

MARLOWE

by
L.M. Ransil

BASED ON A TRUE STORY: From the case files of Detective,
Samuel B. Marlowe...

Registered with W.G.A.W. (#1492691)

December 1, 2011
311 S. Swall Dr. PH7, L.A., CA 90048
(310) 858-7658
MyMuse311@gmail.com

MARLOWE

FADE IN:

EXT. -- LOS ANGELES MAYFAIR HOTEL -- 1937 -- AFTERNOON

Bustling with self-importance, the City's most elegant hotel extends a long burgundy canopy over the sidewalk welcoming fancy guests.

Nash Sedan screeches to a stop. VALETS react as keys are thrown to them. A tall, dark pinstripe-suited figure adjusts his Panama hat. Eyes follow him into the hotel.

MARLOWE V.O.

The Mayfair served tea in the afternoons, in rooms full of potted plants and old ladies...

INT. - HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

DOORMAN, (African American in an organ-grinder's monkey uniform) opens the door. His eyes widen.

MARLOWE V.O.

I didn't drink tea, and I wasn't exactly welcome.

Somewhere, a bell keeps ringing, as the figure is followed through the lobby by stares of hotel guests.

The front desk CONCIERGE, mid-30's, painfully skinny, rings for a bellhop. He glances up at SAM MARLOWE, early 40's, well-groomed and dressed, African American.

CONCIERGE

Coloreds go to the service entrance.

Keeps banging the desk bell. Marlowe doesn't move.

CONCIERGE (CONT'D)

(loud whisper)

What have I said that wasn't perfectly clear?

Reaches for the bell again. Marlowe puts his hand over it.

MARLOWE

Name's Marlowe. Samuel B. Got a call from Raymond Chandler.

The MANAGER, 40ish, an impeccably groomed nervous butterball, comes up from behind.

MANAGER

Thank heavens, you're here! Mr. Chandler's on the fifteenth floor.

His eyes go wide as he sees Marlowe's face.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

You're the private investigator?

Marlowe pulls out a business card.

MARLOWE

Licensed in the state of California.

EXT. -- HOTEL WINDOW ON THE FIFTEENTH FLOOR -- AFTERNOON

The Manager leans out, looks along the ledge and points. Marlowe leans out.

RAYMOND CHANDLER, late 40's and scholarly-looking, sits a dozen feet away on the ledge, feet dangling. Tie is undone, suit disheveled, a bottle of whiskey in his hand.

Marlowe comes out, stands next to Chandler, lights a cigarette.

MARLOWE

Nice view.

The sun has shifted to the west, throwing a dusty orange haze over the City skyline. Chandler nods.

A bug-eyed pigeon coos at Chandler for invading its perch.

CHANDLER

Scram!

Teeters on the edge as he swats at the bird.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

Everyone's a critic.

A hand pushes him back against the wall. Marlowe's hand.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

They say we become what we do. Frightening thought, don't you think, Marlowe?

MARLOWE

I try not to think that much.

CHANDLER

I like that. Can I use it?

Marlowe shrugs.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

I think too much. Then I drink,
trying to forget I'm so utterly
appalling at what I do!!

His words echo off the Downtown buildings.

MARLOWE

They pay you lotsa money to be that
bad.

Chandler stands, takes a couple weaving steps and pivots.

CHANDLER (O.C.)

It's not about the money.
Or the joy of writing!!!

Regains his balance. Downs a sip, as his words bounce back
at him.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

Eight million stories in this City!
And I can't write any of them!
Sometimes I just want to scream,
'who the hell am I to think I could
ever write?!' and throw the whole
bloody manuscript out the window!

MARLOWE

Why the hell d'you do it?

Chandler slides back down into a seated position. Offers
Marlowe the bottle.

CHANDLER

Why are you a detective?

Marlowe smiles, takes a swig and returns the bottle.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

Got a new character. But I can't
quite get him into focus.

Squints at Marlowe...tall, shadowy figure outlined by the
wavering glow of the hotel's neon sign.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)
He's a detective. Call him Philip
Mallory.

MARLOWE
Mallory. That's a girl's name.

CHANDLER
It's too soft, I knew it! How
about Masters? No, that's stiff.
Murphy, too Irish. Mitchell,
Philip Mitchell. Boring! It's all
boring! Mason, Matthews, Michaels,
Mosley!!!

Waits for the echo...then holds up the bottle. It's empty.

MARLOWE
Looks like we'd better go get
ourselves another.

EXT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Marlowe drives west on Wilshire. Stops at a light. Squad
car pulls up alongside, PATROL OFFICERS eyeballing him.

MARLOWE (V.O.)
1937, north of Wilshire, someone of
color was about as conspicuous as a
fly on a bed of white rice.

Chandler leans into view, nods to the officers. Squad car
pulls away.

INT. -- MARLOWE'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Chandler sits in the passenger seat, opening a bottle as
Marlowe drives.

CHANDLER
I've decided to write a book.

Marlowe's eyes dart to the rear view mirror.

MARLOWE
A whole book?

CHANDLER
I'm tired of bylines in Dime Store
magazines. It's time I moved up in
the world. Oh, my God! Stop!

Marlowe stops the car, as Chandler lurches out and throws up in the bushes.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

I'd been sending letters to the Black Mask Magazine. They did detective stories, but not very well. So as someone in the field, I decided to fill the writers in on the facts. Raymond Chandler asked to meet me.

Chandler gets off his knees, climbs back into the car.

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

He was new at detective fiction, and nice for someone who thought he was British and wanted to write serious literature.

CHANDLER

God, I wish I was dead.

MARLOWE

Why didn't you jump?

CHANDLER

(smiles)

I'm afraid of heights.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Marlowe stops the car on La Jolla Avenue, in front of a sleepy-looking Spanish bungalow. He gets a glimpse of a car pulling up around the corner.

CHANDLER

I can't go in like this!

Curtains in the house part briefly. Chandler ducks down. Marlowe lets the car idle, but it's clear Chandler's not coming up.

EXT. - MARLOWE'S CAR DRIVING DOWN CENTRAL AVENUE -- AFTERNOON

Marlowe parks his car in front of a tired-looking, two-story brick building. The neon "S" on the saloon sign flickers over a lonely-looking drunk leaning against the front wall.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Marlowe checks his mirror again. All he sees is Chandler, passed out in the passenger seat, cheek against the window.

INT. - DOWNSTAIRS BAR AT MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- AFTERNOON

The bar isn't dark enough to hide the dinginess. SMILEY the bartender (late 40's, African American, not named for his cheerful nature) stands endlessly polishing the same glass.

Marlowe pulls Chandler into the bar by his armpits.

SMILEY

Landlord's lookin' for you,
Marlowe.

MARLOWE

I'll bet he is.

The Smiley pays no attention as Marlowe drags Chandler through the bar, to a small set of stairs at the back.

INT. -- HALLWAY OUTSIDE MARLOWE'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Marlowe drags Chandler down a dimly-lit hallway, past fly-by-night businesses and bored-looking ladies-of-the-evening in open doorways, giving him the eye.

A door at the end reads: Samuel B. Marlowe, Private Investigations. A note is taped to the door: Rent due. SECOND NOTICE. Marlowe balls up the note and tosses it, juggling Chandler's weight as he sticks a key in the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Look what the cat dragged in.

Marlowe turns to see VELMA, mid-thirties, light-skinned African American, long straightened, golden brown hair falling over one of her bright green eyes. Posed against a door frame, Velma's long luscious form is wrapped in a frilly purple housecoat.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

There she was. Only woman who
could melt a man in a heartbeat
...then kick him right back into
the deep freeze.

A man emerges through her doorway, still buttoning his shirt sleeves under his jacket.

African American, local businessman or shopkeeper, he slips a folded bill into Velma's robe pocket. He and Marlowe lock eyes, as the man slinks down the hall.

VELMA

Wherever you go, Marlowe, trouble follows.

MARLOWE

Trouble's already been there. I just clean up. I got any messages, Velma?

Velma's face goes from vamp to frown.

VELMA

It's been two days, Marlowe! Would it kill you to check in? Let me know you're not dead in an alley somewhere.

Marlowe pushes Chandler to the wall so he can open the door.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Who's the stiff?

MARLOWE

Nobody you know.

Marlowe gets the door open.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Messages, Velma.

Velma pulls paper slips from her black lace bra.

VELMA

All right, all right!

INT. - MARLOWE'S OUTER WAITING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

An old brown couch sits all by itself in a room in need of a coat of paint. Chandler mumbles as Marlowe drags him to a door with big black letters: PRIVATE

Velma picks up letters that came through the mail slot, following Marlowe and Chandler into the next room.

INT. - MARLOWE'S INNER OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

A shade hangs askew on the only window, blowing over a desk, two mismatched chairs and a file cabinet.

Marlowe carries in Chandler, switches on the light. Velma follows, reading paper slips pulled from her black lace bra.

VELMA

Freddy called. Three times.

Marlowe pulls down a Murphy bed, throws Chandler onto it.

MARLOWE

What'd he want?

Velma shrugs.

VELMA

Who can understand him? Dunno why you let him hang around.

Marlowe sits down at his desk.

MARLOWE

He's your half-brother. Gives him somethin' to do.

VELMA

Follows you around like a puppy.

MARLOWE

Don't you like puppies, Velma?

VELMA

'Til they crap on my rug.

She sits down on the desk, reads messages...miles of leg hanging out of the housecoat. Marlowe reaches for that leg.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Down, boy.

Slaps his hand.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Tailor called. He was able to patch that hole in the pant leg of your blue stripe gabardines.

MARLOWE

Only good thing about a .22.

Velma sorts envelopes. A locket swings out of her neckline.

VELMA

Bills, bills and more bills.

Marlowe grabs the locket. Small gold piece, engraved with two intertwined angels. Their eyes lock. Velma grabs it back from him.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Another letter from...

(sounds it out)

Dash-i-ell Hammett. The magazine guy.

Chandler manages to sit up.

CHANDLER

And book author! The world's greatest writer of hard boiled detective fiction.

Falls back onto the bed. Velma drops the envelopes.

VELMA

You said those detective stories were a bunch of bunk.

MARLOWE

Forget what I said.

VELMA

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Velma exits, as Marlowe sorts through his mail.

CHANDLER

Marlowe, in your first letter, you asked me why I wanted to write detective fiction. I've been thinking about that...and the answer is the Continental Op.

Lays, looking up at the ceiling fan.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)

Remember Hammett's first character? Skulking around the shadows, getting into people's heads. That odd little man was so calculating, so vividly alive! Reading those words, I realized I was wasting my life behind a desk. Deep down, I'd always wanted to be a detective!

MARLOWE

A detective?

CHANDLER

I could learn! Hammett says a man should write what he knows.

MARLOWE

Hammett doesn't know squat.

Chandler sits up.

CHANDLER

I'll have you know Dashiell Hammett was a Pinkerton!

MARLOWE

Glorified night watchman, whiling away shifts, dreaming about flashy dames, fast cars 'n fancy footwork.

Marlowe pulls out a whiskey bottle, pours himself a drink.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Real detective work's freezin' your ass off in doorways, sortin' through leads goin' nowhere an' everybody's lies. When you think you know what you're doin', knuckle ball comes outta left field. Knocks you flat on your ass.

Marlowe looks over at Chandler, down again on the bed. He begins to snore.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

You're gettin' the hang of it.

INT. - VELMA'S ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Small room, all cheap lavender frills and beads. Big round purple bed in the corner, bordered by Velma's acting headshots. She changes stockings as Marlowe opens the door.

MARLOWE

Goin' out. Watch my friend for me.

Fancy suit and hat are laid out across the bed.

VELMA

Can't. I got a call from the studio.

MARLOWE

Who'll answer my phone?

Velma opens the window, and leans out.

VELMA
Smiley!!

EXT. - MARLOWE'S BUILDING -- AFTERNOON

Smiley sticks his head out the downstairs window.

Velma dangles the phone by its cord, lowers it to him.

SMILEY
What'm I supposed to do with this?!

VELMA
If it rings, answer it!

Shuts her window. Smiley frowns.

INT. - MARLOWE'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Chandler snores as Marlowe returns to put on his hat. He hears the waiting room door open and close.

MARLOWE
Velma?

No answer.

INT. - MARLOWE'S OUTER WAITING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Marlowe comes out of his office. FREDDY LEROY, has planted himself on the couch. 40ish, African American, 6' 6", 350 pounds, IQ of 50, child in a giant's body. Hand tucked inside his long coat, Freddy is crying.

FREDDY
I stayed on him, Marlowe. Stuck with him like a duck on a junebug. Lost him on Slauson. Then turned around 'n, oh Lordie, there he was!

Breaks down into high-pitched whimpering.

FREDDY (CONT'D)
Velma's gonna be mad at me! So mad, mad, mad at me!

MARLOWE
Freddy, Freddy...

Shakes Freddy just a little.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Velma'd never be mad at you.

FREDDY
They know I saw 'em, know I heard
'em! An' I was so careful, just
like you showed me, Marlowe!

Begins to blubber.

FREDDY (CONT'D)
I'm a dummy. I always mess up!

Freddy doubles over on the couch.

MARLOWE
Don't say that. Freddy...

Marlowe spots blood pooled around Freddy's shoes. Opens
Freddy's coat to see the deep gash across his upper stomach.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Oh God, Freddy!

Freddy grabs Marlowe, pulls him down onto the floor as he
falls. Marlowe cradles Freddy in his arms.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Freddy! Need you to be strong for
me. Can you do that? Velma...!!!

FREDDY
(hoarse whisper)
Fire...! Fire in the Arroyo Seco.

Freddy presses a small folding camera into Marlowe's hands,
and closes his eyes.

INT. - MARLOWE'S OUTER WAITING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Cops back away from Freddy's body, so a photographer can
shoot.

Marlowe is grabbed from behind in the doorway, and hurled
into the hallway.

INT. - HALLWAY OUTSIDE MARLOWE'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

SERGEANT CHARLES BROADY, 38, African American, Plain Clothes, large gold lateral incisor, throws Marlowe against the wall and cuffs him.

BROADY
Finally stepped in it, Marlowe.

MARLOWE
Yeah, Broady. If you mean that steaming pile you call a career!

Broady shoves Marlowe into the wall.

BROADY
Sergeant Broady to you!

Marlowe pivots, rams Broady in the mid-section.

Broady goes down, but springs up again...only to be stopped by a VERY large obstruction.

DEEP MAN'S VOICE O.S.
Damn! Never could leave you two alone for a minute.

SERGEANT ROSCOE WASHINGTON, 43, 6' 5", uniformed, African American and built like a linebacker.

INT. - MARLOWE'S WAITING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Broady follows Marlowe in from the hallway, snatches the camera from the floor.

MARLOWE
Hey, that's private property!

Broady waves the bloody camera in Marlowe's face.

BROADY
Looks like evidence to me.

WASHINGTON
Give it a rest, Broady.

