (2):

ROOK

No.

SIDNEY

Very well, then. I hate to resort to this course of action, look away Belitzia, but you leave me no alternative.

Sidney removes his glasses and places them gingerly in his breast pocket, turns to Rook and assumes a boxer's stance. Rook stares coldly at him and then slams him with a sharp right to the breast pocket. After a long, disbelieving take, Sidney removes the remains of the shattered specs from his pocket and withdraws to the corner of the room picking small bits of glass from his left pocket.

BELITZIA

You were saying?

ROOK

Information, Miss Vericunda, the name and address of an old associate of your husband.

BELITZIA

A woman?

ROOK

No. A man. A nervous little man. A technician who developed some film for your husband a long time ago.

BELITZIA

Oh, I don't know such things. All his papers, his books and records are in his personal desk — here.

She goes to desk.

ROOK

Mind if I give it the once-over?

BELITZIA

How can I stop you?

ROOK

You can't.
BELITZIA
How could anyone stop a man like you?

SIDNEY
Belitzia, what are you doing? Don't you see this man is exploiting you?

BELITZIA
(breathing hard)
You know what you want and you go straight to it. Like a Tartar.

SIDNEY
He's playing on your vulnerability in this your hour of grief, Belitzia.

BELITZIA
Such a man is capable of anything. Anything.

SIDNEY
The man is a criminal. Darling, for all we know he may be involving us --

ROOK
Wait a minute. What's this?

BELITZIA
What's what? What is what?

ROOK
These check stubs.

BELITZIA
Oh, those are checks for Lazlo's little people.

ROOK
Little people? What did he have, the D.T.'s?

BELITZIA
People in the profession. Old actors, studio personnel. You know, small loans, little advances. He never expected to see the money again. He was too generous. His heart was big.
INSERT - THE CHECK

The check is made out to Vernon Lavon Melrose.

BACK TO SCENE

ROOK
Melrose, Melrose. Of course.
It's not the street, it's a
name. A man's name.

BELITZIA
I don't understand. What does
it mean?

ROOK
It means that I'm back in business.
It means at last I've got a lead.
A ray of light in this whole crazy
mess. Thanks for the use of the
hall, your highness.

He turns and starts for the door. Lt. Schrecker
and Sgt. Mahone are standing in the doorway watching.

SCHRECKER
All right, John. Let's see you
talk your way out of this.

MAHONE
(muttering)
You're really asking for it,
ain't ya cookie?

SIDNEY
Thank God you've come, gentlemen!
This man broke in here and struck
me viciously in the pocket.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Rook is seated in a chair under a bright light. He
is calm and composed. Schrecker and Mahone are
sweating and disheveled. Mahone is dozing.

ROOK
I always go to the steam bath.
Twice a week to get the wrinkles
out of my suit. It was the night
of the big dance and I wanted to
look spruce. That's why I was as
surprised as you were to find that
fine young American had gotten his
neck broken.
SCHRECKER
All right, John. I've had it with you now. If you don't start leveling I'll toss you to Mahone.

MAHONE
(waking and mumbling)
Hail, Mary, Mother of... what's happening?... what do ya want?

SCHRECKER
(looking at Mahone)
For crying out loud. C'mon, John, who're you covering for? Will ya spill it. You know what we can do if you hold out on us.

ROOK
Hold out on you? Why, Lieutenant Schrecker, haven't I always done everything in my power to cooperate with the officers of the law in the pursuance of their appointed rounds.

SCHRECKER
(shrieking with mounting intensity)
CONTINUED (2):

SCHRECKER (Contd)
maximum earnings of the aforesaid officer during the eighteen month period prior to the termination of said officer's tour of duty. You don't know what it's like, John. You don't know what it's like. (he breaks down)

ROOK (V.O.)
Can I go now?

SCHRECKER
(drained)
Yes...yes. Go. Don't try to leave town. And don't mention what I've said here to anyone.
(grabs Rook's hand)

Ever.

Rook leaves.

