

Angel Eyes

Written by

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"A closeted lesbian bookkeeper for a private investigator, falls for the woman she is assigned to investigate which causes her carefully constructed life to collapse."

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FADE IN

INT. ARCHIE JOHNSON'S OFFICE - EVENING

ARCHIE JOHNSON, 50's, co-owner of Johnson and Miller Detective Agency, sags in a chair in his cluttered office. He nurses the effects of a beating; suit rumpled, tie askew, blood on his shirt.

Packed into his office are HOWARD MILLER, 50's, co-owner; and secretaries IVY TUCKER, early 30's; GEORGINA NESBIT, mid 30's; and MURIEL HARDY, 40's.

Ivy and Georgina, wannabe beaus, fuss over Archie, alternately dabbing at the scrapes on his face.

Wallflower Muriel holds a wash basin. She has a finger towel draped over one arm.

Howard sits on a corner of Archie's desk.

HOWARD
You got nothing.

ARCHIE
I got a beating. You happy?

HOWARD
Information, asshole.

ARCHIE
The information is he had three guys waiting for me when I showed up. Dragged me into the back and beat me up. Had a customer not come in I'd be counting teeth from a hospital bed.

Archie slaps Ivy's hand.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
OUCH!

IVY
Sorry.

She returns to blotting the scrapes.

Howard stands.

HOWARD
So next time we try to talk to him, I'll get Gus to go with you.

ARCHIE

I ain't goin' next time. He knows we're on to him. George, quit it!

Archie shoves away Georgina's hand as he rises from the chair.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

I'm goin' home.

HOWARD

To lick your wounds?

ARCHIE

Home is where I keep my whiskey.

He grabs his hat off his desk, pushes through the women and leaves. Ivy and Georgina toss their washcloths in the basin, splashing Muriel. They follow Archie out of his office.

Muriel heads to the bathroom with the basin. Archie leaves the office with a slam of the main door.

HOWARD

That's it for today, girls. Might as well go home. I'll have to think about the next step.

Ivy and Georgina don't have to be told twice. Muriel exits the bathroom.

HOWARD (cont'd)

You can go, Muriel, in case you didn't hear.

MURIEL

Phone doesn't ring when you're not here. I'm going to stay and catch up on billing.

Howard nods, opens the door and Ivy and Georgina flounce through it into the hallway. He exits, closing the door, but reopens it.

HOWARD

You don't have to answer...

MURIEL

...the phone. I know. What would I tell someone anyway? I just do the books.

He nods and closes the door.

Muriel enters the closet-sized "kitchen" to get coffee. She closes both Archie and Howard's office doors as she heads to her desk in a back corner of the office. Ivy and Georgina have large desks prominently placed to be the first you see when you walk into the office.

As she passes the overhead light switch, she flips it off. She sits, flips open a ledger, and works on the books.

DOOR OPENS

Muriel looks up to see CHARLES RYAN and RONALD BUCHANAN, 40's, enter the room. They wear slightly rumpled suits with fedoras.

They scan the room and head to Muriel. She stands.

MURIEL (cont'd)
We're closed...gentlemen.

CHARLES
Except you're still here so you're still open.

Buchanan grabs a chair adjacent to Ivy's desk, drags it to Muriel's desk, and sits. Ryan stands.

RONALD
It's been two weeks. We ain't heard nothin' from them.

Ryan coughs.

RONALD (cont'd)
...haven't heard anything. Charlie here says I gotta work on ma dictation or sump'thin' like dat.

MURIEL
I just do the books.

CHARLES
But you do work here. Maybe you overheard something.

Muriel sits and slaps the ledger closed.

MURIEL
I don't pay attention. I...do... the...books.

She waves receipts at Buchanan. Ryan leans on her desk, his face in her face.

CHARLES

Muriel, you could look for us. Just give us a report.

Buchanan stands, swinging his leg over the back of the chair, his gun visible on his belt.

MURIEL

Gonna beat me up, Chuck?

CHARLES

That would be, how to put this... umseemly.

He looks at Buchanan who drags the chair back to Ivy's desk. He returns to Muriel's desk and sits on an edge, rummaging among the receipts. Angry, Muriel snatches them away.

MURIEL

Stop it and get out. I don't have anything for you.

Buchanan picks up a receipt.

RONALD

Drinks at The Cloverdale. That's fancy. Whachew lookin' for at The Cloverdale?

MURIEL

I told you, I don't know. It's not my job. You're never this way to Ivy.

Buchanan shudders.

RONALD

Ivy doesn't play hard to get.

MURIEL

I have work to do.

RONALD

So give us a report and you kin work.

Buchanan picks up Muriel's letter opener and cleans his fingernails. Muriel stomps into Howard's office. She returns to the doorway with a file folder and flips through it. Ryan gives Buchanan a wink.

MURIEL

They don't know anything. Says they can't find anything.

(MORE)

MURIEL (cont'd)
 She leaves her house, goes to work,
 goes home, doesn't go out.

Buchanan approaches Muriel.

RONALD
 Lemmee see.

Muriel snaps the folder closed in his face, turns and tosses it onto Howard's desk, then slams Howard's door shut.

MURIEL
 Anything in here is privileged. You
 can believe me or not. Get out.

Ryan and Buchanan look at each other. Buchanan shrugs and heads for the door. He stops at a wall calendar and taps the end of the month.

RONALD
 I believe you, dis time. We pay for
 service. Tell them gumshoes we got
 deadlines. They got one month.

Ryan nods and follows Buchanan out the door.

EXT. STREET UNDER AN ELEVATED TRAIN STATION - MORNING

In a light drizzle, Muriel and DEAN HALVORSON, late 30's, excitable gay retail clerk, carry cups of coffee as they approach the elevated train station. Dean wears a tailored suit with pocket square while Muriel wears an outfit as gray as the weather.

The street under the station is closed and filled with police, police cars, and a paddy wagon. Police lights reflect off the pavement.

People gawk as police enter and exit a small tailor shop adjacent to the El stop. Bags of items are carried out of the shop and put into trunks of police cars.

Police lead the owner of the tailor shop, ABRAHAM METZ, a small man, late 60's, out of the shop and put him into the paddy wagon.

Dean freezes to stare at the activity. He knows Metz. Annoyed, Muriel grabs his arm and drags him into the EL.

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Dean and Muriel weave their way through the THRONG on the platform to a somewhat empty corner near two WOMEN. PEOPLE rubberneck the events below as police continue to enter and exit the shop.

WOMAN 1

Well, I could tell. I don't know how you were fooled.

WOMAN 2

Oh come on. He had everyone fooled. I bet he's not even Jewish.

Dean taps woman 1 on the shoulder.

DEAN

Excuse me, we got here late. What happened?

WOMAN 1

Cops arrested the owner of the tailoring shop for being a Communist.

Dean is horrified.

WOMAN 2

I, too, am shocked. He didn't look like a Communist.

WOMAN 1

I don't know how you couldn't see it. Beady eyes. He never looked you in the face when he talked to you. He always looked like he was hiding something.

DEAN

How did they know?

Woman 1 leans in, drops her voice, and stage whispers.

WOMAN 1

I heard someone say they heard someone else say a client of his turned him in.

DEAN

Someone heard someone say something. That's it?

WOMAN 1

Well, it was obvious. I never went into the shop. He was creepy.

DEAN

Since when is creepy a marker for being a Communist?

The elevated train pulls up. Muriel grabs Dean's arm and prevents him from boarding.

DEAN (cont'd)

That's our train.

MURIEL

There'll be another.

The platform clears of eighty percent of commuters. Woman 1 gets on the train after a quick look back at Dean. The train leaves.

DEAN

I don't get...

MURIEL

Shut up.

DEAN

Muriel, they arrested Abraham Metz. He wasn't the world's best tailor but he's not a Communist.

MURIEL

You, of all people, shouldn't be pressing this issue with people you don't know. If you object to what two women say who wouldn't know a Communist if he bit them, you'll find the feds at your door. You know how it is.

DEAN

You are exaggerating.

MURIEL

Did you use Metz's services in the last ten years?

Dean's face falls.

DEAN

You don't think...

MURIEL

Of course I think. I think because you, obviously, can't. We have to keep our heads down and not draw attention to ourselves. How many times do I have to tell you this?

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY - MORNING

Muriel arrives first at the office. She flips on the overhead lights, tosses her coat on the coat stand and heads to the kitchen to make coffee.

Door opens and Ivy enters. She wears poorly made knock-offs of current Hollywood fashion. The effect isn't quite all-together. She steps to her desk, drops her purse, pulls out a compact, and appraises her looks in the mirror. She pulls out blood red lipstick and touches up her lips.

Muriel exits the kitchen with a mug of coffee.

IVY

Where's mine?

MURIEL

Kitchen. It's fresh.

Muriel slides to the wall to avoid Ivy, and heads to her desk. She resumes entering expenses into the ledger.

Door opens and Howard steps into the office, looking behind him. Ivy exits the kitchen with a mug of coffee. When she sees Howard, she pours a mug for him and intercepts him as he moves toward his office.

Ivy hands Howard the coffee. He looks at it and then at her.

HOWARD

You make this?

IVY

Of course. I know how much you like your morning coffee.

Howard turns toward Muriel.

HOWARD

Make a fresh pot, would ya?

MURIEL

Can I..can I talk to you a moment,
Howard?

Howard looks at the coffee.

HOWARD

I need my coffee first.

Howard enters his office, tossing his hat onto a chair and raises the window shades. Muriel dashes into the kitchen and rattles a pan. She comes out with a fresh mug of coffee. Ivy glares at her.

INT. HOWARD MILLER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Muriel enters Howard's office as he sits. He looks at the folder Muriel tossed onto his desk, remembering that's not where he left it last night. Some of the contents are strewn across his desktop.

Muriel sets the coffee in front of him. Howard takes the mug, leans back in his chair and takes a long drink.

HOWARD

I can always tell your coffee.

Muriel coughs.

HOWARD (cont'd)

Oh right. What did you want to talk
to me about?

Outer office door opens and closes. Muriel turns to see Georgina. Georgina has more fashion sense than Ivy; tries to look like a Paris model, but fails. Ivy huddles with her in the middle of the room. Muriel turns back to Howard.

MURIEL

Ryan and Buchanan showed up after you
all left.

She points at the folder.

MURIEL (cont'd)

They wanted to know what you'd found.

Howard collects the folder contents, placing things slowly inside. Outer door opens and closes.

GEORGINA (O.C.)

Archie, are you feeling better?

Archie grunts and strides into Howard's office. Georgina trails him like a puppy. Muriel moves away from the office door. Archie plops into one of the chairs.

