

HAMMETT

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FADE IN:

INT.--EXT. CAR ON STREET - NIGHT

Behind the wheel of the plain black 1927 sedan is the nameless CONTINENTAL OP, a hard-faced, middleaged man wearing a dark hat and suit. Next to him is SUE ALABAMA. She is in her late twenties with a pretty, watchful face that's growing bitter. She looks smart, or perhaps only clever. Certainly not wise.

OP

(voice over)

The pearls were insured for 100,000 dollars so when the thief offered to sell them back for five-thousand, the insurance company came to us. There was just one hitch. There always is. The thief insisted on a woman go-between. The Old Man suggested Sue Alabama who used to work for us a few years back. When he asked me what I thought, I said I thought she'd be perfect.

During the voice-over, Sue Alabama takes a small .25 caliber automatic from her large purse. She checks it with a casual, but totally professional air. The Op glances at the gun.

OP

That'll stop a kitten, if you're lucky.

SUE

(staring straight ahead)

It'll stop a tiger, if you know how to point it.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

It's a relatively small bridge. The Op's car, its lights now out, pulls up about 30 or 40 feet away from the bridge and stops.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Sue and the Op sit in the car, both smoking, both silent, watching

the bridge. The Op pulls a watch from his vest pocket. He uses a pen light to read its dial. He holds the pen light on it for a moment or two and then clicks it off.

OP

Go.

SUE

Right.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Sue gets out of the car on her side, the Op on his. He watches her start toward the bridge, which is lighted only by a phone booth on this side and by a rather dim lamp about half way across. Sue's pace is neither quick nor slow. Just steady.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Sue has now reached the bridge, and is walking across it toward the Camera. In her arms, clutched to her breast, is the large purse. Her right hand is inside the purse. Fog swirls around her.

OP

(voice over)

Her name wasn't really Sue Alabama. It was Sue something Greek and unpronounceable. But all of us called her Alabama, so she had it changed legally back in '25. That was right after she and I took Nowhere Nickleton at the Biltmore in L.A. She primed him and I went in on the clean-up. Nowhere never did figure it out completely. Sex was nearly all Sue Alabama ever needed. She could use it the way some guys use a blackjack. I still think she was probably the best I ever worked with.

As the voice over ends, Sue Alabama's back disappears into the fog and dark just past the bridge's single overhead lamp.

The Op stares into the blackness into which Sue has disappeared.

Still staring, he takes a pistol from his topcoat pocket and checks it quickly.

We HEAR a shrill yell. It could be a man's; it could be a woman's. A second or so later, we HEAR the sound of a single shot. The Op is already pounding toward the bridge.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

As the Op races onto the scene and stops, his gun out, Sue is standing with her small gun down at her side. At her feet is the crumpled body of a small man. A large .45 automatic lies near his right hand. The Op reads the scene quickly, expertly.

OP

No pearls, huh?

SUE

No pearls.

OP

The five-thousand bucks?

SUE

Inside coat pocket. He needed one hand for the money, and the other to hold the gun. He wasn't good enough to do both.

The Op puts away his pistol, kneels by the man, and turns him over. He uses his pen light to illuminate the man's face. The man is about forty or forty-five, weak looking.

OP

Well, if it isn't Pen-Pal Morrison. Hello, Pen-Pal.

He reaches into Pen-Pal's inside pocket and brings out a blood-smeared envelope. He wipes the envelope off on Pen-Pal's clothes and checks its contents.

OP

At least you didn't hit the money.

SUE

I didn't aim at the money.

The Op, still kneeling, stares thoughtfully at the dead Pen-Pal for a moment. He picks up the .45 and sniffs it, almost absently.

OP

I can't figure him for a cannon. The only thing Pen-Pal ever used was the U.S. Mail. Extortion. That's why they parked him in Atlanta for three years.

SUE

Maybe he just got ambitious.

The Op rises and turns toward the bridge railing, his back to Sue Alabama.

OP

Maybe.

He leans on the bridge railing, or seems to. His right hand moves casually along the railing and then stops.

OP

No pearls though?

SUE

No pearls. It was a cute heist, that's all. Just one small step up from extortion.

The Op, his back still to Sue, has found something with his right hand. At first, we can't see what it is because it's virtually invisible. But what he's found is a black thread. He starts pulling it up hand over hand. At the end of the thread is a prophylactic rubber. Inside the rubber, we can just make out the string of pearls.

OP

That's kinda naughty.

He turns toward Sue. Her small pistol is pointed at his chest.

The Op looks at it, unconcerned. He gestures slightly with the pearls.

OP

Where were you gonna fence 'em, Chicago?

SUE
Cincinnati.

The Op nods his grudging approval.

OP
Yeah. Cincinnati. Sigh-Sigh
Liebowitz. Sigh-Sigh'd give
you a good price. But if
you still want them, you'll
have to use the shooter.

SUE
I know.

She hesitates for a moment. Her forefinger stiffens around the trigger and then relaxes.

SUE
Give me two hours.

OP
Why?

SUE
(shrugs slightly,
indifferently)
For old times' sake.

OP
I'll give you one.

Sue thinks about it.

SUE
Okay. One.

She starts backing away from the Op, her gun still levelled at his chest. She backs away until the fog and the dark swallow her up.

The Op watches her go. The expression on his face is thoughtful, almost sad. He stuffs the pearls into his topcoat pocket, turns, and starts walking in the opposite direction, his hands jammed into the topcoat's pockets, his head bowed. We go with him.

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OP

(voice over)

I didn't give her an hour,
of course. I didn't even
give her fifteen minutes.

At the end of the bridge is the lighted phone booth. The Op goes into it, drops his nickel, and starts talking into the phone.

OP (contd)

(voice over)

They picked her up at Union Station in a Pullman drawing-room with a ticket for Chicago in her bag. I was almost sorry she didn't make it. Back in '26 Sue Alabama and I'd nearly got married. I suppose it's just as well we didn't.

The Op hangs up the phone, comes out of the booth and starts walking slowly toward his car.

FADE OUT

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A man is seated at a table in front of a window, typing. He's thin and gray-haired. The man is Dashiell Hammett. He types the last two words--"The End"--and slumps back in his chair, finished. Then he leans forward, scans quickly what he has just written, grins wryly, rips the page from the typewriter, puts it with the rest of the story, picks it all up, and heads for a whiskey bottle.

As he crosses to the bottle, we see the rest of the apartment, note the overflowing ashtrays, the wadded up balls of paper that spill over onto the floor, and yesterday's newspaper with the screamer headlines:

INDICT SIX ON
GRAFT CHARGES

Hammett picks up the less than half full whiskey bottle and looks at it with a kind of affectionate self-mockery.

HAMMETT
Old Inspiration.

He pours himself a stiff jolt, gulps it down, shudders, and lights a cigarette, which sends him into a paroxysm of coughing. But he doesn't put the cigarette out. Instead, he pours himself another large slug, and crosses over to the Murphy bed where he settles back with his drink and his just written story.

He leafs through the story, drains his drink, takes another deep drag on his cigarette, suffers through another coughing fit, extinguishes his cigarette, and leans back on the pillows, exhausted. His eyes close. Hammett sleeps.

TIME LAPSE:

The dim figure of a man walks up the back steps into the back door of the apartment. The man wears an overcoat and hat. Only his silhouette is visible. He moves from the kitchen into the living room and over to where Hammett lies sleeping.

MAN
Getting grey as a goose, kid.

The man notes the short story manuscript and picks it up. He then moves over to the window and peers out. We still cannot see his face. He turns as if looking for something.

WHAT HE SEES

is the rest of the living room. His eyes light on a large dictionary. He crosses to it, removes a small, flat, newspaper-wrapped object from his topcoat pocket and slips it inside the dictionary. He holds the story manuscript under one arm pressed against his side.

He then moves to a chair, settles down into it, switches on a very dim lamp, tips his hat forward, and begins reading the manuscript.

We still have not seen his face.

TIME LAPSE:

HAMMETT wakes up slowly. The apartment is again dark, except for the light from the street. He remembers his manuscript

and reaches for it, only to find it gone. He sits up quickly just as the lamp switches on.

This time the man's face is fully illuminated. The face is that of the Op--but somehow not as hard, not as cunning, not as resolute. Something's missing. Character perhaps.

MAN

Looking for this?

He gestures with the manuscript.

There's surprise on Hammett's face, if no delight. He grins anyway--a cold grin.

HAMMETT

Jesus! Ryan. James Francis
Xavier Ryan. Jimmy--to his
host of friends.

Ryan touches his hat brim in a mock gesture of acknowledgement. The hat is tan and expensive. So is Ryan's coat, which boasts a velvet collar.

RYAN

Himself.

HAMMETT

Thirsty?

RYAN

Always.

Hammett rises, cross to the bottle of whiskey, and pours two drinks. As he pours, Ryan gestures again with the manuscript.

RYAN (contd)

Except her name wasn't Sue
Alabama. It was Betty
Philadelphia, and I did
marry her, worse luck.

Crossing to Ryan, Hammett grins and hands him a drink.

HAMMETT

Ever hear from her?

Ryan shrugs.

RYAN

Ever hear from yours?

Hammett shakes his head no and drinks. So does Ryan, with gusto.

RYAN

Lemme ask you a literary question.

HAMMETT

Sure.

RYAN

I'll be sitting around with nothing to do and pick up one of those pulp rags, just to see if you got a story in it, and when you do it's usually about this fat little bird who goes around knocking hell out of everybody and shooting off his piece, and who's always about two or three hops ahead of everybody else. How come he hadn't got a name? That's what I wanta know. How come he hadn't got a name? Are names hard to write? Shit, I can write names. Foxfire McGee. Bitsy Glass. Joe Pickles.

HAMMETT

You remember him, don't you?

RYAN

I should. He goes around doing everything I used to do. Half the time I don't know whether to be flattered or embarrassed as hell.

HAMMETT

(grinning)

You're sure he's you?

RYAN

I know he is.

HAMMETT

Maybe that's why you
remember him then.

RYAN

Or maybe it's because you
won't give him any name.

They both grin and drink. Hammett goes back for the depleted bottle and fills both glasses again, emptying the bottle. He trades Ryan a drink for the manuscript.

HAMMETT

What brings you to town?

While Ryan answers, Hammett puts down his own drink, straightens up the manuscript, and slips it into a stamped pre-addressed manila envelope whose flap he licks and seals.

RYAN

That's what I wanta talk to
you about. I got an MP thing
going.

HAMMETT

Who's missing?

RYAN

A little Chink girl. About
sixteen or seventeen. Pretty.
Her name's Crystal. Crystal
Ling. I need some help, Sam.
You know this burg and I don't.
Especially, you know Chinatown.

Hammett shakes his head no.

HAMMETT

I'm out of it, Jimmy.

Ryan grins in disbelief, slowly shaking his head.

RYAN

Once in, never out. At least, not all the way. Hell, I bet you're still half snoop. I bet you read other people's mail, poke around in their medicine cabinets, eavesdrop.

Hammett laughs.

HAMMETT

When I walk down the street, you know what I still look at? Earlobes. Noses. Eyebrows. Scars--if there are any.

RYAN

Well, hell, so do I.

HAMMETT

Yeah, but you're trying to match 'em up with the pictures on the post office wall. I'm just taking inventory.

RYAN

For your stories?

Hammett nods.

RYAN (contd)

Well, like I said, I need some help. Especially in Chinatown. The cop that runs things there, Manion. Is he sorta--?

Ryan makes his palm flip-flop several times. Hammett shrugs.

HAMMETT

You might say Manion's a little....

He makes his own palm flip-flop. Ryan stares at Hammett.

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RYAN

I want you for my tin mittens.

HAMMETT

Me?! No chance. I don't screw around with the cops. Not in this town.

RYAN

(coldly)

This town's like any other town.

HAMMETT

Only more so. Let's go find some booze.

RYAN

In a minute. Lemme tell you a story first. You like stories, don't you? Sure you do. Well, it seems this fat little guy with no name is up in some place that sounds a whole lot like Butte--except you don't call it that--and he's knocking hell out of a bunch of hardrock miners. Well, the fat little guy has got a sidekick this time--a kid the agency sent him--green as grass. Somehow they get themselves in the shit, and to make a long story short, the fat little guy takes a greased thirty-ought-six slug in the shoulder which, by rights, should've taken the green kid in the left eye. Well, the green kid is falling all over himself telling the fat little guy that no matter what he wants, no matter when, just holler. Except you have the fat little guy saying he'd rather holler for his Aunt Lucy than for the green kid. Remember that story?

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HAMMETT

I remember it.

RYAN

Well, you know the funny thing is, it was almost like I'd read it before somewhere.

There's a long pause as they stare at each other.

HAMMETT

All right. I was the green kid.

RYAN

(very quiet and hard)
And anywhere, anytime is now.
You owe me, Hammett. I'm calling it in.

Hammett buttons his vest and fastens his tie. Ryan watches him. Hammett finds his suit coat and puts it on. Ryan's eyes never leave him. Hammett shrugs into his topcoat and settles his hat on his head. Finally, he picks up the manila envelope containing his story, and turns to Ryan.

HAMMETT

Right. I pay what I owe.
Let's go find some whiskey.

They start for the door. But before they can reach it, we HEAR someone knock. Ryan flattens himself against the wall. His hand darts into his topcoat pocket. Hammett glances at him curiously, smiles slightly, goes to the door and opens it.

Leaning against the door jamb, holding up a tea cup that dangles from one finger, is Sue Alabama.

Except it's not really Sue Alabama, of course; it's Hammett's downstairs neighbor, KIT CONGER, pert and pretty, stylish and smart. Very smart, but also something of a wiseass.

KIT

Hi, neighbor. Can you spare a cup of booze?

HAMMETT--Thomas

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Hammett grins.

HAMMETT

Sorry, Kit. I'm slap out.

Ryan moves into the frame.

KIT

I didn't know you had company.

HAMMETT

Miss Conger, Mr. Ryan.

RYAN

How are ya?

KIT

Are you a writer, Mr. Ryan?

RYAN

Do I look like a writer?

KIT

They come in assorted sizes.

HAMMETT

Kit's a librarian downtown.

Ryan tries a little heavy-handed flirtation.

RYAN

You don't look like a librarian.

KIT

We come in all sizes, too.

HAMMETT

Look, we were just going out to mail this.

(indicates envelope)

When I come back I'll bring you some booze.

KIT

Let me give you the money.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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Hammett hesitates, then shrugs.

HAMMETT

Okay.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

All three enter Kit's apartment. It's a cheery place with a line of lacy delicate lingerie hung up to dry. Ryan eyes it, interested. Kit notices.

KIT

Oh, that. Well, that's
what I wear underneath this.
(she tugs at her dress)
You've never seen any before?

