

MARLOWE

PILOT

"Choices"

pruss / wolper

LivePlanet

1/16/07

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A Simple Job

ACT ONE

EXT. LOS ANGELES - 101 FREEWAY - DAY

I'm driving. The sprawling smog carpet sweeps out from the horizon and swallows Hollywood in one gulp.

Thermals rise in wavy lines from the pavement appearing to shake the skyline in the distance as THE RADIO tells us all it's the 13th of 13 straight days over 100 degrees. Signs point to exits along the way: Alvarado

MARLOWE (V.O.)

I used to like L.A. I don't know exactly when it changed. I guess maybe it's like any meaningful relationship. If you poke around in the dirty details of it long enough you find things you wish you hadn't.

Vermont

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I've spent most of my life in Los Angeles and the past 8 years as a private investigator. Maybe those dirty details are starting to get to me.

Melrose

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

So, why don't you leave, Marlowe? Look around, there's nothing keeping you here. No wife, no kids. Just you and L.A. and she could care less about you. Go on. Drive. Right on to a better life in a better town that you won't have to bitch about.

Cahuenga. I click my turn signal. It flashes amber light in the darkness, lighting up the fool's face in the rearview mirror who looks right back at me.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Life is choices.

EXT. BRENTWOOD HOME - DAY

I park in front of one of those 5 million dollar Swiss Chalet jobs. The door opens and I'm greeted by a middle-aged guy trying not to look it.

BILL CHURCH

Mister Marlowe? Bill Church. Please come in.

I'm led through a large room with a phony coat of arms over the fireplace.

EXT. POOL AND GARDEN - DAY

SUZETTE CHURCH is 36 trying to be 29. Botox, boobs, lips. I'm not judging, I just notice these things. At least she paid top dollar and everything ended up in the right places.

SUZETTE
Careful Alberto. Esto est mui importante.

BILL
My wife, Suzette. Mister Marlowe.

SUZETTE
The detective, goodie. How do you do?

MARLOWE
I do swell. What's so importante?

SUZETTE
Oh it's a rare Japanese shrub. A Venus or something. I'm the only one of us who has one.

BILL
Of our friends she means. God knows where she got it.

SUZETTE
My husband doesn't appreciate rare plants.

Alberto sweats bullets as we head to a tray of iced drinks.

BILL
Well I'll get right to it. We'd like you to follow someone. A friend of ours. Tracy Faye.

MARLOWE
What did she do?

BILL
Nothing really.

MARLOWE
You trust all your friends that much or just Tracy?

The housekeeper who brought the drinks calls from the house.

BLANCA
Mister Church, telephone call for you.

BILL
I better take that. We're just having a bit of harmless fun. She'll explain it to you. We'll be in touch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He heads into the house. As I turn back to Mrs. Church, she's opening her shirt to cool off and dabbing her flowered, bathing-suited cleavage with a napkin.

SUZETTE

Excuse me.

MARLOWE

It's your house, lady.

SUZETTE

If that were true I'd have you stay longer.

MARLOWE

Now what would I do here?

SUZETTE

A number of things. You could help rearrange my flowers. My husband seems to have lost interest.

MARLOWE

You mean in rare plants?

SUZETTE

And what do you think of my Venus?

Okay...I'll play along.

MARLOWE

I think she probably needs a lot of attention. More than most need.

SUZETTE

You don't say?

MARLOWE

I also think all that attention would be worth it, just to see the flowers.

She eyes me like a meal.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

In the mean time, spreading a little cow manure now and then can't hurt.

She smiles. We understand each other.

SUZETTE

Our friend has been sleeping with someone, and she won't tell us who.

MARLOWE

Is she supposed to?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUZETTE

She's just being so secretive, it's driving us crazy with curiosity, I mean what if it's a celebrity?

MARLOWE

(sarcasm)

Gee I didn't think of that. This could be serious. So you want me to crawl around in the bushes and snap their picture.

SUZETTE

Nothing so complicated. I'm having dinner with her tonight at Katana. She drives a silver Beemer.

She hands me a photo of Tracy and the plate number.

SUZETTE (CONT'D)

Afterwards she'll be going to see her secret lover and all we want is for you to follow her, get his address and find out as much as you can.

MARLOWE

That's it, just tonight?

SUZETTE

One night. In and out.

MARLOWE

I'll give you a call when I'm done.

SUZETTE

Better yet, maybe you could stop by and see my flowers.

Her flowered bathing suit top is difficult to look past as ICE CUBES settle in my glass.

EXT. SUNSET BLVD - DRIVING - DAY

Bright Sun, billboards and traffic.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Frustrated wives are dangerous things and frustrated Hollywood wives can be outright torture. I won't be checking out her flowers any time soon, but in this job it's better to let her think I will until I get paid.

EXT. KATANA - NIGHT

I'm parked in the red near a couple of Valets listening to the radio.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A bus boy delivers a tray of Cokes with ice and they hand me one. I pull a flask from the pocket in my car door, toss a jigger in, give it a stir. That's better.

MEANWHILE - AWAY FROM MARLOWE:

INT. KATANA RESTAURANT - SUNSET BOULEVARD - NIGHT

At a table for four sit three women. All in their early to mid-thirties except for the fourth girl standing off to the side, talking on her cell. Her name is TRACY FAYE. She's 29, sexy and flaunting it. SUZETTE is the self-appointed leader of the group and eyes Tracy with suspicion.

WOMAN # 2

I can't believe you hired a private detective. You are evil.

WOMAN # 3

Is that expensive?

SUZETTE

No. A grand. It was Bill's idea. The first interesting one he's had in a long time. Almost made me want to sleep with him again.

She drops the topic because Tracy is now back.

TRACY

Sorry girls got to run. Love ya'll.

She tosses some money on the table. The other three watch her excitedly head out as Suzette punches a number on her cell.

EXT. KATANA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

I see her getting into the silver Beemer. She's a California blonde who could make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. I set my Coke in the cup holder and follow her.

EXT. BLUE JAY WAY - NIGHT

Tracy parks in front of a house behind tall hedges. She walks to the iron driveway gate, punches in a security code and enters as I look for an address and can't find one. Get out of my car with a flashlight and check the curb. The numbers are smudged off by tire rubber. I check the mail slot. Nothing. The garage...There we are. Aluminum Neutra numbers: 2301

I head back to my car pull my NIGHTSCOPE from the glove box, wipe the lens and watch THROUGH THE GREEN TINT from a safe distance. There's not much to see. She walks past one window. Another.

After a few minutes I hear A SCREAM coming from the house. I pause, start my car and start to drive away slowly. It's none of my business. Then another SCREAM. Okay damnit. I reverse, park and investigate.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door is open and the inside hallway dimly lit. Tracy Faye sits on the floor beside **A HALF DOZEN HEAD SHOTS** scattered near her spilled purse. She sees me and starts to back away, terrified.

MARLOWE
Easy. It's okay.

TRACY
Oh god. Oh god.

She's in shock. I follow bloody footprints from her feet to A MAN - DEAD ON THE FLOOR in a pool of blood in the next room.

MAIN TITLES:

INT. BLUE JAY WAY HOUSE - NIGHT

STEVE DENZLER lies in a pool of blood. I examine a few details from as close as the cops let me get.

The lead detective is a friend of mine. He finishes with Tracy Faye in the next room, who is still shaken by the incident.

He is DETECTIVE PETE MILLER from LAPD Hollywood Division. Pete's around 42, a little lumpy around the edges and has seen it all since he was a rookie in 1986.

DETECTIVE PETE MILLER
Thank you Miss Faye. We'll be in touch.

Tracy walks past me.

MARLOWE
Take care of yourself.

TRACY
Somebody has to, I guess.

She leaves.

MARLOWE
What'd she have to say?

DET. PETE MILLER
That she was visiting a friend. The front door was unlocked so she walked in. Called out her friend's name, figured he was upstairs on the phone or something. Ten minutes pass and no sign of him so she goes looking and finds him dead on the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE

Well I didn't hear anything. No fight, argument, nothing. And I was here.

DET. PETE MILLER

Yeah, you were right outside. That's a big help.

MARLOWE

Next time I'll ask the victim to invite me over for a drink an hour before he's killed.

DET. PETE MILLER

That'd be nice. Maybe you could ask him to die at a reasonable hour while you're at it. There were 9 home invasions in this neighborhood in the past 4 months but this is the only one with a body left behind.

MARLOWE

Anything missing?

DET. PETE MILLER

The maid told me he had a drawer in the bedroom with a few G's and a Vintage Rolex. All gone. Anyway, the blonde might know somebody who knows somebody. Who sent you on the tail job for instance?

MARLOWE

Between us? Bill and Suzette Church. He owns a PR company.

Pete makes notes.

DET. PETE MILLER

So he makes drunk actors out to look like victims when we pull them over.

MARLOWE

Being a victim is a god given right these days, you know that. America's favorite past time.

DET. PETE MILLER

Right. Baseball is number 3 now, behind that and being pissed off for no reason. Why her?

MARLOWE

She's just a friend they wanted to keep tabs on. One of these bored Hollywood couples, thought she might be banging a celebrity.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DET. PETE MILLER
I love this town.