Washington appears behind them, locks eyes with Broady, who slinks away.

INT. - MARLOWE'S OFFICE -- AFTERNOON

Washington shoves Marlowe into his office, followed by a YOUNG COP, uniformed, also African American.

MARLOWE
He killed Freddy!

WASHINGTON
'Spose you can prove it.

Marlowe doesn't answer.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Didn't think so.

Washington pauses in the doorway to look back at Freddy.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Poor bastard. Didn't have the
brains he was born with, but never
hurt nobody.

Notices Chandler, passed out on the Murphy bed.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)
Who's sleeping beauty?

MARLOWE
Friend sleepin' it off. Didn't see
nothin'.

Chandler rolls over, begins to snore. Washington nods to the Young Cop, motioning to Marlowe's handcuffs.

WASHINGTON
Get those off him.

YOUNG COP
Sergeant Washington, sir!

The Young Cop salutes, then uncuffs Marlowe.

WASHINGTON
Now that there, Marlowe, is an
ambitious young man. Most rookies
wanna be Police Chief, but uh-uh...

Young Cop smiles.

YOUNG COP
No, sir. I wanna be Mayor!

WASHINGTON

Lot like 'nother young hotshot
dreamer I used to know. That'll be
all, Officer...

YOUNG COP

Bradley, Tom Bradley, sir.

Another salute, Young Cop exits. Washington shakes his head.

WASHINGTON

Blood all over you. Marlowe, give
me one reason I shouldn't bust your
sorry gun-for-hire ass!

MARLOWE

I'm a private investigator.

WASHINGTON

Same thing. Report says he was
babbling 'bout a fire?

MARLOWE

He'd just run into the wrong end of
a very large knife. Rocky, when've
you known me to carry a blade?

WASHINGTON

Doesn't mean you didn't put him in
front'v it. Blood trail leads down
Central to Slauson.

MARLOWE

He was tailing somebody for me.

WASHINGTON

That's Broady's beat. You son-of-a-
bitch, you're still doggin' him!

MARLOWE

He's a pimp, arsonist 'n
extortionist. Now he's a murderer.

WASHINGTON

Says you...! Only thing worse'n a
dirty cop is a dirty one you can't
touch.

MARLOWE

Tell Broady his day'sa coming.

WASHINGTON

I'm not tellin' him nothin'. You
wanna bust him?

(MORE)

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Shoulda stayed with the Department!
Oh, but that's right, Mr. Hot Shot.
Hadta go hook yourself up at the
D.A.'s office. Ended up house
nigger, working the same penny ante
colored cases you did down here.
For all your high fallutin' plans,
couldn't even stay outta trouble
doin' that.

Marlowe slams a file drawer shut.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

What the hell do you want?!

MARLOWE

A little payback.

WASHINGTON

For Freddy?! People like you, me
'n Freddy, we don't get that! You
been spittin' the wind ever since
I've known you, and you're always
angry when you're wet. Coulda made
the grade, Marlowe, but you...you
don't know your place.

MARLOWE

An' what place is that, Rocky?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Gol-darn-it! That's gonna leave
one hell'va stain on the rug!

DISTRICT ATTORNEY BURON FITTS, 48, tall gaunt, large beak-
like nose and intense eyes, stands in the doorway, polishing
an ebony walkingstick topped by a brass eagle.

WASHINGTON

District Attorney Fitts. Since
when's your office interested in a
South Central stabbing?

Fitts shrugs, digging the brass tip into the door frame.

FITTS

One jig killin' another's your
business. As long as you keep it
in your own neighborhood.

Turns to Marlowe.

FITTS (CONT'D)

I'm here to pick up a witness.

MARLOWE

Whatever it is, didn't see it. And if I did, you'd be the last one I'd tell.

FITTS

Always the smart guy, Marlowe.

MARLOWE

If I was smart, woulda quit before you could fire me.

FITTS

You still runnin' errands for that weasel, Eddie Mannix?

MARLOWE

I handle security for MGM Studios. Matters calling for discretion.

FITTS

Mannix wouldn't know discretion if it bit him on the ass.

Marlowe sits down behind his desk.

MARLOWE

Must be important to bring someone so high 'n Mighty this far south'v Wilshire.

FITTS

We're reopening the Paul Bern suicide.

MARLOWE

That old turkey? Case is colder'n he is.

FITTS

Maybe not. The widow's being blackmailed.

Marlowe puts his feet up.

MARLOWE

Jean Harlow. So she's a movie star. Why should I give a damn?

Brass eagle slams down on the desk, just missing his toes.

FITTS

The witness is someone you know...

INT. - DOWNSTAIRS BAR AT MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- EVENING

Marlowe shows Smiley a spool of six-16 film.

MARLOWE
Get Cal to develop this for me.

SMILEY
You owe him.

MARLOWE
I know.

SMILEY
What'm I supposed to say to him?

Marlowe hands him the film.

MARLOWE
You'll think of something. Oh, and
my friend's sleeping it off. Can
you keep an eye on him?

SMILEY
Do I look like a babysitter?!

Marlowe puts on his hat and exits. Smiley yells after him.

SMILEY (CONT'D)
Know it's your fault, don't you?!

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- DOWNTOWN L.A. STREET -- NIGHT

Marlowe drives, scanning a chaotic mix of neon lights.

MARLOWE (V.O.)
It was my fault...and all I could
do now was try'n make somebody pay
for all the bad things people do to
each other. Told myself Freddy'd
want it that way. Truth was, I'd
never even thought of what Freddy
wanted.

Marlowe comes to a long line of rundown trucks and cars at a
police blockade, suitcases and furniture strapped to them.

Driving past, Marlowe focuses on two ragged, sad-eyed kids
sitting on the curb as cops argue with their parents, clearly
pointing them back to the City Limits.

INT. - L.A. TIMES BUILDING LOBBY -- FRONT STEPS -- NIGHT

Marlowe walks up the steps past a bum, asleep under a cover of newspapers. Uniformed cop appears, billy club drawn.

POLICEMAN

Up you go!

Bum screams as the club slams down on his knees. Another cop runs up, joins in the beating.

INT. - UPSTAIRS L.A. TIMES BULLPEN OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bullpen is dark and empty, except for a reporter in the corner, desk lit by a single desk lamp. J.C. MORAN, early 50's, unkempt workingman's scholar, stands looking out the window, sipping from a whiskey bottle. Marlowe joins him.

MORAN

Hard time to be on the street.

Marlowe takes the bottle.

MARLOWE

(Irish accent)

Especially if you've nary a nickel in your pocket.

Moran smiles. Marlowe takes a sip, returns the bottle. Moran sits down at a desk.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Read your piece, Moran. On the shantytown they cleared down on Temple.

MORAN

Mayor's showing his campaign contributors he's protecting 'em.

Pours whiskey into a cup, hands it to Marlowe.

MARLOWE

Dustbowl folks. Two, three hundred of 'em. Escorted to the City Limits by the Mayor's Boys in Blue.

MORAN

Your former Brothers, lest we not forget. I was there. Trucks loaded with whatever they could take off their farms.

(MORE)

MORAN (CONT'D)

Women, children, old people, men
who'd do anything to feed their
families. All with nowhere to go.

Moran pours himself another cup.

MARLOWE

Articles like that can't be making
you popular at City Hall.

MORAN

The Mayor can kiss my Irish ass if
he thinks I'm gonna retract.

Marlowe clinks cups with Moran.

MARLOWE

Haven't changed, Moran. Still the
guy who knows everything, 'n never
happy 'til you're pissin' everybody
off.

Moran holds up his cup.

MORAN

To the Brotherhood of Pissin'
Everyone Off.

They drink.

MARLOWE

Still drinking the cheap stuff.
Don't you know this'll kill you?

MORAN

We all die sometime. That why you
come, Marlowe? To warn me of my
imminent demise?

MARLOWE

Pokin' around. What can you tell
me about the Arroyo Seco?

MORAN

Nasty, craggy little river gulch,
that. Where'd you hear 'bout it?

MARLOWE

From a dead man.

MORAN

Why doesn't that surprise me...?
Canyon runs north from China Town
through the back hills to Pasadena.

(MORE)

MORAN (CONT'D)

Barren as all get-out, dryer'n a witch's tit. Orange grove country, or used to be. Remains of those orchards still brushin' the banks of the riverbed like a gathering of old ghosts.

MARLOWE

Sounds like a whole lotta nothin'.

MORAN

Miles 'n miles of it, which is interesting.

MARLOWE

Why's that so interesting?

MORAN

I just wrote about it.

Slaps the next edition down on his desk, headline: "Police Roust Homeless Camp in Arroyo Seco River Basin."

EXT. - MGM STUDIO GATES -- NIGHT

Inside the gate, Eighteenth Century Infantrymen thread their way through a line of grips rolling lights to a night shoot.

Guard waves Marlowe's car through the gate.

INT. - SOUNDSTAGE -- NIGHT

Marlowe makes his way through the backstage towards a fancy garden party set.

Velma stands, dressed as a maid on the sideline, tray in hand, waiting for her cue.

All eyes are on the actor and actress center stage.

ACTRESS

Oh, Byron, what ever shall I do without you?!

Marlowe taps Velma on the shoulder. She shakes him off, as the actress launches into a stifled series of sobs.

DIRECTOR

Cut, cut, cut...!!

Marlowe whispers to Velma.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
 Myrna, honey, sounds like you're
 strangling a cat. Give me
 something!

Velma bursts into tears, runs from the set. Director turns.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
 Now that's what I'm talking about!

INT. - SOUNDSTAGE DRESSING ROOM HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Half-open doors provide glimpses into a series of dressing rooms. DAY PLAYER ACTRESSES turn from their mirrors to watch Marlowe catch Velma.

VELMA
 Don't touch me!

She pushes him away and runs down a staircase.

INT. - SOUNDSTAGE BASEMENT -- NIGHT

Marlowe enters a dank, barren cement room full of African American ACTORS in various states of undress. Both sexes, all getting into costume and make up.

Marlowe goes to the only private booth in the room, pulls back the curtain. A shoe flies out and hits him. He dodges another shoe.

VELMA
 He looked up to you, Goddamn it!
 He trusted you! Look where it got
 him!!!

She comes at Marlowe, fists flailing on his chest.

VELMA (CONT'D)
 He wasn't like you! He could never
 be like you! Couldn't you see
 that?! Oh, Freddy...

Marlowe pulls Velma to him and lets her cry.

VELMA (CONT'D)
 You son-of-a bitch. Take me home.

MARLOWE
 I don't think so. District
 Attorney's looking for you.

VELMA

What the hell does he want?

MARLOWE

Thinks you have something still
stuck in your craw about Paul Bern.

She pushes away from him.

VELMA

He's crazy. I said all I had to
say, four years ago.

MARLOWE

Not what the widow's saying. Term,
blackmail was bandied about.

VELMA

I just asked her for what's mine!

MARLOWE

Sometimes it's how you ask.

VELMA

This's all so ridiculous! The City
invalidated the deed to the house
Paul gave me. Some legal mumbo-
jumbo saying the land can't be
owned by a person of color.

MARLOWE

Term's Restrictive Covenant. Paul
dead, title goes back to the wife.

VELMA

But she doesn't want the house!
She told me, and now they won't let
me see her again. I'm taking every
little job on the Lot, just trying
to get near her again.

MARLOWE

Thought you'd rattle the cage a
little.

VELMA

I never made trouble, Marlowe, I
swear! Ask her. She was nice
about it. She's not at all like
everybody says.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I need three maids on stage.

SECOND A.D. in the doorway, waves a clipboard at them.

SECOND A.D.
You, you...and you.

Points to Velma.

SECOND A.D. (CONT'D)
Everyone on stage. Chop, chop.

VELMA
(to Marlowe)
You can get to her. Ask her to
help me. You owe me, Marlowe...

Marlowe steps aside, as Velma follows the A.D. to the set.

EXT. - SERVICE STREETS OUTSIDE THE SOUNDSTAGE -- NIGHT

Marlowe pushes through a line of greensmen carrying shrubs.

MARLOWE V.O.
Some women have a way of winding
the truth around you...

Gets tangled in a leash. A chimp screeches at him.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
Digging it in 'til hurts.

Trainer yanks it away.

MARLOWE V.O. (CONT'D)
'Cuz they know even a smart man
doesn't always think with his head.

Marlowe stops, looks up. Bannered across a soundstage wall is a huge sultry Close Up of Jean Harlow, jagged lettering across the bottom: RECKLESS.

EXT. - MGM'S FRONT PLAZA -- NIGHT/CONTINUOUS

Marlowe surveys the large open concourse.

MARLOWE V.O.
Thing to do now, was look for
somebody with a whole lot more to
answer for.

Looks up. Stark white edifice in front him is the Thalberg Building. Marlowe smiles.

INT. - THALBERG BUILDING HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Marlowe walks up to an office with a sign: Edward Mannix, Vice President, Studio Security. The door is flanked by two massive men in suits.

SUIT #1
Got an appointment, spade?

MARLOWE
Don't need one.

SUIT #1 and SUIT #2 block Marlowe.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Can't you guys find a better way to make a living?

SUIT #1
Look who's talking. Guy who bird dogs cheating husbands.

MARLOWE
Don't do divorce work.

SUIT #1
Yeah, not unless it's really slow.

Suits #1 and #2 push Marlowe back. He dusts himself off... then turns and charges them.

INT. - EDDIE MANNIX'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Marlowe and the Suits burst into the office. EDDIE MANNIX, short, vicious-looking plug of a man is leaning back in his desk chair.

MANNIX
Don't you guys ever knock?!

Sound of a zipper. A SECRETARY emerges from behind the desk.

SUIT #1
Sorry, boss.

Secretary stands up, smoothing back her hair.

SECRETARY
Mr. Mannix, will there be anything else?

MANNIX
Dolores, why don't you go home?

Secretary exits. Mannix motions for the Suits to stand down.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

Marlowe, heard you were on the Lot.
Who're you workin' for?

MARLOWE

You know me. I work for myself.

MANNIX

An' I'm the King'a England. Spill,
Marlowe.

MARLOWE

This is personal.

MANNIX

That would be Velma Leroy. Popular
girl all of a sudden.

Marlowe shrugs.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

Nothin' but trouble since she set
foot on the Lot. You should know.
Got stuck givin' her the heave-ho
when Paul Bern got engaged.

Rolls his eyes.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

Hear the girl's got a temper.

MARLOWE

She was taken care of.

MANNIX

He gave her a house. Big kiss off
for a girl who goes by the hour.

MARLOWE

She's an actress.

Mannix snorts.

MANNIX

Actress...! Know the difference
'tween a star 'n a bit player? The
class of their johns.

Laughs, lights a cigar.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

'Tween you'n me, always thought
Bern was a fairy. 'N suddenly,
there he was, Mr. Hollywood
Producer, juggling broads! Could'a
knocked me down with a feather when
he got engaged to our reigning Sex
Goddess!