RYAN

(gruffly)
A couple of times.

Kit turns, picks up a bill, and hands it to Hammett, who pockets it. She indicates the envelope.

KIT

Make a carbon?

HAMMETT

Nah.

KIT

One of these days the post-
man won't complete his
appointed rounds, and you're
going to be stuck.

Hammett grins as he and Ryan head for the door.

HAMMETT

(over his shoulder)
I'll bring you back some
gin, Kit.

KIT

Gin's for old ladies. Make it
Scotch.

HAMMETT

Scotch.

He and Ryan go through the door.

EXT. STAIRS OUTSIDE HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hammett and Ryan head down the stairs.

RYAN

Cute dish.

HAMMETT

Very.

EXT. HAMMETT'S ALLEY (ON WAY TO POP'S) - NIGHT

They go past the Chinese laundress and down the alley. Their backs are to us most of the way, thus permitting the following NEW DIALOGUE:

HAMMETT

I hear you left Pinkerton's.

RYAN

Yeah, three, four years back. Long hours, short dough. Any money in the writing racket?

HAMMETT

Penny a word.

RYAN

Write a million words, you'd be set. Me, I've got my own little agency up in Tacoma now. No divorce stuff; no collections. Nice.

HAMMETT

You sure look flush--although I can't decide whether you look more like a bootlegger or a banker.

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RYAN

Helps jack up my fees, Sam.
What's this town like anyway,
free and easy?

HAMMETT

More so than most.

RYAN

Who runs things?

HAMMETT

The same people who run things
everywhere.

RYAN

The crooks, the cops, and the
big rich, huh?

HAMMETT

You don't sound too surprised.

RYAN

Hey, it's me. Jimmy Ryan.
Remember?

EXT. POP'S POOL AND BILLIARDS - NIGHT

Hammett enters. Ryan looks quickly up and down the street
and follows.

RYAN

Jesus, another speak. Think
we'll ever vote out prohibition?

HAMMETT

Not until enough of us drunks
stagger to the polls.

INT. POP'S - NIGHT

Pop, Ryan and Hammett have drinks in teacups. Pop lifts his.
So do Hammett and Ryan.

POP

This oughta kill or cure.

Ryan and Hammett drink and start choking. Pop chuckles and walks to a magazine rack behind him for the latest copy of Black Mask.

POP

Ain't you gonna ask me
about your latest? Just
came in this mornin'.
Fine piece of work, Samuel.

HAMMETT

You want to meet the original?
(nods at Ryan)
This is the guy.

Ryan moves off to look at someone on the steps who's reading from the magazine rack--someone whose identity is hidden. Ryan turns back.

RYAN

You keep telling people that,
I'm gonna ask for a cut.
(pokes Hammett)
Come on. Let's get out of here.

He starts for the back of the pool hall. Hammett shrugs at Pop and follows. Ryan and Hammett walk toward the back exit past the pool tables.

RYAN

Is there another way out of
here?

HAMMETT

You all right?

They pass Hammett's friend MIKE on the way out the back door.

MIKE

Hey, Sam. What do you hear
at Winterland? Don't put
your money on Walker.

HAMMETT

(on his way out)
If I was a betting man, I'd
put my money on Pudowski,
and Jenkins in three.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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Ryan grabs Hammett and pushes him out the door. A small man comes down from the steps where he was reading magazines and crosses the pool hall, following them.

EXT. ALLEYWAY STAIRS BEHIND POP'S - NIGHT

Hammett is pushed up the stairs by Ryan.

HAMMETT

What the hell's the big rush?

Ryan gets to the top and sees the little man at the back door. He throws some trash cans down the stairs at him.

EXT. ROMOLO STREET - NIGHT

Hammett and Ryan head up the street. Hammett stops at a mailbox to mail his manuscript. Ryan grabs him and pushes him across the street.

HAMMETT

Damnit, I want to mail this thing.

RYAN

Later.

Ryan heads across the street to a dark alley. Hammett hurries after him.

HAMMETT

I thought we were going to Cookie's for a belt.

RYAN

To hell with Cookie's.

He heads down an alley. Hammett follows.

EXT. CHINATOWN ALLEY - NIGHT

Ryan and Hammett are getting deeper and deeper into Chinatown--all the signs are Chinese now, the shop windows show Chinese goods, and all the people in the streets are Chinese. Ryan is having to work hard to keep up a reasonably calm front. His right hand is still jammed into his coat pocket around the pistol.

HAMMETT

You know where you're going?

A BUM approaches them in the alley.

BUM

You gotta nickel for a cup
of coffee?

Ryan brushes him off and keeps walking. Hammett tosses the
man a nickel and walks fast to catch up to Ryan.

RYAN

This is a shortcut.

HAMMETT

Where to?

Ryan doesn't answer.

They reach the end of the alley and head into a courtyard.

EXT. CHINATOWN COURTYARD - NIGHT

Ryan and Hammett arrive in a courtyard at the end of the alley.
A crowd of people, all Chinese, are gathered in small groups.
Some old people huddle near the ground playing dominoes.
Others play checkers on a deserted food stand. A group of
thugs hang out near a doorway and watch Ryan and Hammett with
suspicion. Little kids follow a man "practicing" for New
Year's in the giant head of a dragon, all of the kids dancing
around and bumping into Hammett and Ryan who stare at the
crowd. Ryan is nervous.

RYAN

I gotta get outta here.

HAMMETT

Some shortcut.

Just then, some kids let off fireworks behind them, and they
whirl around. Through the noise and commotion Ryan fires off
his gun--so nervous that he forgets to take it out of his
pocket. The gunshot sends the Chinese crowd into a frenzy.
People start running around. Some stare suspiciously at
Ryan and Hammett. One of the Thugs runs by and lifts Hammett's
manuscript envelope out of his overcoat pocket. But Hammett is

still too stunned by the outburst to notice. The flurry dies down a bit. Hammett looks at Ryan who lifts up his pistol, still inside his overcoat pocket, and stares at the smoking hole in his coat.

RYAN

Fifty bucks! Camel-hair!

HAMMETT

Are you all right?

He looks at Ryan, then pats his own coat pockets and notices his manuscript is gone.

HAMMETT

My manuscript!

He dashes back up the courtyard to the alley they came from to see if he can spot anyone running away with it. He looks around at some of the people. They return his stare. Hammett then looks back to where he left Ryan standing in the middle of the courtyard. Ryan is gone. In the distance is a LITTLE MAN looking Hammett's way, but he can't make out who it is. Hammett starts walking through the crowd of people, now looking for both Ryan and his missing manuscript.

EXT. CRIBS/DEVIL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hammett walks through the crowd in the courtyard and enters a gate at the end, which takes him into the outside of the "cribs", the Chinese prostitute caverns. A drunken French sailor accosts him as he enters through the gate, and a little Chinese girl tugs at his coattail as he ascends the stairs in an attempt to spot Ryan and/or his manuscript. Two other girls on the landing eye him with interest.

PROSTITUTE

Two dollar? One dollar?
You want my sister?

HAMMETT

(ignoring her)
Jimmy! Jimmy!

PROSTITUTE

You make love, mister?

HAMMETT
(walking down the stairs)
Not tonight.

EXT. CRIBS/CHINATOWN COURTYARD - NIGHT

Hammett takes one last look around and heads back into the courtyard. It is now almost deserted, except for a few people who pass him by, running from the direction of the alley and looking over their shoulders at Hammett. Just near the alley he stops, hears something, and slowly walks around to get a better look into the alley. A silhouette is standing in one of the doorways and walks into a glimmer of light as he seems to recognize Hammett.

BRADFORD
Samuel?

HAMMETT
(walking into light)
Hello, Tom. Tom?

BRADFORD walks toward him, and around the corner follows his boss, LT. PAT MANION, smoking a pipe. Another SHADOW behind them darts back into the alley.

HAMMETT
(to Bradford)
I see you're not particular
about the company you keep.

BRADFORD
Them that works, eats.

HAMMETT
Hello, Manion.

MANION
A little off your regular
patch, aren't you, Hammett?

HAMMETT
You got Chinatown roped off?

MANION
No, but sometimes I think it'd
be a hell of a good idea.

HAMMETT

(to Bradford)

I'm looking for somebody.
Guy about fifty, fifty-five,
gray hair, six foot, tan
topcoat with a velvet collar.

MANION

Fancy.

BRADFORD

Haven't seen him, Sam.

MANION

And what would your fancy friend
be doing down here?

Hammett hesitates, then remembers what he promised Ryan.

HAMMETT

Looking for a Chinese girl.

BRADFORD

(chuckling)

Ain't we all.

But Manion grows interested.

MANION

Any particular girl?

HAMMETT

Yeah.

MANION

Your friend a private cop?

HAMMETT

Maybe.

MANION

And maybe there'd be a
little...

(he rubs his fingers
and thumb together)
...reward money?

HAMMETT

Could be.

Manion looks at Bradford.

MANION

What d'you think, Tom?

BRADFORD

(piously)

It's up to you, Lieutenant.

(he looks at Hammett

curiously, almost disappointed)

You this guy's tin mittens, Sam?

Hammett shakes his head.

HAMMETT

You ought to know better'n that,
Tom. Whatever you guys slice
up, you slice up three ways,
not four.

Bradford looks at Manion who nods slightly. They've agreed.

MANION

Who's the girl?

HAMMETT

Her name's Ling. Crystal
Ling.

Manion reacts. So does Bradford, but to a lesser degree.
Manion bores in on Hammett.

MANION

Let me tell you something,
Hammett. I never heard of
any Chink girl called Crystal
Ling. If you're half-way
smart, you never heard of her.
And if your fancy friend with
the velvet collar is half as
smart as you are, which would
make him only one-quarter
smart, he never heard of her
either.

HAMMETT

That's a lay-off speech if ever
I heard one.

MANION

Take it any way you like.

Manion turns abruptly and leaves. Bradford hangs back.

BRADFORD

(quietly)

That ain't bad advice, Sam.

Bradford turns and goes after Manion, leaving Hammett staring after them, thoughtful, puzzled.

EXT. CHINATOWN ALLEY - NIGHT

Hammett starts down the alley. The Shadow we saw before in the alley when Bradford and Manion accosted Hammett now peers out from a doorway again. He begins to follow Hammett down the alley. In the light he appears to be the same little man from the melee in the courtyard when Ryan disappeared.

Hammett walks down the alley, apparently lost in his own thoughts, which we are privileged to share.

HAMMETT (V.O.)

I wonder what went out on Ryan first--his nerve or his legs? You're lucky you quit the business when you did, Hammett. Otherwise, you could've wound up like him--shooting holes in your pocket. Ryan would be better off in a swivel chair behind some nice big desk. Of course, a typewriter's not a bad place to hide behind either. Lots of cheap thrills--and no risk.

Just after the word "risk", Hammett whirls and collars the little man against the wall.

HAMMETT

What's up?

SALT

Uh...howya doing?

Hammett still has hold of him.

SALT (contd)

Uh...you're Dashiell Hammett,
aren't you?

HAMMETT

That's what it says on my
birth certificate.

SALT

I'm an admirer of yours.
I'm a writer, too.

HAMMETT

Really?

SALT

Newspaperman. Salt. Gary Salt.
I really liked "Dead Yellow
Women", and that other issue
of Black Mask....

HAMMETT

(interrupting)

And I guess you're just follow-
ing me down this alley to get
my autograph, right?

SALT

Well...actually...the fellow
who was with you...

HAMMETT

You mean Jimmy Ryan?

SALT

That's it, Mr. Hammett.

HAMMETT

What do you want with him?

SALT

I've got something for him.

HAMMETT

Oh, really. Well, he's probably
at Cookie's now. If you come
with me, I'll introduce you.

He starts walking back down the alley toward the steps, once more passing the bum whom he and Ryan passed on their way into the courtyard.

SALT
(a little hesitant)
Gee, thanks...Mr. Hammett.

HAMMETT
(to Bum)
You got your nickel, right?

He climbs the steps and looks back at Salt who is dragging his feet.

HAMMETT (contd)
You want to meet him, right?

Salt follows him up the stairs.

EXT. CIGAR STORE - NIGHT

Hammett appears on a street corner, lighting up a new cigarette, and Salt is not far behind him. Hammett starts down the street toward a doorway to a cigar store, but Salt hangs back near the corner. Hammett looks back as he opens the door to the cigar store and motions for Salt to come with him.

HAMMETT
C'mon, Salt, I won't let
them hurt you.

Salt slowly follows him into the doorway.

INT. COOKIE'S STAR BAR - NIGHT

Hammett and Salt walk into the hallway and up a few steps into a crowded bar, full of well-dressed men and women enjoying bootleg liquor behind the disguise of a cigar-store front. They pass by a piano player and Hammett says hello to a few of the regulars as he ambles over to the bar, Salt tagging along. The BARTENDER comes up.

HAMMETT
(to Bartender)
'Lo, Vinnie, how's tricks?

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VINNIE

'Lo, Sam, kinda late tonight,
ain't you?

HAMMETT

I guess.

(looks around the crowd)
I'm looking for a pal of mine,
from out of town...camel-hair
coat, brown hat, about six
feet tall.

VINNIE

Nobody here tonight but regulars.

HAMMETT

Thanks anyway.

Vinnie puts a drink in front of Hammett and motions to Salt,
who is looking around the crowd for Ryan.

SALT

(to Vinnie)

Nothing thanks.

(to Hammett)

He isn't here.

HAMMETT

Don't worry, he'll be in.
Now why don't you do us
both a favor and tell me
what you want him for.

Hammett takes his drink and starts looking around the crowd
for Ryan again as he listens to Salt with one ear:

SALT

It has to do with Chinatown...
I'm working on a story...it's
a freelance job...anyway, I've
been working on it a long time....

He is interrupted by Hammett's stare at someone in the phone booth
at the end of the bar. Hammett moves away from the bar.

HAMMETT

(looking toward the phone booth)
Excuse me a minute...

Hammett walks through the crowd toward the phone booth. On his way he is bumped by a small man in a dark coat. Hammett quietly approaches the man in the phone booth--camel-hair coat, brown hat, gray hair, a dead-ringer for Ryan. Hammett pokes his finger into the man's back, and the man turns around with both hands up, dropping the phone receiver.

MAN IN PHONE BOOTH
Don't shoot!

Hammett sees that this isn't Ryan, and steps back.

HAMMETT
Sorry. I thought you were
a friend of mine.

Hammett turns to head for the bar again and sees that Salt has vanished. The small man who bumped into him earlier gives him a stare, then he darts through the crowd toward the exit. Hammett moves back to the bar. -----

HAMMETT
(to Vinnie)
The geezer with the bow tie,
you see where he went?