EXT. UNION HALL - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

Rook walks in the door over which a sign reads: "Motion Picture Laboratory Technicians Local #342."

ROOK
It was morning again when they got through with me at police headquarters. So I made a bee-line for the one place where they'd know the whereabouts of Vernon LaVon Melrose.

INT. UNION HALL - DAY

An office with roll-top desk, pole phones, NRA posters, a portrait photograph of FDR, union posters. A union official is the only occupant of the office.

OFFICIAL
(hoarse voice)
Greetings, brother. What can I do you for.

ROOK
(same hoarse voice)
Looking for one of your members.

OFFICIAL
To what purpose, may I inquire?
ROOK
I represent the law firm of Cooper, McCall, Barnard, Hasking, Krikel, Weinstein and Dorply. Our specialty is tracing missing heirs. We are holding a sizeable sum of money for a certain member of your union.

OFFICIAL
May I inquire as to his name?

ROOK
Melrose, Vernon Lavon Melrose.

OFFICIAL
(going to file)
Melrose, Vernon Lavon.

(flipping cards)
Mankie, Mavage, McClue, Meldon, Melrose. Of course. Known to all who know him, and there's quite a few as do, as Sonny Melrose.

ROOK
Where can I find him so as to bestow upon him this bounty bequeathed him by an elderly, well-heeled, inconsequential uncle?

OFFICIAL
Sonny, if memory serves, resided with his mother of blessed memory, Ida Louise Melrose, until the time of her tragic demise.

ROOK
You mean...?

OFFICIAL
Yes, Sonny's mother passed away due to Big Casino about six months ago. We sent a wreath.

ROOK
I guess they needed her more up there than we do down here.

OFFICIAL
Yeah, when heaven made mothers, Sonny got more than his share.
CONTINUED (2):

ROOK
Where do you figure I can find him now?

OFFICIAL
(getting card out of file)
Since his mother was taken, Sonny has been on our inactive list. His last address was 127 South Flower on old Bunker Hill.

ROOK
Thanks, buddy.

OFFICIAL
I hope Sonny enjoys his fortune, but nothing can replace a mother.

ROOK
(removing hat)
Too true.

EXT. FLOWER STREET HOUSE - DAY

Rook's car pulls up in front. He gets out and approaches front door.

ROOK (v.o.)
The old Bunker Hill section of L.A. was a roting rack of bogus Victorian Jim Crackery that had seen better days before the century turned. Most of its tenants had likewise seen better days. The whole neighborhood had the look and the smell of an old folks home that could use a good scrub-up. Most of its inhabitants never moved. They just cashed in their chips where they sat.

INSERT - DOORBELLS AND NAMEPLATES

Rook's finger travels over names in apartment house directory til he comes to the name Vernon LaVon Melrose. Under it is the name Ida Lousie Melrose crossed out in ink. The nameplate below reads: Hammet.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Rook walks down a long hallway to a door at the end.
ROOK (v.o.)
With a little luck, Sonny Melrose would be the end of the line.

Rook knocks on the door and waits.

ROOK
Mr. Melrose.

SONNY (o.s.)
(behind door)
What do you want?

ROOK
I want to talk to you.

The door opens a few inches to reveal a frightened-looking little man in thick glasses, a tattered robe, and cutter's gloves.

SONNY
I'm not well. I've got an upper respiratory ailment. I don't feel like seeing anyone.

ROOK
Let me in, Sonny.

SONNY
What's this all about, anyway?

ROOK
It's all about a film you worked on called "Tarzan's Wedding Night".

SONNY
Go away.

Sonny starts to slam the door, but Rook throws his shoulder against the door. It splinters. The chain comes off and Rook enters Sonny's apartment. He shuts the door behind him.

INT. SONNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

SONNY
(cringing)
I don't know what you're talking about.
ROOK
Sure you do, Sonny. "Tarzan's Wedding Night." It was a smasheroo on the stag circuit in '27. It earned you a bit of change at the time. But it's paid off beautifully over the years. With small handouts from the director. And after that heavy payments from the leading lady.

SONNY
I don't remember anything about...