MARLOWE
Get in line. Who's the stiff?

DET. PETE MILLER
No celebrity. Name is Steve Denzler.
Four stab wounds with a butcher knife.

MARLOWE
Denzler Realty?

DET. PETE MILLER
His father was the big real estate
mogul. He died a few years ago and
left a 40 million dollar company to
his two sons. Steve took over the
business.

MARLOWE
Let me know if there's anything I can
do.

I turn to leave but Pete stops me.

DET. PETE MILLER
You can give me your background file
on Tracy Faye and the couple who hired
you.

MARLOWE
I don't have one.

DET. PETE MILLER
You can get one, Marlowe. I have faith
in you. It'd sure make my life a lot
easier.

MARLOWE
That's what I live for.

OFFICER
Detective Miller? The security company
is here.

Pete checks his watch. Rolls his eyes at me.

DET. PETE MILLER
I feel safer already.

FLASH BULB from the SID photographer. WHITE OUT and CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BLVD - DRIVING - NIGHT

Cruising down Sunset on my way home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE (V.O.)

And just like that a few hours work lands me in a murder case. I'm wondering if Tracy could have done it. I guess she had the time. But then why scream? Panic maybe. Was there anything about her behavior that tipped her hand? Like yelling at an ATM machine at a liquor store?

I stop at a red light near a liquor store and THROUGH THE WINDOW I see none other than

TRACY FAYE with six bottles of red wine beside her in a plastic hand cart. She's beating the ATM and yelling at it.

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

Just keep driving, dummy. You're not that curious. Hot girls lose their marbles every day in this town. Some of them do it for a living.

But when the light changes, I pull over to the side.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

She's nearly crying. A couple of guys are watching and laughing. The clerk is ready to call the cops as I come in. She sees me, points to the machine immediately and justifies her behavior.

TRACY

It won't give me money!

MARLOWE

I tell you what, why don't I give you money?

EXT. PARKING LOT - TRACY'S CAR - NIGHT

I carry the wine out for her.

TRACY

I must seem like one crazy bitch, huh?

MARLOWE

Not the bitch part, really.

She almost smiles. I pop her trunk and set the wine inside.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

That should get you through the night.

Just then I'm hit from behind. My reflexes spin me around in a flash and I find, TRACY is fainting in my arms.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Easy. I gotcha'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY

How about you? Do you think you could get me through the night?

MARLOWE

How 'bout I get you home and you do the rest on your own, huh?

I help her into her car.

TRACY

I have to ask...what were you doing up at that house?

MARLOWE

I was in the neighborhood on a case, and heard you scream.

TRACY

And here?

MARLOWE

Just driving by.

TRACY

Wow, it's like a sign. You're my guardian angel or something.

MARLOWE

Oh I'm an angel alright.

INT. MARLOWE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

THE PHONE RINGS. I'm on the couch in clothes from the night before. My place is nothing fancy. One bedroom. One view of the Hollywood sign when the shades are open. One kitchen used for special occasions. One door leading to the outside world. I reach over to answer the phone. It's a friend of mine.

KEN (PHONE)

Forgetting appointments is a form of narcissism. And just plain rude.

I get up as my cat - SHADOW - hops onto the couch and slinks her tail under my nose. I pull her away as I talk.

MARLOWE

Ken, I'm sorry. Breakfast is on me.

KEN (PHONE)

Wow. Miracles. In that case I'll wait.

I get up, barely. Look Shadow in her squinting eyes.

MARLOWE

Am I cheap?

She meows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Who asked you?

EXT. CAFE 101 - FRANKLIN & 101 FREEWAY - DAY

Breakfast with hipsters in their natural habitat.

MARLOWE'S (V.O.)

My buddy Ken is a shrink and one of the smartest people I know. He used to do psych profiles for the FBI and now has a private practice. Our weekly breakfast ritual sometimes offers insights I might miss without him. Besides all that, he's funny

I'm in a booth with KEN ROSEN, PhD - 60, a shrink for thirty.

KEN

The point is, there's a big difference between stabbing somebody to death and shooting them, and a bigger difference between men and women who do it. Men can stab somebody for any number of reasons, but for women it's always personal. It seems obvious but find out whatever personal connection there is between her and the guy. And if there is one, start digging. Unless she's crazy, then all bets are off.

MARLOWE

She doesn't seem crazy.

I collect my photos and slip them back in the envelope.

KEN

Moving to Hollywood to become famous just because you were homecoming queen isn't the sanest thing in the world. The question is why you feel compelled to rescue young women when dating them would be easier.

MARLOWE

Maybe I'm rescuing them from me, you ever think of that?

Ken notices JESSICA REEDE showing up at the counter to get take out coffee.

KEN

Case in point.

She then steps over to us. She's 26, bright, full of energy, and between dancing gigs, works part time for me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

Hello, Doctor Rosen. Marlowe, Bill Church wants to meet you in two hours. Oh, and I got you a new cell phone, to replace the one you lost. And the guy is coming to fix the a/c in your apartment again this afternoon.

KEN

So Jess, how's a dancer's life going?

JESSICA

Okay actually. I'm doing a video next Friday and I'm still bouncing between 40 Deuce and The Aqua Lounge to pay the rent. It doesn't suck.

KEN

Good for you. I don't know why you're still hanging around this guy.

JESSICA

Take a look at him. He needs me.

MARLOWE

My friends, ladies and gentlemen.

JESSICA

Adios boys.

She leaves and Ken turns to me.

MARLOWE

Don't even start.

KEN

Come on Marlowe. She goes missing in Mexico when she was how old? 19, 20? You bring her home to her parents, and for what?

MARLOWE

For a thousand bucks a day and expenses.

KEN

And now she works part time for you out of platonic gratitude, right? You guys are a study in boundary issues.

MARLOWE

Check please.

He laughs and we CUT TO:

INT. BRENTWOOD HOME - DAY

I'm waiting for Bill Church as I look through the window at...

EXT. BRENTWOOD HOME - POOL AREA - DAY

The pool area where Suzette Church is getting some kind of New Age pampering in the pool with two people gently swirling her in the water as she floats on her back.

Bill opens a door behind me. Unlike his wife, Bill seems a little shaky today. Emotional.

BILL

Thank you for coming. My accountant sent a check to your office.

MARLOWE

That's fast. I should work for you more often.

BILL

Actually, I'd like you to think of it as a retainer for continued services.

MARLOWE

I'm listening.

BILL

It's about the murder of Steve Denzler. Terrible thing.

MARLOWE

Did you know him?

BILL

Yes. He was a client up until a few days ago. We got into an argument about how much I was charging him and he fired me. It happens. But this time it happened at The Sunset Tower Bar and I didn't handle it very well. That's my concern. I'm in Public Relations and those relations would be strained considerably if I'm dragged into a murder investigation which could go on for years. It's --

MARLOWE

Bad press. Two days ago is pretty fresh.

BILL

Like I said. I'm concerned which is why I want to hire you to find out who killed Steve.

MARLOWE

I see. I'll need to know whether or not you have anything to hide. Do you?

He doesn't seem to like it. Pauses. Thinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

It's nothing personal. But if you want me to poke around in this mess, I'm not going to be dainty. Stuff will come out and I'd rather not be surprised. If that's a concern too, then have a nice day.

As I leave, he stops me.

BILL

Wait. There's more to it.

He pauses for a moment. Looks out the window to make sure Suzette is still floating and lowers his voice to tell me.

BILL (CONT'D)

The blonde girl, Tracy and I, we were having a...thing, you know.

MARLOWE

What, like a sandwich? Or something more serious? Come on, Mister Church, now's the time. Secrets have a way of catching up to you.

BILL

We've been seeing each other for months. I never should have gotten involved with her. It was a bad idea. I - look this is gonna' sound kinda' funny, but I was worried she was seeing somebody else.

MARLOWE

So you and your wife wanted to know who Tracy was seeing but for different reasons.

BILL

It's a helluva' coincidence and one that could end my career. I need to know how deeply Tracy is involved in this whole mess, and I pray to god she's innocent.

MARLOWE

Do you think she could have done it?

BILL

That depends on her secrets.

END ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

The Blonde

CONTINUED:

BEGIN ACT TWO

INT. SUNSET TOWER HOTEL - NIGHT

The owner is an old friend of mine. JOHN WHELAN, 36 black, cool, confident, bright. The place is busy but not crowded. John joins me at the bar, sniffs my glass. Cringes.

JOHN

Jesus, this stuff will rot your insides.

He motions to the bartender.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Julie. Get him something nice. Top shelf. On me. What's up, buddy?

MARLOWE

There was an argument between a couple of your customers last Tuesday. One of them ended up dead last night.

JOHN

Right, Steve Denzler and Bill Church. I just caught the end of it. It's a damn shame about Steve. He's was one of those genuinely good guys too, and how many of them are there in Hollywood? Like eleven.

MARLOWE

You know what it was about?

JOHN

Apparently Denzler didn't feel he was getting his money's worth and fired him. Denzler left. The word is, Bill's company wasn't doing well to begin with. Anyway, he drank himself silly with a girl in the lounge.

MARLOWE

Tracy Faye?