Vinnie shakes his head no.

HAMMETT
Thanks, Vinnie.

Hammett heads for the exit.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CIGAR STORE - NIGHT

Hammett is back on the corner outside the cigar store. He hears a strange TAPPING NOISE down the street, and starts off in its direction, past the cigar store. At the shoeshine stand a few doors down, a SHOESHINE MAN is shining a man's shoes, fancy black and red wing-tips. The MAN himself is hidden by a newspaper he's reading, but Hammett recognizes him as the little man who bumped into him near the phone booth inside, and as perhaps even the small figure who dodged the trash cans Ryan threw down the steps outside of Pop's.

EXT. SHOESHINE STAND - NIGHT

Hammett walks up to the shoeshine stand and stares at the little

man for several moments.

HAMMETT

Great cover, kid, the newspaper. I really like that. Knew a guy once who used to disguise himself as a fire hydrant. Course he did have a small problem with the dogs.

The little man can hold his anger no longer after listening to Hammett's taunt. He snaps back from behind his newspaper:

PUNK

You better get your picture took, creep, your mama won't know you when I get finished.

HAMMETT

See you later, kid.

He starts walking away, then stops at the edge of the stand.

HAMMETT (contd)

By the way, your paper's upside down.

The Punk looks out from under the paper and starts to quickly turn it around. Then he takes a second look and sees that it was right side up all along, and that Hammett has just called his bluff. He takes a long look at Hammett as Hammett laughs and walks off down the street, on his way home.

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT BUILDING (STAIRS & HALL) - NIGHT

Hammett trudges up the stairs. When he gets to Kit's door, it opens. Kit is wearing a rather seductive robe.

KIT

Hi, mister. Where's my whiskey?

Hammett turns with a smile.

HAMMETT

Booze is something I almost never forget.

Hammett, a bit tight, produces a pint from his topcoat and examines it critically.

HAMMETT (contd)
Scotch--although the closest
it's been to Scotland is
probably Modesto.

KIT
Shall we investigate?

Hammett nods and grins his agreement and they enter her apartment.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hammett watches as Kit makes two drinks. She hands him one.

HAMMETT
How do you like to say, "I
told you so"?

KIT
I love to say I told you so.

HAMMETT
I lost the manuscript.

Kit is instantly, genuinely concerned.

KIT
Oh, Sam, I'm sorry!

Hammett takes a long swallow and shudders.

HAMMETT
I also lost Ryan along the
way.

KIT
Maybe he's already up in
your place.

HAMMETT
Maybe.

KIT

It would seem then that you might have to make a choice about where to sleep. Mr. Ryan no doubt snores. On the other hand, I don't.

Hammett grins.

HAMMETT

I know.

He kisses her--a quick, brotherly kiss that leaves Kit more than a little disappointed.

KIT

Still the best you can do on short notice?

HAMMETT

We'll work on it sometime. Right now I've got to go see about Ryan.

Hammett turns and starts for the door, but turns back at the sound of Kit's voice.

KIT

By the way, I brought this home from the library. It's just out. You can have it when I'm finished.

She hands Hammett a book. He reads the title page aloud and then hands it back.

HAMMETT

"A Farewell to Arms" by Ernest Hemingway.

KIT

Your styles are somewhat alike-- in that you both seem quite fond of short sentences.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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HAMMETT

(grins)

Maybe he doesn't know how
to write a long one either.

Hammett turns again, and this time makes it into the hall
before Kit speaks again--softly, sadly.

KIT

Sam.

Hammett turns. Her face and tone are mournful.

KIT

About your manuscript.

Hammett nods, quite prepared for more commiseration. Instead,
Kit grins wickedly and makes a face at him.

KIT

I told you so!

She slams the door in his face. Hammett chuckles, turns, and
leaves.

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hammett enters his apartment. He looks around and calls for
Ryan.

HAMMETT

Ryan! James Francis
Xavier Ryan!

Receiving no answer he wanders over and sits down on the floor
to paw through old wadded up sheets of paper in hopes of sal-
vaging his manuscript.

HAMMETT (V.O.)

(self-mocking)

First rule of fiction:
Always keep a carbon.

He finally gives up, crawls to his trunk, opens it, and takes
out a wrapped up pistol which he unwraps.

HAMMETT (V.O.)
(still self-mocking)
Second rule of fiction:
Guns is action.

He sprawls across the couch and sleeps.

TIME LAPSE:

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's morning. Hammett is still sprawled on the couch asleep when the phone rings. It keeps on ringing until he awakens, stumbles to it, and mutters hello.

RYAN
(whispering over
phone)
It's me.

HAMMETT
Ryan! Where the hell are you?

RYAN
(over phone)
I can't talk now. Look in
the dictionary. The big
dictionary.

The phone goes dead. Hammett hangs up and looks around the room until his eyes light on the dictionary.

But Hammett's hungover. Badly hungover. Before he does anything, he needs a drink. He begins a search, a rather desperate one, and finally locates an unlabelled pint of clear liquid, possibly gin, that he's stashed away for just such an emergency. He goes into the kitchen and comes back with a bottle of milk. He eyes the liquor, then the milk, takes a swallow of the liquor, almost gags, and washes it down with the milk, straight from the bottle. Then he lights his first cigarette of the day, gets his coughing fit over with, has another quick drink, and turns his attention to the dictionary.

He opens it to discover the small flat newspaper-wrapped package that Ryan hid there the previous night. Hammett unwraps the newspaper to reveal a small address book. He flips through it once, then twice, and stops on the only page with an entry.

INSERT--OPEN ADDRESS BOOK

The pencilled entry reads: Mission House--Sacramento St.

ON HAMMETT

It means nothing to him. He looks down at the discarded newspaper page, picks it up, and smooths it out, only to find that a story has been torn out of the page--which is page one. Hammett puzzles over the hole, but is interrupted by a loud knocking.

He crosses to the door, looks through his peephole, and opens the door. Standing there is Salt.

SALT

God, I'm sorry, I know it's early....

HAMMETT

Yeah, it's early. What do you want, Salt?

SALT

I didn't mean to...listen, I figured...

HAMMETT

I'm listening. I'm still listening.

SALT

The truth is, I'm not really a writer. I just collect gossip for the papers. For The Post and Call. Can I come in?

HAMMETT

Listen, Salt, I've got a whole story to rewrite by day before yesterday, so whatever you've got to say, make it snappy, will you?

SALT

I hear a lot, that's my business. And I hear Ryan's in big trouble.

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HAMMETT

Something to do with the
missing Chinese girl, huh?

SALT

I was trying to write a real
story for once, about the
slave racket in Chinatown.
Twelve, thirteen-year-old
girls right off the boat
and into the cribs. I met
her there...

He pulls his wallet out of his jacket pocket and opens it for
Hammett, showing him a stack of photos of a young Chinese girl.
In some of the photos she is clothed, in others nude. Hammett
takes the whole stack in his hands and turns back into the
room to let some light on them.

SALT (contd)

Crystal...look...

Hammett walks into the living room and quietly pockets the top
photo while still studying them. Salt follows on his heels.

SALT (contd)

Isn't she beautiful?

HAMMETT

Yeah, she's beautiful, she's
very beautiful. So what?

SALT

A lot of people want to talk
to her.

HAMMETT

I'd like to talk to her myself.
Why's everybody so interested
in this Chinese dame anyway?

SALT

(backing away)

Look, you just tell your friend
Ryan I want her back--

HAMMETT

Back?

SALT

That's all I can tell you,
believe me. I'm already so
far out on a limb.

(he turns and heads for the
open door)

You just tell him that!

(he dashes for the landing)

And you tell him if he doesn't
watch his step, he could wind
up dead! And I mean it!

He bounds down the front stairs and is gone, leaving Hammett
in his open doorway. He shuts the door and shakes his head.

TIME LAPSE:

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is somewhat straightened up. Hammett is dressed
and shaved and at the telephone.

HAMMETT

(into phone)

Sunset 3689.

(a voice answers)

Eli? Sam Hammett. Can you
pick me up outside the
Occidental Board Mission
House in, say, one hour?
Right. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone, picks up the almost barren address book,
flips through it again, puts it in his pocket, picks up the
newspaper front page with the hole in it, and starts folding
it carefully.

EXT. OCCIDENTAL BOARD MISSION HOUSE - DAY

Hammett goes into the Mission House, sees Mrs. Cameron, and
learns that Crystal Ling left the mission on January 3rd.

INT. ELI'S TAXI - TRAVELLING SHOT - DAY

Eli, the cab driver, glances around. He's a tough, wizened
little man, who before he became a cab driver, did something
far different, probably something dangerous.

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ELI

Where to, Hammett?

HAMMETT

The main library.

ELI

Right.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO LIBRARY - DAY

Hammett is standing by the dumb-waiter for newspaper and magazine deliveries. He is thumbing through a stack of back issues of The Tacoma Tribune, dumps the last few on the large pile on the floor, and then goes through a few of the recent issues he has of The San Francisco Chronicle. The floor and ceilings in this stacks area of the library are made of clear and frosted glass, so it is possible to see (if not already hear) people on the floors above and below.

Hammett presses on the voice box button on the dumb waiter.

HAMMETT

Can I get a copy of the
Chronicle for January 3rd?
I'm sending back the batch
of Tacoma papers.

(Waits for an answer)

Yeah, thanks.

He picks up the Tacoma papers from the floor and puts them into the dumb-waiter and sends them down.

CUT TO:

GLASS CEILING

We HEAR the Punk's shoes on the glass and see him walking back and forth.

CUT TO:

Hammett who, hearing the dumb-waiter return, turns and opens the door and takes out a new copy of the January 3rd issue of the Chronicle.

INSERT

Torn page fitted over library copy page. The story that shows

through the hole has a headline that reads:

DEATH OF S.F.
TIMBER SCION
RULED SUICIDE

Hammett, in a voice over, reads certain key phrases that either interest or intrigue him.

HAMMETT (V.O.)

Mr. Callahan was prominent
in local business and civic
circles...recent financial
reversals...despondent...
according to a spokesman
for the family, attorney
E.L. Hagedorn.

INSERT - HAMMETT

The name fascinates him.

HAMMETT

Hagedorn. English Eddie
Hagedorn.

INT. LIBRARY STACKS - DAY

Hammett meets and talks with old girl friend in library stacks.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Hammett again climbs into Eli's cab.

INT. CAB - TRAVELLING SHOT - DAY

ELI

Now where?

HAMMETT

The morgue.

ELI

You back on the game,
Hammett?

HAMMETT
(smiles)

Sort of.

ELI

I was worried there for a while. I thought you were getting half-way respectable, like me.

Hammett grins.

HAMMETT

How's it feel, Eli--being half-way respectable?

ELI

Dull, Hammett. Damn awful dull.

INT. CORRIDOR, CITY CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Hammett wanders down the corridor until he comes to the door he's looking for, the half-open one with the flaked black painted lettering that reads:

John Fallon, M.D.
Deputy Coroner

Hammett goes in the door.

INT. FALLON'S OFFICE - DAY

Hammett comes into a bare cubicle with a couple of filing cabinets and a messy desk. Behind the desk is DOC FALLON, 60, grizzled and bitter.

HAMMETT

Hello, Doc. I heard you retired.

DOC

I got thirteen kids, Hammett. You don't ever retire if you got thirteen kids.

(almost to himself)

Who ever heard of a doctor with thirteen kids?

Hammett sits down.

HAMMETT

I was sure I heard you retired.

Doc reaches down and produces a pint bottle and two glasses from somewhere.

DOC

And I heard you quit drinking.

HAMMETT

We were both wrong.

Doc pours. They drink.

DOC

No, what you heard, Hammett, is that I almost got fired... at 59.

HAMMETT

Maybe that was it.

DOC

You know what my problem is? I'm a half-way honest man in a nine-tenths dishonest world. What's your problem?

HAMMETT

Suicide.

DOC

My advice? Don't hesitate.

HAMMETT

Not mine. C. F. Callahan's.

Doc stares at him for a moment, then rises, goes to the door, closes it, and returns to his desk.

DOC

Funny you should ask. Had a guy in here last week asking the same thing. Big guy about my age with a fancy tan topcoat and hat to match.

(pointedly)

He was on the expense. You on the expense, Hammett?

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HAMMETT

Nope.

DOC

Pity. You sure?

Hammett nods.

DOC (contd)

(sighing)

We go back a ways, you and I, don't we?

HAMMETT

Quite a ways.

DOC

The Colcord thing. In '21.

Doc sits there for a moment reminiscing to himself, sighs again, rises, goes to the filing cabinet, takes out a file, puts it on his desk, and sits down again.

DOC (contd)

C. F. Callahan. Interesting case, in a way. Sorry I can't discuss it. Sure you're not on the expense, like that other fella?

HAMMETT

I'm sure.

DOC

(another sigh)

You know what I got?

HAMMETT

What?

DOC

Bad kidneys.

Doc rises and leaves. Hammett watches him go. When he's gone Hammett reads quickly through the file. He finishes just as Doc returns. Doc picks up the file, opens it, finds a five-dollar bill, pockets it smoothly, happily, and returns the file to the cabinet.

DOC

Like I said, an interesting case. The victim struck himself on the head with a blunt instrument and then pumped a .38 round into his heart. Or maybe it was vice-versa. Suicide is often...fascinating.

He returns to his chair.

HAMMETT

(biting)

Who sat on you, Doc?

Doc turns in his swivel chair and stares at the wall.

DOC

I don't know. But it came from way up high and it came down hard and heavy.

(with total self disgust)

Go away, Hammett. Just go away.

After a moment, Hammett leaves.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE HAMMETT APARTMENT - DAY

Hammett walks up Hyde Street past the Chinese laundry and starts up the alley to the back entrance of his apartment. ROSE comes out of the laundry with a package and chases him down.

CHINESE LAUNDRESS

Mr. Hammett! Mr. Hammett!

HAMMETT

(stopping to face her)

Rose! Nee homa!

CHINESE LAUNDRESS

Your laundry's ready, Mr. Hammett.

HAMMETT

Thank you.

CHINESE LAUNDRESS

How are you, Mr. Hammett?
Can I fix you some noodles?
Are you hungry?

HAMMETT

Thanks, Rose. I'm okay.

CHINESE LAUNDRESS

Oh, you don't eat enough!

Hammett laughs, takes the package of laundered shirts, and heads up the alley.

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Hammett comes into his apartment carrying his laundry. He puts it down, heads for the bureau where he keeps his glasses, removes a bottle from his topcoat pocket, opens it, and pours himself a drink. From the kitchen he HEARS a sound and whirls, startled.

WHAT HE SEES

is CRYSTAL LING, dressed demurely to accent her extreme youth, and looking wide-eyed, innocent, and more than a bit frightened.