Throws a B&W studio photo of Jean Harlow down on the desk.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

Girl half his age. An', Bern, he
had certain...deficiencies.

Wiggles his finger.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

No bigger'n my pinkie, know what I
mean? Only way he gets off is
beating the bride black'n blue on
their wedding night. Fine can'a
worms that was. Apologized in a
note, right before he shot himself
in the face.

MARLOWE

Must've cost to keep it outta the
papers.

Mannix shakes his head.

MANNIX

You don't wanna know. This Harlow
broad's been running wild ever
since. Went down to those hoochie
nightclubs of yours on Central
Avenue two days ago. Hasn't come
back. Girl's mama's goin' crazy.
Got half my guys out lookin' for
her.

MARLOWE

Mannix, your guys couldn't find
their own dicks with a flashlight
on Central.

Mannix laughs.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

What's it worth if I go find her
for you?

MANNIX
 Couple'v C notes, and my undying
 gratitude.

MARLOWE
 I'll get on it. First thing
 tomorrow.

Mannix pushes the photo across the desk at Marlowe.

MANNIX
 She's got a picture startin'. Make
 it tonight.

MARLOWE
 Can't.

MANNIX
 Wha'da'ya mean can't?

MARLOWE
 Got a guy at my office. Needta get
 him home or his wife'll kill me.

Mannix smiles.

MANNIX
 Better her than me.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- DRIVING DOWN CENTRAL AVENUE -- NIGHT

As Marlowe drives, he surveys throngs of nightclub patrons, black and white, all dressed up for a good time. Street corner bands blend competing styles of jazz. Neighborhood merchants sell food from carts, while soft shoe dancers tap for pennies on the sidewalks.

MARLOWE (V.O.)
 The Central Avenue Strip in all its
 glory. Only place in town where it
 didn't matter what color you were.
 Dozens of jazz clubs, restaurants
 and bars, where someone like MGM's
 most misunderstood star might wanna
 get lost. Truth was...I barely
 knew where to start.

EXT. - CENTRAL AVENUE -- NIGHT

Large neon sign hangs over Club Alabam, arrow pointing down at the door. Words on the sign read: **This is the place.**

INT. - CLUB ALABAM -- NIGHT

DUKE ELLINGTON leads an eighteen piece jazz band tearing the roof off the joint. People are dancing everywhere, even on the bar. The music is so loud, Marlowe can barely make himself heard as he shows Harlow's photo to the bartender.

MARLOWE

Have you seen her in here tonight?

BARTENDER keeps making drinks, as he shakes his head.

INT. - THE MEMO CLUB -- NIGHT

Another lively jazz club. Marlowe talks to BARTENDER #2, who also shakes his head.

INT. - THE DOWNBEAT CLUB -- NIGHT

A funkier club, a dark, smoky precursor to the beatnik joints. BARTENDER #3 looks at Harlow's photo and shrugs.

INT. - THE TURBAN ROOM -- NIGHT

A black band in bright-colored zoot suits plays high energy swing jazz. BARTENDER #4 waves Marlowe off, then beckons Marlowe back. Points Marlowe to the rear of the club.

INT. - DRESSING ROOM AT THE TURBAN CLUB -- NIGHT

A dozen zoot suited black musicians drink, smoking reefer and feeling up the ladies. Door opens. A clamor of cocking and clicking, as shotguns come out of music cases, shiny handguns and straight razors. Everyone in the room pulls a weapon... even the ladies.

Moment of silence, as Marlowe stands in the doorway.

BIG BOOMING MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Marlowe! You son-of-a-bitch!

Man laughs. The room stands down. Marlowe winds his way through the smoke, to a man seated in back.

MARLOWE

You dirty, old junkyard dog!

Marlowe slaps palms with POP SANDERS, black, bald, 60ish, smoking a cigar, holding court from a huge winged-back chair.

POP SANDERS
Votin' for me?

MARLOWE
Last I looked, you were the only
one on the ballot.

Sanders stands up, pins a button on Marlowe's jacket: Pop Sanders for City Council.

POP SANDERS
Still nice to have a turn out.

MARLOWE
So, Pops, how's business?

POP SANDERS
Not what it used to be.

Sinks back into his chair.

POP SANDERS (CONT'D)
Time was you could make a good
living if you had what people want.
Now everybody's in your pockets,
police, even the politicians.

MARLOWE
That why you got into politics?

POP SANDERS
Seemed to be the natural
progression.

Puffs on his cigar.

POP SANDERS (CONT'D)
So what's this about you'n Charles
Broady?

MARLOWE
Don't like pimps. No offense.

POP SANDERS
None taken.

MARLOWE
An' I hate dirty cops even more.

POP SANDERS
Broady's small time, but those
little guys are like rattlesnakes.
(MORE)

POP SANDERS (CONT'D)
Cut off the head, it can still bite
you. Why d'you need that kinda
trouble?

MARLOWE
Got business with him.

POP SANDERS
Is this about Velma's brother?

Shakes his head.

POP SANDERS (CONT'D)
Better be worth it. Broady's
connected. Friends in places you'd
never guess. Places you don't
wanna know. Marlowe, you're a man
of principle. Don't let those
principles get you killed.

MARLOWE
I try not to.

They lock hands.

POP SANDERS
So what fleeting wind blows you in
my direction?

MARLOWE
Lookin' for her.

Shows Sanders Harlow's picture.

POP SANDERS
You have good taste, my man.

MARLOWE
Can't afford this kind of taste.
But I work for people who can.

POP SANDERS
Those people might wanna check out
the jam session over at the Dunbar.

EXT. - DUNBAR HOTEL -- NIGHT

The six-story brick building rises over Central Avenue, as if
it knows its unique and ambitious importance. Marlowe looks
up at the neon hotel sign as he walks towards the front door,
music wafting out of windows on upper floors.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

The Central Avenue Dunbar. Home-away-from home for entertainers not welcome elsewhere. In 1937, no person of Color could stay at any other fancy Los Angeles hotel.

A hand grabs Marlowe by the collar, yanks him into the shadows outside a service doorway. Feel of metal at his throat is a six inch pearl-handled switchblade.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Only one person I know who'd carry a candy-assed blade like that.

Glint of the gold tooth, Sergeant Broady emerges from the shadows. Presses the blade to Marlowe's Adam's Apple.

BROADY

Want me to show you how it works?

MARLOWE

I'm a bleeder. Might mess up your pinstripes.

BROADY

Cut the crap, Marlowe, 'n cough up the pictures.

MARLOWE

Broady, if I knew what you were talkin' about, I'd probably still tell ya to go screw yourself.

The Hotel Doorman walks by. Doesn't see them in the doorway. Broady makes a small cut on Marlowe's neck.

BROADY

Now look what you made me do.

Marlowe pivots to face Broady.

BROADY (CONT'D)

I should kill you right now.

MARLOWE

Go ahead.

Broady hesitates.

BROADY

Too easy.

MARLOWE

Know what I think? You pick on people who won't fight back.

Pokes at Broady, who steps back.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Small merchants, working girls, old ladies who hit the numbers, drunks with half a pint. Have I left anybody out?!

BROADY

This's about the retard. What kinda future did a guy like that have anyway?

MARLOWE

His name was Freddy...! And he had people who cared about him!

BROADY

Those people shoulda watched out for him.

Shrugs and smiles.

BROADY (CONT'D)

Somebody like that could trip 'n fall on a blade.

MARLOWE

You son-of-a-bitch! You're gonna burn in Hell!

Broady waves the knife in Marlowe's face.

BROADY

Something tells me I'll be seeing you there, Marlowe.

Doorman walks by again, and stops, hulking frame darkening the doorway. Broady fades into the shadows.

DOORMAN

Hey!?

Marlowe turns to see the service door behind him closing.

DOORMAN (CONT'D)

What's going on here?

Marlowe tries the door...but it's locked.

INT. - DUNBAR HOTEL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Elevator doors open. Marlowe steps out, holding a handkerchief to the cut on his neck.

The music is louder now. He smiles, follows the jazz riffs down the hall to an open door.

INT. - DUNBAR HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Marlowe enters a room, twenty black JAZZ MUSICIANS, all playing their hearts out. Trumpet player offers him a reefer. Marlowe shakes his head, shows him Harlow's photo. Trumpet player smiles, points Marlowe to the bathroom.

INT. - DUNBAR HOTEL BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Marlowe opens the door a crack. Inside is a MAN on the floor in his underwear, late 20's, African American, a woman under him. He's slapping her, hard and repeatedly.

MAN

Come on, come on!

Marlowe yanks the man up by his undershirt, flings him into the tub. The man flails as Marlowe pummels him.

Smash! Marlowe gets it on the back of the head with a bottle. Sinking to the floor, he looks up at JEAN HARLOW, 26, unkempt after three days of debauchery, recognizable only by her trademark platinum blonde hair.

She threatens Marlowe with the broken bottle.

MAN (CONT'D)

She's back. You deal with her.

The man rolls out of the tub, limps from the room. Slams the door behind him.

Burnt spoon and bloody syringe on the sink...cord tied around Harlow's arm and the mark on it. Marlowe stands up.

Harlow launches herself at him. Sidestepping her, he grabs the bottle. Pulls her down onto the floor, holds her until she stops struggling.

HARLOW

Lemme go!

MARLOWE
Not 'til I know you're not gonna
hurt me. Or yourself.

HARLOW
What's it to you?

Tries to scratch him. He grabs her tighter.

MARLOWE
Miss Harlow, don't make me hurt
you!

HARLOW
I know you. You're one'a them!

MARLOWE
People're worried about you.

HARLOW
They can all go to hell!

MARLOWE
You have a film starting tomorrow.

HARLOW
Haven't you heard? I'm not doin'
that film. I'm gonna stay right
here. Have some fun for once.

MARLOWE
This kinda fun'll kill you.

HARLOW
It's my life! I'm tired'v
everybody tryin' to take a piece'v
it. So buzz off, buster!

Tries to push him away. Marlowe yanks her to her feet,
flings her over his shoulder.

INT. - DUNBAR HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Musicians don't miss a beat as Marlowe carries Harlow through
the room, kicking and screaming.

INT. - DUNBAR HOTEL LOBBY -- NIGHT

Red velvet upholstery, mahogany paneling, and sweeping
staircase. The Dunbar Lobby was determined to be as
sumptuous as any of the white hotels.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

There're some women who're lost 'n
misunderstood... 'n others who just
make you wanna smack the hell out 'v
'em.

Patrons pay little attention as Marlowe carries Harlow over
his shoulder through the lobby.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Marlowe throws Harlow into his back seat.

HARLOW

This is kidnapping, you big ape!

Marlowe gets into the car behind the wheel.

HARLOW (CONT'D)

Gonna have you arrested!

MARLOWE

Won't be the first time.

He starts the car, pulls onto Central Avenue. Harlow
shrieks, beating her fists on the seat. Marlowe ignores her.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Marlowe heads west, picks up Western Avenue just above
Washington Blvd. Harlow leans over the seat.

HARLOW

Why do I have to ride in the back?

MARLOWE

You won't like the answer to that
question.

HARLOW

I'm coming over.

Pushes her back.

MARLOWE

No, you're not.

He fights to control the car. Harlow scrambles over the
seat, plants herself next to him.

Sound of a siren. Marlowe pulls the car over.

MARLOWE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 1937, three things you didn't wanna
 do. Bet against the Yankees, spit
 north'v Wilshire...or be seen with
 a white woman in your car.

TRAFFIC COP #1, 40ish, white, squirrely-looking, raps on
 Marlowe's window, motions for him to get out of the car.
 Marlowe complies.

EXT. - WESTERN AVENUE -- NIGHT

Traffic Cop #1 walks Marlowe around the car, and leans him
 over, hands flat against the trunk. TRAFFIC COP #2, 40ish,
 white, a large man, peers through the passenger window.
 Harlow rolls down the window.

TRAFFIC COP #2
 Can you get outta the car, Miss?

HARLOW
 What's the problem?

TRAFFIC COP #2
 Just get out of the car.

HARLOW
 Well, of all the...! Do you know
 who I am?

Strikes her trademark side pose.

HARLOW (CONT'D)
 Jean Harlow! I'm a movie star, you
 stupid flat foot.

Traffic Cop #2 yanks open the door.

TRAFFIC COP #2
 You don't look anything like her.
 Now get outta the car.

Marlowe watches Traffic Cop #2 drag Harlow from the car.

Traffic Cop #1 pushes Marlowe face-down onto the trunk.

TRAFFIC COP #1
 Looks like a live wire, that one!
 What're ya doin' with her, boy?

Drags his nightstick across the car trunk.

TRAFFIC COP #1 (CONT'D)
Thought you'd grab yourself some
powdered sugar? Sound about right,
boy? What's that?! Speak up, boy.

Nudges Marlowe with the nightstick.

MARLOWE
I'm not a boy.

Traffic Cop #1 swats Marlowe on both sides of the head.

TRAFFIC COP #1
What'd you say, boy?

MARLOWE
Go to hell.

Traffic Cop #1 pushes Marlowe's face into the car trunk.

A siren is heard as another car pulls up. Marlowe tries to
turn his head and - wham! -- he gets it across the head with
the night stick.

BROADY (O.S.)
What've we got here?

TRAFFIC COP #1
Just a traffic stop.

BROADY (O.S.)
What's that, officer?!

Marlowe turns his head on the car hood to see Sergeant
Charles Broady, nose-to-nose with the cop.

TRAFFIC COP #1
Traffic stop, Sergeant, sir!

BROADY
Is this how you do a traffic stop?

TRAFFIC COP#1
Sir?

Cop steps aside. Broady smiles down at Marlowe.

BROADY
This -- Officer -- 's how you do a
traffic stop.

Rams Marlowe's face into the car trunk.

EXT. -- WESTERN AVENUE -- NIGHT

Marlowe sits on the ground, against his car. The cops have gone. Harlow tries to dab the cut on his forehead with a handkerchief.

Marlowe stands up, braces himself against the car.

HARLOW
Should'a gotten their badge
numbers. Louie B.'d bust those
flatfoots right outta the force!

MARLOWE
Before or after he goes to hell?

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Marlowe drives towards Beverly Hills. Harlow pulls up her skirt in the back seat, checking her ruined nylons.

HARLOW
Will you look at that?

Marlowe tries not to, as he stops at a light. Pair of headlights comes up behind. A big tan Packard.

He peels away from the stoplight, makes a U-turn. Watches in the mirror as the Packard sits at the light.

Marlowe turns onto a side street. Harlow leans over the front seat.

HARLOW (CONT'D)
Got any booze?

MARLOWE
Booze?

HARLOW
Hooch. I wanna drink, mister. Or
I'm gonna jump right outta this
here car.

INT. - THE NITE KAP -- NIGHT

Rundown, out-of-the-way bar. Marlowe and Harlow enter. The few patrons in the bar are all black. The BARTENDER/OWNER, 50ish, African American, sees Harlow and frowns.

MARLOWE
Hey, Moe.