JOHN

That's right. Do you know her?

MARLOWE

I'm starting to. What can you tell me about her?

He points to a table of other girls.

JOHN

Not much. Another Star Wanna' Be. She hangs out with them a lot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of them in particular catches my attention.

SMASH CUT TO:

The floor of Steve Denzler's house. The **CASTING PHOTOS** Tracy brought strewn across the Oriental rug. The face in the photo on top is the same girl now partying it up at The Sunset Tower.

MARLOWE
Who's the redhead?

JOHN
Krystal. She's not your type.

MARLOWE
No kidding? You think it's my clothes?

JOHN
That and your general disdain for women who can't start a sentence without using the word "I".

Krystal and the girls gather their gear and head out.

MARLOWE
I got to talk to her.

JOHN
That's easy. She's a club girl.
Tonight it's the Galaxy Club.

EXT. SUNSET TOWER - NIGHT

John is helping me get my car through the Valet crunch as A GUY is yelling at a Valet that he's been waiting 20 minutes for his car. John rolls his eyes at me.

JOHN
This parking thing in L.A. is a real nightmare.

MARLOWE
And getting worse every year.

JOHN
Every month. I'm making a deal with the Bank next door to handle the overflow from the lounge or I'm screwed. The deal is supposed to happen in a few weeks.

NEXT DOOR I SEE AN EMPTY PARKING LOT FOR THE BANK WITH A SIMPLE CHAIN ACROSS THE ENTRANCE.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I gotta' go deal with this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE
Take care, John.

Healthy handshake and I'm gone.

EXT. GALAXY CLUB - LAS PALMAS AVE - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

A line of cars waits for Valets. People are definitely not satisfied.

KRYSTAL breezes past the doorman with a nod. Since I'm not as welcome, I have to think of something else.

EXT. CHEROKEE AVE - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

I quickly drive around the block and spot an apartment building with a RENT SIGN then pull up to the car ports and see one that is clearly empty with empty storage space with open doors.

I park there and take what's left of my Coke with Lemon from the other night and walk to the Galaxy club.

EXT. GALAXY - NIGHT

As I head PAST THE PARKING CHAOS to the front door I see A SIGN posted at a

NEIGHBORING parking lot. IT IS COMPLETELY EMPTY WITH A CHAIN BLOCKING THE ENTRANCE. THE SIGN READS:

DENZLER PARKING

EXT. GALAXY CLUB - HOLLYWOOD - LAS PALMAS - NIGHT

As I approach I notice one of the valets. His name tag reads ERNESTO. I work my way to the velvet rope and back into the doorman with my drink.

MARLOWE
Hey is it cool to have this out here?
I left my phone in the car.

DOORMAN
No man, it ain't cool. Get back inside.

MARLOWE
But my phone.

DOORMAN
Inside with the drink, sir.

Fine. I push past others and find myself

INT. GALAXY - NIGHT

I'm not a club guy but I can pretty much read the scene with a glance or two. Krystal is the type who gets paid in alcohol to look good. I wait till her girl gang is on the dance floor and she's alone before I introduce myself.

MARLOWE
Hi Krystal, you mind?

I sit down at the small table she's made her territory.

KRYSTAL
Whatever. How do you know my name?

She's looking around for one of the security guys so I get to the point.

MARLOWE
I saw your head shot at Steve Denzler's house.

KRYSTAL
Really? When?

MARLOWE
Right after he was murdered.

KRYSTAL
Are you a cop?

MARLOWE
Not exactly. A private investigator.
What can you tell me about Tracy Faye?

KRYSTAL
Do you know Tracy?

MARLOWE
Sure. We go to the same church.

She smiles. WHIPS OUT HER CELL PHONE and sends a TEXT MESSAGE while she talks to me.

KRYSTAL
She works at a casting agency and is nice enough to pass my headshot around if a job pops up.

MARLOWE
That's nice of her. Does she do that for everybody or just close friends?

KRYSTAL
Ask her yourself. She's around here somewhere.

TIME CUT:

INT. GALAXY CLUB - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

After a search through the ultra-hip clientele I see Tracy with some people in the back. I head that way and suddenly someone taps my shoulder.

NICHOLAS

Excuse me. My name is Nicholas. I own this place. Can we have a word?

I step to the side with Nicholas. He's around 40. Nice-looking enough. Nice suit. Nice smile. Sincere and friendly.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I try to create a safe place for people to hang out and not be bothered, you understand.

MARLOWE

Of course.

NICHOLAS

I get a lot of celebrities in here and so I have to run a tight ship and no offense, but I can't have a private detective asking people questions. Makes everyone nervous.

MARLOWE

I understand. No big deal.

I see Tracy across the room.

NICHOLAS

I'm happy to buy you a drink before you go, okay? Sorry.

MARLOWE

Don't worry about it.

I EXIT.

MEANWHILE (AWAY FROM MARLOWE):

AT THE BAR - Krystal waits for the right moment and then grabs Tracy's arm.

KRYSTAL

We have to talk.

She pulls her OUT THE DOOR.

EXT. GALAXY CLUB - HOLLYWOOD - LAS PALMAS

Just outside the private side entrance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KRYSTAL

You showed my headshot to Steve Denzler?

TRACY

I'm sorry, I thought I was doing you a favor. He's a nice guy. I mean he was.

KRYSTAL

Tracy, next time ask me. Okay? At least point the guy out to me so I can decide if I want him calling me.

TRACY

I'm sorry.

Just then, CHARLIE BATTIS interrupts. Late 30's. A little proud of his muscles. He's the high-strung jealous type. His style is Vegas by way of Bakersfield. He brings over two drinks. One for him and one for Tracy.

CHARLIE

What's going on? Is she bothering you Tracy?

TRACY

No. It's just girl stuff.

CHARLIE

Cuz it sounds like she's being a bitch.

KRYSTAL

Screw you, Charlie.

TRACY

Charlie, it's none of your business.

CHARLIE

I'm just inside if you need me.

TRACY

Great.

KRYSTAL

I'm outy.

FROM A DISTANCE I spot Krystal leaving Tracy at the door.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

I still don't know what to make of Tracy. Is she just a nice girl doing Krystal a favor? Or is there another reason she had her photograph at Steve Denzler's? And if so, what would that reason be? He's in real estate, not the movie business.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED:

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

I decided to take a closer look at her, out of her natural habitat.

Tracy spots me, blows me a kiss and steps back inside. That guy (Charlie Batts) is still hanging around outside watching her every move.

EST. FOREST LAWN - DAY

Forced manicured beauty in what should be a desert hillside.

INT. FOREST LAWN CHAPEL - DAY

I stand in the back of the room with the other late-comers. An urn filled with what's left of Steve Denzler is on a table in between two pots of lilies.

A few blown up photographs of Steve hang on the wall. Steve in his twenties with a younger guy. Steve on vacation - fly fishing.

It's not hard to figure out who the younger guy is because he's at the podium, trying to compose himself through his SOBBING. He holds up BOOK WITH A TIBETAN DESIGN, RED LEATHER COVER.

MARK DENZLER

A friend of mine gave me this book about TRUTH. The message in it is simple. "Speak the Truth and act on it". My brother did both, sometimes to a fault. What you saw was what you got with Steve and people respected that. He was my brother my friend and my idol. Even though he hated the beach.

There are scattered sad chuckles from those who know the family history enough to get the joke. Among them Suzette, who's hanging on every word. Next to her is Bill checking his Blackberry.

Tracy steps over, fanning herself with a program. In fact, everyone is fanning themselves with their programs.

TRACY

What are you doing here?

MARLOWE

Sweating. It's nice out isn't it? If you're a gila monster.

TRACY

I'm in a rotten mood.

MARLOWE

Yeah it shows. You have a wrinkle.

As Mark Denzler leads the group in prayer she bows her head and joins in, looking sincere.

EXT. CHAPEL - LATER

Half the people are anxious to get the hell out of there, the other half mingle like it's a cocktail party.

TRACY

Cell phones are what cigarettes used to be. A way to feel okay standing alone. Bill told me that once. Though, look at the guy. He's so not okay.

Her eyes are on Bill who's got his phone up to his ear while yelling at one of the Forest Lawn parking attendants.

TRACY (CONT'D)

He's ridiculous.

MARLOWE

I guess you know him well enough to hate him.

TRACY

I'm just pissed. That night at Steve's while you were calling the cops, I called him and unlike a normal person who would be concerned and helpful, he freaked and wanted nothing to do with it.

MARLOWE

Why'd you call him?

TRACY

I was calling Suzette. She wasn't home.

MARLOWE

Why didn't you call her cell?

TRACY

(rattled)

Who said I didn't?

MARLOWE

You said she wasn't home.

TRACY

I have to go pay my condolences to Mark. Coming?

MARLOWE

Later. And Tracy?

She stops as if expecting a compliment.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

You never called her cell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

I expect her to deny it or laugh it off but instead she looks hurt.

TRACY

It's not easy being a girl in this town.

She walks away, pulling herself together. By the time she gets over to Mark Denzler she's back in control. She steps in front of Suzette to give Mark a long lingering hug which doesn't make Suzette too happy.

BILL (O.S.)