CRYSTAL

Mr....Hammett?

HAMMETT

Crystal Ling, right?

She gestures vaguely.

CRYSTAL

Your door was...unlocked.

HAMMETT

Sometimes I get careless.

CRYSTAL

You are a friend of a
Mr....James Ryan?

HAMMETT

Yeah. I'm a friend of his.

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CRYSTAL

I wonder if you would be kind enough to tell Mr. Ryan to please stop looking for me. I am not lost.

HAMMETT

What about a guy named Salt? Gary Salt. He's looking for you, too.

CRYSTAL

He is an evil little man. A corruptor. Almost worse than Fong Wei Tau. No--no, that's not true. No one is worse than Fong. I need a haven, Mr. Hammett. For eight hours. That's all. Just some place safe for eight hours.

HAMMETT

Then what?

CRYSTAL

(vaguely)

Then I can reach my...friends.

HAMMETT

How'd you know about me and Ryan?

CRYSTAL

You and he were in Chinatown last night. Nothing there goes unobserved. In Chinatown, you are known as a kind man, a just man.

HAMMETT

How old are you, kid?

CRYSTAL

Sixteen. Almost seventeen.

HAMMETT

And you're looking for an
eight-hour hideout.

He indicates his apartment.

HAMMETT (contd)

(mocking)

Well, I'm a kind man, a just
man, so what about here--

(hard)

--providing you tell me about
you and C. F. Callahan.

CRYSTAL

(startled)

I...I cannot.

HAMMETT

(shrugs)

Have it your way. There're
plenty of other places to
hole up in this town.

CRYSTAL

(after long hesitation)

I...I was there when he died--
when she killed him.

HAMMETT

She?

CRYSTAL

Mrs. Callahan. His wife. I
fled. Later, the police came
and took her away and put her
in a sanitarium.

HAMMETT

And called it suicide.

Crystal nods.

HAMMETT (contd)

What were you doing there
anyway?

CRYSTAL

Mr. Callahan. Well, Mr.
Callahan, you see, had
bought me from..from Fong.

Hammett reacts with utter disbelief.

HAMMETT

You spin quite a tale, kid.

CRYSTAL

But it's true. Horribly
true. I need just eight
hours, Mr. Hammett. That's
all. And if you could find
Mr. Ryan--

HAMMETT

(interrupting)

And get him off your back.

CRYSTAL

Oh, yes. Please.

HAMMETT

You'd do what for me?

Crystal's demureness almost slips away. But not quite.

CRYSTAL

Anything. Anything you want.

Hammett suddenly switches on a lamp and studies Crystal for
a long moment.

HAMMETT

Yeah. I bet you would at
that. Okay. Stay here.
Lock the door. Don't let
anyone in and don't answer
the phone. Got it?

CRYSTAL

Yes. Thank you. Thank you
very much.

Hammett heads for the door, stops, and turns back.

HAMMETT

How old did you say you were?

CRYSTAL

Almost seventeen.

HAMMETT

Seventeen.

He shakes his head in disbelief or wonder--perhaps both--and leaves.

EXT. KIT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

By the time Hammett leaves Crystal it's night. He knocks on Kit's door. She opens it, dressed as if she's just come home from work.

HAMMETT

I didn't know if you'd be home yet.

KIT

Just got here. Come in.

INT. KIT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hammett goes in and hands Kit a slip of paper. She looks at it.

HAMMETT

Look, there's a cop I know who's reasonably crooked. Crooked as cat shit, in fact. But he's all right. His name's Bradford. Tom Bradford.

KIT

Bradford.

HAMMETT

Yeah. I wrote it down.

Kit looks at the slip of paper again.

HAMMETT (contd)

His number, too. If I'm not back by the time you go to work tomorrow, tell him to come looking for me.

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KIT

Where?

HAMMETT

At Fong's.

KIT

That's all? Just Fong's?

HAMMETT

He'll know what I mean.

Kit gestures disparagingly with the slip of paper.

KIT

You don't need this, Sam.
Go back to your typewriter.

HAMMETT

Did you ever owe anybody
anything? Anything important?
I don't mean money.

KIT

Once. Perhaps twice.

HAMMETT

What'd you do?

KIT

I paid them back.

HAMMETT

Why? I mean why'd you pay
them back?

Kit recalls the painful memory, but resists it.

KIT

Because I...needed to,
damnit-all!

HAMMETT

Well, I owe Ryan.

He turns and leaves.

EXT. FONG WEI TAU'S CLUB - NIGHT

A busy street in Chinatown. Hammett walks up the street. He passes cars and taxis, pausing outside an ornate rococo Chinese building. He then crosses the street, makes his way past the crowds, and goes up the stairs and into the place, through its huge doors.

INT. FONG WEI TAU'S CLUB/CASINO - NIGHT

Hammett checks his hat and coat and walks to the edge of the large game-room of the casino. A young CHINESE MAN, the door-man/host of sorts, approaches Hammett on the top of the staircase to the casino.

CHINESE MAN

Craps? Roulette? Blackjack?

HAMMETT

I want to see Fong. I'll be
at the blackjack table.

He walks down the steps and into the elegantly dressed crowd of wealthy San Franciscans and weaves his way to the blackjack table. He buys some chips and plays there for a few moments, and then is greeted from behind by a massive Chinese man, THE BOUNCER, who taps Hammett on the shoulder.

BOUNCER

Come with me, please.

Hammett turns and follows the Bouncer through the crowd over to a large staircase in the casino, where another THUG, a large Chinese man, is standing with FONG WEI TAU. Fong is a very slight man. He comes over to Hammett from the private staircase when he sees him approach with the Thug.

FONG

Mr. Hammett, I'm honored.
Your renown precedes you.

HAMMETT

Yeah, I've heard a couple
of things about you, too.

FONG

Indeed. Well, Mr. Hammett,
(more)

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FONG (contd)
shall I play John Chinaman
for you? The elaborate
politeness and so on? Some
of your people find this
charade amusing...

HAMMETT
I don't know, I'm pretty
hard to amuse.

FONG
Excellent. Then perhaps we
can get right to the point
of your visit.

HAMMETT
I was wondering if a friend
of mine had been around here,
Jimmy Ryan?

FONG
Ryan? Jimmy Ryan?

HAMMETT
Yeah, I think you two might
have a mutual friend. Cute
little girl called Crystal.

FONG
Perhaps we are a bit public
here.

He ushers Hammett to the large staircase marked "private". The
Bodyguard opens up the velvet cord blocking the stairs, and
Fong and Hammett go up, followed closely by the Bouncer.

INT. FONG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Fong walks into his office and over to his chair behind the
desk. Hammett follows him, slowly, pausing to look at the
outrageously lavish surroundings--fancy paintings, ornate
curtains, furniture, and a myriad of expensive objets d'art
around the room. He stands in the doorway from the hall to
the office and is quickly frisked from behind by the Bouncer.

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HAMMETT

I like your paintings, Fong.
Simple, but elegant.

Fong ushers him to a chair in front of the desk and Hammett walks in and sits down. The Bouncer remains positioned at the doorway. A YOUNG CHINESE GIRL enters with a basket and puts it on Fong's desk. While the two men talk, she opens it and pulls out a tea pot and service for one. She pours Fong a cup of tea, replaces the pot in the basket, and walks over to the sofa behind Hammett and sits down.

FONG

Your friend Jimmy has been here. Indeed, he is still here, enjoying my hospitality while I consider a proposition he's made me.

HAMMETT

What kind of proposition is that?

FONG

Crystal, did you say? Well, all things lost in Chinatown wind up at Fong's, Mr. Hammett. Even lost souls.*

Fong reaches inside his top desk drawer and pulls out a manila envelope. It's Hammett's missing manuscript.

HAMMETT

Where'd you get that?

FONG

An interesting piece of work, Mr. Hammett. My first encounter with the detective genre. I find the ending especially curious. A trifle disappointing perhaps--your detective seems to be very philosophical.

HAMMETT

Sorry I disappointed you.

FONG

No, no, I'm very interested.
(more)

FONG (contd)

Is this pure invention, or do you draw your material from real life?

HAMMETT

Real life, Fong. Now, if you don't mind, I'll take this back...

He rises and reaches for the envelope. Fong draws it back quickly.

FONG

Now, now, Mr. Hammett. Common sense would dictate that you listen quietly. Perhaps your work has made the habit of fantasy too strong in you-- you'll find I'm not so easily dealt with as your paper villains.

HAMMETT

I see. In that case, I think I'll be going now. Thanks for the cup of tea.

He gets up from his chair and crosses to the exit. The Bouncer flattens him with one blow to the stomach. Hammett shakes his head and slowly gets up on his knees, leaning on the arm of the sofa.

HAMMETT (contd)

Next time, I'll try your elaborate politeness routine.

Fong rises from his chair and looks down at Hammett.

FONG

Evidently you don't understand how important it is that I talk to this lady. So please, don't be silly, just tell me where she is.

Hammett slowly rises to his feet and makes another attempt to dodge the Bouncer. Unsuccessfully. The Bouncer gives him two quick blows, one to the chest and one to the face, and Hammett falls again, this time bleeding a little from the mouth. Fong crosses in front of the desk to stand over him.

FONG (contd)

Do you really insist on
this foolishness?

Hammett wipes a little blood from his lips and staggers on his hands and knees over to the Bouncer, lamely grabbing his leg in an attempt to throw him off balance. The Bouncer throws him off easily with one kick, and Hammett falls back onto the floor, almost unconscious at this point.

FONG (contd)

Physical heroism is not the
writer's metier, my friend.
Remember about Crystal
quickly, and save yourself
a great deal of vexation.

Hammett slowly rolls over, struggling to retain consciousness, when the Bouncer comes in and gives him a few sharp kicks in the gut. He rolls over and passes out.

FADE OUT:

INT. FONG'S/BARE ROOM - DAY

It is early morning and Hammett is still passed out on a mattress in a bare cell room, somewhere in the catacombs at Fong's casino. The room is lit by a single, bare bulb hanging from the ceiling. The Bouncer comes into the room and takes a look at Hammett who, from his present disheveled state, has been slapped around even more than Fong witnessed up in his office. The Bouncer turns and walks out the first door, then the second security door, and peers in the small, porthole window. He switches off the light from the outside, and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DREAM ALLEY - NIGHT

It's very foggy in the narrow dream-like alley. There's absolutely no sound except Hammett's footsteps. Dressed now in a tuxedo with black tie he moves cautiously through the fog toward the alley exit. A figure steps out of a doorway. It's the Op, dressed just as he was on the bridge. Behind him appears Sue Alabama, also dressed exactly as before.

The Op glares at Hammett, takes out his pocket watch, glances at it, shakes his head in disgust, and puts it back.

OP
You're late.

SUE
He's always late.

Sensing that it's a dream, Hammett tries to question his way back into wakefulness and reality.

HAMMETT
Ryan?

OP
(to Sue)
Ryan? Who the hell's Ryan?

SUE
I don't know any Ryan.
(to Hammett)
Come on. It's this way.

HAMMETT
What is?

OP
What you hired us to find.

HAMMETT
I didn't hire you to--

SUE
(interrupting)
You drink too much, Hammett.
You black out. You forget things.

She turns and walks off through the fog toward the alley exit. The Op gestures brusquely for Hammett to follow Sue. He does-- cautiously.

EXT. DREAM STREET - NIGHT

There is absolutely nothing on the dream street except the fog. There are no cars; no people, no lights. Just an open grave

that has been dug in the middle of a deserted city street. Yet there is no dirt around the grave, only a stylized tombstone that tilts at an odd angle. The open grave is illuminated and outlined by eight old fashioned smoking oil pots, the kind once used to warn of street repairs.

Sue, Hammett, and the Op approach the grave. Poking up out of it is a wooden ladder. Nearby, his back to us, stands the GRAVEDIGGER, leaning on a long-handled shovel. The Gravedigger is dressed in a long black coat and a dark hat.

The Op indicates the grave's tombstone.

OP

You didn't really need to hire us, Hammett. You'd've found it yourself--sooner or later.

Hammett looks

ON TOMBSTONE

whose carved legend reads:

SAMUEL DASHIEL HAMMETT
1894-1928

HAMMETT

Christ, they couldn't even spell my name right.

He looks up. Sue Alabama is pointing her small gun at him.

SUE

Go on. Get in. You're late.

The Gravedigger turns. It's Fong--still wearing his tuxedo underneath the long dark topcoat. He lets fall the shovel, which falls without sound, smiles at Hammett, and takes the familiar manila envelope out from beneath his black topcoat and dumps its contents into the grave. The pages flutter down into the hole.

FONG

Interesting--but flawed.

HAMMETT

God'dammit, that's my story.

He moves quickly to the grave's edge and looks down.

WHAT HE SEES

in the grave is himself, dressed in the tuxedo, lying on a catafalque of some kind, his arms folded over the miraculously reassembled manuscript pages, a small contented smile on his face.

BACK TO SCENE

Hammett looks up at the Op.

OP

(shrugging)

Like we said, Hammett.

You're a bit late.

The Op turns to Sue Alabama.

OP (contd)

Come on, Sugar, Let's go.

Sue waves her pistol at Hammett.

SUE

What about him?

OP

He's the big brain. Let
him figure it out.

Sue nods thoughtfully and pockets her pistol. She and the Op turn and disappear into the night and the fog.

Hammett turns back. Fong is gone. So is the open grave. All that remain are the eight smoking oil pots outlining where the grave once was. And the tombstone still remains, still leaning at its crazy angle. Hammett slowly, cautiously approaches the tombstone. He puts out his hand to touch it. When he does, it crumbles into dust.

CUT TO:

INT. FONG'S/BARE ROOM - DAY

Hammett stirs on the bed and wakes up slowly. He gets dressed.

The Young Chinese Girl unlocks the door, comes in, and tells him to hurry. Hammett follows her out of the bare room.

EXT. FONG'S/ BARE ROOM - DAY

He stumbles out the door, and the girl frantically tugs at him to keep up with her pace as she scurries across a large room and back up the stairs.

CHINESE GIRL

You find Crystal, tell her
Mei Sing ready to come with
her. Now, hurry!

She scampers up the steps and Hammett staggers up behind her, disappearing around the landing.

INT. FONG'S/HALLWAY - DAY

A disused section of Fong's building--the floors are bare, the walls unpainted. It's a long hallway, lit by a couple of bare bulbs, the walls broken by a series of closed doors. The Chinese Girl is tugging Hammett, leading him down the hall quickly. He is slower to follow.

CHINESE GIRL

Come, hurry! They find us
soon!

She opens a door at the end of the hall and ushers Hammett inside, where there is a crowd of people.