HOWARD

Get any sleep?

Archie rubs his temples.

ARCHIE

Enough. Billing error?

HOWARD

Seems Ryan and Buchanan were here last night after we left. Muriel was just about to explain.

ARCHIE

Tell them anything?

Muriel points at the folder.

MURIEL

There's nothing new in there from the last time they were here.

ARCHIE

Yeah, it's pretty much a dead end. She doesn't go anywhere or talk to anyone.

MURIEL

They said they aren't going to pay their bill if we don't find something.

ARCHIE

She won't give me the time of day, even when I bought her coffee.

Georgina steps into the office from the doorway where she'd been listening. Ivy stands in Georgina's vacated spot.

GEORGINA

I cannot imagine a woman not succumbing to your charms.

Howard rolls his eyes and mutters.

HOWARD

God.

Muriel stifles a giggle.

HOWARD (cont'd)
Maybe we have to call it?

Archie rises and picks up the folder.

ARCHIE
No, there's something here. I just
don't know how to get to it.

MURIEL
If I could suggest something?

Howard and Archie give her surprised looks.

MURIEL (cont'd)
If I thought I you were tailing me, I
wouldn't give you the time of day.
Stop treating her like a conquest and
treat her like a friend. You catch
more flies with honey than with
vinegar.

Archie hands the folder to Georgina.

ARCHIE
A job for you.

Georgina flips through it, then hands it to Ivy.

GEORGINA
Ewww...no. She has no fashion sense.

Ivy looks through the folder and hands it to Muriel.

IVY
I have work to do. You suggested it.
You do it.

MURIEL
I just do the books. You didn't hire
me to do detective work.

HOWARD
You said everyone can use a friend.
She's now yours.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRY - EVENING

Muriel enters the small lobby of the 6-flat apartment
building where she lives. She carries a manila envelope.

She gets her mail from the box and sees several copies of the latest issue of *The Daily Worker*, a Communist newspaper, lying on the floor under the mailboxes. She looks around then picks up all of them.

Dean sticks his head out the door of his first floor apartment and spies Muriel in the lobby picking up the newspapers. He exits his apartment and opens the inner building door for Muriel, startling her.

DEAN
You're home, finally.

Muriel brushes past him and climbs the stairs to the second floor, fishing in her purse for her key, while juggling the envelope and the newspapers. Dean follows her up the stairs. She pauses at her second floor door.

DEAN (cont'd)
I don't ask for much, but a 'Hi Dean.
How was your day?' is too much?

When she finds the key, she opens her apartment door and enters the apartment, flipping on the light.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Muriel lives in a spartanly furnished one-bedroom apartment. She drops the envelope on the kitchen table and takes the newspapers to her garbage can, dropping them into the can.

She removes her hat and coat and hangs them on a hook by the door. Dean stands in the doorway.

MURIEL
You can come in.

DEAN
Well, I wasn't sure.

MURIEL
Hi Dean. How was your day?

Muriel goes into the kitchen and comes back with a couple of sodas. She sets them on the table.

DEAN
Is everything okay?

MURIEL
I got assigned a job today.

Dean sits down. Muriel puts on a record of vocal jazz.

DEAN

Really? You're now a PI? Do tell.

Muriel sits down, opens the envelope and slides out all the contents.

MURIEL

Her name is Lara Baker. She works for Edward Flores Transportation and Storage. She's the secretary to Joseph Shevner, vice-president. He has reason to believe she's a Communist and we've been paid to get the dirt on her.

DEAN

Miller and Johnson accumulate dirt very well.

MURIEL

Flores handles troop supply from the east coast to ports on the west coast. They think someone is spying on them. Can't have Communists learning what we're shipping to Korea.

DEAN

What are you supposed to do?

MURIEL

Figure out if she's a Communist. Archie looks at every woman as a conquest. Howard would rather think about stuff than do it.

Dean slides the papers around.

DEAN

Well, her daily routine is well-documented. What's she look like?

MURIEL

I didn't have time to look through all the stuff. Her photo's probably in there somewhere.

Dean slides a photo out of a smaller envelope. It's a head shot, almost studio quality. Lara Baker is gorgeous, late-30's, with a side-parted pageboy haircut. She could be a runway model. He hands Muriel the photo. Muriel is stunned.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Look at her eyes; Angel Eyes; and I
get to be her new best friend.

INT. RUBY'S BAKERY - MORNING

Dean holds the door for Muriel as they enter the bakery. There are FIVE people, three WOMEN and two MEN, in front of them in line.

Dean leans in to Muriel.

DEAN
I don't see her.

Muriel motions him to be quiet. The MAN in front of them turns around to stare before turning back. Muriel removes her gloves, opens her purse and pulls out a coin purse. She removes a five dollar bill.

The line moves forward. Behind them, the bell on the door tinkles as PEOPLE leave and enter the shop. Dean and Muriel reach the counter. A sunny 50 year-old WOMAN in a flour-tinged full apron stands behind the counter.

CLERK
What'll ya have?

DEAN
We'll each have a cherry danish and a
cup of joe to go.

The woman nods and goes to fill the order.

MURIEL
I could have ordered for myself.

DEAN
Could have. Didn't.

Behind them the bell sounds as the SOMEONE enters. The clerk returns with the order. Muriel lays the money on the counter before the clerk can tell her the amount. She nods and gives Muriel change. Dean fishes in his pants pocket and drops a quarter in the tip jar on the counter.

Dean grabs the coffee while Muriel grabs the bag with the danishes. They turn and slide past PEOPLE in line behind them.

As they get to the door, LARA BAKER, 37, grabs the doorknob to enter the bakery. Dean sees her and inhales sharply. Lara steps inside as Dean and Muriel exit. Muriel watches her.

Lara is dressed in a tailored coat and matching hat. She removes sunglasses as she enters the bakery, nodding a thank you at Dean. Dean gets behind Muriel and forcibly moves her toward the EL stop.

DEAN (cont'd)
It is not polite to stare.

MURIEL
She's luminous.

DEAN
Do you even know what that means?

MURIEL
You use it to describe Barbara Stanwyck.

DEAN
Okay, I concede that point. Keep walking and stop staring.

MURIEL
I'm going to be her best friend.

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN CAR - MORNING

Muriel sits in the middle of the car facing forward. She wears a plain dress. She holds a cup of coffee.

Lara sits facing the center of the car. She wears the tailored coat over a finely-tailored dress with matching heels.

P.A. SYSTEM
Next stop Merchandise Mart.

The train pulls into the station. Over half of the PEOPLE in the car, including Lara, stand to get off at this station. Muriel loses Lara in the mass of commuters.

EXT. STREET BELOW THE MERCHANDISE MART ELEVATED STATION - MORNING

Dean holds an umbrella over his and Muriel's head as they sip coffee and watch the commuters exiting the station.

DEAN

You sure she'll be on this train?

MURIEL

She's a creature of habit. I've followed her here every morning but she loses herself in the people who get off. There!

Muriel nods toward the stairs as Lara descends to the street. She is dressed in a dark gray raincoat over a red dress. Her black shoes are covered in rain boots. She holds an umbrella.

DEAN

Where does she buy her clothes?

MURIEL

You tell me not to stare.

Lara pauses, opens her umbrella, and walks up the street. Dean and Muriel follow at a discrete distance. Lara walks to frosted glass doors. She shakes the water off her umbrella, glances back in Muriel's direction, and enters the building.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Well, we might have blown that.

INT. RUBY'S BAKERY - MORNING

Lara and Muriel are at the counter. Lara wears her tailored navy coat. Muriel wears her worn grey coat but today, she has a flowered crystal brooch on the lapel.

Lara turns from the counter with her pastry bag and coffee. She pauses for a minute to notice Muriel then leaves. She is out the door when Muriel's clerk looks in Muriel's bag.

CLERK

Oh no. You have the order of that other woman! She has yours.

Muriel whirls around and sees Lara nearly to the stairs to the train. She grabs the bag.

MURIEL

I got this. I'll catch her. We go the same way.

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Muriel reaches the top of the platform. PEOPLE wait for the train. She scans the crowd and sees Lara at the end of the platform sipping her coffee. Muriel pushes through the crowd toward Lara.

MURIEL

Excuse me. I'm so sorry to bother you.

Muriel holds up the pastry bag.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Ruby's gave you mine instead. I...I know we ride the train at the same time, so I...I grabbed yours to trade.

Lara opens her bag, then slowly lowers her sunglasses.

LARA

You are correct. This is not my order.

Muriel hands her the bag.

LARA (cont'd)

Thank you. This most definitely is mine.

Muriel nods.

LARA (cont'd)

You are not with your...husband... today?

MURIEL

My what? Oh! Him! Oh no! That's just Dean. He's my best friend. He lives in the apartment below me.

LARA

I see.

Lara points to the brooch on Muriel's coat.

LARA (cont'd)

That's a Henry Allard, is it not?

MURIEL

A who?

LARA

Henry Allard. A small jewelry firm in Lyons...France. They made jewelry until the early 1930's when the depression caused them to close.

MURIEL

I...I don't know. It was my great-grandmother's. My great-grandfather got it for her after the war. Today would be her birthday and I always wear it on this date.

LARA

May I?

Muriel takes off the pin and hands it to Lara. She examines it and hands it back.

LARA (cont'd)

It's not an Allard but my goodness what a perfect copy.

The train arrives. Lara nods toward the open door.

LARA (cont'd)

I'd love to hear the history of this. Perhaps you would like to chat more on the way to your destination.

She enters the car. Muriel stares after her then hastily jumps into the car, sitting next to Lara as the doors close.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY - MORNING

The office is busy with work. Muriel saunters in. Work comes to a halt. Howard exits his office.

HOWARD

You are late.

MURIEL

I know.

She strolls to her desk and picks up the folder for Lara. Archie stands in his office door.

HOWARD

That's the third time in ten days.

She whirls around and opens the folder. She recites information as she steps toward Howard.

MURIEL

Lara Baker, 37. Originally from Kansas City. Has a degree from Westwood Secretarial College. Came to Chicago solely to get a job. Landed at Flores 10 years ago. Worked her way up from mail clerk to her current position of secretary to the vice-president of shipping, Mr. Joseph Shevner. Something about him, she doesn't like.

HOWARD

How...?

Muriel slaps him with the folder, turns, and saunters to her desk.

MURIEL

Honey, Howard.

Howard flips through the folder and follows Muriel to her desk.

HOWARD

I'm impressed.

MURIEL

I'm doing what you told me to do. We're best friends.

She assesses if Ivy or Georgina are paying attention. She leans toward Howard.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Did you get money from Flynn or Bertelli or Johnson?