ROOK
Don't romance me, bright eyes. Your memory's terrific. It started working the day you found out a certain hungry little bit player announced her engagement to the scion of one of the richest families in the U.S. of A.

SONNY
Oh, that's a lot of applesauce. Why would I...

ROOK
Button your lip and let me finish. That was when you started sending the bride-to-be these...

(produces letter)
...paste-up reminders. Look familiar, Sonny boy?

SONNY
I never saw that before in my life.

ROOK
Don't be demure, Sonny. Or I'll hit you in the mouth. Why, cutting out and pasting up these little memos got to be one of your favorite and most frequent pasttimes for almost a decade. They paid the rent. They put groceries on the table. And most of all they covered the rapidly mounting medical expenses for your mother. Isn't that right?
SONNY
It was so exorbitant. When she told me in '28 that Dr. Wisekopf gave her six months I figured it was just a matter of time. But then there was this medicine—terrifically expensive. But it seemed to pluck her up no end. As her condition worsened she needed more and more and then all those visits to Dr. Wisekopf, and that man charges an arm and a leg. I was getting in over my head. I needed money, lots of it, money for the medicine. Money for the household expenses. Money for the bills that kept piling up, up, up. Money for that scoundrel Wisekopf.

ROOK
Still, you must have socked away quite a bundle over the years.

SONNY
I barely made ends meet.

ROOK
Oh, come on, Sonny. You made pah-lenty.

SONNY
No. No. It all went out.

ROOK
Out? Out for what? To hire a professional killer to rub out anyone connected with your little enterprise?

SONNY
Rub out?

ROOK

SONNY
I never hired anyone to do anything.

ROOK
Now, Sonny. Don't be disloyal to your associates. You know the (MORE)
ROOK (Contd)
fellow I'm talking about. Big
gorilla in a butcher's cap.
Tattoo on his right arm reading,
"What do you say?"

SONNY
How would I know a person like
that? Look at me. Do I look
like an underworld kingpin to
you? Me? I'm nothing, nothing.
Just Sonny. The mama's boy.
Little cry-baby Sonny who always
had a clean handkerchief and
carried a dutch blue lunch bucket
with tulips painted on it. Little
Sonny who was never allowed to
read over-stimulating adventure
tales, or play with the Armenian
kids.

ROOK
Take it easy Sonny.

SONNY
When father left town with that
girl from the 5 & 10 cent store,
Mother gave all her affection to
me. She smothered me with it.
I was just her baby. Her little
Sonny. She wouldn't even let me
comb my hair alone.

ROOK
She didn't help you cut the film.
You did that like a brave little
man.

SONNY
Yes, but I was scared, scared all
the time. Scared of her.

ROOK
She didn't help you with the notes.
You did that with your own little
paste pot. It was your operation.
Yours all the way. You're going to
tell me a boy that could work all
that out wouldn't have the moxie
to hire a killer.
SONNY
Hire a killer? Why would I hire a killer?

ROOK
To kill. To clean up after you so you could make the big score and sell the negatives and skip clean.

SONNY
Sell the negative? You mean now?

ROOK
That's right, sweetheart. This afternoon at four o'clock.

SONNY
That's ridiculous.

ROOK
What's ridiculous?

SONNY
I already sold the negative.

ROOK
Sure you did.

SONNY
I did. I sold it. I did.

ROOK
Oh, yeah? When?

SONNY
Six months ago. I wanted to give mother a funeral she'd never forget.

ROOK
Who'd you sell it to?

SONNY
I'm not going to tell you.

ROOK
Come on Sonny. It's a little late for you to play the strong silent type.

SONNY
I said all I'm going to say. You've no right ...
ROOK
Spit it out Sonny, you'll feel better for it.

SONNY
No. You can't make me.

ROOK
Come on Sonny. You'll never be the man your mother was.

SONNY
(misty eyed)
Mother....

ROOK
Who'd you sell the negative to?

SONNY
I sold it to....

64A There is a shot. The window breaks with a tinkle. Sonny looks toward the window, then turns to Rook, making a gesture to remain calm.