INT. FONG'S/OPIUM DEN & ANTE ROOM - DAY

The Chinese Girl leads Hammett past a huge THUG sitting in the ante room, motioning to him that her customer is "okay". The Thug is sitting at a fan-tan table, playing with another man and taking money from customers going into the den to smoke opium. The Chinese Girl ushers Hammett to the entrance of the opium den, and ducks out, leaving Hammett staring at the place--it is filled with smoke and little Chinese attendants serving the customers. The customers are a variety of well-dressed San Franciscans and a few sailors on shore leave, all sitting or lounging in the ornately furnished room filled with elaborately cushioned "bunks". Little wooden tables line all the bunks, each with a tray full of opium, pipes, and tea service. Hammett slowly walks through the opium den.

INT. - EXT. OPIUM CUBICLE - DAY

He finally spots Ryan lying flat on his back in a cubicle on a bare cot of some kind, clutching a smoldering opium pipe. Ryan's eyes are mere slits. There's a dreamy smile on his face. He sucks at the pipe. The contrast between the dream's take-charge Continental Op and his real life model is startling.

HAMMETT
For Christ's sake, Ryan.

Ryan's eyes slowly focus. He recognizes Hammett.

RYAN
Hi, kid. You here? Find
a bunk and lie down. Grab
a pipe and some dreams.
Some real sweet dreams.

HAMMETT
Let's get the hell out
of here.

RYAN
What for? Everything's all
been taken care of. Every-
thing's been brought to a
mutually satisfactory
arrangement. Yes, sir.
(savoring the words)
A mutually satisfactory
arrangement.

HAMMETT
What are you talking about?

RYAN
Bidness, kid. Bidness.
Grownups' bidness.

Hammett gives up on trying to make any sense out of Ryan. He moves over, grabs the pipe away from him, and hauls him to his feet.

HAMMETT
Come on. Let's go!

Ryan gazes around dreamily.

RYAN
I don't think they really
want us to leave.

He points. Hammett looks.

WHAT HE SEES

INT. ANTE ROOM, FONG'S - DAY

The Chinese Thug is still playing fan-tan.

RYAN
The biggest goddamn China-
man I've ever seen is
sitting right over there.

They step down from the platform in the direction of the door.

HAMMETT
Don't worry. I don't want
to argue with him. Loan
me a dollar.

Ryan pulls a dollar out of his pocket and gives it to Hammett. Hammett then leads him back through the den toward the entrance, taking on the appearance of someone who is now either very drunk or very high from the opium. He staggers across the floor to the ante room, Ryan following a few steps behind.

HAMMETT
(singing)
Maybe I'm lonesome, maybe
I'm glad, Feeling unhappy,
I may be sad....

He reaches the ante room, standing over the Thug's shoulder.

HAMMETT (contd)
(still singing)
Maybe...who knows!

Ryan quietly slips behind Hammett and out the door.

HAMMETT (contd)
(tossing the dollar bill
on the table)
Dollar on three.

The Thug sections off the beads with his chopstick and scarfs
up Hammett's dollar bill.

THUG
You lost.

HAMMETT
Already? I love games of
chance. Thank you, gentlemen.

He slouches out the door and meets Ryan in the hallway. He
shuts the door and looks around the hall and the nearby stairs.
The SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS coming down the steps.

HAMMETT (contd)
Don't look now, but there's
another guy who doesn't want
us to leave. Run like hell.

The two of them take off as fast as they can just as a tall
lean THUG bounds down the stairs. The Thug at the fan-tan
table bursts through the door on hearing the noise in the hall.

TALL THUG
(screaming)
STOP!

He pulls a hatchet out of his tuxedo jacket and hurls it down
the hall, just as Hammett and Ryan race through a door. Hammett
slams the door just as the blade of the hatchet lodges into its
frame with a thud. He and Ryan take a turn down another hall,
and the two Thugs race after them through the door.

INT. FONG'S/CASINO - DAY

Hammett and Ryan open another door and slip into a room which
they discover is the main casino. They stop at the bar and
look. Ahead of them, blocking their path to the main entrance
is Fong. Near him is the Bouncer and assorted Thugs. They
spot Ryan and Hammett immediately and make a bee-line for
them, but Hammett and Ryan duck back through the doorway
and slam the door, locking it from the inside. Fong and the

Bouncer arrive at the locked door seconds too late, but Fong shrugs it off and shakes his head nonchalantly.

FONG

(to Bouncer)

Ta mun tzo bo tru chue.

(They can't get out of there.)

INT. FONG'S/HALLS & BASEMENT - DAY

Hammett and Ryan race back down the long flight of stairs from the casino and make a quick turn to the left which leads them to a coal chute down to the basement. The two of them slide down the coal chute and encounter a Chinese worker shoveling coal into one of the furnaces. Hammett collars the man and covers his mouth so he'll stay quiet and they drag him away from the chute opening into a corner. Just then, the two Thugs who chased them down the hall outside the opium den, burst through the open door at the top of the coal chute. Ryan and Hammett hear them and lie low for a minute, then listen as the two Thugs dash away after seeing nothing down the chute. Ryan floors the coal worker with a blow to knock him out for a while, and he and Hammett duck into another passage.

Hammett and Ryan crawl out of another tunnel in the cavernous basement and walk past broken wires, a fuse box and a few rats scurrying along. They find a small door leading to a flight of rickety stairs at the opposite end of the basement. Ryan goes up the stairs, Hammett following.

INT. FONG'S CRIBS/SLAVE LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Ryan and Hammett crawl through the small door into a room filled with smoke--this time it is not just from opium pipes but from a huge wash cauldron filled with soaking laundry, a number of cooking fires, scores of candles, and many small incense burners. We are in the slave quarters.

A large number of young beautiful Chinese girls do the laundry. They are also taking care of even smaller children off in the sleeping areas; cutting up vegetables on one of the long kitchen tables; chatting among themselves; combing each other's hair and giggling; bathing one another; attending to the elders. As Ryan and Hammett arrive all the Chinese turn to them and react. They are aghast and frightened. Ryan and Hammett stare at them. The girls in the bath tubs cover themselves and the older women and men yell indignantly in Chinese.

All of them huddle together in fright and shout at the two men to get out of their home.

Ryan trudges through the group and heads toward the cribs at the end of the hall, looking for a way out. Hammett stares at the strange crowd. Ryan opens a door to one of the cribs at the end of the row. There, a sailor and a young Chinese prostitute jump up from where they lie on a small mattress. Ryan shuts the door quickly and motions to Hammett to catch up. The little prostitute bounds out the door and bumps into Hammett as he starts down the room, fending off angry yells from a number of elderly men, women, and young girls. He meets up with Ryan who is being pestered by an old man guarding the cribs. They leave through a door.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Hammett and Ryan find themselves in a storage room, partially filled with cardboard cartons. Hammett is fed up with Ryan. He grabs him and slams him up against a stack of cartons. Some of the cartons fall over.

HAMMETT

All right. Let's have it.
Let's start with that dumb
phone call about the
dictionary and go from there.

Ryan starts laughing.

RYAN

You don't know what that was? You--the great detective story writer? That was a clue, you simple son of a bitch. You're right, Hammett. You are out of it. You can't even smell good red herring five days in the sun. I wrap up a little address book in a newspaper page with a hole in it, and you're off and running. You decoyed 'em for me, Hammett. They went after you and I went about my bidness. You may not be much of a writer, kid, but you make just one hell of a decoy.

Hammett's rage at being suckered is almost total. His fist goes back. But then he lowers it, turns, walks a step, and turns abruptly back. He looks Ryan up and down coldly.

HAMMETT

You know what's happened to you, Ryan? You've fallen apart. Your nerve's shot and your brain's pickled. And you know the only mistake I made? I felt sorry for you.

RYAN

(shouting)

Nobody has to feel sorry for Jimmy Ryan! Nobody!

HAMMETT

(cold and mean)

Look at yourself. Look. Fifty-five and gut-sprung and running on booze. Quit kidding around, Ryan. You're done. Your life's over.

RYAN

(shouting)

Then quit stealing it from me! Quit using me in your goddamn stupid stories! Quit stealing my life from me!

Ryan's awful admonition shocks both men into silence. Both realize the truth of each other's charges. They also realize that whatever friendship might have existed is now over. Their eyes meet for a moment, then dart away.

They turn and go out the storage room door.

EXT. CRIBS/DEVIL'S KITCHEN - DAY

Ryan and Hammett come out of the door, go down the stairs, and walk through the gate into the arms of Manion and Bradford-- and the paddy wagon.

EXT. CRIB LANDING - DAY

Fong rushes out through the door onto the landing.

FONG'S POV

Hammett and Ryan are in a confrontation with Manion and Bradford.

HAMMETT

My girl friend call you,
Tom?

BRADFORD

She called.

MANION

Inside, Hammett.

HAMMETT

What the hell is--

MANION

(interrupting)

Get him inside, Tom.

The two men are hustled into the paddy wagon.

MANION (contd)

As for you, Ryan. You and
me're gonna have a nice
little talk.

The paddy wagon door is slammed on Ryan and Hammett.

BACK ON FONG

who smiles.

INT. POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

It's almost dark except for the hot white overhead light. Hammett is seated on a stool underneath the light. Prowling around him like a big cat is Lt. Manion. Tom Bradford, heavily shadowed, is seated nearby.

MANION

All right, Hammett, let's
(more)

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MANION (contd)

try it just one more time.
Tell me about you and Crystal
Ling.

HAMMETT

I don't know any Crystal Ling.

MANION

He don't know any Crystal Ling.
Then why ask about her all
over town?

HAMMETT

I haven't asked all over town.

MANION

He hasn't asked all over town.
You asked me; you asked Tom.
You asked Fong. God knows who
else you've been asking.

(pause)

Ryan says you're his tin mittens.

HAMMETT

Ryan's lying.

MANION

Ryan's lying? You approached
me and Tom, Hammett. You tried
to bribe us, as God is my witness.
Didn't he try to bribe us, Tom?

BRADFORD

He tried to bribe us, Lieutenant.

HAMMETT

(to Bradford)

What do you do when you get
home at night, Tom? Throw up?

BRADFORD

I drink a lot, Sam. I drink a
whole lot. Then I throw up.

HAMMETT

(very cold, very firm)
I'm walking, Manion.

MANION

He's walking, he says. Well,
before you take your walk,
Mr. Hammett, would you mind
please telling us where you
were at precisely 3:13 a.m.
this morning?

HAMMETT

At Fong's.

MANION

Fong says you weren't, but
then Fong's lying, right?

HAMMETT

He's lying.

MANION

Fong's lying. I'm lying.
Tom's lying. Ryan's lying.
Everybody's lying but Hammett.

HAMMETT

What's so important about
3:13 a.m.?

MANION

Oh, that. Why that's when it
happened.

HAMMETT

What?

MANION

(to Bradford)

Take him down, show him, and
then throw him out.

INT. CITY MORGUE COLD STORAGE - DAY

For the sake of our story, the city morgue is in the same
building. Hammett, Bradford and Doc Fallon are in the cold
storage room. Fallon pulls a drawer out. On it is a sheet
covered form. Fallon throws back the sheet, but all we get
to look at are a pair of female legs with thick ankles.
Hammett stares down at the body without expression.

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HAMMETT

Crystal Ling?

BRADFORD

Crystal Ling. She got it at exactly 3:13 a.m. It was at the end of the line on the #19 trolley run. The motor-man and the conductor'd both just looked at their watches when they heard her scream.

HAMMETT

How many times?

BRADFORD

Did she scream? Just once.

HAMMETT

What happened to her face?

DOC

They found a baseball bat right next to her. She was struck nine times.

HAMMETT

Sexually assaulted?

DOC

We haven't run the tests yet, but if you want a guess, I'd say probably.

Hammett reaches out and touches something. When his hand comes back there's a smear of blood on his forefinger. He sniffs it, then wipes it off casually on Doc's soiled white jacket.

BRADFORD

(sarcastically)

Ketchup?

HAMMETT

Blood.

Hammett turns to leave, but Bradford catches him by the arm as Doc slides the body tray back into the wall.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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BRADFORD
We ain't quite through yet,
Sam.

INT. SMALL POLICE ROOM - DAY

Hammett and Bradford enter a small, almost bare room containing only two chairs, a small still-furled projection screen, and an old 16 mm projector. There are also TWO UNIFORMED COPS. One of them unfurls the screen; the other is loading the projector.

BRADFORD
Sit down.

Hammett sits down. So does Bradford.

BRADFORD (contd)
Run it.

One of the Cops switches off the lights. The room goes completely dark. After a long moment, the other Cop turns on the projector. A silent, grainy, black and white film begins on the screen.

THE FILM:

The room is a sex fetishist's dream. Into the scene prances Crystal Ling, dressed as Little Bo Peep, complete with shepherd's crook. She turns her back to the camera, revealing a bare rear which she wiggles provocatively. A man, bare to the waist, but wearing tight black trousers and a Halloween wolf mask bounds into the scene. Bo Peep reacts with mock horror, wiggling her rear and mugging at the camera. The Wolf grabs her and throws her on the bed, bare rear up toward the camera, head down. Bo Peep twists her head around to look at the camera. She grins wickedly. The Wolf reaches for a whip and starts taking off his trousers.

INT. SMALL POLICE ROOM/THE FILM - DAY

ON HAMMETT

who rises

HAMMETT
I get the idea.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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BRADFORD
(he also rises)
Cut it.

The film continues to run although we can no longer see it.

BRADFORD
I said cut it, goddamnit!

The film is turned off. The lights go on.

HAMMETT
Where'd you get it?

Bradford shrugs.

BRADFORD
It's been making the rounds
of stags for about the last
three months.

HAMMETT
Who made it?

BRADFORD
That's what we're working on.
We find out who made it, we
find out a whole lot more
about Crystal Ling and who
her friends were.

Hammett turns to leave, but turns back.

HAMMETT
Who's Jimmy Ryan's client?

BRADFORD
Some little old Chinese lady
up in Tacoma.

HAMMETT
Is that a fact?

BRADFORD
That's a fact. We checked.

HAMMETT
I bet you did.

INT. CITY HALL/UPPER LEVEL ROTUNDA - DAY

Hammett steps out into the open area of the rotunda's upper level. To his left is a high ledge for the walkway itself, overlooking the lower entrance level to city hall. Above is the huge dome on top of the building. Salt is seated up on the ledge waiting for him, and jumps down from his perch as soon as he spots Hammett and walks fast to catch up to him. Salt is smoking a cigarette.

SALT

Jesus, Mr. Hammett, you
look terrible.

HAMMETT

(still walking)

Beat it, Salt. I'm tired.