Howard stiffens. Muriel picks up bills.

MURIEL (cont'd)

I can't keep moving money to cover the bills. We did the work. They need to pay for services.

Howard abstractly nods.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Who you gonna let go?

Overly high-pitched giggle. They look at Ivy and Georgina gossiping.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Have one of them cook your books,
Howard.

She snatches up her coffee cup and heads to the kitchen.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Muriel tosses her coat and hat onto the hooks by the door. She puts a small grocery bag and copies of The Daily Worker onto the table, and flips on a light.

Footsteps on the stairs and Dean enters her apartment. Slung over his arm are two dresses.

DEAN
I need your opinion.

He holds up a lavender-colored dress. Then he switches to a light blue-colored dress.

MURIEL
I don't know this stuff. You're the
one who works retail.

DEAN
For a men's store.

MURIEL
Did Hazel pick these out?

Dean nods.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Then Hazel should have given you an
idea of which one. Is it for
Saturday?

Muriel scoops up the newspapers and the bag of groceries. Dean follows her into the kitchen.

INT. MURIEL'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Muriel drops the newspapers into her trash which has several different issues of The Daily Worker in it. She pulls a pot of soup out of the fridge.

DEAN

Marcel's is having a contest; first one in six weeks. I want to win it. Lauren's going to be there. I need to upstage him.

MURIEL

Lauren? Who's Lauren?

DEAN

I don't know his name.

MURIEL

Oh wait. He's the guy who dresses like Lauren Bacall.

Dean leans on the counter, playing with Muriel's groceries. Muriel snatches them away.

DEAN

I'm so close to winning. He's going to come in in some suit with the waspish waist and I want to flounce.

MURIEL

You said he's gorgeous. It seems like an uphill battle. Well be careful. They raided Cozee's last week. Archie said two dozen were booked. You could wind up flouncing from Precinct 15.

DEAN

I know. I know. I'll take money for the payphone to call you.

MURIEL

So I can pretend to be your sister. I gotta be careful, too, you know.

She stirs her soup. Dean picks a Daily Worker from Muriel's trash can and flips through it.

DEAN

I don't agree with most of what they say, but they talk about people being who they are. What would it be like, Muriel, if we could just be?

Muriel looks up from the soup.

MURIEL

Lavender.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - MORNING

Lara sits in the lobby of Muriel's office building, a shabby Art Deco knock-off. She stands as Muriel enters; carrying a cup of coffee, and dodging commuters.

LARA
There you are.

MURIEL
I...um...hello. This...is a surprise.

LARA
This isn't the water department.

MURIEL
How...?

LARA
I followed you. I'm curious about you. Is that a crime?

HARRY JORGENSEN, 65, pushes through the revolving door. He sees Muriel and Lara and doffs his hat at them.

HARRY
Muriel, good morning, and morning to you ma'am.

MURIEL
Good morning, Harry. I'll be up shortly. If you would pass that along?

Harry looks quizzically at Muriel, but nods and gets into the elevator.

MURIEL (cont'd)
I lied. I'm sorry. I...I'm not at the water department. I work in an office here. I'm a simple bookkeeper.

LARA
Nothing to be ashamed of. I'm a simple secretary.

Muriel steps back and looks at Lara.

MURIEL
You're gorgeous. I'm just Muriel.

Archie pushes through the revolving door and spots Muriel. He goes to the news stand and buys a newspaper from MAC, 60's, the proprietor. He opens it, pretending to read.

ARCHIE

Who you got in the 5th race at Hawthorne, Mac?

MAC

I haven't looked at who's running.

ARCHIE

Doesn't sound like you. You know everyone there.

MAC

I...I gave up the track for the Missus. She don't like my playin' the horses.

LARA

You're not "just Muriel." You're my friend. In these TRYING times, we all need friends. I came to ask if you'd dine with me tonight.

She removes a notebook and an exquisite fountain pen from her purse. She scribbles on a page, rips it out and hands it to Muriel.

LARA (cont'd)

5:45 p.m. My treat. Come to my office from work. We can have dinner at this marvelous place I know. My direct line. Call me before you leave here.

Lara breezes out of the entry. Archie saunters over.

ARCHIE

Best buddies, eh?

He chuckles as he heads toward the elevator. Muriel stares after Lara.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY - DAY

Muriel slowly pushes open the office door and peeks inside. Georgina sips coffee while staring intently at Howard's closed office door.

Muriel slides in and slithers around the office walls to her desk, keeping Georgina in full view. At her desk, she doffs her coat and hat, and drops her purse in a lower desk drawer.

She opens Lara's folded note.

MURIEL POV

Elegant handwriting

Betcher Building - 5th floor

MO4-6624 - my line

END MURIEL POV

Muriel gulps and sits down, stowing the note in her purse.

Ivy and Howard's voices emanate from Howard's office. Archie's office door is partially closed.

HOWARD (O.C.)

But you weren't supposed to fuck him.

IVY (O.C.)

You didn't tell me that!

The conversation becomes unintelligible.

Muriel takes a deep breath, gets up with her coffee cup, shoves aside the coffee purchased earlier, and ambles toward the kitchen, keeping an ear open for eavesdropping. Archie snickers when she passes his view.

IVY (O.C.) (cont'd)

I didn't compromise anything!

Muriel takes a drag on coffee of dubious drinkability and heads back to her desk. Georgina follows Muriel and hands her a small stack of envelopes.

GEORGINA

I hope he don't fire her. Ivy and I get along. Bills.

MURIEL

If what she did compromised the investigation, we won't get paid. You won't be able to afford your Dutch Boy face paint.

Howard's door opens and Ivy storms out. She grabs her coat, purse, and hat and exits the office, slamming the door. Archie comes out of his office.

ARCHIE

Bad?

HOWARD

Nah. Nothing we can't handle. I'll have to call Schwartz and let him know she slept with the informant.

He points at Georgina and Muriel.

HOWARD (cont'd)

If we send you out to spy on someone, don't sleep with them.

Archie winks at Muriel.

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN CAR - MORNING

Muriel sits alone at the back of the car. She occasionally sighs and looks at the damaged brooch cradled in her hands. Muriel's obvious melancholy has people avoiding sitting around her.

Lara gets onto the train. She sits in the first vacant spot she finds, then sees Muriel at the back. She moves to a spot in front of Muriel.

LARA

Is this seat taken?

Startled, Muriel looks at Lara, then back to the city passing by.

MURIEL

Um...no.

Lara sits next to Muriel. Muriel adjusts herself to be closer to the car wall than Lara. Her hand tightens around the brooch.

LARA

Something I said?

Lara appraises Muriel's body language and then slides her gloved hand over Muriel's hand and opens it. She sees the damaged brooch.

LARA (cont'd)
Oh no. What happened?

Muriel watches the city.

MURIEL
Dean borrowed it. He said one of the
guys snatched at it at the cl...

Muriel covers her mouth and looks frantically at the other
passengers. No one is paying her any attention, except Lara.

MURIEL (cont'd)
I've said too much.

Lara entwines her fingers with Muriel's, the brooch between
the palms of their hands. She looks straight ahead.

LARA
Dean; the fellow you're sometimes
with? Does he dress often?

Startled, Muriel nods. Lara moves closer.

LARA (cont'd)
Marcel's?

Muriel snaps her head around.

MURIEL
How?

LARA
I keep tabs on certain aspects of
city life.

She takes the brooch from Muriel. She apprises the damage.

LARA (cont'd)
I know someone who can fix this.

MURIEL
You do?

LARA
If you trust me, I shall call him
today. Give me two days and it shall
be right.

Lara drops the brooch in Muriel's hand. She stares straight
ahead. Muriel looks at the brooch, then at Lara. She lays
the brooch on Lara's lap. Lara smiles and takes her hand.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY -
DAY

Muriel enters the office. Howard's door is closed. Archie's is wide open.

Georgina files her nails. She gives Muriel a smug look. Occasionally, shadows cross the frosted glass of Howard's door.

Muriel goes to her desk and sits before removing her coat.

Howard's door opens. Buchanan and Ryan exit. Ryan has sloppy bandages around the palm of his left hand.

RONALD

Muriel? Learn anything about our
Commie?

MURIEL

Uh...she likes cherry danishes and
extra strong coffee and wears La Nuit
de Paris cologne.

CHARLES

Archie could have told us that.

Ryan and Buchanan laugh as they approach the exit door.
Howard exits his office.

HOWARD

Knock it off, Ryan.

RONALD

Look, gumshoe, we're payin' fer
information, not her breakfast and
what she smells like.

Archie exits Howard's office and moves towards his.

ARCHIE

You'll get our report as agreed.

Ryan and Buchanan stare at Muriel who looks at the floor,
before they exit.

GEORGINA

Seriously, is that all you got?

MURIEL

No, but I'm not telling them.
Information isn't free.

ARCHIE
Cash in that dinner invite yet?

Howard stares at Muriel.

HOWARD
What dinner?

Muriel glares at Archie.

MURIEL
I have an opportunity to gather more
information...

She points at Ivy's empty chair.

MURIEL (cont'd)
...without sleeping with the
informant.

Georgina shudders.

GEORGINA
Ewww. That's disgusting. Those kinds
of people should be shot.

Archie and Howard exchange looks as Muriel's shoulders sag.

INT. LOBBY OF BETCHER BUILDING - EVENING

Muriel timidly enters the building. It is late Art Deco with
some Works Progress art on one wall. A well-dressed
attendant approaches her.

ATTENDANT
Ma'am, are you here to see someone?
Most firms are closed for the day.

MURIEL
Ah...ah...Lara Baker in suite...

ATTENDANT
You must be Miss Hardy. Miss Baker
informed me you were coming. Right
this way.

The attendant leads an intimidated Muriel to a set of iron
gates in front of an elegant elevator with a "Staff Only"
sign on it. The attendant knocks.

The doors open and a well-dressed WOMAN, 50's, holds the
doors open while she beckons Muriel inside.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

Mrs. Johnson, please take Miss Hardy to the fifth floor.

Muriel, more than a little cowed by this, is rooted in place. The attendant leans into her.

ATTENDANT (cont'd)

Miss Hardy, Miss Baker is expecting you. Right this way.

MURIEL

Oh...yes...sorry.

Mrs. Johnson rolls her eyes as Muriel shuffles into the elevator.

INT. FLORES TRANSPORTATION - CONTINUOUS

Muriel pushes open the frosted glass doors to Flores Transportation. The reception area is dark with the receptionist gone for the day.

Muriel stands uncomfortably in the waiting area. She sees a light coming from an office at the end of a short hallway. A phone rings. Lara's voice; too far away to hear clearly; answers the phone. Muriel inches slowly toward the light.