BARTENDER/OWNER
 Don't want you bringing your kinda
 trouble in here, Marlowe.

MARLOWE
 This isn't trouble.

Harlow is bedraggled and antsy-looking.

BARTENDER/OWNER
 Looks like trouble t'me.

MARLOWE
 One drink, we're gone.

BARTENDER/OWNER
 I'm counting.

Marlowe hustles Harlow into a back booth, and heads into the rear hallway.

HARLOW
 Hey, buddy, where's my drink?!

INT. - BACK HALLWAY OF THE NITE KAP -- NIGHT

Marlowe's on the pay phone.

MARLOWE
 Hey, Smiley. 'Bout that guy in my
 office... Out on Central Avenue?
 All by himself?!

Smiley's voice rises out of the receiver at him.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Took money from the til...? No,
 I'm good for it. An' a bottle, it
 figures... No, I'll look for 'im
 when I can. Don't worry. God
 takes care of drunkards 'n fools.

INT. - THE NITE KAP -- NIGHT

Marlowe slides into the booth across from Harlow. She has her drink. Bartender/Owner slaps a shot down for Marlowe. Harlow finishes her drink, then helps herself to his.

She downs the shot, holds up the glass.

HARLOW
 Hey, barkeep!

Bartender/Owner frowns.

MARLOWE
Maybe you should slow down.

HARLOW
And maybe you should mind your own
business!

Harlow takes the glass and walks away. Sits down at an old piano, dabbling with the keys. Marlowe walks up to her.

HARLOW (CONT'D)
I remember you. Eddie Mannix's own
personal Steppin Fetchit.

MARLOWE
I'm not here for Eddie.

HARLOW
We're all here for Eddie. We just
don't know it.

MARLOWE
Tell you a secret. I don't work
for Eddie. Just let 'im think I
do.

HARLOW
Yeah, you're the only person who
can't be bought.

MARLOWE
Just careful 'bout what I sell.

HARLOW
I got news for you. Everybody has
their price.

MARLOWE
So what's the price of the house
your husband gave away?

Harlow slams her fingers down on the piano keys and gets up.

EXT. - THE NITE KAP -- NIGHT

Marlowe follows Harlow out of the bar.

HARLOW
What do you want from me!!!

She wraps her arms around herself, slides down into a seated position on the sidewalk against the wall.

MARLOWE

What Paul wanted. For Velma to have the house.

HARLOW

Tell her I'm sorry.

MARLOWE

Tell her yourself.

HARLOW

I'd help her if I could! I have no control of anything! You have no idea what my life is like!

She begins to sob. Marlowe hands her his handkerchief.

Harlow wipes her eyes and blows her nose. Offers the handkerchief back to him.

MARLOWE

Keep it.

She sees stitched-in initials: SBM.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Samuel B. Marlowe, at your service.

HARLOW

You work for Eddie Mannix and Louie B. Mayer. They protect the studio.

Tears in her eyes, she looks up at him.

HARLOW (CONT'D)

I just wanna know...when the hell's anyone gonna protect me?

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Harlow lays in back as Marlowe drives, three days of revelry catching up with her. She wipes her face and looks up at him in the mirror.

HARLOW

You look tough but you have kind eyes. Anybody ever tell ya, you're nothin' but a great big marshmallow?

She drifts off to sleep.

Marlowe keeps his eyes on the mirror. No sign of the Packard.

EXT. - HARLOW'S BEVERLY GLEN MANSION -- NIGHT

Harlow sleeps as Marlowe lifts her from his car and carries her up the walkway. The house is big and white, oppressively opulent. At the porch is a small statue -- black jockey holding a lantern.

MARLOWE
 (to the figurine)
 Wonder if you feel as out of place
 here as I do.

He rings the doorbell. BUTLER in his bathrobe answers.

INT. - HARLOW'S MANSION FOYER -- NIGHT

MAMA JEAN comes down the spiral staircase in her dressing gown, mid-40's, blonde and flashy (older, more worn version of her daughter).

MAMA JEAN
 You must be Mr. Marlowe.

MARLOWE
 Got a delivery for you.

MAMA JEAN
 I suppose you can explain what
 Eddie Mannix was thinking, sending
 someone like you to do this job.

MARLOWE
 I can. Doesn't mean I will.

MAMA JEAN
 I don't like your manners.

MARLOWE
 Don't like 'em much either.

Shrugs, swinging around with Harlow in his arms.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Just the same, ma'am, should
 probably tell me where you want
 her. Could drop her right here, if
 you want.

INT. - HARLOW'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mama Jean leads Marlowe into a huge, white bedroom. He lays Harlow on a ruffled satin-covered bed.

MARLOWE

Another big white room. Somebody doesn't like a lotta contrast.

MAMA JEAN

(to the housekeeper)

Ella, please clean her up.

Mama Jean beckons Marlowe from the room as the HOUSEKEEPER undresses Harlow.

INT. - HARLOW'S MANSION FOYER -- NIGHT

Mama Jean leads Marlowe down the stairs. Tiny white dog runs after them.

MAMA JEAN

So you call yourself a private investigator.

MARLOWE

On my better days.

Mama Jean picks up the dog. It yaps and growls at Marlowe.

MAMA JEAN

You don't like me, do you?

Marlowe doesn't answer.

MAMA JEAN (CONT'D)

You underestimate me, Mr. Marlowe.

MARLOWE

No, I'm sure you could squash me like a bug. Or do you have people who do that for you?

MAMA JEAN

You mustn't ever mention this incident. Some very bad people would be upset if you did anything to damage my daughter's career.

MARLOWE

Ma'am, I work for those bad people. An' your daughter seems plenty damaged to me.

A maid emerges from a side room.

MAID

Phone call, Mrs. Bello. Benjamin Siegel.

MARLOWE

Friends call him Bugsy.

Mama Jean gives him an icy stare, picks up a phone on a side table in the foyer.

MAMA JEAN

(on the phone)

Yes, thank you, but she's home.

MARLOWE

(more to himself)

Lady, you know a few more bad people than I would'a guessed.

Mama Jean turns her back on Marlowe. He gets the hint and wanders into the next room.

INT. - HARLOW MANSION LIVINGROOM -- NIGHT

A white two-story room with huge crystal chandelier and grand piano. Over the fireplace is an enormous oil painting of Harlow in a white sequined gown.

Mama Jean comes up behind Marlowe, dog still in her arms.

MAMA JEAN

What do you know about the movie business, Mr. Marlowe?

MARLOWE

As little as possible.

MAMA JEAN

It's my job to shield my daughter. Sometimes it's more than I can do on my own. I ask friends for assistance. Sometimes I buy help. Are you in that business, Mr. Marlowe?

MARLOWE

Depends on the kind of help.

MAMA JEAN

Do you know my husband?

MARLOWE

I know of your husband.

MAMA JEAN

He calls himself my daughter's manager so he can hang around the studio chasing actresses. That's when he's not out selling shares in some fake Mexican gold mine. I'm divorcing him, but he has something ...something I need.

MARLOWE

What is it?

MAMA JEAN

It doesn't matter.

MARLOWE

Rule #22 in the Detective Rule Book: When a client says it doesn't matter, it usually matters a hell've a lot.

MAMA JEAN

My husband took personal papers, including a certain property deed. They belonged to my daughter's dead husband. I need these documents back.

Shifting the dog in her arms, Mama Jean takes a gift-wrapped package from an armoire.

MAMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Take this to my husband. Bring back the white alabaster box he keeps with him.

MARLOWE

How will I know I have the right box?

MAMA JEAN

He won't want to give it to you.

MARLOWE

Why don't you have your pal, Bugsy, help you?

MAMA JEAN

Benjamin might end up killing Marino.

(MORE)

MAMA JEAN (CONT'D)

That wouldn't break my heart, but I can't have my daughter's career tainted by another scandal. I'll pay you five hundred dollars.

MARLOWE

Five hundred's a lotta money. Must be something wrong with this picture.

MAMA JEAN

It has to be done tonight.

MARLOWE

There it is.

The dog yipes in Mama Jean's arms. She drops it, then kneels trying to coax it back. Dog runs off.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

A little like children.

MAMA JEAN

Jean starts rehearsals tomorrow with Clark Gable. Marino threatens to go to the set.

Holds the package out to him.

MAMA JEAN (CONT'D)

Please, Mr. Marlowe, for my daughter's sake...

INT. - HARLOW'S MANSION FOYER -- NIGHT

Marlowe picks up the telephone.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Every time a woman appeals to my better nature, I end up on the short end of things. Why's it, that never stops me from doing it again?

Dials.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Smiley...I know, I know. Any sign of Chandler...? Izzy's? No, I gotta do one more thing. Tell Izzy to keep him there...

(MORE)

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I don't care, sit on him, lock him
in the cooler, 's long as he's in
one piece.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Marlowe drives towards Hollywood. The Packard is on him. Another car comes up behind the Packard, illuminating the driver, a man with a broad-brimmed Panama hat. His features are in shadow.

Marlowe slows down. So does the Packard. Marlowe makes a couple turns. The Packard hangs back, but stays with him.

EXT. - THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- NIGHT

Marlowe passes the hotel, and parks on a side street.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- NIGHT

Adjusting the rear view mirror, Marlowe watches a pair of headlights backing up, into a parking space at the corner.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

On the streets, sometimes you pick
up things. Have to stop'n scrape
'em off on the curb.

Roots around the glove compartment, comes up with a steel tire pressure gauge.

INT. - THE PACKARD -- NIGHT

The driver is Sergeant Broady. Marlowe gets into the back seat, shoves the tire gauge into the back of Broady's neck.

MARLOWE

You're one hell'v a lousy tail.

BROADY

Been doggin' me for months,
Marlowe. Can you blame me?

MARLOWE

Truth is, Broady, I blame you for
everything! The weather, traffic
down Main Street, even that shit-
eating grin on your face.

Digs the gauge into Broady's neck.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Now get your hands up!

Broady raises his hands.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Even you aren't stupid enough to think I'd have Freddy's photos on me. What d'you say, I drill you one, so I don't have to guess what you really want?

BROADY
Velma Leroy! I'm lookin' for Velma Leroy.

MARLOWE
Since when's the D.A. handing off work to scum like you?

Digs the gauge into the back of Broady's skull.

BROADY
Screw you, Marlowe! What gives you the right to judge me?

MARLOWE
Maybe it's 'cuz you hurt people. Burn their businesses 'n take their money. You're crooked, always been crooked. An' you 'n I both know you killed Freddy!

Pushes Broady's face into the steering wheel.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
And maybe...it's 'cuz I just don't like you!!

BROADY
Got a big mouth, Marlowe. Someday somebody's gonna close it for you.

Marlowe whacks him on the back the head with the tire gauge.

MARLOWE
'Til they do, stay the hell outta my way!

EXT. - PACKARD -- NIGHT

Marlowe slams the door. Broady peels rubber pulling away.

EXT. - BACK OF THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- NIGHT

Marlowe approaches two old, black BELLHOPS, playing craps on the service door steps.

MARLOWE

Lookin' for a fellow. Italian, late-forties, says he's a movie producer. Name's Bello. Probably staying under another name. Likes the ladies.

Old bellhops smile at each other

OLD BELLHOP

Who's askin'?

Marlowe produces a dollar bill.

MARLOWE

Mr. Washington.

Both old men grab for the bill. Marlowe pulls it back.

EXT. - BACK OF THE ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- NIGHT

One old bellhop returns with a page torn from the registry.

OLD BELLHOP

This is who you want.

Marlowe reaches for the sheet.

OLD BELLHOP (CONT'D)

You can have it...

(smiling a toothless grin)

If you introduce me to Mr. Lincoln.

INT. - ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- BACK SERVICE HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Marlowe grabs a bellhop jacket from a rack, puts it on.

INT. - ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- SERVICE ELEVATOR -- NIGHT

Marlowe gets onto the service elevator with a white WAITER carrying a tray. The waiter eyes Marlowe. Marlowe nods as the waiter gets off on a lower floor.

INT. - ROOSEVELT HOTEL HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Marlowe knocks on the door to Room #707. No answer.

MARLOWE
Room service.

MAN'S VOICE FROM BEHIND THE DOOR
Didn't order room service.

Door opens. MARINO BELLO, late 40's, fleshy, balding, in his boxers. Behind him, RUBY, early 20's, a bad peroxide blonde, peers out from under the sheets.

Marlowe shows Bello the gift-wrapped box.

INT. - ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- BELLO'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Bello rips open the package. It's filled with paper strips.

BELLO
What the hell?

Marlowe pushes his way into the room.

BELLO (CONT'D)
She sent you, that lousy bitch!

Tries to back-hand Marlowe. He grabs Bello's arm, throws him down on the bed.

BELLO (CONT'D)
I know who you are! Think you're one'a Eddie Mannix's toy soldiers, but you're nothing! Just a two-bit, South Central Jungle Monkey. You stupid spade!

Marlowe twists Bello's arm, as Ruby crawls to the corner of the bed.

MARLOWE
Shouldn't use that language in front of a lady.

Pushes Bello face-down into the mattress.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
(to Ruby)
Might be a good time to go get dressed.

Ruby wraps a sheet around her, and goes into the bathroom. Marlowe watches, his eyes crossing the dresser...and the white stone box on it. A large keepsake box, carved, stone lion resting across the top.

Marlowe lets go of Bello and goes to the box. Bello reaches under the bed, pulls out a tiny .22 Caliber automatic. He points it at Marlowe.

BELLO

Only way my wife gets what's in that box is over my dead body.

MARLOWE

She has people who can arrange that.

BELLO

Her studio lackeys?! They're nuthin'! Hah! When I met that bitch, her precious Baby Jean was a tow-headed little brat. I made her what she is! A movie star!

Ruby peeks out of the bathroom, then closes the door.

BELLO (CONT'D)

My wife tries to cut me out, tell her I'll send her little angel to the hoosegow! Yes, she drove into a ditch the night her hubby died. Drunk as a skunk she was. Came home to mama, blood all over her. Maybe 'cuz she bumped her head. Maybe not. D.A. opened a murder investigation.

MARLOWE

An' closed it as suicide.

BELLO

'Cuz the Studio cleans up all her messes.

Motions to the box with the gun.

BELLO (CONT'D)

Wanna see who our sweet little Baby Jean really is?

Pulls out several sheets of folded paper.

BELLO (CONT'D)
 Souvenir from Tijuana, month before
 her husband died.

Hospital records in Spanish, detailing a procedure: **ABORTO**

BELLO (CONT'D)
 Stayed alone under her maiden name.
 Harlean Carpenter. Told the hubby
 she was goin' down for the sun.
 Ain't that a hoot? Only one thing
 that girl likes more'n sun, 'n she
 married a guy who wasn't up to it.

Points the gun at Marlowe.

BELLO (CONT'D)
 Now down on your knees, spook!

MARLOWE
 Or you're gonna shoot me with that
 pea shooter?

BELLO
 I said get down!