Hammett grabs Salt's cigarette and takes a drag, still walking. Salt is taking a few fast paces to each of Hammett's slow ones to keep up with him, holding tightly to his overcoat, neatly folded over his arm.

SALT

I heard you and Ryan got
picked up...did he say any-
thing to them about Crystal?

HAMMETT

(still walking)

What would he tell them about
Crystal?

SALT

For Pete's sake, Mr. Hammett,
I don't....

HAMMETT

Salt, I just made a New Year's
resolution. I'm gonna go buy
a quart of whiskey, and I'm
gonna take it home and drink
it, and then I'm gonna catch
some shuteye. And when I wake
up I'm just gonna pretend that
this was just a bad dream.
So, wise up--take a powder.

They have reached the hallway near the stairs, still walking.

SALT

I just want her back! Jimmy
Ryan and me, we had a deal!

HAMMETT

That's between you and him.
I don't wanna hear about it.

SALT

Please, Mr. Hammett! Help
me out!

HAMMETT

What's in it for you, anyway?

He starts down the stairs, putting on his suit jacket. Salt
follows.

SALT

If Crystal gives me the rest
of what she started to tell
me, I'll have a story that'll
blow Chinatown wide open!
A real story!

He follows Hammett down the many flights of stairs.

HAMMETT

Swell, I can see the headlines:
'LITTLE GIRL RUNS AWAY FROM
CHINAMAN'

SALT

It's not just the story. Don't
you understand? If I don't get
her back, they're gonna come
looking for me!

HAMMETT

Look, I said scram!

He continues down the stairs, Salt on his heels.

INT. CITY HALL/LOWER LEVEL ROTUNDA - DAY

Hammett comes down the stairs and rounds the corner, Salt still

on his tail. They walk into the main entrance of city hall on the mezzanine level. A long flight of wide marble stairs is at their left as they walk into the clearing. Hammett spots a detailed architect's drawing of the proposed Golden Gate Bridge just on the edge of the entrance area and stops for a minute to look at it.

HAMMETT

Hey, look at that, will you?

Salt stops and looks at it for a minute, but is distracted by his own anxiety.

HAMMETT (contd)

Over four thousand feet long.
The longest suspension bridge
in the world.

He looks over to the center of the entrance area in front of the long flight of marble stairs and sees a large model of one of the towers for the proposed bridge. He walks over to it, looking at it from top to bottom and shaking his head.

HAMMETT (contd)

And I bet the graft'll set
a new world record, too. *

He walks around to the front of the model, his back to the stairs. Salt follows.

Hammett suddenly does an about-face and turns around and grabs Salt fiercely by the collar.

HAMMETT

Listen, Salt. Crystal Ling's
dead. You don't believe me?
Go ask the cops. She's down
there lying on a slab with a
sheet over her. Maybe they'll
even show her to you. Go ask
'em. Go ahead, go on down
there and ask them. *

Salt shakes his head, and every other part of his body, caught in Hammett's tight grasp.

HAMMETT

She was on the run all right,
but it wasn't just some penny-
ante bullshit, was it? She
wasn't just some old lady's
wandering daughter. *

Salt struggles to get out of Hammett's grasp, and they tussle for a minute on the edge of the long staircase. Salt finally breaks loose and races down the steps, leaving Hammett standing at the top of the stairs holding Salt's tattered overcoat. He turns around and rummages through the pockets, pulling out Salt's wallet and tossing the coat down at the base of the tower exhibit. Hammett trudges on down to the main lobby which is teeming with people on city hall business.

EXT. HAMMETT ALLEY AND STAIRS - DAY

Hammett passes the laundress on his way up the alley to his apartment. She turns from tending to her ducks and looks at him.

CHINESE LAUNDRESS

Oh, Mr. Hammett! What happened?

HAMMETT

I fell out of my tree house, Rose. *

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Hammett comes into his living room and stops, dumbstruck by what he sees.

HAMMETT'S POV

The room is wrecked. One wall is smeared with blood.

Hammett moves into the room, assessing the damage. He picks up a lamp and returns a tipped over chair to its former position. In the background Kit appears in the still-open doorway.

KIT

(shocked)

Good Lord!

Hammett turns.

HAMMETT

Somebody went to a lot of
trouble for nothing.

KIT

(stares at him)
I don't know which looks
worse--you or--this.
(indicates room)

Hammett crosses to his bottle, pours a drink, and looks
thoughtfully about the room.

HAMMETT

Don't worry about the blood.
It probably belonged to a
chicken.

KIT

A what?

Hammett drinks and shrugs.

HAMMETT

Or maybe a duck. Either way,
it's just a warning. Maybe
the third or the fourth--I
can't remember exactly.

KIT

Warning to do what?

HAMMETT

To lay off. It all started
with Ryan. You met Ryan, my
old pal.

Kit nods.

HAMMETT (contd)

And after Ryan came Gary Salt
and after Salt came Crystal
Ling. Almost one, two, three.
Now Ryan's probably sleeping
it off in jail and the cops
are about to bury Crystal
Ling. So that leaves only
Gary Salt, doesn't it?

KIT

Are you detecting or dissembling?
Who's Gary Salt?

Hammett has already dug out the billfold that he removed from Salt's topcoat. He goes through it only to discover it's empty except for a slip of paper that looks like a receipt.

HAMMETT

This is his wallet and Gary Salt's a guy who last Thursday spent 65 cents for the B.P. special at Frank's Cafe.

KIT

Even I can figure that out.
B.P. stands for blue plate.

Hammett nods and turns the receipt over. What he sees written on the back causes him to react with surprise.

INSERT - RECEIPT

On it are written in pencil six names. By each name is the figure \$166,666.

Hammett looks up at Kit.

HAMMETT

Okay. You figured out blue plate. What do these names mean to you? Herson, Chamblers, Norsette, Creel, Michaelson, and Doan?

KIT

Money. Pots of money. Tons maybe. They're six of the richest men in San Francisco.

Hammett thinks, then grins.

HAMMETT

Do me a favor?

KIT

What?

HAMMETT

Get on the phone and call the Post. See if they've really
(more)

HAMMETT (contd)
got a Gary Salt working for
them, maybe part time, maybe
not even that.

KIT
Who'll I be?

HAMMETT
His wife. He hasn't been home
in three days and there's no
food in the house and the kids
are screaming. Cry a little.

CUT TO:

KIT ON PHONE

She's superb. Her voice falters, breaks, even sobs. She is
the perfect distraught wife.

KIT
(into phone)
...but it's been three days
and I don't know where else
to call. Yes...yes...I under-
stand. But oh, dear God,
what're the kids and I going
to do?!

She hangs up and turns to Hammett, grinning as she wipes a
real tear from her eye.

KIT (contd)
How was I?

HAMMETT
Perfect.

KIT
Your Gary Salt doesn't work
there. He was only a free-
lance anyway, peddling society
gossip items. They don't know
where he works now--or where
he lives. They say he hasn't
been around in weeks.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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Hammett nods as if he hadn't expected much else.

HAMMETT

Would you be willing to
spend a little shoeleather?

KIT

Doing what?

HAMMETT

Looking for Gary Salt.

(he gestures at
wrecked apartment)

I think I'm running out
of time. It'd help if
you worked one side of
the street while I worked
the other.

Kit stares at Hammett with cold curiosity.

KIT

Who the hell are you now?
Hammett, the writer, or
Hammett, the detective?

HAMMETT

(thinks about it)

Probably Hammett the
detective.

KIT

What a waste.

She turns and heads for the door, but when she reaches it,
she stops and turns back.

KIT (contd)

I'll go, of course. But
you knew that before you
asked, didn't you, Sam?

HAMMETT

(thoughtfully)

Maybe.

EXT. STREET NEAR HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eli's taxi is waiting. Eli leans against the front fender as Hammett and Kit approach. Hammett has shaved and is wearing fresh clothes.

Eli moves off the fender as Hammett and Kit arrive. Hammett makes the introductions.

HAMMETT

Kit, this is Eli.

Eli touches his cap.

HAMMETT (contd)

Eli's the last of the IWW
organizers.

Eli grins sardonically and opens the taxi's rear door. Kit starts to get in, but pauses.

KIT

Are you really a Wobbly?

ELI

Nah, that's just Hammett
talking. What I am now
is sort of an anarchist
with syndicalist tenden-
cies. What're you?

Not sure whether he's kidding, Kit replies promptly.

KIT

Revisionist Unitarian.

Eli nods his dour, thoughtful approval as Kit and Hammett climb into the rear of the taxi.

EXT. GRUBBY CITY STREET - NIGHT

Old cars are parked along the curb, among them Eli's taxi, Eli at the wheel. Traffic is light. A few PEDESTRIANS are out. Most of the shops are closed. But a corner Mom & Pop grocery is still open.

EXT. MOM & POP GROCERY - NIGHT

Through the shop's window we can see Kit questioning the GROCERY OWNER who answers with expressive shrugs and negative headshakes.

EXT. FRANK'S CAFE - NIGHT

The cafe is across the street and up the block. Through its window we see Hammett talking to FRANK, a soured 35 or so, who's behind the counter, a soiled chef's hat on his head. A few CUSTOMERS are hunched over coffee at the counter. The tables along the wall are empty.

WE GO INSIDE and listen to Hammett question Frank.

INT. FRANK'S CAFE - NIGHT

HAMMETT

...in his thirties, sloppy dresser, about five-six, whines a lot.

FRANK

Yeah, I think I know the guy you mean. I didn't know his name was Salt though.

HAMMETT

You know where he lives?

FRANK

What the hell, Jack. He comes in, he eats, he pays, he leaves. Why should I care where he lives? Around here somewhere, I guess.

HAMMETT

He ever come in with anyone? Friends maybe?

FRANK

Guys like him, Jack, they don't have friends.

Hammett nods his agreement and thanks, turns to leave, and sees something through the cafe's plate glass window that makes him react.

WHAT HE SEES

across the street, dressed much as before, is the Punk.

EXT. SALT'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The Punk stops at the narrow dark entrance to the three or four story apartment building. A shop of some kind occupies most of the building's ground floor. The Punk looks quickly around, then darts into the entrance that leads up to the apartments.

ON HAMMETT

who comes out of Frank's Cafe and starts across the street.

EXT. MOM & POP GROCERY - NIGHT

Kit comes out of the store and stops.

WHAT SHE SEES

is Hammett entering Salt's apartment building

KIT

hurries after him.

INT. SALT'S APARTMENT BUILDING FOYER - NIGHT

Hammett stops at the mail boxes.

INSERT: MAIL BOX LABEL

it reads: G. Salt, 402.

HAMMETT starts up the stairs.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR (SALT BUILDING) - NIGHT

Hammett moves down the corridor, stops at 402, starts to knock, but hesitates at the sound of loud voices coming from within the apartment.

PUNK (O.C.)

I want 'em now, pally. Not
tomorrow. Not the next day.
Not the day after that. Now.

SALT (O.C.)

(terrified)

I don't have them, mister.
I swear to God I don't have
them. But maybe if--

Salt's voice breaks off when we HEAR the sound of something
being thrown against a wall--perhaps a lamp. A second later
we HEAR the sound of a single gunshot.

Hammett hurries past 402 and down the corridor where an old
mattress and bed springs have been carelessly propped up
against the wall--waiting for the junk man. Hammett ducks
behind them and peers through the space between the mattress
and the wall.

WHAT HE SEES

through the space is the Punk hurrying out of Salt's apartment,
a .45 automatic in his hand. The Punk hesitates, looks around
warily, then races to the stairs and bounds down them.

ON HAMMETT

who comes out from behind the mattress and cautiously goes
after the Punk.

Hammett reaches the top of the stairs. He starts down them,
but stops abruptly. Hammett's right hand darts into his top-
coat pocket.

WHAT HAMMETT SEES

at the bottom of the landing is the Punk--and Kit. The Punk
has his left arm around Kit's waist. In his right hand is
the .45 which is pressed against her back. He looks up at
Hammett.

PUNK

Just one more step, sweetie,
and she dies. But she dies
slow. Real slow.

Hammett raises his right hand which is still inside his top-coat pocket. It looks as if he may be pointing a pistol at the Punk.

HAMMETT

Let her go.

PUNK

That's an old wheeze,
sweetie. The oldest.

HAMMETT

Call it.

The Punk weighs the odds, hesitates, then decides it's a standoff. He releases Kit.

PUNK

Up.

Trembling with fear, Kit slowly starts up the stairs. The Punk gazes coldly up at Hammett.

PUNK

Next time, I'll call.

HAMMETT

Next time, you'll lose.

Kit has almost reached Hammett. The Punk nods thoughtfully, turns, and hurries down the stairs.

Hammett goes down to the frightened Kit, puts an arm around her, and helps her up the rest of the stairs.

Kit leans against a wall.

KIT

Have you really got a gun?

HAMMETT

Do you really want to know?

Kit closes her eyes and shakes her head no. When she opens them she looks around.

KIT

Is this where Salt lives?

HAMMETT

Used to live, I'm afraid.

They start toward Salt's apartment.

INT. SALT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hammett comes through the door, Kit just behind him. Hammett grimaces.

HAMMETT

It's not pretty.

Kit looks, closes her eyes, and turns her head.

WHAT SHE'S SEEN

is Salt who, dressed in a white shirt and pants, is in a sitting position against one wall. He has been shot in the chest. The white shirt is soaked with blood. Higher up on the wall is where a lot of Salt's gore spread itself over the wallpaper when the .45 slug went all the way through him.

HAMMETT

takes in the rest of the room. A lamp has been smashed against the opposite wall. There is some ordinary furniture--and a suspiciously solid-looking door.

The door interests Hammett. He crosses to it, but it's locked. He turns, goes back to Salt, kneels down, pats the dead man's pants pockets, extracts a ring of keys, returns to the door, and unlocks it.

INT. SEX ROOM - NIGHT

It's dark in the room. Hammett finds a wall switch and flicks it on. He and Kit are almost blinded by the bank of photographic lights that come on. The room is the whore's dream which we saw in the blue film starring Crystal Ling.

Hammett gives the room a quick glance. Kit is fascinated by all the kinky paraphernalia. But what interests Hammett most is the big mirror that runs across one wall. He looks from the mirror, to the bed, and back again--trying to remember the camera angle from the blue film.

He looks around for something heavy, finds a tripod, and uses it to smash the mirror. Behind the mirror in a small room are a 16 mm motion picture camera of appropriate vintage; a 4 x 5 Speed Graphic, and a small Leica--if Leicas were being made in 1928. The cameras are all on tripods, positioned to photograph the sex room.

Kit picks up a piece of the shattered mirror.

KIT

You can see through it.

She looks from the cameras, to the bed, then back to the cameras. Understanding comes quickly.