MURIEL

He...he...hello?

Movement. Lara's head pops out of the lighted doorway.

LARA

Muriel! You're here! Oh good. Come here.

INT. LARA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lara's office is luxury. On the wall are framed photos. Muriel views three photos showing Lara and MEN standing by an airplane; a brand new diesel locomotive; and a military supply ship.

Lara's desk is messy with secretarial materials. There is another frosted glass door with "Mr. J. Shevner, Vice President" painted on it in gold outlined letters.

Lara gestures toward a leather chair and returns behind her desk to paw through the paperwork.

LARA

I'm sorry. We'll be delayed. We had items stolen off another shipment. I'm unable to trace where the shipment went when it left the warehouse.

MURIEL

We could postpone.

LARA

Oh dear, no! Please. I would like your company, if you wouldn't mind waiting. You've come this far.

She takes a stack of papers and drops it in a pile on the floor.

LARA (cont'd)

Searched.

She stops and stares at Muriel as Muriel seats herself.

LARA (cont'd)

Where are my manners? Coffee?

Muriel shakes her head and settles into the luxury of the chair. She pulls a well-read dime mystery novel from her bag and commences reading, keeping an eye on Lara.

The frosted glass door is ripped open. JOSEPH SHEVNER, 60's, blasts into the room. He radiates self-important bloviation. His dark suit doesn't quite fit him.

He tosses a sheaf of papers onto Lara's desk. They skid across the top and create more mess.

SHEVNER

It's here somewhere! I don't know how you could miss it.

LARA

The warehouse lists everything accounted for. We don't require an inventory once its in the boxcar; merely when it's put into storage.

SHEVNER

Damn Communists are stealing our stuff!

He swipes at a stack of papers on Lara's desk and sends them flying. Lara anxiously watches the sorted papers unsort.

SHEVNER (cont'd)
 Someone knows exactly what we ship
 and when we ship it.

Muriel checks her purse and smashes a couple copies of The Daily Worker into the bottom.

SHEVNER (cont'd)
 McCarthy is right. There are spies...
 Who the hell are you? This company is
 closed! How long have you been here?

Lara comes around her desk.

LARA
 Mr. Shevner, this is my dear friend,
 Muriel Hardy. We were going to dinner
 tonight before this took an
 unfortunate turn. Muriel, my boss,
 Mr. Joseph Shevner, Vice-president of
 Transportation Services for Flores
 Transportation International
 Incorporated.

Muriel puts away her book, stands, and smooths her skirt.

MURIEL
 Mr. Shevner.

SHEVNER
 How much did you hear?

MURIEL
 I...I...well, I work in the jeweler's
 district, sir. Discretion is their
 business and it is mine. I'm no
 threat, if that's what you're worried
 about.

Shevner glares at Muriel, turns, and retreats into his office, slamming his door.

MURIEL (cont'd)
 I don't think he believes me.

Lara gathers the wayward papers.

LARA
 He's just distressed about the stolen
 goods.

MURIEL
 Important stuff?

LARA
I don't think so but...

Shevner throws open his door and stalks out, carrying his hat.

SHEVNER
You got the weekend to figure this out.

He glares at Muriel who shrinks in his gaze, and leaves, slamming Lara's office door. Lara sinks to a corner of her desk.

She takes a deep breath and opens her office door, gazing down the hallway. She carefully closes the door turning back to Muriel.

LARA
The weekend. The weekend. Tracing takes a week.

Muriel picks up the last of the papers on the floor.

MURIEL
It's like bookkeeping, Lara. You match totals.

Muriel rifles through the papers in her hand. She gestures at them and the stacks on Lara's desk.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Bag these up. I can look at them and match things up. I can hand everything off to you Monday morning on the train.

Muriel heads to Lara's desk and starts piling the papers. Lara takes her hand.

LARA
You'd do this? For me?

Muriel catches her gaze, gulps, pulls her hand free.

MURIEL
Sure. I'm your...friend.

LARA
This is confidential information. If the Communists found out...

Muriel looks Lara dead in the eye.

MURIEL
Lara, do I look like I hang around
Communists?

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Lara and Muriel chortle over the remains of dinner in a nearly empty restaurant. The WAITER passes by the table and refills their glasses with what's left of the wine and removes the bottle.

MURIEL
And the dog jumped the fence...jumped
the fence. No one knew he could do
that.

Lara wipes away a tear.

MURIEL (cont'd)
The guy takes off running, stuff
flying everywhere, knocked the
postman down.

LARA
I can't breathe.

MURIEL
If I hadn't seen it, I never would
have believed it. Barney never barked
at any of us. But he hated that guy,
on sight.

LARA
You have such an interesting life.

MURIEL
Nah. I guess I have crazy stories but
I'm just Muriel.

Lara looks around the restaurant before reaching across the table to take Muriel's hand.

LARA
You're more than 'just Muriel'.

Muriel lets Lara caress her hand for a few seconds before self-consciously withdrawing it. She grabs her wine glass, and downs the contents.

MURIEL
You said you don't talk to your
familiy.

LARA

I do not. They are Communists. My father is an organizer in Kansas City.

MURIEL

How did you get your job? That kind of association...

LARA

Shevner doesn't know, at least, I don't think he does. I've been with Flores a long time, before he came.

MURIEL

You couldn't find a job in Kansas City?

LARA

I chased someone here...a person...I was close to. She made some...unfortunate decisions. I thought I could help.

MURIEL

But you couldn't.

Lara focuses on something over Muriel's shoulder. The women sit in uncomfortable silence.

MURIEL (cont'd)

I won't tell.

LARA

I know you won't.

MURIEL

How do you know? I could have an ulterior motive for agreeing to dinner.

Lara fumbles in her purse and pulls out a small box. She pushes it across the table to Muriel. Muriel eyes her, takes it, and opens it. It's her brooch; repaired and cleaned.

LARA

I don't think you would have entrusted me with something so personal to you if you had designs on me.

Muriel gets emotional.

LARA (cont'd)

The missing goods are personal to me. I've worked damn hard to get where I am and accusations of being a Communist and stealing would sink everything; everything, I've worked for.

Muriel removes the brooch from the box. It sparkles in the dim light of the restaurant.

LARA (cont'd)

They fixed the back; tightened the clips on all the gems, and replaced the missing diamond.

MURIEL

This must have been what it looked like when Grandpa Tom handed the box to her.

Muriel replaces the brooch in the box and closes the lid. She looks up at Lara.

MURIEL (cont'd)

How much to repair?

Lara waves her off.

LARA

Save my job. We'll consider it even.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRY - NIGHT

Muriel opens the door from the entry into the building. She grabs the few copies of The Daily Worker by the door and stuffs them into the bag carrying Lara's papers.

Dean's head pops out of his apartment.

DEAN

There you are! You're late!

He saunters into the vestibule.

DEAN (cont'd)

Where have you been?

Muriel doesn't answer as she climbs the stairs to her floor. Dean grabs her arm.

DEAN (cont'd)
Blowing me off? Look, if it's about
the brooch...

Muriel shakes her arm loose.

MURIEL
You're not my father. I don't have to
check in with you.

She pounds up the rest of the stairs, opens her door, enters
her apartment, and slams the door shut.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dean slowly opens Muriel's door and peeks around it. Muriel
stands at her dining room table, sorting Lara's papers into
piles. The brooch box sits at the end of the table.

Dean slides in cautiously.

DEAN
Muriel? Are we still friends?

She looks up.

MURIEL
Yes. That's a dumb question.

DEAN
You're angry.

She doesn't answer. He picks up the brooch box and opens it.

DEAN (cont'd)
Whoa.

Muriel snatches it away from him.

MURIEL
We're friends in spite of you
breaking this. I learned I can't
trust you with overly meaningful
items.

DEAN
It was Lauren. He snatched it off my
dress... or tried to. Tore the dress,
too, but I think I can have it
altered and give it to my sis...this
isn't about a brooch.

MURIEL

She fixed it. She fixed it for me.
She fixed it because she wanted to;
for me.

Muriel looks at Dean.

MURIEL (cont'd)

I'm going to help her.

Dean sits at the table.

DEAN

You're supposed to prove she's a
Communist. What changed?

MURIEL

Angel eyes.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY -
DAY

Muriel keeps her head down as she works at her desk. On her
nondescript dress, she wears the brooch.

Ivy and Georgina snicker among themselves, looking back at
Muriel occasionally, and not doing much work.

Archie's door opens. Buchanan and Ryan saunter out. Ryan's
hand is still bandaged.

ARCHIE

I'll get Muriel looking through the
paperwork right away.

The men look at Muriel. Ryan rubs his bandaged hand. She
shrinks into her chair.

CHARLES

Shouldn't be that hard to prove. Nice
pin.

Archie sees them to the door.

ARCHIE

We should have something over the
weekend.

He practically pushes Ryan and Buchanan out and heads to
Muriel's desk.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
They gave us three month's shipping reports. Goods are winding up on black market. You should be able to figure out who she's talking to. She signs everything.

Muriel looks up.

MURIEL
What if it's not her?

ARCHIE
That's not the answer the client is paying us to find.

He fishes a check out of his jacket pocket and slaps it onto her desk.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
Partial payment. Finish the job and we get the rest. You'll get a nice bonus, too.

Muriel stands and looks over the check. She leans forward.

MURIEL
You didn't answer the question.

She stands up straight and looks past Archie to Ivy and then Georgina. Her next comments are directed, loudly, at them.

MURIEL (cont'd)
I should like to discuss the reimbursement situation with Howard, while we're talking about it.

INT. HOWARD MILLER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Muriel, carrying the ledger, enters Howard's office without knocking, followed by Archie. Howard is on the phone.

HOWARD
Look Bud; just cuz he's homo doesn't mean he's a security risk regardless of what McCarthy says.

Archie closes the door.

HOWARD (cont'd)
I gotta go. The only thing he's
guilty of, right not, is being a poor
dresser.

He hangs up the phone, puts a finger to his lips, and points
at his door. Archie nods and flings open the door. Georgina
nearly falls into the room. Ivy is right behind her.

HOWARD (cont'd)
Business meeting. Both of you. Go
home.

Georgina rights herself. Archie points. Georgina reluctantly
grabs her personal items. Ivy doesn't have to be told twice.
She's gone.

GEORGINA
But it's only three. There's still
two hours...

Archie crosses his arms.

ARCHIE
You get paid. OUT!

Georgina leaves.

HOWARD
We usually knock around here before
entering a closed door. Courtesy, you
know.