Come on, Suzette. Let's go.

Bill waves her over to their waiting car. As she walks past me, she doesn't even bother to shoot me a glance. She gets into Bill's car without saying another word.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

If Tracy could lie about her affair with Bill, maybe she could lie about other things. I don't think she could kill a man 6'2" with a knife, but she was there that night and if she had the security code, she might have given it to somebody else. But then why hang around? Mark would gain from his brother's death financially, but he was a wreck giving that speech and nobody's that good an actor. At this point either Tracy still knows something she isn't telling me, Steve Denzler had enemies we don't know of, or it was simply a home invasion gone bad.

EXT. BLUE JAY WAY - DAY

The doors are open and monitored by a beat cop. I show him Pete's card and walk in, sweating bullets, with two Iced Teas.

INT. STEVE DENZLER'S HOUSE - DAY

I approach Pete who is on his hands and knees looking under the couch. I hand him an Iced Tea.

MARLOWE

You find anything interesting for me?

DET. PETE MILLER

Naw. You know how these things go.

MARLOWE

Yeah it's like CSI. Somebody gets life in San Quentin because you found a monkey's fingerprint on an ice cube.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

It's either jealousy, greed, or rage. And this town isn't running out of any of them any time soon. I checked the brother out. Mark Denzler. He's clean as far as we know.

MARLOWE

The neighbors see anything?

DET. PETE MILLER

They don't even know who lives here. He was out of town half the year on business.

MARLOWE

You still think it's the girl?

DET. PETE MILLER

Unless you can find me a better suspect, she's all I got. Besides according to you she was in the house for ten minutes before she screamed. Maybe she was sitting there waiting like a polite guest or maybe she wasn't.

MARLOWE

An eight-inch butcher knife? She would have had to use a hammer and pound it in.

DET. PETE MILLER

Maybe she had help. Maybe she let someone in the back door. And there are a few other things about her that make me wonder.

But he's not talking.

MARLOWE

Do you want to tell me what they are?

DET. PETE MILLER

I'll think about it.

MARLOWE

You joking? You're not joking. Is something bothering you?

DET. PETE MILLER

Me? No. There are a hundred thousand crimes a year in L.A., I'm one of 6 thousand cops. I got a city that's losing it's mind in the middle of a heat wave; a murder of a guy who was a friend of the damn Mayor;

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DET. PETE MILLER (CONT'D)
and a friend of mine telling me to
ignore a key witness. Aside from that
I'm just peachy.

MARLOWE
I'm not telling you to ignore her. I'm
just saying I have a hunch about her.
She's not the type.

DET. PETE MILLER
Really? I checked around. Let me tell
you about her type. She's what we call
a "puller". She pulls in girls for
rich men who get to look them over
like they're buying a new suit.

MARLOWE
Sounds like a high-end dating service.

DET. PETE MILLER
Nothing you and I could afford. Only
this one comes with a murder, and your
girlfriend is part of it.

MARLOWE
Come on, Pete --

DET. PETE MILLER
We've been through a lot together,
Marlowe. We scratch each others' backs
and it usually works out fine, but you
come and go as you please because I
have the badge. You answer to whoever
has their wallet out, while I got to
follow procedures in case this thing
winds up in court. Now if you'll
excuse me, I have to go back to
headquarters in five minutes and do
some police work.

I head out, and on my way Pete stops me.

DET. PETE MILLER (CONT'D)
When I get enough evidence I'll arrest
her. In the mean time, I'll be
watching her, and if she didn't do it,
the killers will be watching you.
Either way, she's trouble.

MARLOWE
Yeah well, trouble is my business.

END ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

Liars All

CONTINUED:

BEGIN ACT THREE

EXT. BLUE JAY WAY - DAY

Did I mention it's hot? I chew ice from my tea, shake the cup and, open my car door. I happen to glance up the street to:

THE NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - on an angle, overlooking Steve Denzler's place. Bolted to the eave of that house, I see A SECURITY CAMERA POINTED THIS WAY. I walk up the street to check it out.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Pete's job was to look at the clues and mine was to look at the spaces between them. In this case that meant the house up the street.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

A HUGE BUDDHA sits beyond the bridge to the front door, which I can see through the bamboo. I ring the bell and look up at another security camera posted here as A VOICE scrambles over the two-inch intercom.

LAURA DEVIN

Who is it?

MARLOWE

Name's Marlowe. I'm a private investigator. It's about your neighbor.

INT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Laura Devin is 46, fragile and too trendy. We walk through a large room with a view of Century City and Catalina as...

FOUR Latina women work at a long table among containers of gold chains, diamonds, pearls and other precious things.

LAURA DEVIN

My friends tell me I'm paranoid, but I'm a jewelry designer, so I have more security cameras than most people anyway. Combine that with living alone and you could say I make sure I'm covered.

We reach a security bay a little smaller than the one at NORAD. Monitors, hard drives, computers.

LAURA DEVIN (CONT'D)

Turn your head, please.

I do as she logs on and types in commands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA DEVIN (CONT'D)

You said two nights ago between five
and midnight? Okay...You can look now.

I turn around to see TIME LAPSE SECURITY footage on three
monitors showing three exterior angles of her property
simultaneously.

MARLOWE

Stop there please.

She does, and THERE IS A BLACK MERCEDES S550 parked just down
the street from Steve Denzler's house.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

Slowly now.

She allows the recorded image to advance and WE SEE - A
SHADOWY FIGURE run to it, get in and drive. The LIGHTS COME ON
as well as those lighting THE LICENSE PLATE.

EXT. LAURA DEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Laura's walking her dog while I try to get PETE ON HIS CELL
PHONE.

LAURA DEVIN

I rarely saw Steve. He spent most of
his time in New York. If he was here
it was usually on business.

I make note of that as Pete picks up the phone after letting
it ring long enough to let me know he's pissed.

MARLOWE

Pete, the neighbor's camera picked up
a plate number. GBX2131. Yeah, the
next house up. One of those "Look-at-
me-I'm-Spiritual" houses. I told her
you'd be by later. Now you can go back
to hating me.

EXT. MARLOWE'S OFFICE - ENTRANCE AREA - DAY

Jessica is trying not to show she's a little pissy.

MARLOWE

I need you to check to see if Steve
Denzler had any real estate deals in
the works. Could be anything. His
house. Commercial space. Land in
Malibu. Anything at all. I want to
know if he was in town for a
particular reason.

She scribbles a note.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

Miss Tracy Faye is in your office. She didn't have an appointment, but I didn't think you'd mind, after all you saved her life. At least that's what she said.

MARLOWE

I didn't save her life exactly.

JESSICA

Well she's dressed to thank you anyway.

Jessica leaves.

INT. MARLOWE'S OFFICE - DAY

I open the door to my office and Tracy Faye is here, wearing a Sun dress that leaves little of her body in the shade. She fans herself with a newspaper. She's crying.

TRACY

I'm sorry to just show up like this. It's just that I heard you were asking around about me and it makes me nervous.

MARLOWE

That makes sense. You were at the scene of a murder and some people wonder if you had something to do with it. I'd be nervous too.

TRACY

Do you think I have anything to do with Steve's death?

MARLOWE

It doesn't matter what I think. But just for the record did you kill him?

TRACY

No, of course not.

MARLOWE

Then what are you crying about?

She tries to compose herself. But can't.

TRACY

I moved here from Ohio to start my life over and now I'm afraid I'm in over my head AGAIN and I can't believe it. My whole life I felt like there were smarter people making me out to be the dumb one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She cries. She shows me a tabloid newspaper. There is a tiny photo of her and Steve Denzler on page 15.

TRACY (CONT'D)

This paper doesn't exactly have reporters. Somebody had to call it in. Somebody who's trying to ruin my career.

MARLOWE

Recently, seems like the only people worried about their reputations are the people who don't have one. No offense, but what career are we talking about exactly?

TRACY

I do some acting and modeling, and the last thing I need is to look like I'm involved somehow in a murder.

MARLOWE

Can I ask you something flat out? How do you know Steve Denzler?

TRACY

He was a friend and a good guy and I don't know many of those. Steve was the only man in town who treated me with respect. He even offered me a job at his company. Not a lot of money but a real job.

She whips out her checkbook.

TRACY (CONT'D)

What would it take for me to hire you?

MARLOWE

To do what, exactly?

TRACY

To find out who's behind this, of course.

MARLOWE

I tell you what. I'm poking around in this case anyway on somebody else's dime. If I come across anything that can help you, I'll let you know.

TRACY

Oh thank god. I only have 68 dollars in my account anyway.

She pushes too close to me as she gives me a kiss on the cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Maybe Tracy was working through a few boundary issues of her own. What I wanted to know was if Tracy really was a friend of Steve Denzler's and if he might have had any enemies. I figured his brother would have both answers.

EXT. MARK DENZLER'S HOUSE - PCH - DAY

Mark lives on a stretch of PCH north of Trancas. Pricey real-estate for a row of shacks. I ring the doorbell a few times. No answer.

I look past the gate and can't see much except TEN POTTED PLANTS on the patio. Not just any plants either. *Very expensive and rare Japanese shrubs called VENUS.*

And the last time I saw one was...