SONNY
Don't panic, but I.....

He falls to the floor, dead. Rook rushes to the window, sees Spike running for a car carrying a rifle with a telescopic sight. Rook jumps out the window, overtakes Spike and they begin to fight.

64C They fight up the stairs and onto the roof. It is a bloody fight with Spike winning all the way. However, Rook finally lands a lucky punch and Spike falls from the rooftop. Rook sees that he is dead and goes to the car. He reads the registration card.

65 INT. ROOK'S CAR - DAY

Rook is bruised and battered, his clothes torn.

ROOK (v.o.)
Suddenly it all fell into place. All the double-dealing. All the back-stabbing. All the lies. The sun was just setting behind wet, black clouds as I pulled up at the mansion in Pasadena for the last time.
66  EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Rook gets out of his car and walks to the door. The Chinese houseboy opens the door. Rook pushes past him, goes up the stairs and into the library.

ROOK (v.o.)
A lot of people had been playing me for the sucker. But now it was my time. Time to deal a new hand. And it didn't matter anymore how I felt or who was going to get hurt.

66A  INT. FOYER - NIGHT

Ishimoto opens the door. Rook grabs him by the lapel.

ROOK
Where are they?

Ishimoto is terrified and speechless.

ROOK
I said, where are they?

Ishimoto gestures upstairs. Rook releases him and starts for the staircase. Crisp, having heard the commotion, comes out of a doorway down stairs.

CRISP
Where are you going, Mr. Rook? Don't go up there.

Rook continues up the stairs.

CRISP
This is rashness, Mr. Rook. You will live to rue it.

Rook approaches the library door.

CRISP
I warn you, Sir, don't go in there.

Rook bursts through the library door.

CRISP (o.s.)
(a small voice at bottom of the stairs)
Oh, well....

67  INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Stanford, Craven and Mildred are at cocktails in evening clothes.
CONTINUED:

STANFORD
(surprised)
Mr. Rook. You weren't announced.

CRAVEN
Rook, I thought I told you yesterday
to....

ROOK
Ah, the Campfire Girls, toasting
marshmallows for a chilly night,
I see.

MILDRED
Are you all right, Johnny?

ROOK
Never better.

CRAVEN
Johnny?

STANFORD
You'll have to excuse us. We were
just leaving for the opera.

ROOK
I hear it's a bad season.

STANFORD
Nevertheless....

ROOK
(closing door)
Why don't we stay here where it's
cozy. We can sing the night away.

CRAVEN
You're wasting your time, Gum Shoe.
It's all over.

ROOK
So, you made the payoff.

CRAVEN
We just performed the ceremonial
cremation of the negative and
toasted the future governor of our
fair state. So you see, there's
nothing for you here.
ROOK
Not so fast Big-Shot. None of you are in the clear yet.

MILDRED
Why, what do you mean?

ROOK
There are a few loose ends. Like dead bodies. There was Lazlo Gabbo who died in my office with a bullethole in the back of his vicuna coat. Norman Conquest with a broken neck. And Sonny Melrose with an upper respiratory condition that isn't going to get any better.

CRAVEN
Who the devil is Sonny Melrose?

ROOK
He was the jittery little lab technician who started the whole mess. The one who was blackmailing Mrs. Stanford.

STANFORD
So, he's the one.

ROOK
It could look that way, couldn't it? Except that you made the payoff at four o'clock and Sonny picked up a .38 slug in the middle of a sentence at two-fifteen.

MILDRED
But you said he was blackmailing me.

ROOK
He was. He was. That is, up until six months ago. When he sold the negative to buy some posies for his sainted mother.

CRAVEN
He sold the film?

ROOK
For peanuts, compared to what it's been bringing on the market lately. It seems he sold the film to someone (MORE)
ROOK (Contd).
who knew how to make it pay
off, pay off big. Somebody
a lot closer to home.

CRAVEN
Are you implying, Rock, that
someone here in this room...

ROOK
Not someone, Craven.

STANFORD
That one of us...