Muriel drops the ledger, open to the page she was working
on, and the check from Archie, onto his desk. Howard picks
up the check. He whistles.

HOWARD (cont'd)
Half?

Archie nods. Muriel points to a line item in the ledger.

MURIEL
That'll keep the lights on and water
in the pipes. You guys have to quit
demanding petty cash.

Archie sits.

ARCHIE
Business.

MURIEL

Who you going to let go? My opinion is, Georgina. Ivy may sleep with the marks but she doesn't gossip. Georgina never met a piece of gossip she didn't embrace like long-lost royalty owing her favors.

HOWARD

Letting someone go is harsh.

MURIEL

You hired me to keep the lights on; to make you legit.

ARCHIE

You do good work, Muriel.

She gives him a withering look.

MURIEL

I can't move it around anymore and have it look legit.

She picks up the check.

MURIEL (cont'd)

It's not enough, Howard.

ARCHIE

We'll get the rest next week. You just gotta prove...

MURIEL

What if I can't? What if she's not a Communist?

ARCHIE

She is. You just have to find it.

MURIEL

Her father is and the FBI in Kansas City know all about him.

HOWARD

How?

Muriel sits.

MURIEL

I called in a couple favors. You might owe Dwight a whiskey, or twelve.

(MORE)

MURIEL (cont'd)
She's not tied to her father in
Kansas City and you still haven't
answered my question.

Archie leans back and studies Muriel.

ARCHIE
I'm thinking all the paperwork in the
world isn't gonna get you
understanding what you're looking at.
It's still numbers and you already
live for numbers.

HOWARD
What are you proposing?

ARCHIE
They say someone's stealing their
stuff. How do we know if it ever gets
on the train to begin with? She signs
off on everything. If she doctors the
sheet before it gets to the
warehouse, they can only verify what
they get.

He stands.

MURIEL
But what if it's not her?

ARCHIE
You got a good pair of walking shoes?

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Neatly organized piles cover Muriel's table. She makes notes
as she reads through a stack. Several coffee cups rest on
paper piles. She wears the brooch and rubs it occasionally.

KNOCK and Dean enters the apartment with two tailored
dresses.

DEAN
Which one?

Muriel looks up quickly.

MURIEL
Those don't flounce.

Dean drapes them over a chair.

DEAN

I've decided to pay homage to Barbara Stanwyck. Elegance and power personified. I wish I knew where to get a fox stole.

Muriel eyes him and goes back to work. Dean shifts back and forth.

DEAN (cont'd)

So...so...?

MURIEL

So what?

DEAN

This woman has warped your brain.

MURIEL

Don't talk like that about her.

DEAN

I need your opinion!

Muriel stops and puts down her pen.

MURIEL

I don't get why. You never listen to me. You're out flouncing around without a care in the world.

DEAN

I care.

MURIEL

One word. One fragment of a sentence, overheard at the wrong time, could get you put away.

DEAN

I'm not asking some tizzy on the El. I'm asking you.

MURIEL

Three people were let go from the water department; two for being Communist, and one for being homosexual.

DEAN

You hated that place. Why do you keep tabs on it?

MURIEL

Because it's the canary. If they start purging the water department, they'll cast a wider net. I don't want to be caught in that net.

DEAN

You are so paranoid. They aren't going out of their way to look for us.

She rises from her chair.

MURIEL

I keep my head down. I don't ruffle feathers. I'm good at my job. I want to pass through life quietly.

Muriel grabs a couple of the mugs, goes to the kitchen, and returns with fresh coffee. She hands a mug to Dean.

DEAN

You're doing a good job of passing.

MURIEL

And then I meet her and I am putting my whole life on the line to prove she's not what they say she is.

She gestures at the paper piles.

MURIEL (cont'd)

She's being framed but I don't know by who.

DEAN

That's...that's a statement.

MURIEL

I'm up to my eyeballs in numbers and, damn it, yes I'm sure. Then you flounce in here and want me to give you an opinion. Here's an opinion. The cops bust these shows looking for "perversion". Who cares if you look like Barbara Stanwyck or Ann Blythe. That won't protect you. You got a label now and it's poison. I don't want any of that poison.

Muriel gestures at two large steamer trunks in a corner of the room.

MURIEL (cont'd)

It's been years. I think I finally can live without wondering if I have to move again. Everything I own fits into those trunks. Everything.

DEAN

But you're going to risk it for her? Why?

MURIEL

Angel Eyes, Dean, her angel eyes.

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - MORNING

Muriel races up the platform carrying Lara's paperwork organized into two bags. "Lara" stands at the far end of the platform, away from people.

This is LUCY BAKER, 35, Lara's sister. Muriel does not know about Lucy. Her hair is a half-shade darker than Lara's. Her body type is a bit different from Lara's. The clothing, sunglasses, hat, and gloves are the same.

Muriel catches her eye, drops a bag, and gives her a small wave. Lucy looks quizzically at Muriel and moves away into a knot of people, avoiding eye contact, pulling her hat down, and turning her back to Muriel.

Muriel stops. The train pulls up. When the doors open, Lucy enters the car with the group of people. Doors close and the train pulls away. Muriel watches as it passes.

EXT. RAILROAD WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Muriel and Dean walk with SPECIAL AGENT BROWN, 50's, and WAREHOUSE MANAGER WHITMAN, 50's, across a section of rail yard toward a medium-size warehouse. Two MEN wait at the door of the warehouse. Muriel carries a shipping manifest.

Ryan and Buchanan watch the quartet from the dark corner of an adjacent building.

The quartet strides up a ramp. One of the men, TOMPKINS, 40's, pulls a key ring off his belt and opens the large door lock.

WHITMAN

Does he really think there's anything to be gained? It's all here when we put it into the boxcar.

Tompkins slides the door open. He snaps on the light. At this time, not much is stored in the building. Muriel opens the manifest and scans the boxes.

Dean roams the space looking at everything. He spies Ryan and Buchanan sneaking up to the ramp. He backs into an unlighted corner. Dean keeps an eye on the two men who angle to see inside the building, while not being seen.

MURIEL

So then, this stuff is loaded onto the boxcar?

WHITMAN

Yes ma'am. We have to rely on what's delivered to be accurate. What you have listed on the paper is what we get. We check what's on the paper is in the delivery.

MURIEL

How often is it wrong?

She approaches some boxes.

WHITMAN

One-percent, if that. Flores doesn't deal with companies who don't deliver what's ordered.

MURIEL

This is pretty boring stuff.

TOMPKINS

Got that right. Boots. Bandages. Socks. I think we got handkerchiefs this time.

He pats the boxes.

TOMPKINS (cont'd)

All being sent to our guys in Korea to fight them goddamn Commies.

Muriel cringes. Whitman nudges Tompkins.

TOMPKINS (cont'd)

Begging your pardon, ma'am, for my language.

Dean recognizes Ryan.

Door opposite the entry slides open. Three MEN jump into the warehouse from a boxcar. They slap down wood for a ramp and roll a small cart into the building.

TOMPKINS (cont'd)

If you're done ma'am, we'd like to finish loading so this goes out on schedule.

MURIEL

Goes in there? May I?

Muriel enters the boxcar. Buchanan looks behind him, spots something, and motions to Ryan they need to leave. The men melt into the shadows.

Dean comes out of his sheltered spot and slides up to the door to see where Ryan and Buchanan went.

Muriel exits the car.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Thank you. Whatever's happening is happening either way before you get stuff or after this is loaded and you hand it off to the railroad.

Tompkins and Whitman shift uneasily. Muriel doesn't notice. She turns to exit and sees Dean at the side of the door, scanning the yard.

MURIEL (cont'd)

What's so interesting?

DEAN

Oh...ah...nothing. Just the activity of a rail yard. People have no idea how goods get from Detroit to Phoenix. How's security here?

BROWN

Best in any rail yard in Chicago.

DEAN

No wandering unauthorized people?

BROWN

No...why?

He goes to the door and peers into the yard.

BROWN (cont'd)

Did you see someone?

Dean looks in the direction Ryan and Buchanan left.

DEAN
I thought we might have been
followed, but now, I question myself.
Shadows. Who would want to follow us?

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN CAR - LATER

Muriel reads the manifest. Dean watches PEOPLE get on and off. Once they are reasonably alone, he leans over.

DEAN
What was Lauren doing there?

Muriel looks up.

MURIEL
Lauren?

DEAN
Lauren Bacall was there.

MURIEL
Your arch nemesis? From the club?

DEAN
One and the same.

MURIEL
I don't know who that is. Are you
sure?

DEAN
You think I'm going to mistake him?
That was Lauren Bacall as I live and
breathe, except he's playing cops and
robbers. I'm not sure which side he's
on. I was hoping you could tell me.

The train stops at a station.

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Dean grabs Muriel's elbow and pulls her to the side, to let people pass.

DEAN
He didn't see me. I saw him.

MURIEL

I'm so confused. There were the guys who opened the warehouse...

DEAN

These two followed behind. They were watching you.

MURIEL

Two? Now you're saying two men? Make up your mind. You'll be saying you saw Sam Spade out of the corner of your eye.

DEAN

I'm telling you, there were two men and one of them was the guy who does Lauren Bacall at the drag shows.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Muriel and Dean drink bourbon.

MURIEL

She's being framed. I'm sure of it.

DEAN

How is Lauren involved?

MURIEL

I'm going to have to listen to this forever, aren't I?

DEAN

Only until I figure it out.

MURIEL

So, the stuff she gave me...

DEAN

Did you ever get it to her?

Muriel adds more bourbon to her glass.

MURIEL

No. She was so desperate for me to figure things out and when I do, won't give me the time of day.

DEAN

Just drop it off.

MURIEL

I can't do that. I don't think Mr. Vice President would approve. I want to hand it off at the EL but the last few days, she sees me and moves away or she's not been there. I trudge it to work and trudge it home.

DEAN

Maybe she figured out who you really are.

MURIEL

Why would she suspect me of anything?

Dean adds more bourbon to his glass.

DEAN

She followed you. God, you are the densest person I know.

Muriel gets up, goes to her apartment door, and opens it.

MURIEL

I don't need to be insulted.

Chastened, Dean sets down his glass.

DEAN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Muriel closes the door and sits at the table.

DEAN (cont'd)

We live such pointless lives sometimes. It's exciting to be in the skulls of skullduggery.

MURIEL

Dean, I don't want skulls. I don't want Sydney Greenstreet. I'm happy with numbers, and being a fly on the wall. How do I get this crap back to her when she won't talk to me?

Dean swirls the bourbon around in his glass before downing the contents.

DEAN

I have an idea. You've got sensible shoes, right?