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. BRENTWOOD HOME - POOL AREA - DAY

SUZETTE

Oh it's a rare Japanese shrub. A Venus or something. I'm the only one of us who has one.

BILL

God knows where she got it.

BACK TO MARLOWE:

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

You looking for Mark?

MARLOWE

Yeah, is he home?

NEIGHBOR

Try about a mile down the road. The big white house. Double lot. Nicholas DiFrisco's beach.

MARLOWE

Nicholas has his own beach?

NEIGHBOR

And if you don't know him, you won't have access. Unless you want to enter down at Big Rock and walk a mile back up.

EXT. PCH - NICHOLAS DIFRISCO'S - DAY

I drive. Sure enough there's a jeep parked outside which I assume is Mark's because of the Wave Buzz bumper sticker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

I slow down and see what the neighbor was talking about. The pathway to the water that runs left of Nicholas's big white house is padlocked. I keep driving.

EXT. BIG ROCK ROAD - DAY

I park across the highway and make the necessary adjustments.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

I carry my shoes and shirt and sweat my way up the coast.

I spot Mark right away. He's sitting on the shore next to his collector's item long board, lost in thought.

MARLOWE

Mark. I'm Phillip Marlowe. I was at your brother's memorial service.

MARK

You knew Steve?

MARLOWE

I was the one who called the cops. I was there on a case.

MARK

Right. The detective. A lot of burglaries up there. That's why I live at the beach. How'd you know I was here?

MARLOWE

Your neighbor. Seems there's an access problem.

MARK

It'd be nice if everyone had access but then you get all these amateurs who don't respect the waves. Ruins it for the real surfers.

MARLOWE

Did your brother have any enemies?

MARK

It's like I told the cops, none that I know of. The weird thing is, I gain by Steve dying, but without my brother to manage the money, I'll just lose it all. Our dad knew that, and that's why Steve handled it. We all wanted it that way.

MARLOWE

I don't mean anything, but do you mind my asking where you were last Tuesday night?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

On my way back from Japan. I go every couple of months. The cops have my airline ticket.

MARLOWE

Yeah, I noticed those flowers at your place. Venus plants, right?

MARK

How'd you know that? Yeah, I know a guy at UCLA who helps me bring them in to the country as botanical studies.

A GUY steps out onto the deck balcony of DiFrisco's house. I've seen him before. Mark calls to him.

MARK (CONT'D)

Hey Charlie. Charlie Battis. Phillip Marlowe. Charlie works with Nicholas.
(to Charlie)
Marlowe was with Tracy at Steve's house the night he died. He's a private detective.

CHARLIE

No kidding. Great.

MARLOWE

So was Tracy Steve's girlfriend or something?

CHARLIE

No. Just a friend. Thanks for being there for her.

MARK

You know Tracy?

CHARLIE

We're pretty close you could say.

He said with a little too much pride.

MARLOWE

You got a minute?

CHARLIE

I don't really. Enjoy the view.

MARK

I gotta' roll too. Nice meeting you.

We shake hands and pound fists because we're cool like that, and he hits the waves. That leaves me and some gorgeous girls in bikinis who have access to this private beach. So I leave.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEANWHILE (AWAY FROM MARLOWE):

POV - BINOCULARS

we watch as Marlowe walks far down the beach on the way to his car.

Lower the binoculars and REVEAL it's CHARLIE BATTIS watching Marlowe in the distance, with a concerned look on his face.

EXT. BIG ROCK ROAD

I'm glad to get back into my air-conditioned car. MY CELL PHONE RINGS and I see it's PETE.

MARLOWE

You want to kiss and make up, right?

PETE (PHONE)

I got an ID on the suspect's car you saw leaving the murder scene.

MARLOWE

Great. So who did it?

PETE

Sandra Bullock.

END ACT THREE

(CONTINUED)

The Importance of Being Ernesto

CONTINUED:

BEGIN ACT FOUR

EXT. GALAXY - NIGHT

There are plenty of cars pulling up as I drive up to THE VALET - ERNESTO - who looks like the one in charge.

ERNESTO
Twenty dollars.

MARLOWE
I'm not staying.

My cell phone rings. Caller ID reads Sunset Tower. I let it go to voice mail.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
I just stopped by to say Sandra Bullock sends her regards.

Ernesto looks confused.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
The Mercedes that was parked here a few days ago? One of you guys took it out for a little ride?

He holds the parking ticket up to my face.

ERNESTO
See? Not responsible for nothing, never.

MARLOWE
Yeah that's nice. But this is a murder investigation.

ERNESTO
I just park the cars.

Two cars pull up behind me. The other valets glare at Ernesto. I'm blocking the road.

MARLOWE
Here's what's going to happen, Ernesto. The LAPD is going to be all over you guys because that Mercedes was spotted near the site of a murder. Now since Sandra Bullock was happily having dinner at the restaurant across the street at the time, it means whoever had the keys to her car took it for a little ride. And their fingerprints are all over it.

I scribble my number on a paper and hand it to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE

Call me if you want to stay out of jail.

As I drive away, I see Ernesto running over to what may be one of the last five public pay-phones left in L.A. I check the time, pick up my cell and call Pete.

MARLOWE (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Pete. Do us a favor. There's a pay phone at 7723 Las Palmas. A call is being made from there right now. At 8:32. I need to know who the call is going to. I owe you one. Okay another one.

Call waiting beeps. Caller ID reads SUNSET TOWER. John Whelan calling - again. I swing my car around and head west.

EXT. SUNSET TOWER - NIGHT

I drive up to a riot. This is what happens when you've got too many people on too much booze with too few parking spaces. That gives me a thought. I call Jessica on my way inside.

MARLOWE

What did you find out about Steve Denzlers' real estate deals in L.A.?

INTERCUT:

INT. DANCE REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

Jessica looks hot in dance clothes. On her phone and out of breath.

JESSICA

I'm picking up a file from the agent on my way back. Apparently there's a parking lot deal in the works. Do you have any idea how much a slab of asphalt with painted lines on it goes for?

MARLOWE

More than the cars parked on it. Jeezus you're breathing heavy. You have company?

JESSICA

(rolling her eyes)
I'm with 7 girls.

MARLOWE

You dirty little bird, and you didn't call me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

I'm in dance class, genius. I'll see you later.

She hangs up. I drive up closer to the entrance where John Whelan is trying to pacify a particularly irate customer who walks away disgusted.

JOHN

Tracy's inside.

INT. SUNSET TOWER - NIGHT

I'm sitting at the bar. Across the room is a nice booth with nice little girls all in a row. Tracy dressed like a conservative wife, and one of her clones who has been pulled in for middle-aged Euro-looking guys.

Tracy spots me and comes over immediately leaving the euro sheep to be slaughtered by the clone. Tracy is drunk. In fact she's near blotto.

TRACY

Are you here for me?

MARLOWE

Isn't everybody?

TRACY

It's okay, I'm used to guys wanting to know where I am.

MARLOWE

Actually, a friend of mine owns this place.

TRACY

Really? I like John. I like you too, Marlowe. Do you like my outfit? Some guys like me this way.

MARLOWE

Anyway is fine by me. Listen, I just want you to know there was a car at the murder scene that night. Somebody left Denzler's and drove it away and it wasn't you.

TRACY

Really? That's good. You're really good. All I ever wanted was a good guy. I know a lot of guys, you know? And they're not so...good, but you're good. You're a professional and I appreciate that, and...

As she babbles my cell rings. It's Pete. I answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE

Talk to me.

PETE (PHONE)

I got two things for you. Neither is going to make your life easier.

MARLOWE

Sounds like my life. Shoot.

PETE (PHONE)

Four years ago Tracy Faye was arrested for attempted murder of her boyfriend.

MARLOWE

You don't say.

TRACY

No really...you were there for me...

I wasn't talking to you, genius. I look at the Tracy before me in a Breakfast at Tiffany's dress complete with pearls.

MARLOWE

So she did time? She got off, what?

PETE (PHONE)

And get this, she stabbed him. I'm getting details from the Dayton, Ohio D.A. in the morning. I told you she was trouble.

Tracy orders another round of drinks to her table.

MARLOWE

What's the second part?

PETE (PHONE)

I got that number Ernesto called from the pay phone. It's Gorman's Bar in Hollywood.

MARLOWE

I'll pay them a visit.

PETE (PHONE)

I wouldn't if I were you. It's a pretty exclusive place, and they don't take kindly to strangers. We closed it down once for drugs and guns, it was open again the next day.

MARLOWE

Who they paying off?

PETE (PHONE)

Who knows? Cops don't even go in there without backup.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE
Thanks for the warning.

We hang up as Tracy finishes.

TRACY
I'm not the kind of girl I look like.
I mean..I'm really sincere.

She stumbles on a heel.

MARLOWE
Maybe it's time for you to go home.

EXT. L.A. STREETS - NIGHT

The flats between Melrose and Beverly. Small houses and bungalows. Tracy searches for the keys in her bag before we turn down her street.

TRACY
Second house on the left.

I park in the driveway of the small house.

INT. TRACY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Comfortable nothing fancy. I make sure she's safely inside before I turn to go.