ROOK
That's right.

MILDRED
But who? Why would...

CRAVEN
That doesn't even make sense.

ROOK
Doesn't it, Craven?

CRAVEN
But who stood to gain?

ROOK
Not gain, Craven. Lose. Who
stood to lose the most if those
pictures ever got out?

STANFORD
Why, I would. I'd be ruined.
My political chances would be
dashed.

ROOK
And that would be just too bad,
wouldn't it? That would leave
you with your banking empire,
your real estate and oil holdings,
and $45 million in cold cash.

STANFORD
Well, I guess I could get by.

ROOK
Yes, you could. But what about
you, Craven?
CRAVEN
Me?

ROOK
Yes, you. You got a lot invested. A lot of time. A lot of money. You put your entire machine behind the champion of the overdog here. It would be a set-back. A big one. But you could recoup your losses. You could go shopping for another boy. So who does that leave?

He saunters over to Mildred's chair.

ROOK
(continuing)
Just one person who stood to lose everything...if the election went sour, without a chance to recoup the loss.

MILDRED
Why, what are you saying?

ROOK
You know what I'm saying angel face. You're a smart cookie. You figured the whole thing out a long time ago.

MILDRED
A long time ago?

ROOK
Six months ago, to be exact. You saw that if the bottom fell out and your husband lost the election, he'd drop you like a hot potato. Not even a divorce. Just a quiet little annulment in the judge's chambers. No alimony. No settlement. No nothing. You saw it all. And decided to go into the blackmail business for yourself so you could have a small fortune on the side for a rainy day. Didn't you? Answer me. Didn't you?

MILDRED
(breaking down)
You should have seen his face, Johnny, when I told him. The (MORE)
MILDRED (Contd)
look on his face. I stood over there where you're standing now and told him everything. All about the film and the secret payments I'd been making. I didn't want him to get hurt. It was maybe the only decent thing I ever tried to do. I saw his contempt, his disgust. And everything I ever felt for him died. I tried to play square with him, Johnny. But he went cold on me.

CRAVEN
Mildred, don't be a little fool!

MILDRED
You were no better! The two of them, Johnny. Looking at me like I was dirt! Like I was a bad dream!

STANFORD
But, dearest, we were only trying to think of your well-being.

MILDRED
You were only thinking of your dainty reputation. They sent me to my room, Johnny, like a naughty child. So I went. And I sat in my room with a deck of Luckies and a pot of coffee. And I did some fast thinking. I made up my mind that they were going to pay and pay plenty. I knew what they were thinking. I saw it all in those fish-eyed looks. If the election was a bust they were going to dump me back in the streets with nothing but my memories.

STANFORD
Mildred, how can you imagine that I would in any way whatsoever...

MILDRED
And suppose you did win. Suppose you could clear up this mess and (MORE)
MILDRED (Contd)
make it all the way. What then? What's in it for me? Thirty to forty years with a man who thinks I'm trash. Not on your life, buster.

STANFORD

MILDRED
Oh, shut up.

ROOK
So you decided to buy up the negative and blackmail yourself. Right?

MILDRED
Right! Why not. I had plenty of time to think it over. To figure all the odds. To find a plan. It took Currier and Ives here over an hour to decide what to do about dirty little Mildred. And when they came to my door I knew just what I had to do. Things had gotten sticky and it was time to move on.

ROOK
And you wanted to travel first class.

MILDRED
That's right, soldier.

ROOK
So you bought that negative from Sonny Melrose out of your shopping allowance. Then you upped the ante and sent yourself the notes.

MILDRED
It seemed like a good idea at the time.

ROOK
Well Mildred, now you've got your mad money.

STANFORD
Oh, Mildred, you've ruined everything. You killed for that money. What will the Party think? What will our friends think?
MILDRED
I didn't kill anybody, buglemouth. I've got an alibi for every one of those murders.

ROOK
An alibi doesn't count for much. Nobody from this end of town does their own killing. A little man comes around once a month.

STANFORD
Nevertheless, Mildred, you killed those men just as surely as if you pulled the trigger yourself.