Bello fires. Shot bounces off the alabaster box, embeds in
 the bathroom door frame. Ruby peeks out again.

BELLO (CONT'D)
 And you! Get out here!

Still wrapped in sheets, Ruby hesitates.

RUBY
 In front of him?

Bello waves the gun at her.

BELLO
 When did you get to be so shy?

Ruby comes out of the bathroom. With Bello distracted,
 Marlowe grabs the gun. They struggle...

INT. - ROOSEVELT HOTEL -- BELLO'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Bello sits on the bed, still in his boxers, as Marlowe takes
 the alabaster box from the dresser. Ruby, now dressed, holds
 the gun on Bello.

BELLO

You no-talent, little whore! Think you're an actress?! I'll make sure you never work in this town!

Marlowe heads for the door.

MARLOWE

(to Ruby)

You can shoot him if you want to.

Ruby looks like she's considering it.

EXT. - DRIVEWAY OUTSIDE ROCKY WASHINGTON'S DUPLEX -- NIGHT

Sergeant Rocky Washington can be seen in an upstairs window in his undershirt washing dishes. His wife, HAZEL, 38, African American, five feet and three inches of spitfire, paces in the background, talking at him.

Pebble bounces off the window. Then another. Washington looks down at Marlowe in the driveway. Washington frowns.

WASHINGTON

Honey Mama. Just gonna take out the trash.

Comes downstairs with the trash pail.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Marlowe! Gonna be hell to pay, if Hazel catches you here!

MARLOWE

Hazel usedta love me.

WASHINGTON

That was before I got reamed every time I helped you outta a jam.

MARLOWE

When've you helped me?

WASHINGTON

I'm helpin' you right now by not kicking your sorry ass. What do you want, Marlowe?

MARLOWE

Why're they reopening the Paul Bern case?

WASHINGTON

You know white folks! Some movie star's producer husband does the Dutch Act 'n nobody can let it go!

MARLOWE

We both know there's more to it. Rocky, just point me in the right direction.

Towering over Marlowe, Washington pokes him in the chest, backing him down the driveway.

WASHINGTON

That'd be right behind you. Keep going, keep going. Just...about ...there.

Pushes Marlowe out onto the street.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

You got it.

Washington turns to walk away.

MARLOWE

It stinks, Rocky! You know it stinks!

WASHINGTON

Read the same damn reports you did.

MARLOWE

That was four years ago.

WASHINGTON

What makes you think they talk to me 'bout anything north'v Wilshire?

HAZEL O.S.

Rocky? You out there?

Hazel has come out onto the stairs, peering out into the darkness. Marlowe and Washington freeze. She shakes her head and goes inside.

WASHINGTON

You didn't get it in uniform. An' you don't get it now! Why d'ya keep messin' in other people's business?

MARLOWE

D.A.'s blowin' smoke at me, lookin' for a friend'v mine. Need to know kinda trouble she's in.

WASHINGTON

For such a smart guy, you always were a soft touch, Marlowe.

Dumps his pail into a trash can, slams the lid.

WASHINGTON (CONT'D)

Night Bern shot himself, taxi driver drove by. He saw a woman run from the house.

MARLOWE

Report said she was just a shadow.

WASHINGTON

Guy from the Times is still pokin' around on the case. Seems the driver saw something that's not in the report.

INT. -- DOWNSTAIRS BAR AT MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING-- NIGHT

Marlowe walks through, towards the stairs to his office.

SMILEY

Izzy lost that fool friend'v yours.

MARLOWE

Name's Chandler.

SMILEY

Walked in on the card game at Moe's place. Played two hands. Now he's at the Chicken Shack. Ivey has him cornered with her fried chicken.

MARLOWE

Big Ivey? He's a dead man!

SMILEY

(calls after him)

An' that reporter pal of yours called. Says you know where to find him.

INT. - MARLOWE'S INNER OFFICE -- NIGHT

Marlowe sets the alabaster box on his desk, pokes through it.

MARLOWE

One place Moran'd be this time'a
night. An' it sure isn't home...

EXT. - CENTRAL AVENUE -- NIGHT

Marlowe drives down Central Avenue, then turns onto a
quieter, more residential street.

EXT. - BROTHER'S AFTER HOURS CLUB -- NIGHT

Marlowe parks near a large house. Curtains are drawn, but
the lights are on, music blaring.

Marlowe goes up the walkway. Two large black men at the door
glare at him. One cracks a smile. Marlowe and the GUARD
slap palms.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

They called this place Brother's.
During the day, Brother ran the bar
down at the Dunbar.

INT. - DUNBAR HOTEL BAR -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

BROTHER, a very large bald black man, mid-40's, dressed in a
tuxedo formally greets bar patrons to the upscale jazz bar.

EXT. - BROTHER'S AFTER HOURS CLUB -- NIGHT/CONTINUOUS

Brother opens the door. Transvestite make up, woman's wig
and African print kaftan, he kisses Marlowe on both cheeks.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

But at night, Brother was a sister,
an' he ran the most exclusive After
Hours club in town.

INT. - BROTHER'S AFTER HOURS CLUB -- NIGHT

The place is packed, movie stars, black entertainers,
Pasadena socialites. A band plays in the living room, and
there's a bar in every room.

Marlowe walks through elegantly furnished rooms decorated with numerous pieces of original artwork. He grabs a bar stool, making eye contact with luscious female barflies.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Fancy ladies. Like other pieces of art in here, they were for sale.

JOE THE BARTENDER, busy making drinks, slaps Marlowe's hand.

JOE THE BARTENDER

Marlowe, my man.

MARLOWE

Joe. Seen Velma tonight?

Joe the Bartender shakes his head. Marlowe scans the bar.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Thought Bugsy Siegel was in jail.

JOE THE BARTENDER

Technically he is.

Pours Marlowe a drink.

JOE THE BARTENDER (CONT'D)

All depends on who you know.

BENJAMIN SIEGEL, late 30's, long coat draped over his shoulders, all in white, more like a movie character than gangster. He stands, talking to a group of men.

MARLOWE

Isn't that the Mayor with him?

MAYOR FRANKLIN SHAW, short officious butterball in his mid-40's, talks to Siegel. Two tall high-end hookers flank the Mayor, hanging on his every word.

JOE THE BARTENDER

And the D.A. Your old boss...

One hooker turns to accept a drink, revealing D.A. Fitts, listening over the Mayor's shoulder.

JOE THE BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Looks pleased with himself.

Siegel slaps Fitts on the back. Fitts smiles.

MARLOWE

Lemme see what I can do 'bout that.

Joe the Bartender rolls his eyes as Marlowe ambles over to Fitts.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Mr. District Attorney.

Fitts pivots. The group around him goes silent.

FITTS
Marlowe. When did they start
letting people like you in here?

MARLOWE
Long time before people like you
were comin'.

FITTS
What do you want, Marlowe?

MARLOWE
Your House Dog off my back.

FITTS
House dog?

MARLOWE
Charles Broady? Big, stupid, gets
tongue-tied when his brain engages.
Fortunately, that doesn't happen
often.

FITTS
I've no idea what you're talking
about. You should leave, Marlowe,
before you embarrass yourself.

MARLOWE
Is that so?

Leans over to Siegel.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Anyone ever tell you 'bout ol'
Buron here? That thing his upper
lip does. Curls up like someone
tyin' it in a bow on a nice neat
package of hooey.

Fitts' upper lip twitches.

FITTS
Calling me a liar?

Music fades and the room goes still.

A hand reaches out from the crowd. J.C. Moran drags Marlowe back to the bar. Club activity resumes.

MORAN

Do you have a death wish?!

MARLOWE

(to the bartender)

Drink, Joe.

MORAN

Keep flailin' away at the D.A.'s Office, might as well put a pistol to your own head, Marlowe. Are you doin' this for Velma?

Joe the Bartender slaps a shot down in front of Marlowe. He throws it back and shoves his glass across the bar.

MORAN (CONT'D)

What good're you to Velma if you get yourself killed?

MARLOWE

'Bout as much good as I am now.

The Joe the Bartender re-fills Marlowe's shot glass.

MORAN

We all feel bad about Freddy. But let Justice do its job, Marlowe.

MARLOWE

Justice goes to the highest bidder. Anyone who can't pay, better go find his own.

MORAN

Take the Law in your hands, you'll be no better'n the rest of 'em.

MARLOWE

What makes you think I am?

MORAN

I know you, Marlowe.

Marlowe downs his shot.

MORAN (CONT'D)

Never saw anyone so quick to take on all the problems of the world. Even ones no one can fix.

Marlowe smiles.

MARLOWE

Know what they say. Can't fix things sometimes, without breakin' a few others.

MORAN

To hell with 'em, Marlowe! To the Brotherhood'v Pissin' Everyone Off.

They clink glasses.

MARLOWE

Brotherhood.

MORAN

'tween Brothers, I've been poking through records at City Hall. Came across something in the Arroyo Seco that just might interest you.

Slaps a bundle of papers down on the bar. Pulls out a map.

MORAN (CONT'D)

Long strip of old orange grove property's being bought up, all along the canyon.

Map shows a narrow series of plots, X-ed out in red along a curved black line labelled ARROYO SECO CANYON.

MORAN (CONT'D)

Farms were hit hard by the Big Freeze. Then the creek ran dry. Land's gone to seed.

Spreads the stack out across the bar, searching through it.

MORAN (CONT'D)

Wouldn't think much of it, if it wasn't for the fact there's just one buyer. Company calls itself Millicent Holdings, Inc. I did a bit more pokin' around, and lo 'n behold...

Pulls out a newspaper clipping.

MORAN (CONT'D)

Meet Millicent.

Photo, titled "Santa Anita Derby Days", shows Benjamin Siegel trackside, with his 8-year-old daughter Millicent.

EXT. - STREET NEAR BROTHER'S AFTER HOURS CLUB -- NIGHT

Marlowe heads to his car. Moran trails unsteadily behind. Moran stops and holds up a bottle.

MORAN
To the Brotherhood.

MARLOWE
Brotherhood.

MORAN
Not so fast.

Marlowe turns. Moran's standing at some bushes.

MORAN (CONT'D)
This Brother's gotta take care'v a
little business.

Marlowe turns away. Sound of a zipper.

MARLOWE
Heard you're goin' back over the
Paul Bern suicide.

MORAN
Alleged suicide.

MARLOWE
Something 'bout a certain cab
driver.

MORAN
Yeah, didn't see much. This
particular cab driver, he was more
interested in a lady in his own
back seat.

MARLOWE
Why open it up again? Case's old
news.

MORAN
Funny thing about old news. It has
a way of getting tangled up in new
news. Paul Bern bought a farm
overlooking the Arroyo Seco. And
you'll never guess what he did...

Sound of a zipper again.

MORAN (CONT'D)
He gave it away.

Marlowe turns, and WHAM!

Shakes off a glancing blow to the head and grabs his attacker around the mid-section, propels them both into a wall.

Brass knuckles. This time they connect. A dark figure stands over Marlowe and smiles. Last thing he sees is a glint of gold.

INT. - TINY, DARK DANK JAIL CELL -- MORNING

Marlowe lays on a cot. As his vision clears, he sees light...shining on Sgt. Washington's unhappy face.

WASHINGTON

Two hack jobs? Two hack jobs in one day?! A lot, even for you, Marlowe. Blood all over you. Again.

Marlowe sees the blood.

MARLOWE

Dry Cleaner's gonna hate me. Who's dead?

WASHINGTON

Don' give me that! You were laying across him. Knife right next to you both. If I didn't know how much you liked that lousy Mick...

MARLOWE

J.C...?

Washington nods.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Oh, not J.C!

Sits up, plants his feet on the ground.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

They killed Freddy. An' now they've messed with the Brotherhood! I'm tellin' you, those self-righteous sons-of-bitches 're gonna wish they never heard the name, Samuel B. Marlowe!

WASHINGTON

If I thought you'd explain that, I might die a happy man.

MARLOWE
How long've I been here?

WASHINGTON
Long enough. Someone's here for
you.

Chandler stands at the cell door, disheveled but with a smile
of the cat who ate the canary.

EXT. - POLICE STATION -- DAY

Marlowe dabs at blood on his jacket as Chandler trails him
from the Precinct.

CHANDLER
This business comes with a few
legal problems.

MARLOWE
Trouble is my business.

CHANDLER
I like that. Can I use it?

Marlowe shrugs.

MARLOWE
Where's your car?

Car horn wails, the opening refrain of La Cucaracha.

CHANDLER
I came with friends.

A long, red flame-painted low-rider filled with Mexican
Pachucos in zoot suits idles curbside.

INT. - DOWNSTAIRS BAR IN MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

Smiley frowns as Marlowe and Chandler pass through, showing
the wear-and-tear of last night's adventures.

INT. - BACK STAIRS -- MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

Marino Bello stands on the stairs, pointing the tiny .22
caliber revolver down at Marlowe and Chandler.

MARLOWE
Not that pea shooter again.

CHANDLER

Who's that?

Marlowe shrugs him off, continues up the stairs.

MARLOWE

Don' worry about it.

INT. - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY -- MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

At the top of the stairs, Bello digs the gun into Marlowe's back, pushes him down the hall. Chandler follows.

BELLO

D'you know how long I've been waiting?

MARLOWE

Could've saved time by making an appointment.

Gun in his back, Marlowe opens his office door.

BELLO

You have something of mine. I want it back.

INT. - MARLOWE'S WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Bello pushes Marlowe towards his inner office door. Chandler follows.

MARLOWE

What makes you think I still got it?

INT. - MARLOWE'S INNER OFFICE -- DAY

Opening the door, Marlowe, Bello and Chandler find Bugsy Siegel and GANG have made themselves comfortable. Siegel sits, feet up on Marlowe's desk.

BELLO

Mr. Siegel!

Bello steps forward, tries to embrace Siegel. Siegel shakes his finger at him.

SIEGEL

Marino, you've been a naughty boy.

BELLO
 Everything that bitch says about me
 is a lie!

SIEGEL
 That's not what we're talking
 about. Think, Marino.

Bello nods.

BELLO
 I was coming to see you. Yes!

SIEGEL
 To pay me back every cent I put
 into your little Mexican mining
 operation.

BELLO
 With interest!

SIEGEL
 Lots of interest. Lots 'n lots of
 interest. What d'ya say, boys?

Siegel's gang nods. Siegel stands, pats Bello on the face.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
 And, Marino, while you're doing the
 right thing, I know you'll want to
 make your lovely wife happy.

BELLO
 I will?

SIEGEL
 By signing the divorce decree.

BELLO
 Next time I see my lawyer!

SIEGEL
 Why wait?

Pulls out a wad of papers.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
 Pen someone.

Four of Siegel's guys produce pens. Making a face, Bello
 signs the documents.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
 Here...here...and here...

Folds the papers, returns them to his pocket.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
That wasn't so hard, was it?

Bello seems uncertain.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
Now get lost.