KIT (contd)

You mean they actually...

HAMMETT

Uh-huh.

Hammett makes a quick search of the sex room, but turns up only a check book in the drawer of a small nightstand. Hammett leafs through the check stubs.

HAMMETT (contd)

Listen to this:

(reading from check stub)

James F. Ryan. 100 dollars.

Retainer. It's dated the second.

KIT

That's a week before he came to see you.

Hammett nods.

HAMMETT

Jimmy Ryan's big time client:

Gary Salt. He bought Ryan for a hundred bucks.

Something about the cameras that are aimed into the room fascinate Hammett. He crosses to them, turns the Speed Graphic around, pops open its back, and discovers a small envelope just large enough to contain 4 x 5 prints.

Hammett removes the envelope, looks inside it, and whistles. He takes out six black and white 4 x 5 photos and examines them briefly. We get only a bare glimpse. Each seems to be a sex scene involving a man and a woman.

Hammett wordlessly passes them over to Kit. She looks at them. There is more astonishment on her face than shock or disgust because she seems to recognize some of the figures in the photos.

She looks at Hammett questioningly. He nods. She quickly hands him back the photos.

HAMMETT

You're blushing.

KIT

I certainly hope so.

Hammett stuffs the photos back into the envelope and is putting them away in his pocket when a voice from behind makes both him and Kit start.

VOICE (O.C.)

Did you do the stiff, Hammett?

Hammett and Kit turn.

WHAT THEY SEE

standing in the doorway, a large pistol in his right hand, is Eli.

HAMMETT chuckles.

HAMMETT

Where'd you get the artillery,
Eli?

ELI

(lowering pistol)
You gotta have a little protection if you drive a hack in Frisco.

KIT

(automatically)
San Francisco.

ELI

(to Kit)

I call if Frisco, lady.

(to Hammett)

When I saw that nickle-dime
punk come out, I figured
I'd better come up.

HAMMETT

You know him?

ELI

Everybody in town knows
him, Hammett--except you.
You've been out of it too
long. He belongs to
Hagedorn.

HAMMETT

(surprised)

English Eddie?

ELI

That's right. English Eddie.

EXT. HAGEDORN'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Eli's taxi pulls up in front of the large white apartment
building and stops.

HAMMETT (V.O.)

Hagedorn's?

ELI (V.O.)

Hagedorn's. You know what
they say about the rich,
Hammett?

HAMMETT (V.O.)

What?

ELI (V.O.)

That they ain't happy.
God, I hope so!

Hammett gets out of the cab and goes in.

EXT. HAGEDORN'S APARTMENT BUILDING/ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Hammett comes out onto the top patio of Hagedorn's penthouse apartment. He snoops around and finally breaks in by crawling through the kitchen window.

INT. HAGEDORN APARTMENT/KITCHEN & BAR AREA - NIGHT

Hammett crawls through the kitchen window and meets the parrot. He HEARS the sound of footsteps. It's the Punk. The Punk comes out of the hall and into the lounge.

PUNK

Who's there?

No response. The Punk quietly walks farther into the bar, passing the pillar behind which Hammett is hiding. Hammett jumps him and takes away his pistol. The Parrot squawks.

HAMMETT

Okay, sweetie. Let's go. *

Hammett grabs a glass sitting on the bar, fills it with booze, and pushes the Punk down the hall in front of him.

HAMMETT

Eddie'll have to trade you
in on a new boy. *

He shoves the Punk around the corner and into the entrance hall of the bathroom. Hammett and the Punk enter the bathroom to find English Eddie Hagedorn in the tub.

Hammett throws the Punk into the Sauna, finds a chair, sits down, and confronts Hagedorn.

HAMMETT

Let's talk. *

HAGEDORN

By all means, sir. Let's
But first, my towel, if
you don't mind. *

INT. HAGEDORN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hagedorn, swathed in a large towel, waddles into the bedroom

followed by Hammett. Hagedorn disappears behind a screen. Hammett eyes the lavishly furnished, very large bedroom while Hagedorn puts on a robe.

HAMMETT

(looking around the
bedroom)

Hagedorn. English Eddie
Hagedorn. I once sat out-
side a court room in L.A.
for ten days waiting to
testify against one of
your rich clients who took
an ax to his wife. I never
got to the stand. On the
tenth day you won a dismissal.
The judge was crying so hard
he could barely see where to
sign his name.

HAGEDORN (O.C.)

You exaggerate, sir. But
slightly. Only slightly.

Hagedorn comes out from behind the screen wearing a gaudy
robe and slippers. He looks at Hammett quizzically.

HAGEDORN

Samuel Dashiell Hammett.
Former Pinkerton man--and
now what? Master of the
penny dreadful?

(drops his voice)

Getting rich?

HAMMETT

Scraping by.

HAGEDORN

Aren't we all. Now, sir,
what shall we talk about?

HAMMETT

First off, him.

(he jerks his thumb in
the direction of the
bathroom)

(more)

HAMMETT (contd)

Your gunsel. Why's he been
tailing me all over town?

HAGEDORN

Gunsel! My word, sir, what
a precise use of the English
language. You know the synonym
for gunsel, of course.

HAMMETT

Catamite. Nance. Fairy. Punk.
(nods toward bathroom)
Him. Again, why?

HAGEDORN

We're looking for your Mr.
Ryan, actually, who, we feel
might be in possession of
certain information useful
to my client.

HAMMETT

Your client being the widow
Callahan whose late hubbie
killed himself. Sort of.

HAGEDORN

My lips are sealed.

HAMMETT

(exasperated)

It was in the papers, Hagedorn.
Let's start with him--Callahan.
Why'd he kill himself, if he did?

HAGEDORN

(confidentially)

Well, sir, he was ruined.
Financially, he was ruined.

HAMMETT

What ruined him--liquor, women,
gambling? It's usually one of
the three--or a combination.

HAGEDORN

He guessed wrong on the commodity market. An inveterate plunger. The market rose. He couldn't cover his short position...

(shrugs)

He couldn't take it. Irish, you know. Not Anglo-Irish, of course, but Irish-Irish. An emotional, unstable race.

HAMMETT

What about Callahan and the late Crystal Ling?

HAGEDORN

(blandly)

What about them?

HAMMETT

I understand he bought her.

HAGEDORN

Bought her?! My word, sir, you have been out amongst the liars and the Pharisees. The Callahans had no children. Little Crystal was almost like a daughter to them--until Mrs. Callahan became ill. Whereupon Crystal returned to the mission where the Callahans had found her.

Hammett shakes his head in utter disbelief.

HAMMETT

Well, that's enough of fancy. Let's get down to some hard facts. Gary Salt is dead. Murdered.

HAGEDORN

Salt?

HAMMETT

The short pornographer.

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HAGEDORN

Murdered, you say?

HAMMETT

By your little roommate.
He blew a hole through Salt's
chest.

HAGEDORN

I am distressed, sir. And
shocked, too, of course.

HAMMETT

Uh-huh.

Hagedorn crosses to the telephone and picks it up.

HAGEDORN

I shall miss my Winston, but
as an officer of the court, I
do have my duty.

HAMMETT

Who're you calling?

HAGEDORN

Why, the District Attorney,
of course. Would you like
to speak to him?

HAMMETT

Yeah. As a matter of fact,
I would.

INT. HAMMETT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is still pretty much of a mess. Kit is slumped
in a chair, glaring balefully at Hammett as he mixes two drinks.

KIT

You know what I did tonight?
I almost got killed. And for
what? Answer me that, smart
guy. You're the detective.
The writer. Where was my
motivation? What was in it
for me? A peep into the
cess pool?

Hammett moves over, hands Kit a drink, and gazes down at her calmly, steadily. She glares back.

HAMMETT

You went because I asked you to. Because you knew there was nobody else I could ask.

There's a pause as they stare at each other. It's probably the most tender thing Hammett has ever said to Kit. She also realizes that it's probably as much as she will ever get from him. Her expression softens--but just barely.

KIT

Sure, Sam. Absolutely. You bet. Now what--another swim in the slime?

HAMMETT

Now? Well, now I wait for the District Attorney to--

Hammett's sentence is interrupted by a pounding at the door. He and Kit look questions at each other. Hammett crosses to the door and opens it. Standing there is the detective, Tom Bradford. All friendliness has gone from his face and eyes.

BRADFORD

I told you to stay out of it, Sam.

HAMMETT

So?

BRADFORD

So let's go. Don't ask where. Don't argue about it. If you argue, I'll put the cuffs on.

Hammett backs into the room. Bradford follows.

HAMMETT

Then you goddamn well better put them on.

Bradford does just that. He's good at it. An expert. He grabs Hammett with one hand, produces the cuffs with the other, spins Hammett around, and almost before Hammett knows it, his hands are behind his back, and the cuffs are on his wrists and locked.

BRADFORD

(to Kit)

Sorry, lady.

Bradford finds Hammett's hat, crushes it down onto his head, and leads him out of the apartment.

HAMMETT

(over his shoulder to
the startled,
concerned Kit)

My lawyer's Jim Jungroth.
He's in the book. If I'm
not back in three hours,
call him.

Before Kit can reply Hammett is hustled out the door which Bradford kicks shut.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING (ESTABLISH) - NIGHT

INT. LONG OFFICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Bradford leads the still handcuffed Hammett down the long corridor toward a set of double doors.

BRADFORD

Don't ask me no more
questions, Sam.

They reach the double doors. Bradford takes the cuffs off Hammett's wrists. Hammett rubs them.

BRADFORD

From now on, you're on
your own. God help you.

He opens one of the double doors and gestures for Hammett to go in. Hammett starts in.

INT. BOARD ROOM - NIGHT

Hammett comes into the room. What he sees doesn't surprise him too much. It mostly confirms his suspicions.

HAMMETT

Well, I'll be goddamned.

WHAT HE SEES

is a long, richly appointed board room. At the far end of the board table, as if serving as chairman, is Hagedorn. At Hammett's end, twisted around in their chairs to look at him, are Lt. Manion and Fong.

Also seated at the table, three on each side, are SIX DISTINGUISHED MEN, well-dressed, prosperous looking, all in their mid-forties to early fifties. Everyone stares at Hammett. Hammett stares back. Hagedorn is the first to speak.

HAGEDORN

Welcome, Mr. Hammett. Welcome.
We have need of you, sir.
Great need.

Hammett comes further into the room.

HAGEDORN (contd)

You know Mr. Fong and Lt.
Manion, of course. The other
gentlemen I don't think need
to be--

Hammett interrupts. He takes out the envelope containing the pictures he removed from the back of the camera in the Sex Room.

HAMMETT

(interrupting)

Oh, I'll make my own introductions, Hagedorn.

Hammett starts at the near left-hand side of the board table and very quickly works his way around it clock-wise. As he takes each picture out of the envelope, he holds it up to the light, studies it briefly, then slaps it, face down, in front of the man it belongs to.

Each man reacts differently, but each peeks at his picture as he would at the hole card in a five-card stud game. Not one of them tears his picture up or burns it. Some, with bravado, let their pictures remain in front of them face down, at least for a moment or two. Others slip them quickly away into pockets.

Hammett starts his rounds. He doesn't tarry. He stops at each man just long enough to identify him and to lay his picture down.

HAMMETT

Let's see. Shipping, isn't it?

Shipping nods, just barely. Hammett looks at the picture, then slaps it face down.

HAMMETT (contd)

You go for Little Miss Muffett, right?

Shipping looks away.

HAMMETT (contd)

And you--you're Insurance.
Big Insurance. And your
specialty--Little Bo Peep,
hmmmm?

Hammett places the picture face down. Insurance tries to hold Hammett's gaze, but breaks, and looks elsewhere.

HAMMETT (contd)

Next, Railroads. Grandpa's
railroads, if I remember
right. Let's see.

(he looks at picture)

Cinderella. Little old,
wasn't she, Cinderella?

Hammett slaps it down. Railroads peeks at the picture and hastily puts it away in his pocket.

HAMMETT (contd)

And you. You're Sugar. Maybe
half the world's sugar. Your
preference?

(he examines the picture)

(more)

HAMMETT (contd)

Daddy's Little Girl, I'd say,
but I could be wrong.

He slaps the picture down. Sugar takes his hole-card peek
and lets the photo stay where it is. His gaze is directed
to just about where his vest begins.

HAMMETT (contd)

And you. Oil. It used to
be Mr. Rockefeller's oil,
but now it's yours. And
what's your dream?

(he looks at picture,
then places it)
Queen of the sixth grade.
Maybe fifth.

Oil peeks, then quickly pockets his picture.

HAMMETT (contd)

You? Well, hell, you're just
the Idle Rich, aren't you?
Good works, charities, always
a big power in the reform
movement. And you like, well--

(Hammett looks at picture)
you like the Poor Little
Match Girl.

All six men now look at Hagedorn, as if demanding that some
kind of order be restored.

HAGEDORN

Mr. Hammett, I must--

HAMMETT

(interrupting)

Shut up, Hagedorn. Let me
see if I can figure out the
rest. It must have--

HAGEDORN

(interrupting)

Mr. Hammett, I must advise you--

Fong interrupts Hagedorn.

FONG
(with quiet
authority)

Let him speak.

Hammett looks at Manion and Fong.

HAMMETT
You two make a swell pair.

Hammett starts walking slowly around the table again, this time counter-clockwise. As he walks, he talks. He directs his remarks sometimes to one of the Six Distinguished Men, sometimes to Hagedorn, sometimes to everyone.

HAMMETT
It must have all started at
a party. A stag party.

He looks at Big Oil.

HAMMETT (contd)
Your birthday? New Year's
Eve?

Big Oil starts to say something, thinks better of it, and looks away.

HAMMETT
Anyway, a blue film was the
night's big event, right?
Starring Crystal Ling and the
Wolf Man. And then what, a
week later? Two weeks?
Somebody--maybe somebody like
Gary Salt who was always suck-
ing around you people--well,
this somebody comes over and
whispers in your ear that you,
too--for a small fee--can take
a turn in the hay with Crystal.
So one by one you sneak up into
that back room at the friendly
pornographer's--and it was
Arabian Nights. No fantasy too
wild. No taste too bizarre.
(more)

HAMMETT (contd)

Except that all the time the camera is clicking away. But somebody grabs the negatives away from Salt--right? Crystal maybe, and you turn San Francisco and Chinatown inside out looking for her. Then, all of a sudden, Crystal's dead--and there's a body in the morgue to prove it. And now the blackmailer lands on you. Either you pay up or prints of you and Crystal will be sent to every ritzy club between here and New York--not to mention your wives. And then your business and political rivals can sit back over their cigars and brandies and swap pictures of you guys and Crystal doing cute little tricks in that big red bed.