ROOK
Why should she? She was getting everything she wanted. She had nothing to gain from murder. The question is, who did?

STANFORD
Who did?

ROOK
You did.

CRAVEN
See here, Rook, this line of questioning is entirely uncalled for.

ROOK
So what? I'm looking for a killer.

STANFORD
Why would I kill anyone?

ROOK
To clear the way to the Governor's mansion. To clean house.

CRAVEN
This hired killer you talk of, Mr. Rook. Could you produce him in a court of law?

ROOK
I guess I could, but he wouldn't be too chatty. I pushed him off a building a couple of hours ago.
CONTINUED (8):

STANFORD
(muttering)
One thing after another.

ROOK
The coppers have found him by now. You can bank on that.
And by now they've probably impounded the black Packard roadster he was driving. When they do, even the dumbest flat-foot is bound to notice what I noticed. That the car is registered in the name of Monty Craven.

MILDRED
Monty, you?

STANFORD
Oh, for Pete's sake, Monty, that ruins everything. You spoiled it. You spoiled it all.

ROOK
Don't be ungrateful, Stanford. He was only trying to protect his investment...you.

STANFORD
I don't care. He shouldn't have on my account.

MILDRED
Sit down, Q.

ROOK
That's right, isn't it, Craven? You did it all to clean up the Standard scandal. That's why you had him hire me. So you could have your torpedo tail me while I led him to the victims. Then he'd move in and put the kibosh on them.

CRAVEN
Do you think you can prove any of this Mr. Rook?

ROOK
It's a cinch! It all adds up.
CRAVEN
(pulling gun)
Nevertheless, you'll never leave this room alive.

STANFORD
Oh, kill. Kill. That's all you can think of. It's driving me crackers.

MILDRED
Oh, Monty, don't be tiresome.

CRAVEN
Tiresome. Tiresome? I did it for you. For us. You and I.

MILDRED
You and me.

CRAVEN
You and me. We could have been on top, Mildred. We could have run this state. Just the two of us. And nobody, not even that wimpering ninny, would have been the wiser.

STANFORD
Wimpering ninny!

MILDRED
Johnny, what happens to me if I walk out of here right now?

ROOK
You're in the clear, goddess. If this joker doesn't put a bullet in you first. Nobody's likely to prosecute you for blackmailing yourself.

CRAVEN
Sit down, Mildred.

MILDRED
Want to help a lady with her wrap, soldier?

ROOK
Sure thing.
CONTINUED (10):

CRAVEN
(waving gun)
Keep away from her, Rook.

STANFORD
Is that how you see me, Mildred, a wimpering ninny?

Rook walks over to Mildred and helps her on with her furs. She steps between Rook and Craven.

CRAVEN
(continuing)
Shut your trap! Get out of the way Mildred.

MILDRED
(to Rook)
Will you be all right?

ROOK
Get out of here. Now.

Mildred starts for the door.

CRAVEN
(aiming gun)
Very well. I warned you both.

A shot is HEARD O.S. Craven doubles up in pain. CAMERA PANS to Stanford holding a pearl-handled, smoking revolver.

STANFORD
You spoiled it all.

CRAVEN
(gasping)
You fool Stanford! You chubby little fool!

STANFORD
Chubby!

Stanford shoots Craven two more times.

ROOK
(to Mildred)
Get out.

She goes. Stanford turns to Rook.
CONTINUED (11):

STANFORD

And you.

Stanford starts to aim at Rook. Rook jumps him and grabs gun. Craven lurches to the door, bleeding.

CRAVEN

(calling out door)

Mildred.

He staggers out the door.

MED. LONG SHOT - STAIRCASE

Craven sways to top of stairs, takes step forward toward Mildred, who is at the bottom of the steps.

CRAVEN

You can't walk out on me now.

Mildred turns and looks up at Craven. He takes another step forward and stumbles and falls to the center landing. His gun drops from his hand. He raises his head and calls after her.

CRAVEN

(continuing)

We could have had it all, Mildred.