TRACY
Are you getting tired of rescuing me?

MARLOWE
Is that what I'm doing?

I notice framed photos on a bookcase. Tracy as a sweet-looking kid. Tracy with her family in Ohio.

TRACY
The good old days. Actually they weren't all that good.

Her CAT slinks up to me and rubs on me.

TRACY (CONT'D)
She likes you.

MARLOWE
She doesn't know any better.

TRACY
Maybe she can just tell who to trust.

The cat purrs. Or maybe it's Tracy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE

Make sure you lock the door behind me.

TRACY

You don't have to leave yet.

MARLOWE

Sure I do.

I get out of there for a lot of reasons but I told myself it was because I still had work to do.

EXT. TRACY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

I notice a car behind me popping on headlights as I pull away from the curb.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

I was being followed and I didn't mind. If I was the bait there had to be a fairly big fish coming for me. The trick in this situation is not to get swallowed whole.

INT. GORMAN'S BAR & GRILL - HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Rough place with rough people.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

This is the kind of place that caters to regulars. Whoever borrowed Sandra Bullock's car has friends in this room and those friends took it to Steve Denzler's that night. I'm hoping if I stay long enough I'll recognize somebody. In this case, it would take as long as eating a sandwich and hearing a conversation reminding me that the reason L.A. looks like it does is because cars are more important than architecture.

The Bartender is 63 or so, and talking to a friend at the other end of the bar.

BARTENDER

I gotta' get a new job fast. Anything you can do would be great.

FRIEND

Why they closing the bar?

BARTENDER

Usual reason. They're going to Joni Mitchell this place next month. The production company next door's going to make it a parking lot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

I finish a burger at the bar and swig a soda as A DAY DRUNK sidles up to me, then bumps into me.

DAY DRUNK
How's the burger?

MARLOWE
It's over.

DAY DRUNK
Feel like buying me one?

MARLOWE
Not particularly.

DAY DRUNK
Oh come on.

He sticks a gun in my ribs.

MARLOWE
Where to?

He gestures to a door in the back and we head that way.

INT. GORMAN BAR & GRILL - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The door closes behind me and BAM! Somebody punches me in the gut. I take it like a man, then promptly slump to floor. I look up at

THREE THUGS and CHARLIE BATTIS in a chair against the wall. He gets off his chair and kicks me in the stomach.

CHARLIE
That's for getting too close to my lady.

MARLOWE
Who would that be?

CHARLIE
Tracy.

MARLOWE
Oh, she's YOUR lady? I'll let her know the next time I see her, because she acts like she's serving numbers at a Deli counter.

Charlie lunges forward and kicks me in the ribs. I admit it, it hurts. I probably even deserved it. He lifts my head up by my hair and looks in my face.

CHARLIE
Something bad is going to happen to you now. After, if you're not dead you should consider getting a real job.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gestures to the gorillas and I make my move. I spring forward, punch Charlie a good shot in the mouth. Back fist the guy next to me. I block Charlie's right, tag him again, just before the guy with the gun does something clever to the back of my neck. A black pool opens under my feet and I dive in.

BLACK OUT

The very next thing I know is I hear noise. A HISSING SOUND. Then a whining. Like a sick dog. No, wait.

MARLOWE'S POV

As I coax my eyelids open they let in light. And my brain scrambles to make sense of what I'm seeing and hearing. Those dogs are horns and that hissing is traffic. I'm...

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - MORNING

... parked in my car in the ONCOMING LANES. My eyes light with panic. I fumble for the keys, hearing SCREECHING TIRES as traffic swerves around me like river water around a rock.

END ACT FOUR

(CONTINUED)

A Bigger Fish

CONTINUED:

BEGIN ACT FIVE

EXT. 101 FREEWAY - DAY

I start the car, put it in reverse, punch it, look over my shoulder and accelerate. Cars pass me in the opposite direction on both sides. I pick my spot and... Now! I spin the wheel, reverse float, throw it into drive and step on the gas. As my car spins around to face the right way, a car speeds by and RIPS off my side mirror, but that's the extent of the damage. I drive on.

MARLOWE

Piece of cake.

INT. MARLOWE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

I wake up feeling like miserable would be a step up and **READING JESSICA'S RESEARCH FILE** wasn't doing anything for the ache in my head.

JESSICA

Here. Drink this. It's Ola Loa, a Vitamin drink.

She hands me a glass of something pink. I take a sip.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

You wanna' tell me what happened?

MARLOWE

Oh you know a little of this, a little of that. Then some guys did some things and I went for a drive. How long have you been here?

JESSICA

Oh you know... I got worried when you didn't answer your cell.

Marlowe

How bad do I look?

JESSICA

I'd still do ya'.

She gently massages my neck and touches my forehead. I try something heroic. Standing. The couch flies around the room and hits me in the back of the head. Jessica leans me back. Keeps rubbing me.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Just stay put. I've been told I have healing hands.

MARLOWE

I'm not paying you enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESSICA

Shhh.

She smiles, rubs my head and we look each other in the eyes for a moment that dissipates into silence.

MARLOWE

You know..Jess..I --

JESSICA

Yeah?

KNOCK AT THE DOOR

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Knowing you that could be anyone. Any women beat you in the head last night?

MARLOWE

Women beat me in the head every night.

She answers the door. It's Pete. He checks out my face.

PETE

You look like hammered hell.

MARLOWE

And you're an Abercrombie and Finch model.

JESSICA

Fitch.

MARLOWE

Why don't you run out and get me something to drink I can pronounce. Something brown.

JESSICA

Sure, you want a coffee too Pete?

MARLOWE

I was thinking something from either Kentucky or Ireland. I'm not picky.

JESSICA

Coffee it is. I'll be back. Oh, two things. Ernesto called and left a number.

MARLOWE

And two?

JESSICA

Bill Church's check bounced.

MARLOWE

So-called 'rich people'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jessica leaves.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
She's gonna' kill me with this health
thing. Look at this..I'm drinking pink
vitamin water for god sakes.

I hand him the file.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
Here, Jess did some research on the
Denzler parking lot near The Galaxy
Club.

Pete scans it.

PETE
And Nicholas DiFrisco is buying it.
Gripping.

MARLOWE
Read closer. It's the only available
parking lot in a six block area and if
he doesn't get it his Galaxy Club is
toast. The funny thing is, Mark is the
one driving the deal.

PETE
Get to the point.

MARLOWE
Mark Denzler lives on a hefty
allowance from his brother and likes
it that way. He doesn't go east of the
beach unless he's going to a funeral,
and certainly not for some business
deal. This is the only one he's ever
been part of.

PETE
So?

MARLOWE
So it looks like Steve Denzler called
the real estate office and put the
deal on hold.

PETE
And two days later he was dead.

MARLOWE
Bingo.

PETE
And the deal went through?

MARLOWE
Not yet. The closing date is Friday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETE

So you think Mark was involved with killing his brother for backing out of a deal?

MARLOWE

No. It's like you said, crimes are about jealousy, greed or rage and he's none of them. He'd have to be pushed into it.

PETE

Any idea on who's doing the pushing?

MARLOWE

I have some ideas. But I can tell you who isn't. Tracy Faye.

Pete is still for a moment. Then tells me

PETE

I know. I found out why she stabbed her boyfriend. I'll see you around.

He hands me TRACY'S FILE from the DAYTON OHIO PD.

I take a breath and open it. These photos are never pretty, but they're all the more grisly when you know what the girl under the bruises actually looks like without them.

There are only two mug shots, the other 20 are evidence of her abuse from the mug dishing it out.

I trudge over to my desk and sit in the chair. Open a drawer and check behind a divider, digging with my hand, I pull out my backup Smith & Wesson .40 and I find a bottle of Old Forester. I eagerly pull it from the drawer, but it's empty, with a POST IT stuck to the side: **XO Jess**

I put the bottle back, shut the drawer and see

A scrap of paper with Ernesto's number. I pick up the phone and call.

EXT. FAST FOOD DRIVE-THRU RESTAURANT - DAY

A block of fast food restaurants, car repair shops and store front businesses that look like whatever's happening in their back rooms is paying their rent.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Sometimes, when one little piece falls into place, other things seem to follow. I don't know why, really. It's like priming a water pump. After a drop or two, there's a trickle and if you're diligent, things really start to flow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ernesto is out front - WITH HIS 8 YEAR-OLD SON MIGUEL - and they're struggling to load the restaurant's broken down sign and bulky INTERCOM MENU ORDER STATION into a pick-up truck.

He's sweating and doing his best to hurry while hungry customers yell at him for blocking the drive-thru lane.

MARLOWE (VO) (CONT'D)

In my book the guy was innocent because I've never known a criminal who wouldn't do whatever they had to just to avoid working as hard as Ernesto was right now.

I get out of my car and walk over to him and help from the boy's end.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

You're not parking cars any more?

ERNESTO

I got fired for no reason.

TIME CUT:

SAME PLACE

Ernesto is nervous.

ERNESTO

I was told to pick one of the cars that just drove up and drive it to a bar in Hollywood.

MARLOWE

Gorman's.