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Muriel and Dean sneak along an alley. Dean is dressed in tailored black clothing with a matching fedora. Muriel's garb is all black, ill-fitting men's wear. The pants are particularly baggy and she has to stop to tighten the belt to keep them up.

Both carry a bag packed with Lara's papers.

MURIEL

What if we get caught? I will lose my job.

DEAN

You think the honorable Miller and Johnson never did this in their life? You don't get a P.I. office without sneaking down dark allies.

Dean reaches a rear door of the Betcher Building. Muriel follows. Dean removes a set of lock picking tools from the inside of his coat. A dirk falls out of the pocket.

DEAN (cont'd)

Sorry about the baggy. I had to take what clothes I could find. A sneak wears black, to blend in.

MURIEL

Brown would have been fine. I got that. Wait. How do you have lock picking tools?

Dean works on the lock of the door.

DEAN

I may have bent some rules in the Army.

MURIEL

And a knife? This isn't blending in at all. A knife means you think there's going to be trouble.

Dean shakes her.

DEAN

Will you calm down? It's a precaution. Sometimes the bums who populate allies have attitudes.

Muriel leans against the building and looks up and down the alley.

MURIEL

I don't like this. The shadows. The lack of noise.

The door pops open.

DEAN

There. I open the doors. You drop the stuff on her desk. We leave. I lock up. You turn in to Miller and Johnson what you know. You get your bonus. You never have to see her again. Easy.

MURIEL

It's not easy.

Dean grabs her arm and shoves her inside.

DEAN

Easy. Let's go.

POV CHARLES RYAN

Charles Ryan, secreted in the shadows, watches Dean shove Muriel into the building and close the door.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

POV CHARLES RYAN

Ryan, still secreted in the shadows, watches the building. The back door opens and Dean, dragging Muriel, exits the building. Dean locks the back door.

END POV

DEAN

See? Done. You've executed your obligation.

MURIEL

Illegally.

DEAN

We bent the rules. Miller and Johnson will be proud of you.

Muriel shudders. Dean drapes an arm over her shoulders.

DEAN (cont'd)
 Come on. Torches is still open. I'll
 buy you a drink, or four, to calm
 your nerves.

They stroll down the alley. Ryan steps out of the shadows to follow them.

EXT. TORCHES BAR - LATE NIGHT

Dean and Muriel leave the bar. Dean is tipsy. Muriel is morose.

MURIEL
 You didn't have to start an argument.

DEAN
 Oh yes I did. Richard is positively
 primitive in his philosophy. Chanel
 will always be head and shoulders
 over any design house. These upstart
 ones are simply that, upstarts.

MURIEL
 He nearly hit you.

DEAN
 Nearly is the operative word. He's a
 dolt. He's a transplant from Miami
 and thinks...

Ryan's voice growls from the dark of the alley next to the bar.

CHARLES
 Hello Muriel.

She freezes. Dean moves in front of her and shoves his hand into his coat pocket, wrapping his fingers around the dirk.

DEAN
 And this would be...?

CHARLES
 A friend.

DEAN
 Doubtful. Friends don't growl from
 the shadows at 2 in the morning.

Ryan steps from the shadows into the light of a streetlight. Muriel gasps.

MURIEL
Why are you here?

CHARLES
I should ask you the same thing, but maybe I'll be more direct. What were you doing behind the Betcher Building?

MURIEL
I don't know what you're talking about.

CHARLES
I saw you leave the building.

DEAN
You followed us.

CHARLES
Perceptive, aren't you. That a hobby of yours?

MURIEL
I told you. I told you this wouldn't work out.

CHARLES
Works out just fine, for me.

Dean steps toward Ryan, his hand still in his coat pocket.

DEAN
This lady is my friend, Lauren Bacall. Back off.

Ryan stops and takes a step back.

DEAN (cont'd)
I know who you are. Your fake cop clothes can't hide that. You followed us to the rail yard. Perhaps you're the one taking stuff off box cars and reselling it. That fund the wigs, the make up, the eyelashes?

MURIEL
Ryan does Lauren Bacall? He is the guy who always beats you?

CHARLES
What are you talking about? I don't know you.

Dean grabs Ryan's hand and holds it up. There are visible stab wounds on the palm of the hand.

DEAN
How's your hand, Lauren; the hand
where I stabbed you when you tried to
steal Muriel's brooch?

Muriel gasps.

DEAN (cont'd)
Yup. This is the asshole who thought
it would be funny to rip the brooch
off my dress. I stabbed him with it
and with a pair of scissors. Always
have a pair of scissors at a drag
show. Sorry the brooch broke in the
process.

Ryan rips away his hand and rubs the palm. He menaces Muriel.

CHARLES
Does Howard know you're a homo?

Dean stands nose-to-nose with Ryan.

DEAN
What business is it of yours?

CHARLES
It would be a shame if she lost her
job?

DEAN
Why should her boss believe an ass
like you?

A frightened Muriel backs to the curb.

MURIEL
Go away. I've done my job.

CHARLES
Maybe, maybe not.

He grabs Muriel's arm.

CHARLES (cont'd)
Your JOB was to find that woman
guilty of being a Communist. So far,
you haven't done that.

Dean shoves Ryan.

DEAN

Get your hands off my friend.

Ryan takes a swing at Dean. Dean pulls the dirk. He ducks the swing and when Ryan swings again, Dean stabs him. Ryan gasps, gurgles, and crumples to the pavement. Muriel stifles a scream. Dean pulls the dirk from Ryan's body and stuffs it back into his pocket.

MURIEL

Is he...is he...?

Dean checks Ryan's body.

DEAN

Dead? Maybe. Maybe not.

MURIEL

You killed him.

DEAN

Yeah, well, things happen.

MURIEL

Things don't just happen. You killed someone. I saw it. You act like this is something you do quite frequently.

Dean grabs Ryan's arms and pulls him into the walkway between Torches and the adjacent building.

DEAN

He was attacking my friend. I'm going to stand up to someone doing that. Help me?

Muriel backs up.

MURIEL

I don't want to be involved in a murder.

Dean drags the body toward the back of the buildings. He returns with Ryan's gun and wallet.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Murder. I'm involved in a murder. I don't even know you. Picking locks. Now you stab someone. Oh my god. OH. MY. GOD.

Dean shakes her.

DEAN

I probably saved your life. I know I saved your job. I don't expect you to worship me but a "Thanks Dean" would be nice.

He straightens up and adjusts his clothing.

DEAN (cont'd)

Removed the competition.

MURIEL

A man is dead and you're thinking about a drag contest?

She stands at the entrance to the walkway.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Someone's bound to miss him.

DEAN

Hardly. Muriel, scum like that leave no ripple when they are gone.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY - DAY

Muriel has moved her desk back as far as she can into the corner. She keeps her head down, barely looking up. Ivy and Georgina pantomime wondering what's wrong.

Buchanan enters the office. Muriel freezes when she sees him, recovers, and doubles down on trying to look inconspicuous. Howard exits his office.

HOWARD

Was gonna call you. Muriel went through all the paperwork. Where's Ryan?

RONALD

Dead. Found knifed behind a bar.

Archie enters the room.

ARCHIE

Couldn't have happened to a nicer guy.

RONALD

Heh. He wasn't so nice.

ARCHIE

Figure of speech, Buchanan.

Ronald shrugs. He doesn't get it.

RONALD

He had a past. It caught up to him. I should find the guy who knifed him and buy him a drink.

Muriel knocks her coffee cup off her desk. It hits the floor and shatters like a gun shot. Coffee splatters everywhere. Muriel runs to the kitchen, grabs a mop and a bucket to clean it up. Howard watches suspiciously.

RONALD (cont'd)

This don't affect the job. You got anything?

HOWARD

We'll send over what we got.

Buchanan starts to protest, but shakes his head and leaves. Everyone stares at Muriel busy in her corner.

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN CAR - EVENING

Muriel leans her head against the glass of the train car. The city is diffused colors in a heavy downpour.

Lara gets on, sees Muriel, and approaches. Muriel doesn't notice until Lara sits next to her. She pulls away. Lara rests a hand on Muriel's leg. Muriel brushes it off.

LARA

I received everything. Thank you. I don't know how you talked your way into the building, but everything was on my desk.

Muriel stiffens.

LARA (cont'd)

It appears the problems lie after shipments leave Chicago. I owe you. You saved my job.

MURIEL

You don't owe me anything.

LARA

Oh but I do.

MURIEL

You've been ignoring me on the platform for the last two weeks. You were all, "Save me, Muriel," and then, when I do it, you don't seem to care or even acknowledge me and I'm standing in front of you.

Lara freezes and a haunted look crosses her face.

LARA

I'm so sorry. I've...I've been under some stress.

Muriel gets up and hangs onto the overhead bar as the train pulls into a station.

LARA (cont'd)

This isn't your stop.

MURIEL

Is now.

LARA

We should talk.

Muriel gives Lara an "I've heard that before" look and exits the train.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Muriel sits on her sofa, her feet on the ottoman, crocheting and listening to jazz on the radio. Footsteps pound up the building stairs and stop at her door.

She opens it and Dean stands on the landing. He wears a knock-off Chanel black dress. He sports a cheesy gold medal, and carries an equally cheesy scepter and crown.

DEAN

The winnah!

Muriel lets him into her apartment and closes the door.

DEAN (cont'd)

I thought you'd be more excited.

MURIEL
 Congratulations. You've worked hard
 for this.

He lays the scepter on the table.

DEAN
 I know what you're thinking. "If you
 hadn't 'offed' the competition..."

MURIEL
 Shut up. I try NOT to think about
 that. Buchanan came to the office and
 told us Ryan didn't have friends. He
 was weird and kept to himself. He
 liked to make people feel small. In
 short, a real winner.

DEAN
 Sounds about right, from my
 encounters with him.

MURIEL
 He also said no one cares that he's
 dead.

Dean removes the crown and sets it on the table.

DEAN
 Except you.

MURIEL
 He didn't need to die. Killing him
 didn't serve any purpose. I gotta
 hold this 'til the day I croak.

Dean sits at the table. He plays around with his crown.
 Muriel sits down across from him. She examines the scepter.
 Dean sets down the crown.

DEAN
 Made up?

MURIEL
 Sort of.

She picks up the crown.

MURIEL (cont'd)
 There's something she's not telling
 me, like it gets to the tip of her
 tongue and she can't spit it out.

DEAN

The whole "I want to talk but not actually tell you anything."

Muriel nods.

MURIEL

She's still not out of the woods, even with all the work I did. She said the rumors are still around. Rumors. Everyone's got rumors.

Muriel gets up and goes to the window to look out at the night.