All!

MILDRED

Oh, drop it.

Infuriated, Craven paws for his gun and with great effort raises it.

CRAVEN

(aiming)

You're no good. You never were.

Craven tries to shoot the gun at a terrified Mildred, but he is dying. Just as he is about to squeeze the trigger he feebly drops the gun.

MED. LONG SHOT

Rook is standing at the top of stairs, his .38 automatic aimed at Craven. He holsters his gun and descends.

ROOK

She may not be your idea of a lady, Craven. But she didn't

(MORE)
ROOK (Contd)
spill anybody's blood to get
what she wanted. She tried to
play square with you but you
wouldn't let it go at that.
That's the trouble with your
kind, Craven. You just can't
leave well enough alone.

Rook is now standing on the middle landing looking
down at the dying Craven, who looks up at Rook and
tries to say something. But he can't speak. Instead he hits
Rook's shoe with his fist and drops dead. Rook walks down to Mildred. Crisp and
Ishimoto come out to foyer to see what is causing
the noise.

ROOK
(continuing)
I'm going to miss you, angel
face.

MILDRED
Why don't you come with me?

ROOK
What for, the ride?

MILDRED
Why not? It's on me.

ROOK
Yeah, you're coming out with a
fist full aren't you?

MILDRED
That bother you?

ROOK
Maybe.

MILDRED
Don't be a sucker, Johnny. You
earned it.

ROOK
You tempt me, lady.

MILDRED
Then you'll come?

ROOK
No.
CONTINUED (2):

MILDRED
You don't know what you're missing.

ROOK
I do. But the answer's still no.

Stanford comes out on landing and staggers down the stairs, mumbling insanely.

STANFORD
Oh, boy he hit me right in the face. I got a bloody nose and everything.

MILDRED
What about him?

ROOK
A quiet sanitarium and plenty of rest will make a new man of him.

STANFORD
(stumbling down stairs)
It still hurts from where he hit me. I'm bleeding all over my shirt front here.

MILDRED
Won't they arrest him?

ROOK
With his money? Not for long.

MILDRED
But he killed a man.

ROOK
Just a first offense. Besides as it turned out Craven was the bad guy.

Stanford reaches the middle landing. Dazed, he suddenly notices Craven's body.

STANFORD
Oh, Monty. Wow. What did I do, kill you? Hey, I'm sincerely sorry.

He sits on steps and mumbles to himself.
CONTINUED (3):

ROOK
Where to now, goddess?

MILDRED
Well they say Europe's kind of shaky. I thought maybe Rio would be nice.

ROOK
They say it's very nice.

MILDRED
Sure you won't come along?

ROOK
Thanks again.

Stanford suddenly notices Craven's gun. He grabs it.

STANFORD
Hey, give me that gun, Monty. I'll get him.

He aims the gun at Rook.

ROOK
It looks like this is...

MILDRED
Watch out, Johnny!

Rook shoots the gun out of Stanford's hand.

MILDRED
(continuing)
Nice shooting.

ROOK
Looks like this...

STANFORD
Whew. Shot it right out of my hand!

You want to hold it down up there? I'm trying to say goodbye to your wife.

STANFORD
Oh, leave me alone.
ROOK
Well baby, I guess this is the big kiss-off.

MILDRED
Looks that way.

They stare at each other in silence for several moments. Then Mildred breaks the stare by walking several steps away from Rook.

MILDRED
I'll send for my things tomorrow, Crisp.

CRISP
Yes, Mrs. Stanford.

MILDRED
Schmetterlink!

CRISP
I beg your pardon?

MILDRED
Schmetterlink, Miss Schmetterlink.

CRISP
I understand Miss.

She goes to the door and opens it. A CHAUFFEUR and Rolls Royce are waiting. She turns for one last look at Rook.

ROOK
So long, goddess.

MILDRED
So long, sucker.

She walks out the door, which remains open. She gets into the Rolls. Rock walks out the door.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Rook watches as the Rolls pulls away and disappears down the road.

FADE OUT

THE END