ERNESTO

Yes. I had a phone number to call when I got there. I call, leave the keys in the car, and wait at the bar. An hour later I drive the car back to Galaxy.

MARLOWE

What did the guy look like who took the car?

ERNESTO

I didn't see nobody. I was inside.

MARLOWE

Well who told you to do all this?

ERNESTO

My boss.

MARLOWE

Nicholas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERNESTO

No. Charlie. Charlie Battis.
(to his son)
Miguel, that's enough soda for today.

Miguel doesn't want to put it down, but does for his dad.

MARLOWE

I have one more question. The last
time I talked to you, you went
straight to the pay phone and called
Gorman's Bar. Why?

ERNESTO

I was scared. I know that's where
Charlie hangs out. Maybe he could help
me. I wish I could help you find this
killer. It's these people who ruin
this country.

INT. MARLOWE'S CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Cruising.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

It's obvious Charlie Battis is crazy
enough to kill any guy who gets too
close to Tracy. Steve Denzler and
Tracy seemed close enough for him to
drive up there in somebody else's car
that night. But something is still
bothering me. It's a damn coincidence
that Charlie worked for Nicholas and
in their own ways, they'd both benefit
from Steve's death.

EXT. GALAXY CLUB - NIGHT

Dozens of people stand around sweating out the alcohol they've
been consuming all night while valets run up the block to
retrieve their cars.

I have my twenty dollars out and hand it to Ernesto's
replacement. He hands me a ticket and quickly moves on to the
next in line.

INT. GALAXY - NIGHT

Nicholas is standing at a table checking on guests as I
approach. I follow him as he nods to other guests and leads
me to an empty table. He notices the bruise on my eyelid.

NICHOLAS

No permanent damage, I hope.

MARLOWE

I can still count to ten.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLAS

I heard about your run-in with Charlie. He was a real head case about some things.

MARLOWE

Was?

NICHOLAS

I got rid of him. Not the kind of guy I want around my guests.

MARLOWE

I understand you're getting the parking across the street.

NICHOLAS

That's right. Thank god.

MARLOWE

I also understand Steve Denzler had a problem with the deal.

NICHOLAS

Really? I wasn't aware of that. It's sad about Steve, I didn't know him that well, but there was no problem really. Just business.

MARLOWE

And really easy business when you're dealing with Mark instead of Steve.

NICHOLAS

Mark's a friend, Mister Marlowe. A neighbor. I'm just looking for the win-win in the whole thing. Mark is happy so I'm happy. Everybody's happy.

MARLOWE

Everybody but Steve Denzler.

I LEAVE.

TIME CUT:

MEANWHILE (AWAY FROM MARLOWE):

EXT. GALAXY - NIGHT

Tracy drives up, hands her keys over to the valet. Before she can walk in the door, Charlie Battis grabs her and pulls her off to the side.

CHARLIE

Hey Tracy, how come you don't call me back?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRACY

I never call you back, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You don't even thank me for the gift?

TRACY

I thanked you when you gave it to me.
What do you want from me?

CHARLIE

A little more.

TRACY

You know what then? Don't give me any
more gifts.

CHARLIE

Or what? You gonna' call your
detective? I'll chop him up the next
time I see him.

TRACY

Just leave me alone.

She walks away, he grabs her, pulls her towards the alley and smacks her in the head. As she struggles to get away, Charlie is grabbed from behind by Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

What's the matter with you?

CHARLIE

We're having a little discussion.
Don't worry about it, Nick.

NICHOLAS

(to Tracy)
Go home.

She leaves. Nicholas shoves Charlie into the alleyway.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I told you to get outa' here for
awhile.

Nicholas punches Charlie in the ribs.

CHARLIE

Nicholas! Stop. Okay, I'll leave her
alone. I didn't know she --

NICHOLAS

That's not because of her, you idiot.
That's for bringing Marlowe into my
life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Up until now, Nicholas has been the picture of a straight up cool-headed businessman. But now Nicholas beats the living shit out of Charlie Battis. Pummeling him relentlessly. Nicholas's blood boils with a crazy man's rage. Charlie begs for mercy until he can't even talk and lies barely breathing on the asphalt near the garbage dumpster. A couple of Nicholas's guys bend down to pick him up.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Leave him.

SECURITY GUY

Is everything okay?

NICHOLAS

(sotto)

It will be in 24 hours.

MONTAGE - IT'S DAMN HOT

THERMALS RISE from the pavement in Hollywood.

THERMALS RISE through a layer of smog over the basin.

THERMALS RISE from the deck at Santa Monica Pier.

THERMALS RISE past a DIGITAL BANK THERMOMETER reading: 104F

THERMALS RISE past traffic on the 101.

THERMALS RISE past people yelling at each other through open car windows.

INT. MARLOWE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

This case was getting to me. At least the AC in the office is working and for the moment there's quiet. Until I hear footsteps down the corridor. I open the door to find Tracy and I can't say I'm surprised or that she's surprised I'm not.

TRACY

I couldn't sleep.

MARLOWE

And you're out of Ambien so you decided to drive two miles to see if my light was on.

TRACY

It's not the first time I've done it, it's just the first time you've been here. You're working late?

MARLOWE

The AC in my apartment is busted.

TRACY

Lucky me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She started unbuttoning her blouse.

TRACY (CONT'D)
You sure it's okay, my being here an
all?

MARLOWE
I can always throw you out if you
don't behave.

TRACY
We're alike you and me. No discussion
necessary.

MARLOWE
Then why are we discussing it?

TRACY
You're not gonna' fall in love with me
or something, are you?

MARLOWE
Or something.

Part of me wants to throw her out the fucking window and
another part of me wants to nail her against the wall. I
decided to leave the window out of this until morning.

EXT. MARLOWE'S OFFICE - DAY

I watch through the window as she walks to her car. She
doesn't turn around. She doesn't have to. She knows she's not
easy to forget.

I think about getting some sleep and that's when I see it. The
sunlight reflecting off the metal grabs my attention. It's a
man's watch. **A VINTAGE ROLEX.** I call Pete on the phone.

MARLOWE
Pete? It's me. The list of stolen
items from Steve Denzler's house...?
It included a vintage Rolex, right?...
Why? Because I found it.

END ACT FIVE

(CONTINUED)

The Ugly Truth

CONTINUED:

BEGIN ACT SIX

EXT. TRACY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tracy answers the door in a robe. I hold the watch up in front of her.

MARLOWE

You forgot something.

INT. TRACY'S HOUSE - DAY

Those photos don't look so innocent all of a sudden.

MARLOWE

I have to wonder what a girl with 68 dollars is doing with a 30 thousand dollar watch.

TRACY

Charlie Battis gave it to me. I didn't know what it's worth.

MARLOWE

And you didn't know it was stolen from Steve Denzler's house the night he was killed?

TRACY

What? No. Goddamn Charlie's been practically stalking me for a year. He's psycho. You gotta' believe me.

MARLOWE

I don't have to believe anybody. And not somebody who's already lied to me twice.

TRACY

I'm not lying.

She backs away as I follow her.

MARLOWE

You've been in the middle of this whole thing from the start. You KNOW Nicholas DiFrisco, you KNOW Bill Church, you KNOW Mark Denzler, and you KNOW Charlie Battis who probably killed a man. You know every man involved in this mess, are sleeping with at least two of us but you don't have any information that could help solve this case, right?

TRACY

I don't. I'm just a girl --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

I move in close, cornering her against the wall.

MARLOWE
Save it. You're a long way from Ohio,
now talk do you hear me? Talk!

I slam my hand against the wall. A couple of her childhood photos fall from the shelf and crash to the floor.

SHE SCREAMS a scream from the center of her childhood and it nearly rips the paint off the walls.

TRACY
Don't hit me.

Silence. I let the adrenaline release on its own.

MARLOWE
I'm not going to hit you.

I stand against the wall with her as she cries and slides down the wall to a crouch.

TRACY
That's what they all say, right before
they hit me.

I shake my head. Pick up one of her photos and set it back on the shelf. She's had a life of this stuff and one life's enough.

MARLOWE
Okay.

I leave, and just as I reach the door, she calls to me.

TRACY
The gate code... I gave Nicholas the
security code to Steve Denzler's
house.

MARLOWE
When?

TRACY
Two days before... I didn't say
anything because...I'm afraid of
Nicholas. I'm always afraid...

Poor kid. She's been afraid her whole life, and I wasn't helping. I turn to leave.

TRACY (CONT'D)
Marlowe?

MARLOWE
Don't worry. I'll take care of it.

INT. MARLOWE'S CAR - DRIVING

Heading west chasing the sun down Sunset Boulevard.

MARLOWE (PHONE)
Mark Denzler? It's Marlowe. If you
want to know who killed your brother,
meet me at your place.

MEANWHILE (AWAY FROM MARLOWE):

INT. NICHOLAS DIFRISCO'S OFFICE - GALAXY CLUB

Nicholas's at his desk, on the phone with

INTERCUT:

EXT. MALIBU BEACH - MAGIC HOUR

MARK DENZLER on his cell phone.

MARK (PHONE)
Nicholas? It's me. I'm gonna' be a
little late to sign those papers.

Nicholas has three copies of a contract on his desk.