MURIEL (cont'd)

There's a storm gathering, Dean. I fear it's going to wash me away.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY - DAY

The office is a hive of activity. MAILMAN, 30's, drops a stack of letters on Ivy's desk. The two of them openly flirt. Georgina gets up from her desk, walks in front of the mailman, snatches the mail off Ivy's desk, and sorts it, keeping herself between the mailman and Ivy.

The mailman rolls his eyes and leaves. Ivy stands as Georgina carries a few letters to Muriel's desk and tosses them onto the ledger Muriel is working on.

IVY

Jealous much.

GEORGINA

He's just using you. He makes no secret of being married. He showed you his wife's photo.

IVY

She's a cow.

GEORGINA

Don't let them catch you flirting like that.

IVY

You're just jealous because none of the delivery people like you.

GEORGINA
I have tact and discreditation.

IVY
You have tacky, is more like it.

Muriel stifles a giggle.

GEORGINA
You're jealous of my fashion sense. I gotta hand it to you. You're the best Woolworth's has.

Howard opens his door as Ivy prepares a retort. Georgina hands him several fat envelopes.

IVY
At least I don't get dressed in the dark.

HOWARD
What the hell?

GEORGINA
Nothing Howard. The mail.

Ivy and Georgina sit down at their desks in stony silence. Howard rips open one of the envelopes and scans the contents.

HOWARD
Muriel!

He points at Archie's office. Confused, Muriel rises, smooths her skirt, and heads into Archie's office. Ivy leans over to Georgina and comments in a stage whisper.

IVY
At least we're not wearing clothing rejects from the war.

Howard glares at the women as he closes the door.

INT. ARCHIE JOHNSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Howard tosses the papers onto Archie's desk. Muriel stands uncomfortably near the wall.

HOWARD
Your hunch was correct.

Archie scans the papers. A large grin forms.

ARCHIE

And this is why we pay you the big bucks, Muriel. They're taking stuff before it gets shipped, after the bills of lading are typed. Omaha FBI says the shipments are rifled through even after they are supposedly cleared. They suspect it's the mob, not Communists. Communists wouldn't want the stuff. They'd just want to know what was being shipped and when.

He drops the papers onto his desk.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Our lovely target is being framed.

Muriel looks at her hands and then at the men.

MURIEL

I'm done then? I don't have to pretend she's my friend anymore?

HOWARD

Our part is done. We'll turn this over to Buchanan. Shevner won't be happy. Why is he so convinced she's a Communist?

MURIEL

Because McCarthy tells people Communists are everywhere and it's easier to believe someone is messing with your life than to admit maybe you screwed it up yourself. I'm not cut out for what you guys do; this whole P.I. business. I've seen stuff I can't forget. Just keep me doing the books, okay?

Archie and Howard exchange glances. Howard takes a deep breath.

HOWARD

She's more than a friend, isn't she.

Muriel gasps and steps back. She absently wrings her hands.

MURIEL

No! Well...I...it's...it's complicated. See I did what I told you I'd do. I made friends.

(MORE)

MURIEL (cont'd)

We're friends...I swear...that's all we are. She's nice. I knew when I started talking to her that she wasn't a Communist. I mean...she listens to me and we talk and...we're...we're friends, you know.

Archie rises.

ARCHIE

You're a damned good bookkeeper. All I'm going to say is make sure all your columns add up, you know.

Muriel nods. Howard looks at the door. He slides next to Muriel and drops his voice.

HOWARD

The water department won't happen here. You can bet on it.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Muriel sits on a bench tossing cracker crumbs at a gaggle of ducks. She looks around her, obviously waiting for someone. She shifts her weight, smooths her skirt, crosses and uncrosses her legs.

Lara approaches carrying two cups of coffee. She smiles when she sees Muriel on the bench.

She sits on the bench and shoves one of the cups toward Muriel, who looks it over, looks at her, and takes it.

MURIEL

A spinster; feeding the ducks. How much more stereotypical can I be?

LARA

We're two friends meeting in the park.

Muriel looks around the park. A small compliment of people do typical things for a Saturday afternoon.

LARA (cont'd)

You're so tense, like the FBI is watching our every move.

Muriel nearly drops the coffee.

MURIEL

I have a confession. You're going to hate me. I am prepared for that.

LARA

Confess and I'll decide if I hate you.

Muriel takes a long drink of coffee. She looks at Lara and the words tumble out.

MURIEL

I work for private investigators; Miller and Johnson. We got hired by your boss, Joseph Shevner, to figure out if you were a Communist. He wanted us to make you a Communist. Archie tried to get to know you but he has no tact. I opened my mouth and they dumped you on me.

Muriel gets up, takes a drink, sets down the cup, turns and faces Lara.

MURIEL (cont'd)

I knew, from the moment I saw you at Ruby's, that you weren't a Communist. You're the most gorgeous woman I've ever seen. You couldn't be a Communist.

LARA

Because I dress well?

MURIEL

Well...yeah. I mean, look at the images in The Daily Worker. They dress alike. They scorn capitalist ideas of fashion.

LARA

You said you didn't read that.

MURIEL

I don't, anymore. When it first showed up in the lobby, I wanted to know, but it's garbage.

Lara stands.

LARA

I'm paid well to do my job. How you dress doesn't translate into who you are. You should understand that.

Muriel is flustered.

MURIEL

I...I...asked you here to confess. You needed to know...and I'm...I'm botching this.

Lara links arms with Muriel.

LARA

Walk with me.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Lara and Muriel, linked arm-in-arm, stroll to a secluded section of the park. Lara indicates they should sit on the grass.

LARA

And you've not told Howard or Archie.

Muriel shakes her head.

LARA (cont'd)

You're carrying a burden you need not carry. You said no one liked Ryan. I dare say your bosses will be proud of you.

She takes Muriel's hand. She kisses the back of it.

LARA (cont'd)

I should like to meet Dean. I can, perhaps, give him tips on how to win competitions outright, without resorting to killing off his competition.

Lara leans forward and pulls Muriel's hand to her chest.

LARA (cont'd)

I'm so very glad they sent you to tail me.

MURIEL

You're not mad?

LARA

No.

MURIEL

I watched a man die because of this case. I've lived my whole life from a steamer trunk; moving every time someone made a remark.

Lara pulls Muriel toward her.

LARA

Maybe it's time you unpacked the trunk.

She kisses Muriel.

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - MORNING

Muriel bounds up the stairs to the platform. She spies Lucy at the far end, her hands clutching her purse. She looks uncomfortable to be standing near commuters. Muriel thinks this is Lara and approaches her.

MURIEL

Good morning. You don't have breakfast.

LUCY

Why would I have breakfast?

MURIEL

Be...cause you usually do?

Muriel gives Lucy a once-over.

MURIEL (cont'd)

You okay?

LUCY

Of course I'm okay. That's a silly question.

MURIEL

You're not yourself.

LUCY

I'm perfectly fine to head QUIETLY to the office.

Muriel backs up two steps and turns to watch for the train. They stand in uncomfortable silence.

MURIEL
Did Shevner tell you?

LUCY
Tell me what? What would he know that
I don't?

Muriel stiffens and becomes all business.

MURIEL
Last night, Buchanan picked up our
report. A copy has also been sent to
the FBI. You're cleared.

Lucy turns to face Muriel.

LUCY
Cleared?

MURIEL
Yes. Cleared officially. The goods
are stolen after you sign for them.
The FBI does not suspect Communists
at all. It was a red herring.

LUCY
I...see.

They wait in silence.

LUCY (cont'd)
Cleared.

MURIEL
That is what I said.

LUCY
If it's not Communists, who is it?

The train arrives. People push to get on. Lucy stands at
Muriel's side waiting for her statement. Muriel turns to her
as she gets onto the car.

MURIEL
The mob.

Lucy's gloved hand covers her mouth and she watches the
train leave the station.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRY - AFTERNOON

Muriel stops to pick up her mail and to grab the copies of The Daily Worker under the mailbox. Across the top copy is written, "Go away, faggot." Muriel rips that page off the newspaper and angrily balls it.

The door into to the lobby opens and a well-dressed MAN, 50's, exits. He nods in her direction, as he dons his hat and coat and leaves the building. Muriel watches him leave before entering the inner building.

Dean's apartment door opens and Dean slides out into the lobby. He wears a smoking jacket, pants, and slippers, and carries a cigarette holder.

DEAN

Oh...hello...Muriel.

MURIEL

I don't know whether to be appalled or applaud you for your brazenness.

Dean breezes past her to look into the lobby.

DEAN

What can I say? I take care of my clients and they take care of me. Oh good. The only person he saw was you.

MURIEL

Middle of the afternoon in the middle of the week.

She shakes her head and heads up the steps to her apartment. Dean comes to the bottom of the stairs.

DEAN

I am who I am. I don't need your approval.

MURIEL

You aren't getting it.

DEAN

You shouldn't be casting stones Miss "I Haven't Fallen For the Client".

Muriel stops. She comes back down the stairs to get in Dean's face.

MURIEL

Don't you understand? The risks are huge. You can get yourself out of being called a Communist but you can't get out of being called a homo. It's the worst thing they can tag you with. You treat this like a disease of the month. You don't get cured of being gay by taking two aspirin and washing them down with a fifth of vodka.

Dean stamps away from her.

DEAN

My clients are well-heeled and respectable. They have connections. You can't live in fear, Muriel.

MURIEL

Yes you can. It changes who you are, but some of us have to live with it. We don't have a choice.

She climbs the stairs.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Muriel does dishes. KNOCK at the door. She opens the door to Dean with a bouquet of flowers. He shoves them in her face.

DEAN

I should be more sensitive. You just want what's best.

Muriel takes the flowers.

MURIEL

We have a Communist living in the building. We could get kicked out for that alone. The owner could kick us out for being gay. Maybe you need to start picking another location for your trysts.

She takes the flowers into the kitchen to find a vase.

DEAN

They can't have me show up at their homes. What's this?

He picks up a piece of paper off her dining room table.
Muriel enters the room with the flowers in a vase.

MURIEL

From Lara. Wants me to meet her at
this address on Saturday.

DEAN

This isn't the best of neighborhoods.

MURIEL

I know. She's back to being weird
again. Aloof. Standoffish. Then
today, she slips me this note and
squeezes my hand as she leaves the
train.

DEAN

Why meet you here?

MURIEL

She said, "Dinner."

DEAN

You believe her?

MURIEL

I don't know what to believe. My gut
is saying this is wrong. My head is
saying, "She needs to tell me
something and this is the only place
she feels she can."

Dean drops the note on the table.

DEAN

So, don't go. I know you didn't ask
for my advice, but you were going to?