Bello backs away.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
Scram.

Bello scurries away. Siegel turns to Marlowe.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
So you're the spade detective.

MARLOWE
Name's Marlowe. Samuel B.

SIEGEL
Can't be much of a livin'.

MARLOWE
I get by.

Chandler steps forward, extends his hand.

CHANDLER
Chandler, Raymond Chandler. I'm a
writer.

SIEGEL
Who gives a shit?

Doesn't takes Chandler's hand.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)
But you, Marlowe, Samuel B, you've
been ruffling feathers. Got some
advice for you.

MARLOWE
Watch out for birds?

SIEGEL
Just the big ones. Know what big
birds do?

Siegel raises his right hand, and brings it down with the sound of something sailing through the air from high up. His hand lands -- hard -- on Marlowe's shoulder.

SIEGEL (CONT'D)

Splat!

Smiles and pats Marlowe on the cheek.

INT. -- MARLOWE'S CAR -- DAY

Marlowe lays on the horn. Traffic starts to move.

Chandler sits in the passenger seat, the alabaster box on the seat between them.

EXT. - MGM STUDIO GATES -- DAY

Marlowe's car goes through the gate.

EXT. - PARKING LOT IN FRONT OF THE THALBERG BUILDING -- DAY

Marlowe parks. A black Rolls Royce is pulling out. It pulls back in.

The CHAUFFEUR (tall, thin African American) gets out, goes around to open the back passenger door. A finger -- stubby man's finger with huge opal ring -- beckons Marlowe.

Marlowe gets out of his car, goes to the Rolls. Eddie Mannix sits in the back seat, with a cigar and starlet-of-the-week.

MANNIX

So the girl got home.

Marlowe nods.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

Mama's still chewin' on me. What'd you do, Marlowe?

MARLOWE

My job.

MANNIX

Our Number-One-Box-Office-Draw is comin' unglued.

MARLOWE

Maybe she needs a rest.

MANNIX

She can get all the rest she wants after she shimmies that cute little butt across the screen a few more times in that white satin number.

Stares up at Marlowe.

MANNIX (CONT'D)

Meantime, I need you to go out'n bring me some hospital records.

MARLOWE

Any particular hospital records?

MANNIX

Think you know what I'm talkin' about. Girl's contract has a morality clause. My butt's in the ringer if those records get out.

MARLOWE

Suppose they'll just go into a file. Where they can come out if you ever need somethin' to rub her nose in.

MANNIX

Better'n with that bunch of vultures she's got around her. All tryin' to get a bigger piece'v her.

MARLOWE

We all want something.

Mannix flicks his ash. Marlowe has to step back, to keep it from landing on his shoes.

MANNIX

My point exactly.

Mannix closes the car door.

INT. - THALBERG BUILDING HALLWAY -- DAY

Following Marlowe down a hallway, Chandler stops, transfixed by a movie poster. **The Thin Man** starring William Powell.

Tall, gaunt gruff-looking MAN stands over a secretary in a nearby cubicle. Dark mustache, shock of thick white hair, rumpled trench coat, he wanders over to Chandler at the poster.

THE MAN

Drivel, pure drivel. Silly characters, hackneyed plot, an ending only your Mother'd believe. Making that book into a movie was a complete waste of celluloid.

The Man nods to Marlowe, turns and drifts down the hall.

THE MAN (CONT'D)

Sam...

Marlowe returns the nod.

MARLOWE

D.H.

Chandler stands, gaping after the Man. Marlowe shrugs.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

It's his book. His right to say.

Bannered across the poster: "Dashiell Hammett's Master Mystery".

INT. - MGM STUDIOS -- OUTSIDE HARLOW'S DRESSING ROOM SUITE -- DAY

Mama Jean opens the door. Marlowe stands with the alabaster box, Chandler behind him.

MAMA JEAN

Marlowe! Where the hell've you been?!

MARLOWE

Plenty'a places I shouldn't've.

MAMA JEAN

You have it!

She reaches for the box. Marlowe pushes past her.

INT. - HARLOW'S INNER-DRESSING ROOM SUITE -- DAY

Marlowe knocks on Harlow's dressing room door.

Harlow opens the door in a feather-lined, white silk gown. She sees Marlowe, Mama Jean behind him.

MAMA JEAN
(to Marlowe)
You can't go in there!

Harlow pulls Marlowe into her dressing room, closes the door in her mother's face. Mama Jean pounds on the door.

Marlowe hands Harlow the alabaster box.

HARLOW
This was my husband's!

MARLOWE
Think he'd want you to have it.
Considering all the people tryin'
to keep me from giving it to you.

She opens the box, sorts through the contents.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
If you're looking for the property
deed, it's not in there. Lots'v
letters, an' this.

He fishes out the hospital records.

Harlow's eyes widen. She sits down, like someone let the air out of her.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Did Paul know you were pregnant
when you married him?

HARLOW
I couldn't tell him! I hoped I
wouldn't have to. Paul wanted
children. He was the only man I
knew who did.

She collapses onto her white velvet couch in tears. Marlowe offers her a handkerchief.

MARLOWE
If it's any consolation, he kept
all your letters.

Harlow takes the handkerchief, dabs her make up.

HARLOW
Paul loved me.

MARLOWE

Sure, he was a great guy. An' he bought that house for Velma. What're you gonna do about it?

Harlow stands up, in front of a mirror. She puts on a string of pearls and fur coat, going through the metamorphosis. Damaged, uneducated girl...to Movie Star.

HARLOW

My marriage might notta been all it shoulda been. But my husband believed in me when nobody in this Goddamn business would. And, yes, Paul bought that house. It was one of the last things he ever did...

INT. - FANCY DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES HOTEL LOBBY -- DAY

Chandler sits on a couch, behind a newspaper, a black man at his feet with a shoe shine box. It's Marlowe, jacket off, shirt sleeves rolled, polishing Chandler's shoes.

CHANDLER

(through the newspaper)
How long do we wait?

MARLOWE

's long as it takes.

Chandler fidgets.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

You wanted detective work. What's rule #24?

CHANDLER

If someone says you don't need a gun, you better bring one that works.

MARLOWE

That's #23. Rule #24: Hide in plain sight. But look like you belong.

Chandler freezes behind his paper as Marino Bello comes out of the elevator. Bello crosses to the street entrance, turning to survey the lobby.

The couches are empty.

Bello continues out through the revolving doors.

EXT. - BUSY DOWNTOWN L.A. STREETS -- DAY

Bello adjusts his hat in front of the hotel, and ambles along.

Marlowe and Chandler come out, slip a dollar to the SHOE SHINE MAN (African American), returning his kit. Marlowe and Chandler follow Bello at a discreet distance.

Bello turns a corner, goes into an old-fashioned Jewish Market/Deli.

INT. - OLD-FASHIONED JEWISH MARKET/DELI -- DAY

Bello peruses bagels, and sniffs steaming kettles of matzo ball soup.

EXT. - OLD-FASHIONED JEWISH MARKET/DELI -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Marlowe and Chandler watch Bello through the window.

INT. - OLD-FASHIONED JEWISH MARKET/DELI -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Replacing a kettle top, Bello turns to the window. The window is empty.

Bello nods to the SHOPKEEPER. The shopkeeper goes into the back room.

Making sure he's alone, Bello sticks his finger into a barrel.

EXT. - OLD-FASHIONED JEWISH MARKET/DELI -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Marlowe and Chandler are back at the window.

MARLOWE

One more thing about detective work...

INT. - OLD-FASHIONED JEWISH MARKET/DELI -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Bello pulls a pickled herring from the barrel, sniffs it.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Sometimes a red herring...

Bello drops the fish back into the barrel.

MARLOWE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Is just a red herring.

Shopkeeper returns with a flat package in brown wrapping.

MARLOWE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And...sometimes it's not.

Bello slips the package into his pocket.

INT. - BRADBURY BUILDING LOBBY -- DAY

Bello crosses the ornate, multi-story glass-ceilinged lobby and approaches the elevator.

INT. - BRADBURY BUILDING ELEVATOR -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Bello pulls the package from his pocket, rips the wrapping as he gets into the open wrought-iron elevator. The elevator goes up -- slowly -- glimpses of Marlowe's face outside the elevator on two upper floors, as Bello opens a magazine.

A 1937 "girlie" magazine.

INT. - BRADBURY BUILDING -- UPPER LANDING -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Bello rolls up the magazine, as he gets off the elevator. He ambles down the landing (open to the building's central atrium) stopping at a door: Lucky Strike Mining Company

INT. - BELLO'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

A large, empty waiting room. GLADYS, cherry red hair and three hundred pounds squeezed into a flower-print dress, looks up from the front desk as Bello passes.

GLADYS
Mr. Bello...

He bustles past her to his office.

BELLO
Not now, Gladys.

Marlowe enters as Bello disappears, Chandler in tow.

GLADYS
Excuse me...

MARLOWE
Not now, Gladys.

Barges past Gladys, Chandler following.

INT. - BELLO'S INNER OFFICE -- DAY

Bello sits at his desk behind the magazine, as Marlowe and Chandler enter. Bello goes for his desk drawer. Marlowe closes the drawer on Bello's hand and holds it.

BELLO
Marlowe! What d'you want?!

MARLOWE
What you took from the box.

BELLO
Dunno what you're talking about.

MARLOWE
A certain property deed? Maybe you're thinkin' you'll turn it over to your pal, Bugsy to pay off your debt. Bad news. Title can't transfer without your stepdaughter's signature.

Bello shrugs.

BELLO
'S that so? Got news for you, buster. I do her signature better'n her. Property's been sold. Got a check right here.

MARLOWE
Hand it over.

BELLO
You're kidding.

MARLOWE
Do I look like a man with a sense of humor?

Bello looks at Chandler.

BELLO
See you brought muscle.

MARLOWE

Step outta line 'n he'll beat you
with his Iambic Pentameter.

BELLO

Expect that to scare me?

MARLOWE

My associate can toss the place.
(to Chandler)
Start with those files over there.
If you find anything interesting,
hold onto it.

Chandler starts towards the file cabinets.

BELLO

All right, all right.

Marlowe opens the desk drawer, releasing Bello's hand. Bello goes to the file cabinet, pulls out a large Colt .45. Points it at Marlowe and Chandler.

BELLO (CONT'D)

Think I'd hand that check over to
some spook?

MARLOWE

Or let me take it with a minimum
amount of silliness. Guess not.

Marlowe takes a step toward Bello, who waves the pistol.

BELLO

Stop right there!

INT. - BELLO'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Gladys sits, stirring a cup of tea. There's a gun shot. She stops to listen. Nothing else happens. Gladys shrugs and goes back to her tea.

INT. - BELLO'S INNER OFFICE -- DAY

Marlowe holds Bello's limp body, as Chandler retrieves the gun from the floor.

CHANDLER

Are you crazy?!

MARLOWE

Just faster than he is. Wanna give me a hand?

Chandler's unhappy handling the gun. Marlowe drops it in his pocket as they drag Bello.

CHANDLER

Is he dead?

MARLOWE

That was a love tap. Bring me his chair.

INT. - BELLO'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Marlowe and Chandler emerge from Bello's office. Tucking the check in his jacket, Marlowe lays the pistol on Gladys' desk.

MARLOWE

Gladys, keep this so he doesn't hurt himself.

Marlowe and Chandler exit. Gladys gingerly picks up the pistol, goes to Bello's office and peers in.

INT. - BELLO'S INNER OFFICE -- DAY

Bello sits, tied to his chair by drapery cords. He tries to scream at her through the gag in his mouth.

INT. - BELLO'S OFFICE RECEPTION AREA -- DAY

Gladys smiles, closes the door and goes back to her desk.

EXT. - DESERTED TWO-LANE COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Marlowe's car winds through rolling hills covered with chaparral and oak tree groves. The car pauses at a cross street sign: Orange Grove Drive and Arroyo Seco Road.

Down an embankment, is a homeless camp. Tired sun-burned women chase ragged kids through tents and tin-and-plywood shacks. Dog packs scramble for scraps. Old people smoke pipes in rocking chairs still tied to the backs of broken-down farm trucks. There is a curious lack of young able-bodied men.

In the middle of the camp is a large fire, spit turning with a half dozen tiny squirrel and rabbit carcasses.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- DAY

Marlowe nods to Chandler, as they pass the camp.

MARLOWE
Dust bowl people.

EXT. - COUNTRY ROAD-- DAY

The car stops, backs up to a graveled driveway closed off by a rickety wooden gate flanked by huge withered trees. A chain with a broken padlock hangs from the gate.

EXT. - LONG GRAVELED COUNTRY DRIVEWAY -- DAY

Marlowe's car travels up a shadowy driveway surrounded by a tangle of overgrowth. Remains of a dying fruit orchard.

EXT. - GRAVELLED CLEARING -- DAY

Marlowe's car emerges from the driveway into sunlight...only to be eclipsed by another shadow.

A tall thin house stands above them on a small knoll. Once a prime example of Victorian architecture, the house is a stark, dilapidated ghost of itself.

Marlowe and Chandler park the car and approach the house.

MARLOWE
Good detective looks and listens.

CHANDLER
You won't even know I'm there.

Sound of gunfire. Chandler dodges behind Marlowe as rifle rounds burrow into the ground at their feet. Marlowe smiles.

MARLOWE
She's playing with us.

He urges Chandler on. Next shot takes off a tree branch behind them.

WOMAN'S VOICE THROUGH A BULLHORN
(O.S.)
I told you, you Goddamned shysters
aren't taking my house!

MARLOWE
We're not lawyers.

Rifle barrel appears over an upstairs porch railing. Marlowe takes off his hat.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Do I look like a lawyer...?

EXT. - FARMHOUSE FRONT PORCH -- DAY

Chandler looks out over the shriveled orchards of the dying farm, as he and Marlowe wait at the front door.

The door is answered by LULUBELLE. 50ish, 5' 3", 300 pounds, dark-skinned African American, hair tied up in a checkered scarf. A large gray cat squirms in her arms.

LULUBELLE
She'll be down, when the mood suits her.

Taps the cat on the nose.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
You gentlemen'd best come on in...

INT. - PARLOR -- DAY

Lulubelle beckons Marlowe and Chandler into a parlor cluttered with memorabilia. A taxidermied, horned owl eyes them with wizened amusement from the mantel, next to a squirrel frozen in mid-scamper.

Chandler turns to an upright grizzly posed behind him. Lulubelle shakes her head.

LULUBELLE
The late Mr. Anderssen. He was a hunter, that man. Never saw an animal he didn't wanna kill. Lordie, couldn't seem to stop himself sometimes. Guess some people, they just have this deep rootin' ache in 'em. Seems to make 'em wanna hurt other things.

Small white porcelain frame sits on the mantel. Pale blonde woman, pained expression in her eyes.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
Mrs. Anderssen. Now she was a delicate flower. More of a City Girl, if you ask me.
(MORE)

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
 Never took to the dirt. Died,
 trying to birth their first child.