(to Hagedorn)

Am I right so far, Hagedorn?

HAGEDORN

You are substantially correct, sir.

HAMMETT

(reflectively)

You know, I've lived in this town for what--seven or eight years now. And it's not a bad town. Certainly more fun than most.

He moves over to the window and looks out.

HAMMETT (contd)

The streets get swept. The garbage gets picked up. The graft gets paid.

He turns from the window and stares at the men at the table.

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HAMMETT (contd)

And every few years the people who live here go down and vote for somebody or other, if they happen to think of it. But the politicians they vote into office don't really run this town. Money runs it. Your money. And you run it to suit yourselves--nobody else. You buy the power. You trade it. You sell it. But nobody sitting around this table ever had to scramble for a single vote. And maybe that's why I don't see the mayor here--and certainly not the D.A.

(pause)

Just the cops and the crooks and the big rich. And me. And what I want to know is, why me?

HAGEDORN

Because, Mr. Hammett, we would like you to buy back that which is for sale.

HAMMETT

Again. Why me?

HAGEDORN

Because, sir, the person who has what we wish to buy insists upon you.

Once more Hammett looks carefully all around the table.

HAMMETT

I guess I could go to the papers. Maybe even the mayor. But the newspapers would have their advertising yanked, and the mayor would be reminded of past and future slush funds. At last resort, I guess I could even go to the cops, right, Manion?

MANION

You could try.

HAMMETT

(to Hagedorn)

So what if I make your buy-back? What's in it for me?

HAGEDORN

Ah, now, Mr. Hammett. We finally get to the essence of things. You will find us, sir, most generous.

HAMMETT

Money, huh?

HAGEDORN

Indeed, sir. Money.

HAMMETT

To hell with the money, Hagedorn. I want two things.

He swings around to face Fong.

HAMMETT (contd)

First, I want my story back. It's not much, but it's mine. It's what I do. I want it back.

Fong smiles slightly and after a moment, nods even more slightly. Hammett bears down on Manion.

HAMMETT (contd)

And second--and this is the most important thing. I want to be left alone.

Hammett and Manion stare at each other for a long moment. Finally, Manion nods.

Hammett swings around to face Hagedorn.

HAMMETT (contd)

What's the blackmailer's price?

HAGEDORN
One million dollars.

Hammett snorts and shakes his head in both disgust and disbelief.

HAMMETT
Next question: where and
when?

HAGEDORN
In one hour, sir.
(he picks up a
thick envelope)
Your authorization, credentials,
and complete instructions are
in this envelope.

Hammett moves over, takes it, and wordlessly heads for the
door. At the last moment he stops and turns back.

HAMMETT
When I get the million bucks
what's to prevent me from
taking the next boat out?

HAGEDORN
(ice cold)
Your good judgment, sir,
and the high value you place
on your own life.

Hammett grins and quickly goes out the door.

EXT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We see Hammett come out. He stops and fumbles desperately for
a cigarette, tries to light it, but misses. We MOVE IN closer.
Hammett's hands are shaking so badly he can barely light the
cigarette. He finally sucks in some smoke, exhales it grate-
fully, and grins almost ruefully.

HAMMETT
Tough guy.

He turns and heads down the corridor.

INT. BANK COUNTING ROOM - NIGHT

TWO UNIFORMED GUARDS are counting the last of the million dollars into a large valise. A SUPERVISOR in a dark plain suit watches. So does Hammett.

The valise is closed. One Guard holds a clipboard and fountain pen out to Hammett, as if expecting him to sign for the money.

Hammett stares at him with such a look of cold incredulity that the Guard nervously shifts his gaze to his Supervisor. The Supervisor shakes his head slightly. The clipboard is put away.

One of the Guards picks up the money. The other takes his pistol from his holster. They start out of the counting room, followed by Hammett.

EXT. BANK - NIGHT

Outside the bank, Eli's cab is waiting. Eli is at the wheel as usual. Kit is in the rear seat. She opens the door. The Guard with the money places the valise inside. The two Guards look around carefully, then leave.

Hammett starts to get into the rear of the cab, but stops.

HAMMETT

I'm thirty-four years old
and the only two people I
can trust in the world are
a librarian with a smart
mouth and a would-be bomb-
thrower.

He gets in. As he does, Eli replies.

ELI

If you got two you can trust,
Hammett, you got two more
than most guys.

The taxi pulls away.

INT.-EXT. TAXI - NIGHT (TRAVELLING SHOT)

Eli is at the wheel; Kit in the back seat with Hammett; the valise with the money at Hammett's feet.

ELI
(over his shoulder)
What's in the bag, Hammett,
money?

Hammett pauses before answering.

HAMMETT
Money.

ELI
What're we working, a buy-back?

HAMMETT
A buy-back.

ELI
How much?

HAMMETT
(after another pause)
A million.

Eli twists around in his seat, his face a battleground for
anger and amazement.

ELI
You're shitting me-pardon-
me, lady.

HAMMETT
Watch the road.

ELI
Rich people! What're the
rich gonna buy back for a
million?

HAMMETT
Their reputations.

ELI
You know what we could do with
a million bucks? We could
just keep on driving. South.
Tijuana in three days, maybe
four. Just you and me and the
little lady. Why not, Hammett?

HAMMETT--Thomas

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HAMMETT
Why not, indeed.

But Eli realizes why not.

ELI
Except we ain't.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The taxi pulls up at almost the same spot where the Continental Op stopped his car. Hammett gets out with the bag, followed by Kit.

ELI
I get to come?

HAMMETT
Stay put.
(to Kit)
See that phone booth?

Kit looks.

WHAT SHE SEES

is the same phone booth that the Continental Op used his nickel in.

ON KIT

who nods, looking at the booth.

KIT
I wait inside with this.
(she holds up a nickel)
If I hear a shot, a yell--

HAMMETT
(interrupting)
Or even a small splash.

KIT
Or even a splash, I get the operator, scream for your lawyer, and run like hell.

Hammett nods. Carrying the heavy bag, he and Kit start walking toward the bridge.

When they reach the bridge, Kit goes into the phone booth. Hammett shifts the heavy bag to his other hand and starts walking across the bridge. We go with him.

The fog comes up off the water and almost obscures the bridge. Then it parts, revealing a dim figure.

HAMMETT

Hello, Crystal.

The fog parts even more. Standing in the middle of the bridge, dressed in the latest style, looking amazingly mature, is Crystal Ling. There are two slightly jarring notes: In her right hand is a small pistol aimed steadily at Hammett; over her left shoulder is a very large leather purse that hangs down to her waist.

Behind her at some distance, almost on the other side of the bridge, is a dim, unrecognizable figure. Beyond the figure is a limousine with its interior lights on.

CRYSTAL

Stop right there, Hammett.

Hammett stops.

CRYSTAL (contd)

Put the valise down--and open it.

Hammett follows her directions.

CRYSTAL (contd)

Now move backward five steps and put your hands behind your neck.

Hammett does as ordered. Crystal moves forward and glances down at the contents of the valise. Satisfied, she removes an envelope from her large purse, kneels carefully, and puts it down on the bridge near the valise.

CRYSTAL

The negatives.

Hammett nods.

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HAMMETT

The widow Callahan. She really did kill her husband, didn't she? Just like you said.

CRYSTAL

(rising)

Dashiell Hammett, ever the one-floor-up-and-save detective. Yes. She killed him. She was jealous. But not of me. Of him.

HAMMETT

Then you and she were--

CRYSTAL

(finishes for him)

Lovers? Of course. But the blackmail scheme was Callahan's. He was broke, so he and I and Gary Salt cooked it up.

HAMMETT

I also like the way you fixed the cops.

CRYSTAL

(shrugs)

By the time Dorothy killed Callahan, I'd already acquired some...influence, let's say. So murder became suicide. Mrs. Callahan was tucked away in a sanitarium.

Hammett shakes his head, fascinated.

HAMMETT

And the dead Chinese girl with the thick ankles they tried to palm off on me at the morgue. You did that, too, didn't you?

CRYSTAL

I needed a day or so with no
(more)

CRYSTAL (contd)
interruptions to complete
my negotiations. She was
a useful...pawn, I suppose.
There are millions and
millions more in China like
her. And me.

Hammett snorts.

HAMMETT
I'll take the negatives now.

CRYSTAL
Close the valise as you do so.

Crystal backs away, still aiming the gun expertly. Hammett walks over, stoops down, closes the valise, picks up the negative envelope, checks its contents, and rises. As he does he notes that the dim figure we saw earlier is now approaching behind Crystal. Hammett pretends not to notice. Instead, he asks another question. And he asks it with real curiosity, a writer's curiosity.

HAMMETT
You are bad, kid, aren't you?
I mean, you're rotten clean
through. How does it feel--
really feel?

CRYSTAL
My parents sold me when I was
9 for \$2,000. I turned my
first trick with a Caucasian
at 11. At 17, I'm a million-
aire. I wonder what I'll be
at 21?

HAMMETT
Dead.

Over Crystal's shoulder we can now make out the dim figure who is approaching. It's Jimmy Ryan. In his right hand is a pistol.

CRYSTAL
You really think so?
(without turning)
(more)

CRYSTAL (contd)

You were almost late, Mr. Ryan.

Ryan moves up behind Crystal. She casually slips her left hand back into the large purse.

RYAN

I thought I was keeping pretty close to schedule.

(to Hammett)

How are ya, kid?

HAMMETT

What're you, Ryan--her new pimp?

RYAN

More like a partner--up until now, anyway.

He jams his gun savagely into Crystal's back. She winces.

RYAN

Don't drop it. Just toss it over the side so I can hear the splash.

Crystal shrugs and tosses the gun over the bridge railing. We HEAR a faint splash. Ryan circles around toward the money valise, keeping his gun aimed at Crystal. He waves Hammett into his line of fire. Hammett moves as directed.

RYAN

I'm going for the whole caboodle. The grand slam. A million bucks. And you thought my life was over, Hammett. You want something real to write about? Write about this.

Ryan carefully stoops down to pick up the valise. His eyes flit away from Crystal for a brief instant. It's all she needs. Through the large purse, she shoots Ryan twice. He manages to rise. He tries to bring his gun up. Crystal shoots him again. Ryan staggers and falls to the ground. His gun is by his outstretched hand. He falls, in fact, virtually into the same position as did Pen-Pal Morrison in Hammett's short story.

Crystal's left hand comes out of the large purse. In it is another small gun. Now for a moment, all three characters are frozen into almost exactly the same scene that we first saw in Hammett's short story. Except that Hammett is shocked and appalled by Ryan's death. He makes a slight move, as if to go to his aid, but Crystal waves him back.

CUT TO:

EXT.-INT. BRIDGE PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Kit has already dropped her nickel. She speaks frantically into the phone.

KIT

Operator! This is an
emergency! Get me
Jefferson 3219. I want--

A man's hand moves in over Kit's shoulder and cuts off the phone. She turns, startled. It's Lt. Manion.

MANION

Not just yet, little lady.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Hammett and Crystal are still almost as we left them. Crystal looks up from Ryan's dead body at Hammett. The gun is still steady in her hand, but her right hand now.

CRYSTAL

(softly, quoting,
perhaps enjoying herself)
"He needed one hand for the
money, and the other told hold
the gun. He wasn't good enough
to do both."

Hammett stares at her, still shocked by Ryan's death, but startled and fascinated to hear his own lines being quoted to him. Crystal's left hand dips once more into the large purse and comes out with the familiar manila envelope. She tosses it to Hammett who catches it deftly.

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CRYSTAL

I read it, Hammett. You
can do better.

(she indicates Ryan)
Was he a friend...or what?

HAMMETT

A friend. But he got old.

Crystal laughs sardonically.

CRYSTAL

Not too old. He figured it
all out, tracked me down,
and cut himself in. Maybe
you didn't know him too well.

HAMMETT

Maybe I didn't know him at all.

Crystal suddenly has an idea that amuses her.

CRYSTAL

Take his place, Hammett.
Come with me!

(enthralled by the notion)
That's right. Come with me!
You can be my combination
bodyguard and biographer;
my lover, my lap dog.

Staring at her, Hammett slowly shakes his head no.

HAMMETT

You don't really think
they're going to let you
waltz, do you? Oh, you'll
get to Berlin or Constantin-
ople or Hong Kong or where-
ever you're going. But one
day you'll turn the wrong
corner and wham!--no more
Crystal. Don't you under-
stand that yet? You're
going up against 100, 200,
300 million dollars. You're
going up against the power-
house. The might.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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CRYSTAL
I can beat them.

HAMMETT
Like hell.

Crystal, her gun still pointed at Hammett, stoops gracefully, picks up the heavy valise and starts backing away.

CRYSTAL
Come with me, Hammett.
I'll show you I can beat
them.

Hammett only shakes his head no as the fog and the dark swallow Crystal up for the last time. He kneels quickly by Ryan and feels for the big pulse in the throat. But it's no use.

HAMMETT
You lost it all, Ryan.
The whole caboodle. Every-
thing. Except your nerve.

Hammett rises. Both envelopes are under his left arm. He lights a cigarette with his right hand and stares down at Ryan for the last time. Then he turns and starts walking back the way he came.

He nears the phone booth. When he reaches it, Lt. Manion and Tom Bradford emerge from the shadows. Kit is close by.

MANION
Let's have the negatives,
Hammett.

HAMMETT
(with contempt)
The messenger boys.

He hands the negative envelope over. Manion checks it quickly.

MANION
Now you and the little lady
can make all the phone calls
you want to.

HAMMETT
What about Ryan?

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MANION

What about him?

HAMMETT

He's lying in the middle of
the bridge. Shot. Dead.

Manion looks at Bradford.

MANION

What d'you think, Tom?

Bradford shrugs indifferently.

BRADFORD

We'll get somebody to sweep
him up.

The two cops turn and stroll off into the darkness. Hammett
and Kit watch them go.

KIT

It's not like in your stories,
is it? It's not like a story
at all.

HAMMETT

It's never like a story.

Hammett spots something on the other side of the street.

WHAT HE SEES

is a 1928 mail box.

Hammett starts toward it. After a moment, Kit follows.

Hammett reaches the mail box. Kit is still ten or fifteen
feet away from him when he finally mails the envelope.

KIT

(calling)

You're going to use it,
aren't you, Sam? You're
going to use every last
damn bit of it.

HAMMETT--Thomas

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Hammett turns and stares at her thoughtfully.

HAMMETT

In writing, nothing's ever
totally wasted. Understand?

He waits for Kit's answer. When it doesn't come, he turns
and starts for the taxi.

KIT

(to his back)

Sure, Sam. Absolutely.
You bet.

After a moment, she follows. They get into the taxi. It
drives off.

THE END