NICHOLAS
What are you talking about? Tonight's
the night buddy, I have a Notary here
until midnight. Don't get cold feet on
me now.

MARK
No no. Nothing like that. Marlowe's on
his way out here, says he has some
info on who killed Steve.

NICHOLAS
He's on his way where? To your house?

MARK
Yeah. After that I'll hop in the car.
I promise.

BACK TO MARLOWE

The sun beats me to the beach as I pull into Mark's driveway.

INT./EXT. MARK DENZLER'S HOUSE - MAGIC HOUR

We're on the deck talking.

MARK
You're saying Charlie killed Steve?

CONTINUED:

MARLOWE

And Nicholas sent him.

MARK

There's no way Nicholas would have Steve killed. He's like family to me.

MARLOWE

He's like family to you because if you don't sell him the parking lot, The Galaxy Club fails and he's out 3 million dollars. Steve didn't want to sell it so Nicholas got rid of him.

MARK

No. Nicholas never even knew Steve was going to back out of the deal at the last minute. I only told one person.

At that exact moment, I notice A FLOWERED BIKINI drying over the back of a chair. Not just any bikini.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. BRENTWOOD HOME - POOL AREA - DAY

Suzette Church leaning over and dabbing her wet cleavage with a towel.

BACK TO MARLOWE AND MARK

MARLOWE

Let me guess. Suzette Church.

MARK

That's right. Suzette's been really helpful sorting out this deal for me. I don't have a mind for numbers, you know?

MARLOWE

But I bet she started helping you after she got a better look at your numbers.

MARK

She wouldn't do that.

MARLOWE

You seem to think there are people all around you who wouldn't do anything and they're all doing it.

Just then Nicholas walks in with a gun drawn. He's right behind me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLAS

What the hell are you doing here,
Marlowe?

I reach for my Smith, but Nicholas is too close.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Set it on the floor and kick it over
the side.

I set my gun down and kick it off the deck where it lands on
the rocks and sand below.

MARK

Jesus, Nicholas, put that thing away.

NICHOLAS

Shut up.

MARLOWE

Yeah, shut up, Mark. Your good friend
Nicholas has to think.

Nicholas tosses the contracts on the table with a pen.

NICHOLAS

Sign them.

Nicholas checks his watch. Mark doesn't move.

MARLOWE

Don't do it, Mark.

MARK

Nicholas?

NICHOLAS

Sign them now.

MARLOWE

He had your brother killed. He's the
only one who benefits from Steve's
death.

Wind begins to blow, gonging the wind chimes on the deck. The
first breeze in two weeks.

NICHOLAS

Shut up! Mark, sign the goddamn
contracts.

But Mark just sits on the deck, holding the stack of
contracts, stunned by the truth. And now fuming inside.

MARLOWE

Think about it, Mark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLAS
Shut up, I told you.

He pistol whips me in the head. I stagger away and lean on a table.

MARLOWE
You sign those papers and he'll kill us both.

MARK
No!

Mark explodes. Throwing the papers, which scatter in the breeze as he charges Nicholas who adjusts his aim from me to Mark and I DIVE reflexively and

BAM! BAM! One of the shots hits me. I feel something ice hot on my neck and a warm stream flow under my shirt. I drop, yell, clutch my neck and from my angle I see

Nicholas DROPS because THE OTHER SHOT got Nicholas in the ribs. The other shot was from

PETE MILLER, standing across the deck from us.

Nicholas gropes for his gun and gasps for a breath as Pete steps on his wrist, standing over him.

Other cops come in and help Mark.

DET. PETE MILLER
You okay?

MARLOWE
I called you an hour ago. What'd you do, take the bus?

DET. PETE MILLER
Yeah. I got a little reading done. Did the crossword.

He sticks his hand out for me and hauls me off the deck as another cop attends to Nicholas.

DETECTIVE MILLER
Thanks, Marlowe.

MARLOWE
What are friends for?

EXT. BRENTWOOD HOME - POOL AREA - DAY

I'm bandaged and bruised but not so much I can't make another trip to the West Side.

I'm carrying A PACKAGE WRAPPED IN SIMPLE BROWN PAPER as I make my way to the pool and see

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUZETTE CHURCH tearing at the JAPANESE VENUS PLANT like a wild dog with her hands, and RIPS it out by the roots and THROWS it over the garden wall. Then she sees me.

MARLOWE
Is this a bad time?

She shoots me a glare.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
What's the matter, your boyfriend dump you?

SUZETTE
You've done enough damage, don't you think, Mister Marlowe?

Unbelievable, these people. She rinses her hands with a hose.

MARLOWE
Me? You were trying to trade up and just wanted Mark Denzler for his money. Your friend DiFrisco wanted a parking lot. Steve was suspicious his little brother was suddenly interested in the family business. He was a man of principle so he didn't like DiFrisco much and liked the parking lot deal with Mark even less. He was going to nix the whole thing but you wanted Mark to get the big pay check. You went to Nicholas knowing he had a temper and you knew how to use it to your advantage.

SUZETTE
So I told Nicolas the deal was in trouble. So what?

MARLOWE
So you knew if you lit his fuse he'd take care of it. All you had to do was lie, and as far as I can tell you do that for a living.

She's having a tough time getting her hands clean.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)
My guess is you told DiFrisco that Steve Denzler planned to destroy the deal at the last minute just to humiliate him. Something like that. Right?

SUZETTE
I didn't think he'd kill the man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

I could punch her cute little reconstructed up-turned nose for that. She turns the water off and fiddles with a deck chair.

MARLOWE

The trouble is selfish little people like you are good at lighting fuses but you can't control the blast. And if somebody's life is ruined or somebody dies in the process, you don't care so long as you get what you want.

SUZETTE

That's what you came here to tell me?

MARLOWE

The sad fact is you're not even special. Most people know someone like you. Someone who thinks the rest of us are just here to be manipulated because you're bored or greedy or both. But somehow, somehow, it always comes back to bite you in the ass. Maybe I should be grateful. If it wasn't for people like you making a mess of other peoples' lives I'd be out of a job.

SUZETTE

Who do you think you are, talking to me this way?

MARLOWE

Me? Lady, I'm just a guy with a headache. You know the beauty of this whole thing is, if you and Bill weren't so curious about Tracy, and actually ventured outside your own little privileged world, I never would have found any of this out.

She puts her sunglasses on and leans back in the chair.

I leave her there. Then stop and turn back.

MARLOWE (CONT'D)

I almost forgot. This is from Mark Denzler. He said you need it more than he does.

I set the package on the side table and she tries to act like her life isn't a mess. On my way out, she rips it open to find it is

THE RED TIBETAN BOOK WITH GOLD LETTERS READING: **TRUTH**

EXT. SANTA MONICA PARK - NEXT DAY - MAGIC

Palm trees waft in the breeze. It's a beautiful sunset.

INTERCUT V.O. WITH CORRESPONDING SERIES OF SHOTS

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Steve Denzler was dead. DiFrisco died in the hospital the next morning, and all for a few more parking spaces on Friday night.

NICHOLAS DIFRISCO IN A HOSPITAL BED as a sheet is pulled over his face.

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

They picked Charlie up on his way out of town.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - HOLLYWOOD - DAY

Charlie Battis finishes dressing his hot dog at the condiments counter, takes a bite. And when he turns to leave he sees

FLASHING LIGHTS from two LAPD black & whites and four officers there to give him a ride.

BACK TO MARLOWE

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Tracy thanked me and said she learned something. That she wanted to change her life and was leaving town to stay with a friend for as long as it took.

INT. BURBANK AIRPORT - DAY

I walk Tracy to the jetway and she waves goodbye as I walk past the LED sign reading: **PORTLAND, OR**

MARLOWE (V.O.)

In L.A. it's the 'promise' that gets you. The promise that it's laid back, beautiful, easy-going, and you can have whatever you want, when all that can make the anger and frustration stand out even more. The reality is it's a town full of shaky people on shaky ground living out shaky dreams and every single day somebody falls. At that moment you either get back on the horse or find someone to blame.

INT. BRENTWOOD HOME - EVENING

THE HOUSEKEEPER is cleaning up around Bill and Suzette, who sit opposite each other across the table, ignoring each other and their empty lives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE HOUSEKEEPER scrapes plates into the trash and onto the TIBETAN TRUTH BOOK, which Suzette has already thrown away.

BACK TO MARLOWE - WALKING

I get off my ass and walk along the park on Ocean Drive and damnit, it looks beautiful. I pull the bandage from my eye.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

As long as I can watch it all like a movie and get somebody to pay my expenses, I know I'll never leave. The odd thing is I no longer want to. For now anyway, I feel like I need L.A. as much as she needs me.

I sip the dregs from my flask and spot A BAR across the street as just then my eyes follow two girls walking and talking on their cell phones but not to each other. One of them sees me and smiles as they pass and I turn to check them out, I realize I'm standing right in front of

THE STATUE OF SANTA MONICA with an engraving reading:

PATRON SAINT OF MEN GONE ASTRAY.

BACK TO MARLOWE

I look at the bar. The boulevard. The beautiful sunset. Back to THE STATUE.

MARLOWE (V.O.)

Life is choices.