Cat lets out a yowl.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
 We have company. Now you behave.

MARLOWE
 Marlowe, ma'am. Samuel B. We met
 during the business regarding Mr.
 Bern.

Offers Lulubelle his hand. Cat hisses.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 The movie producer...?

LULUBELLE
 One who died. Paulie, she called
 him. Paulie, Paulie, Paulie.
 Comin' and goin' at strange hours.
 Couldn't live without her. Then,
 he never wanted to see her again.

Nods to Marlowe.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
 Now I remember you!

Pulls a rag from her apron, to dust the mantel.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
 Not that it matters, poor man. One
 moment, you're on top in that
 business. Next, you're naked on
 your bedroom floor, bullet in your
 forehead.

Her dusting knocks a small unframed photo off the mantel.
 Marlowe catches it. A tiny light-skinned black girl holding
 a huge rifle, her smile is a crescent of pearly whites.

A large pale hand rests on her shoulder. The girl is leaning
 against the out-of-focus lower torso of a man.

Lulubelle turns back to Marlowe and Chandler.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
 Oh Lordie, where on earth are my
 manners?! Can I offer you
 gentlemen a drink?

Chandler brightens.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
Just made fresh lemonade.

MARLOWE
No, thank you.

VELMA O.S.
He's a scotch straight up man,
Mama.

Long skirt slit up to mid-thigh, Velma comes down the stairs,
sets the rifle down against the bannister.

VELMA
Thought you worked alone, Marlowe.

MARLOWE
I do.

CHANDLER
We've met, ma'am. I was less than
vertical at the time.

Velma shrugs.

VELMA
Coulda shot you out there. Thought
you were more'v those City Hall
swindlers.

LULUBELLE
One'v 'em nailed a notice to our
door yesterday.

Chuckles.

LULUBELLE (CONT'D)
Left here sittin' on a load of
buckshot, that fellow.

In a large photo over the mantel, stands Olaf Anderssen,
tall, blond, confident, rifle-in-hand.

MARLOWE
Marksmanship runs in the family.

VELMA
Had to get something from him. By
rights, it shoulda been the farm.

MARLOWE
That 'n a nickel'll get you a cup
of coffee. Old man Anderssen died
without a will as I recall.

Velma picks up the rifle and cocks it.

VELMA

But he taught me to take care of myself!

MARLOWE

How long do you think that'll stop 'em?

She aims, takes out the squirrel on the mantel. Targeting the owl, she turns, puts a round in the grizzly.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Is this what Paul woulda wanted?

VELMA

Don't you talk to me about Paul!

Points the gun at him.

MARLOWE

Tell me what you said to his widow.

VELMA

I begged her not to take the house.

MARLOWE

What else?

VELMA

Nothing!

MARLOWE

I don't believe you.

VELMA

Nothing she'd ever say to them!

MARLOWE

Why's it everyone's so interested in a certain cab driver?

Velma cocks the rifle.

VELMA

I told her I was there! That what you want?! I was there that night, and I don't care who knows it!

Marlowe steps forward, the barrel now touching his chest.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Now get out of my house!

MARLOWE

Or what? You're gonna shoot me?

VELMA

And what if I do?!

MARLOWE

They'll send somebody else, who'll bring an army to get you off this farm. Somebody who won't give a damn if you leave feet first. An' they won't care if your mother gets in the way.

He grabs the barrel, pushes it away. Velma sits down on the stairs and starts to cry.

VELMA

Paul called me, sounding so small, so lost. She'd gone to her Mother's and left her wedding rings on his pillow. He was drinking.

Marlowe takes the rifle, hands it to Chandler.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I went in a taxi. Paul said he'd pay. He was generous that way.

She breaks down. Marlowe drags Velma to her feet.

MARLOWE

Tell me what you saw!

VELMA

A woman ran down the driveway when we drove up, got into a car and drove away.

Chandler whispers to Marlowe. Marlowe shakes him off.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I never saw her clearly.

MARLOWE

Did the cab driver see her?

VELMA

I don't know! Maybe...

MARLOWE

Which is it? Don't know or maybe?!

VELMA

Yes, he saw her! At least, I think he did. Oh, I don't know what to think anymore!

MARLOWE

Did you go in?

She starts to cry again.

VELMA

Paul was still breathing. There was so much blood! I held him. You do believe me!? I loved Paul! I could never hurt him!

MARLOWE

There's a cab driver out there who might be saying something different.

CHANDLER

(whispers again)
The hair. Ask her...

VELMA

Brown! I know what you're thinking! But her hair was light brown. Nobody cared what she looked like four years ago. Why should it matter now?

MARLOWE

Who'd you tell?

VELMA

Big guy, gold tooth, L.A.P.D.

MARLOWE

Lotsa attitude? I know him. You don't wanna be here when he comes lookin' for you. No matter how much you love this house.

VELMA

You think I love this house?!

Grabs her rifle from Chandler.

VELMA (CONT'D)

That shows just how little you know about me.

She exits.

EXT. - PATH AROUND THE SIDE OF THE FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Dense overgrowth forms a light-speckled tunnel over the path. Velma is just a shadow moving ahead of Marlowe and Chandler.

EXT. - FARMHOUSE BACKYARD -- DAY

Path leads through the remains of a rose garden to a row of tiny deserted shacks. Marlowe and Chandler get a long view down the deep rugged chasm of the Arroyo Seco Canyon.

Around the bend, smoke trails rise from the Homeless Camp.

INT. - SHACK -- DAY

Dark unpainted room with two pieces of furniture, ancient rocking chair and big brass bed. Velma sits on the bed as Marlowe and Chandler enter.

VELMA

I was born in this bed. Next
twelve years, I spent under it.

Drags the bed from the wall, revealing a small mat and cluster of covers.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Whenever we saw him comin' down
from the house, Mama'd tell us to
play Hide-and-Seek. "Don't come
out," she'd say. "No matter what,
just remember, Mama loves you."

On the window sill is a crudely framed photo. Marlowe picks it up. Two small children entwined in a hug, a light-skinned girl with wavy hair, and a chubby dark-skinned boy.

VELMA (CONT'D)

So we'd lay there, my brother an'
me, an' pray...pray it'd be Mama
who came to find us.

Pulls away the blankets, revealing light streaming through a hole in the wall at one corner of the mat.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I made that hole. My own little
window to the world.

Kneels down on the mat.

VELMA (CONT'D)

When things got bad, I'd press my
face against it, look out and say,
someday, I'm going to go live in
that big fancy house on the hill.

EXT. - REAR VIEW OF FARMHOUSE -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

Velma's childhood memory looking through the hole at the tall
Victorian house. Image fades to its current condition.

VELMA (V.O.)

House may not be fancy anymore.
But it's mine.

INT. - SHACK -- DAY/CONTINUOUS

MARLOWE

It was yours.

Velma stands up.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Farm's been sold.

Pulls the check from his pocket.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Widow endorsed the check. She
wants you to have it.

VELMA

I don't want her money!

MARLOWE

Take it. You can buy another
house. Hell, in South Central, you
can buy five houses!

Sounds of explosions interrupt them.

EXT. - PATH OUTSIDE THE SHACK -- DAY

Down the canyon, black smoke rises over the river wash area.

A much closer explosion rocks the shack. Balls of fire roll
out of the farm house, smoke spurting from upper turrets.

VELMA

Mama...!!!

She runs down the path towards the house, followed by Marlowe and Chandler. Another explosion shakes the old wooden structure, which goes up like a roman candle.

Marlowe grabs Velma at the back door. Handing her off to Chandler, he takes off his jacket, wraps it around his arm.

INT. - FARMHOUSE -- DOWNSTAIRS KITCHEN -- DAY

Marlowe pushes aside a burning door with the protected arm, charges into the kitchen. He's repelled by a blast of flame. Fire is all around him, a red can lying conspicuously on its side. Big black letters: PETROL.

LULUBELLE O.S.
Kitty! Here, kitty, kitty!

Marlowe follows her voice to the next room.

INT. - FARMHOUSE -- FRONT PARLOR/ENTRYWAY -- DAY

Lulubelle chases her cat across the stairwell landing above Marlowe. Tcat yowls and disappears, Lulubelle in pursuit.

Marlowe tightens the jacket around his arm, makes his way up the burning stairs. Smoke on the landing is so thick, he drops to his knees, crawling towards the light of a partly open door.

INT. - FARMHOUSE -- UPSTAIRS BEDROOM -- DAY

Lulubelle reaches under a bed, room burning around her.

LULUBELLE
Come to mommy, big boy.

Blast of hot air launches Marlowe through the doorway as he opens it, onto his stomach. He rolls away as the ceiling beam above him falls.

Marlowe hoists Lulubelle to her feet and onto the window seat of a large bay window.

His view through the lattice work glass is a three story drop onto the graveled driveway. Marlowe uses his protected arm to break out the glass, triggering another blast of hot air.

EXT. - FRONT OF THE FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Whoosh of flame pours from a three-foot hole in the bay window, then recedes.

Clink, clink. Small portions of glass and frame fall on sun-baked, cement-hard earth below. The window is being kicked out from inside.

INT. - FARMHOUSE -- UPSTAIRS BEDROOM -- DAY

Marlowe grabs Lulubelle's hands.

MARLOWE
 (yells over sound of the
 fire)
 We have to jump for it!

She looks at the ground.

LULUBELLE
 I think I'll take my chances.

MARLOWE
 Ma'am, trust me.

LULUBELLE
 Mister, I can't!

Beeeeep! Marlowe and Lulubelle find themselves looking down at the roof of a car...Marlowe's car.

EXT. - FRONT OF THE FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Chandler gets out of the car, climbs onto its roof (with some difficulty).

CHANDLER
 Lower her to me!

INT. - FARMHOUSE -- UPSTAIRS BEDROOM -- DAY

Marlowe looks doubtfully at Lulubelle.

EXT. - FRONT OF THE FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Marlowe strains to lower Lulubelle out the window by her wrists.

LULUBELLE

But Mister! What about my cat?

Marlowe loses his grip. Lulubelle comes down on Chandler. They roll off the car.

INT. - FARM HOUSE -- UPSTAIRS BEDROOM -- DAY

Marlowe fights his way back through the flames to look under the bed...just as the ceiling caves in.

MARLOWE

Aw, hell--!

EXT. - FRONT OF THE FARMHOUSE -- DAY

Marlowe lands in the dirt next to his car and rolls. Dusts himself off, as the cat runs out of the house, singed and smoking, into the orchards. Lulubelle chases after the cat. Marlowe and Chandler watch the old Victorian fall into itself, in blazing glory.

Behind them, screams can be heard from the shanty town, as a cloud of smoke rises over the trees.

Engine sounds and another scream. The Packard races past Marlowe and Chandler and disappears down the driveway...Velma beating at the back window.

INT. - MARLOWE'S CAR -- COUNTRY ROAD -- DAY

Marlowe drives towards the City, in a line of shantytown trucks, Chandler in the passenger seat.

He pulls into the opposite lane, tries to pass them...but he's forced back into the line by approaching fire trucks. The brigade races past them.

CHANDLER

But they're driving past the fire!

MARLOWE

Setting up a line to stop it at the Pasadena Hills.

INT. - DOWNSTAIRS BAR AT MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

Smiley, the bartender, frowns as Marlowe and Chandler walk through.

SMILEY
Cop was here lookin' for you,
Marlowe. Says he left a note.

INT. - MARLOWE'S OUTER WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Marlowe finds his waiting room door kicked open. Inside, a note has been written on the wall in big black letters:
Angel's Flight 6 p.m. Bring the pictures.

Chandler comes in behind Marlowe.

CHANDLER
What pictures?

Marlowe charges out of the office.

INT. - DOWNSTAIRS BAR -- DAY

Marlowe runs up to the bar.

MARLOWE
Smiley, tell me you got the
pictures!

Smiley pulls an envelope out from under the bar. Marlowe grabs it and dashes off.

SMILEY
(calls after Marlowe)
You're welcome.

Shakes his head.

EXT. - STREET OUTSIDE MARLOWE'S OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

Marlowe runs to his car. Chandler follows. Marlowe stops him.

CHANDLER
Marlowe, if you go, they'll kill
you!

MARLOWE
Maybe. But they have Velma.

Jumps into his car, guns his engine. Then he pokes his head out the window.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Hey, Chandler! Don't think I ever
 told you...I actually always wanted
 to be a writer.

Marlowe speeds off in his car.

EXT. - L.A. STREETS -- LATE DAY

Marlowe races Downtown in his car, honking at traffic.

MARLOWE
 Come on, come on!

He pulls onto side streets, but keeps running into the back
 up.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
 Move it, Goddamn it! Isn't there
 someplace all you people have to
 be?!

EXT. - DOWNTOWN L.A. STREET -- ANGEL'S FLIGHT ENTRANCE --
 LATE DAY

Marlowe parks his car in a NO PARKING zone and jumps out. He
 runs to the entrance. through the grand black-and-red
 painted arch is a single track climbing Bunker Hill. Midway
 up that hill is a section where the track splits, allowing
 two twenty-five passenger carriages, resembling old-fashioned
 cable cars, to pass each other...one going up, the other
 down.

There's a sign on the gate: "Closed". Another sign explains
 Angel's Flight closes at 6 p.m. Marlowe looks at his watch:
 6:12 p.m.

MARLOWE
 Damn!

Marlowe climbs the gate to the boarding area and goes to the
 railcar sitting at the bottom of the tracks. It's empty.

INT. - RAILCAR -- LATE DAY

Marlowe enters the car. It starts up the hill, lurching as
 it picks up speed.

Another car comes down the hill towards him, setting sun
 glinting off its windows. Cars swing onto the double track
 portion in the middle of the hill to pass each other.

Velma's at the window of the other car with Sergeant Broady, his arm wrapped across her. There's nothing Marlowe can do, as the cars head away from each other.

On the platform at the top of the hill, stands a tall thin figure, cloaked in trolley engine steam.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Trouble's like a big dog. Run, it'll bite you on the ass. Face it, 'n at least, one'a you's gonna get dinner.

The car reaches the top. District Attorney Buron Fitts enters, hanging onto a pole opposite Marlowe. The car starts down the hill.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Fitts, these photos better be worth the blood you spilled for 'em.

Fitts laughs.

FITTS

Still have that charge-right-in L.A.P.D. mentality. Don't you guys ever get tired of making yourselves targets?

MARLOWE

I took risks, so people like you wouldn't have to. And hey, I'm still standing.

FITTS

But, Marlowe, look where you're standing.

MARLOWE

Right here. That means I'm making you nervous.

FITTS

Do I look nervous?

MARLOWE

You do, actually. It's that little thing you did. What was it? Oh, yeah. You kidnapped my secretary.

FITTS

So she's your secretary?

Other car approaches. Velma can be seen, Broady still wrapped around her. Cars pass each other.

MARLOWE

If you hurt her...!

FITTS

What?! What will you do, Marlowe? In case, you haven't noticed, I'm the District Attorney! You may not give a rat's ass, but there are places that still means something.

Sinks onto the wooden bench behind him.

FITTS (CONT'D)

I can't imagine why I ever even hired you.

MARLOWE

Same reason you fired me. I was a good investigator. Too good to let go, even when things began to stink.

Fitts smiles.

FITTS

Maybe...maybe not. You may not believe me, Marlowe, but there was a time I was a lot like you. I wanted to change the world! Everything for the greater good.

Darkens.

FITTS (CONT'D)

Funny, how things change, while you're trying to figure out what that is. Before you know it, you find yourself just trying not to do too much damage.

MARLOWE

Like burning people outta their homes?

FITTS

You should've stayed out of it.

MARLOWE

It's my nature. To turn up where bad things're happening.

FITTS

Like a fly in the ointment. But
you know what happens to flies.

Marlowe sits down across from Fitts. The end of the line is
coming. Fitts stands up.

MARLOWE

What we have here's a case of "Show
me yours, I'll show you mine."

FITTS

You're wasting my time, Marlowe.

MARLOWE

Got a picture you might like. And
a story...

Pulls a photo from his jacket: Mayor Shaw in a car window.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Once upon a time, there was a jolly
little fat man. For the purpose of
this story, let's just call him...
the Mayor. Now this particular
Mayor, he owned a whole bunch'v
stock in a company. Millicent
Enterprises, ring a bell?

Fitts shrugs and sits down again.

FITTS

It's a publicly traded company.

MARLOWE

Run by one illustrious Mr. Benjamin
Siegel. Ring any other bells?

Pulls out another photo: Mayor Shaw whispering to Sergeant
Charles Broady, as he hands Broady a stack of bills.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Now it seems this fellow, the
Mayor, had lots more mean 'n nasty
friends.

FITTS

Your point?

MARLOWE

The Mayor had a partner.

Pulls out another photo.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Not the best likeness...

Blurry photo of Fitts scowling in the driver's seat.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Thought taxpayers should know they
paid for murder and arson to grease
the wheels for your money-grubbing
land-grab scheme.

FITTS
Interesting. If you could prove
any of it.

MARLOWE
There is proof. J.C. had it, 'n he
would've nailed you to the wall!

Fitts chuckles.

FITTS
You think so? Yes, we all think we
know our friends. To his credit,
your Mr. Moran knew a good story
when he saw it. He reached out for
the deal-of-a-lifetime on this one.

MARLOWE
I don't believe it!

FITTS
Who do you think told me you were
tracking our payoffs? A lifetime
of scratching out stories taught
your friend to play both sides.

MARLOWE
Then why's he dead?

FITTS
He was a writer who wanted to be
paid not to write.

Shrugs.

FITTS (CONT'D)
Someone wanted the last word.

MARLOWE
And right-of-way through the Arroyo
Seco Canyon.

FITTS

Very good, Marlowe!

MARLOWE

Nuthin good about killin' people
for some Goddamned road!

FITTS

Oh, rhis is not just any road, a
super road! First of its kind!
Pasadena to Downtown.

MARLOWE

So a bunch'v rich people can drive
down to their offices! You're
breaking my heart, Fitts.

FITTS

But think of it! Three lanes, both
ways, no cross streets! No stops
for seventeen miles! Seventeen
glorious linear miles, Marlowe!!
Do you know how fast you could go?!
Forty-five, fifty miles an hour,
maybe! Once this stretch is built,
we'll take it all the way down to
the Harbor. I'm telling you, this
...is the doorway to the future!

MARLOWE

An' whose future is that?

Fitts stands up.

FITTS

The future happens, Marlowe, no
matter who stands in its way. You
keep chasing the past. Her past.

Other railcar passes them again, Velma looking out of it.

FITTS (CONT'D)

It's too bad about her brother.
Hear he was simple. Will blaming
someone make you feel any less
responsible?

MARLOWE

I'm not responsible.

FITTS

Who puts a guy with the mind of a
ten-year-old where he can run into
a blade?

Fitts pulls out a 457 Magnum revolver, motions to the photos.

FITTS (CONT'D)
I'll take those. And the
negatives.

Takes the packet, scans the photos and chuckles.

FITTS (CONT'D)
It's ironic, actually.

Points to a face in a photo. Reflection, barely visible in the side view mirror...a woman cuddled up to the Mayor in the back seat. A beautiful light-skinned black woman.

FITTS (CONT'D)
Your friend thought she could stop
us from taking her house. Exposing
the land transfers didn't worry us.
But these photos, they were a
problem. Couldn't have your buddy,
J.C., print pictures of the Mayor
with a colored whore, could we?

Chuckles again.

FITTS (CONT'D)
And you thought this was about
corruption in local government.
Get wise, Marlowe. People know
we're corrupt. No one cares...

Pistol trained on him, Marlowe stares Fitts down.

MARLOWE
Doin' your own dirty work now?

FITTS
Know what they say. Want something
done right, do it yourself.

Marlowe looks down the line at the other car.

The cars passes in the middle of the hill, as the sun sinks. Lights blink on in both cars, illuminating Broady's smile as he tightens his grip around Velma.

Fitts glances at the other car. Marlowe throws himself at Fitts. They struggle for the gun. It flies out of Fitts's hand...slides across the floor of the car.

Sizing up each other, they dive for the gun. Marlowe's faster.

The two men face off at the bottom of the tracks, gun in Marlowe's hand. Fitts smiles.

FITTS (CONT'D)

You're not going to shoot me.

Marlowe looks up the hill. The other car is barely visible at the top.

The railcar starts back up. Marlowe goes to the rear exit.

EXT. - RAILCAR -- SUNSET

Marlowe climbs up the outside of the car. Fitts grabs at him, but Marlowe kicks him off. Marlowe crawls across the car roof, as it makes its way up the track.

Fitts appears over the back, scrambling onto the roof. The two men struggle. Fitts rolls off, clings to a rail at the edge of the roof...dangling over the sidewalk fifty feet below.

Motions of the railcar toss Fitts like a rag doll. He can't find a foothold. Hanging on with one hand, Fitts claws at the smooth rooftop, unable to pull himself up.

Marlowe stares down at Fitts. They lock eyes. Marlowe reaches out...offering Fitts his hand.

MARLOWE

Take it!

Fitts hesitates, his disgust obvious, even though he's losing his grasp.

A hand -- Marlowe's hand -- grabs Fitts's hand, making a herculean effort to pull Fitts up onto the roof.

Marlowe and Fitts lie side-by-side on the roof, catching their breath -- staring at each other.

The other railcar approaches. Velma and Broady can be seen in the illuminated car.

Marlowe stands and prepares to jump to the roof of the other car. He'll have only an instant.

Marlowe makes the jump, but has to fight to keep from sliding off.

INT. - OTHER RAILCAR -- SUNSET

Broady hears Marlowe on the roof. Velma screams, as Broady drags her to a window. The noises stop. Marlowe swings down through the car's back exit with the gun.

Using Velma as a shield, Broady shows Marlowe the knife at her throat. Marlowe approaches them.

MARLOWE

Ever hear what they say about guys
who carry big knives?

BROADY

They kill suckers with smart
mouths.

MARLOWE

That your best line? Broady, you
disappoint me.

BROADY

Think you're so smart, Marlowe?
Sure kicked up dust over a whole
lotta nothin'. Some big retard
with a camera?!

MARLOWE

Toldja, his name was Freddy! Big
as an ox, but couldn'ta hurt a fly.
An' Freddy, he woulda given you his
last dime if you'da asked him for
it. Tell me, what kinda person
shivs somebody like Freddy?

BROADY

I'd say...somebody who didn't wanna
lotta noise.

Smiles.

BROADY (CONT'D)

That's right. Cried like a baby
when he got stuck. Still wouldn't
give me the damn camera!

Marlowe steps towards Broady and Velma.

MARLOWE

Freddy was slow, for God's sake!

BROADY

Fool was fast enough to make it
back down Central.

Marlowe aims the gun at Broady's head.

Broady throws Velma at Marlowe, grabs for the gun.

The men wrestle for the gun at the top of the tracks, rolling over each other to the car's front entrance.

Broady pushes Marlowe off and stands up. Marlowe tackles him, knocks the gun from Broady's hand.

Hanging out of the car, Broady grabs a handful of walkway gravel, throws it in Marlowe's face.

Broady crawls towards the back of the car, searching for the gun. He sees feet...dark stockings, five inch stiletto heels. Framed in the car's rear entry, Velma stands pointing the revolver down at Broady.

He smiles.

BROADY (CONT'D)
Mighty big gun for a little lady.

MARLOWE
Velma, no.

Broady spits on the floor.

BROADY
Know what I always hated 'bout you,
Marlowe? You're 'n uppity jig who
thinks he's better'n the rest'v us!

Velma cocks the hammer.

MARLOWE
Freddy wouldn't want it.

Broady laughs.

BROADY
Your retard brother.

MARLOWE
He's not worth it.

BROADY
(to Velma)
Yeah? An' what's your price now?

Pulls two quarters from his pocket.

BROADY (CONT'D)
Four bits, last I heard.

Throws the coins at Velma's feet. Undoes his belt.

BROADY (CONT'D)
Wha'd'ya say you gimme my money's
worth right here, bitch?

MARLOWE
Velma, no...!!!

Velma shoots Broady in the groin.

Force of the 457 Magnum blast pitches Velma backwards through the car's rear entrance.

Marlowe reaches the car doorway. Velma is just a tiny figure fifty feet below in the alley next to the tracks.

EXT. - ALLEY BELOW ANGEL'S FLIGHT -- TWILIGHT

Narrow chasm of rough surfaces, lit by a street lamp at the alley entrance. Velma lies motionless on the sidewalk under the tracks, gun a few feet away.

Marlowe runs down stairs cut into the angled concrete support for Angel's Flight. He kneels, cradling Velma in his arms. She opens her eyes.

MARLOWE
Velma...! Hold on now.

Passers-by are shadowy stick figures at the alley entrance, vacillating under the streetlight to look.

VELMA
Freddy needs me, you know. Boy
can't do anything without me...

She closes her eyes.

MARLOWE
Somebody help us here...?!

A distant siren wails. Velma's locket lies, open and chain broken, on the concrete. Inside is a picture...chubby, six-year-old dark-skinned black boy hugging a smiling, four-year-old mixed-race girl.

EXT. - FRONT OF HARLOW'S BEVERLY GLEN MANSION -- DAY

Same locket is open in Marlowe's hand. Standing at Harlow's door, he closes the tiny gold piece, as he reaches for the doorbell.

Marlowe stops. He hears water splashing somewhere off to his left...

EXT. - HARLOW MANSION SIDE YARD -- DAY

Marlowe looks over a gate into the pool area.

Bathing suit and swim cap, Harlow is poised on the board. She dives in, swims across the pool, bobbing up at his feet.

HARLOW

Well, if it ain't the spade dick.

MARLOWE

People who hire me call me a
Private Investigator.

He offers his hand to help her out. Long moment, as she looks at his hand.

Mama Jean comes onto the balcony.

MAMA JEAN

What's he doing here?!

Harlow takes Marlowe's hand and hoists herself from the pool. She lays down on the pavement, welcoming the sunlight.

MAMA JEAN (CONT'D)

For God's sake, Jean! Cover
yourself.

HARLOW

I might not be here if you'd
covered yourself every once in a
while! Ever thought of that?!

Mama Jean goes back inside.

Harlow stretches herself out on the concrete. A shadow comes over her. She opens her eyes.

MARLOWE

I'm a licensed investigator. I
take jobs most people'd scrape off
the bottom of their shoes. An'
every once in a while, I do
something just because I know I
should. I have something for you.

He pulls the check from his pocket.

HARLOW
You're in my sun.

MARLOWE
Velma Leroy is dead.

HARLOW
Her last name was Leroy. Who'd'a
guessed?

She shrugs, pulls herself up onto a nearby lounge, closing
her eyes.

MARLOWE
Her house burned down.

HARLOW
Wherever you go, trouble follows.

MARLOWE
I have a theory. Know what a
theory is? Something you know, but
you can't quite prove it.

HARLOW
So what do you know?

MARLOWE
I know you're going to take off
that cap for me.

She opens her eyes and looks at him.

HARLOW
Why should I?

MARLOWE
To rub it in my face. Show me what
a fool I've been. Because you know
I can't do a damn thing about it.

Harlow sits up, rips off the cap, revealing short, curly
light brown hair.

HARLOW
I wear a wig in public, so what?!
That little half-breed told you!

MARLOWE
Velma never recognized you that
night. You gave yourself away with
your unconvincing poor-little-widow
act.

She throws the cap at him.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I wanna know. Would you've given her the money if you hadn'ta seen her face in that cab?

Harlow stands up, puts on a robe.

HARLOW

I didn't kill Paul, you know. We fought about the abortion, and he put the gun to his own head. I just told him he wasn't man enough. For once...I was wrong.

Marlowe returns the check to his pocket.

HARLOW (CONT'D)

So, Mr. Marlowe, is it? You have something for me.

MARLOWE

Bit of advice. Think you may be getting too much sun.

EXT. - OPEN YARD BEHIND A LARGE COMMERCIAL LAUNDRY -- DAY

Chandler trails Marlowe out of a decrepit, steam-filled building to a yard where women, African American and Hispanic, are hanging laundry.

Marlowe and Chandler walk, row by row, looking at the women.

Three rows back, a woman turns to them. It's Lulubelle.

LULUBELLE

Well, Mr. Marlowe, isn't it...?

Marlowe hands her an envelope.

MARLOWE

This is for you.

Lulubelle opens the envelope, sees the check for the farm. She screams and faints. Washer women rush over to pick her up, as Marlowe and Chandler walk away.

CHANDLER

Marlowe, I learned something today.

MARLOWE

What's that, Raymond?

CHANDLER

Sometimes, a little good comes out of the bad.

MARLOWE

Don't get used to it.

CHANDLER

Yes. Wish we still had those photographs. I have a few contacts of my own, you know, who might be able to shake things up.

Marlowe smiles, pulls a stack of photos from his jacket.

MARLOWE

Do you...? That's why we have Rule #29 in the Detective Rule Book, Raymond. Whenever you order pictures, always order an extra set.

FADE TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE:

D.A. Buron Fitts and **Mayor Frank L. Shaw** used fraud, arson and murder to build the world's first freeway, the Pasadena 110.

Mayor Shaw was recalled from office.

District Attorney Fitts was impeached. He committed suicide with a gun from one of his trials.

Sgt. Charles Broady was fired from the L.A.P.D.

Jean Harlow died at the age of 26, the height of her career.

Sgt. Rocky Washington ended up the City's first African American Station Chief. Mentoring generations of young black cops ...one, who did become Mayor.

P.I.

(MORE)

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Sam Marlowe lived to be a hundred, insisting Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe, the two most famous detective characters, were based on a black man...just trying to make it in a white man's world.

THE END