MURIEL

This job is over. I can leave her
behind. I don't have to keep going to
her El stop.

Dean rests his hands on her shoulders.

DEAN

But you can't. Attraction is a drug.
Once you get your hit, it's hard to
walk away from.

MURIEL

What if you came with me?

DEAN

What?

MURIEL

She wants to meet you.

DEAN

I sense skullduggery.

MURIEL

Kind of.

Dean steps back to apprise Muriel's appearance.

DEAN

I'm thinking gray. Katharine Hepburn.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Muriel and Dean work their way down an alley between rows of shabby tenements. Many of the apartments are boarded up. Discards from the broken lives who still live here line the alley and are stacked against the buildings. There is barely enough room for a car to pass.

Muriel is dressed in a natty gray suit while Dean is dressed in pseudo Sam Spade. He adjusts his fedora so it sits rakishly on his head.

MURIEL

Come late, she said. Fewer people to see you, she said.

A rat scurries across the alley.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Rats don't count. Rats don't count.
Rats don't count.

DEAN

This is so exciting. Did you tell Howard about this?

MURIEL

God no.

Dean stops.

DEAN

Maybe you should have.

MURIEL

Then I'd have to 'fess to knowing how Ryan died. I want to never remember that.

DEAN

This feels like something they should know about.

Muriel passes him.

MURIEL

Another anonymous letter showed up at the office yesterday.

Dean grabs her arm.

DEAN

Same thing?

Muriel nods.

MURIEL

It's got to be that broad from accounting. She had it in for me. Howard and Archie dismiss the accusations but I know it wears on them. It's one thing for them to use blackmail to get something. It's quite another to have it applied by someone on the outside to an employee.

Muriel picks her way down the alley.

DEAN

Why would someone who dresses like a movie star want us to come to this dump of an area?

MURIEL

This is connected to Lara. We're gonna find out something, something big. Once I learn what that is, I can tell Howard and Archie. Then they will make sure I'm nothing more than a simple bookkeeper, moving money to keep the lights on.

DEAN

Is that what you want to be?

Muriel and Dean reach the end of the alley where it enters the street.

MURIEL

She lied and yes, yes it is. I've read the newspapers. The terror is real.

DEAN

More than this terror.

MURIEL

Way more.

DEAN

Give me the note with the address.

Dean holds up the note in the streetlight. He walks to the closest building and looks at the building number.

DEAN (cont'd)

Wrong block, Sherlock. This way.

They walk in the middle of the street. Dean points to a boarded-up three-story brownstone toward the end of the next block. As they approach, they can see a sliver of light coming from a basement window.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Muriel and Dean pop into the backyard via the walkway between the two buildings. There is no grass here; merely scabble, gravel, and debris. The garage pad is here but there is no garage.

MURIEL

Let's leave. I've seen enough to say I was here and she wasn't. Something bad is about to happen. I can feel it in my bones.

DEAN

We've come this far, let's...
shhhhhh.

A car comes down the alley toward their position. They back into the shadows of the walkway between the buildings. The car parks on the garage pad.

Buchanan jumps out of the driver's seat and looks around. He puts a hand on a revolver at his belt and opens the back passenger door.

Lucy steps out of the car, dripping in furs and luxury. Shevner exits the other side. He looks around.

MURIEL

What the hell?

Dean emits a low whistle.

DEAN

So she's a moll. No wonder she wears the good stuff.

Shevner rounds the car and offers Lucy his hand. The two of them navigate the broken walkway toward the building. Lucy looks around as if looking for someone. Muriel and Dean shrink backwards into the shadows.

Muriel slides to the ground and leans against the building.

MURIEL

I fell for Angel Eyes. I'm so stupid.

A door to the basement opens. Shevner and Lucy step down the basement stairs and enter the building.

DEAN

Come on. We've seen enough. Let's go.

He helps her to her feet.

SCREECHING and SQUEALING of tires comes from the street. Shevner and Lucy run out of the basement. He points at headlights coming down the alley.

SHEVNER

COPS!

Shevner grabs Lucy's arm and assists her to run toward their car. Buchanan pulls his gun and shoots at the approaching car.

MURIEL

Cops?

DEAN

Or another mob. Either way, we shouldn't be here.

Dean drags Muriel from the walkway to the cellar well of the adjacent building. They crouch in the shadows of that building.

VOICE 1
FBI! FREEZE!

MEN stream into the backyard from between the buildings. MEN pour out of the basement. They engage each other.

DEAN
Stay down. Once this gets crazy, we can slip away.

MURIEL
This is going to get worse?

GUNSHOTS. People dive for cover as men come out of upper floors onto the shaky rear stairs and shoot at the agents. The agents return fire. Muriel looks for Lucy.

In the chaos, Lucy spots Muriel and has enough time to wave and blow her a kiss before she is shoved into the car. Shevner piles in behind her and slams the door. Buchanan guns the car away from the fight.

Muriel stares after the car. Dean grabs her arm.

DEAN
Now! We move!

Dean drags her through the backyards adjacent to the fighting. Muriel stumbles as she looks back to the location of Lucy's car.

MURIEL
She blew me a kiss.

DEAN
We'll reconstruct this later. RUN!

Men with guns are everywhere. Muriel and Dean round the corner of a brownstone and run into a MAN with a gun running toward the fight. Dean grabs him and throws him into a wall. Then he grabs Muriel to continue running away.

GUNSHOTS. Dean staggers.

DEAN (cont'd)
Oh shit. That hurts.

He crumples to the ground. Muriel looks behind her. The man Dean threw aside waves his gun at her, turns, and heads into the fight.

MURIEL

Dean! Dean! Get up! Get up! We gotta go.

She rolls him over. Blood spews from his mouth. He is quite dead. Muriel screams. She staggers to her feet and runs and runs and runs.

INT. MURIEL'S BATHROOM - DAY

KNOCKING on her apartment door. Muriel gets up from the bathroom floor and staggers to her door.

MURIEL

Who is it?

MONROE (O.C.)

Officer Monroe of the Chicago Police Department. We need to talk to you about your downstairs neighbor, Dean Halvorson.

Muriel stifles a gasp and the urge to vomit.

MURIEL

Give me a moment. I just got up.

Muriel frantically peels off her dirty clothes and throws them into the tub. She races into the bedroom and throws on other clothes. She shoves her hair into a bandana.

She goes back to the door, takes a deep breath, and opens it.

BUILDING SUPERVISOR, BILL, 50's, stands on the landing with OFFICER JACOBS, 40's, and OFFICER MONROE, 50's. Monroe leafs through a small notebook.

MONROE

Begging your pardon, ma'am, but I need to ask you some questions about Dean Halvorson who lived below you.

MURIEL

Lived?

Bill takes a deep breath and shifts his weight.

MONROE

May we come in, ma'am? This is a delicate matter.

Muriel ushers the police and Bill into her apartment. Bill stands in the doorway. Officer Monroe indicates Muriel should sit.

MONROE (cont'd)

You were friends with Mr. Halvorson.

MURIEL

"Were"? I still am.

MONROE

I regret to inform you that Mr. Halvorson passed away last night under...unfortunate circumstances.

MURIEL

Died? Died?

MONROE

Yes Ma'am.

MURIEL

Where? When? How? We talked just last night. He was going out.

MONROE

He was in a location we can't identify at the moment other than to say 'South Side'. We aren't sure why he was there. Did he tell you where he was going?

MURIEL

Dean...Dean...what the hell...no...no
OMG. He's never coming back.

Monroe looks at Bill.

MONROE

No ma'am. He's not, which brings us to another issue. Did he have next of kin?

MURIEL

OMG...Dean.

MONROE

Ma'am?

MURIEL

Huh?

MONROE

Did he have next of kin?

MURIEL

Um...he said, once or twice, he had two sisters, but he hadn't talked to them in years. They didn't approve of him. OMG. He was my friend.

Monroe gingerly pats Muriel's shoulder.

MONROE

Would you know of any reason for him to be on Chicago's south side?

Muriel wipes away tears.

MURIEL

No. Dean went a lot of places, though, places which scare me.

Monroe nods and moves to the doorway. He scribbles a phone number on a page in his notebook, rips it out, and drops it on the table.

MONROE

If you think of anything ma'am as to why he would have been on the south side, or if you know of next of kin, please call me.

Monroe and Jacobs go down the stairs to the building lobby. Bill watches them and turns back to Muriel.

BILL

I'm sorry.

Muriel nods. Bill closes the door.

MURIEL

He died. It was real. I saw the whole thing. Jesus Christ.

She becomes sick and rushes into the bathroom to vomit.

INT. DEAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Muriel lets herself into Dean's apartment. The drapes have been pulled shut so light from the street is minimal. She turns on a kitchen light.

The apartment is upended but not ransacked. Stuff is piled indicating a search. Muriel impulsively, puts a few kitchen things away and heads into Dean's bedroom.

INT. DEAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Muriel flips on the overhead light. This room is in complete disarray. Clothes cover the bed. Some of the drawers in the chest of drawers have been gone through. Dean's writing desk has been searched.

MURIEL

What would they be searching for? He wasn't involved; at least, I don't think he was.

She opens the closet. Hanging on the back of the closet door are various BDSM items.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Oh dear god. Clearly, I didn't know Dean.

She throws open the door as wide as possible. She spies a mass of scarves in a box on a shelf. She removes the box and closes the door. She plows through the box and takes two.

She picks through the jewelry on Dean's dressing table, selecting three brooches. She wraps the brooches in the scarves, looks around the room, and spies a framed photo of her and Dean at Buckingham Fountain. She takes it.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Muriel trudges home in a drizzle. She carries her umbrella and doesn't care she's getting wet.

Lara exits a car on the opposite side of the street and dashes to intercept Muriel.

LARA

Muriel! I heard!

Muriel stops.

MURIEL

You heard? Heard? You set me up! You don't "hear" that.

LARA

It wasn't me.

MURIEL

Get out of my sight.

Muriel shoves past her and quickens her pace toward her apartment. Lara chases after her.

LARA

Muriel, I have a sister, Lucy. It was her you saw.

Muriel turns around.

MURIEL

Oh how convenient. When were you going to tell me about this sister? I suppose she's your twin and you usually keep her locked in the attic.

LARA

I wanted to tell you. I did. She's the reason I'm in Chicago. She's that person I came here to help.

MURIEL

Right. The person who turned down your "help."

Lara approaches.

LARA

She's in the mob. She's in too deep. I can't save her.

MURIEL

Funny how that works.

Muriel turns to continue walking.

LARA

Muriel please. I had no idea you'd met. I swear.

Muriel stops. She strides up to Lara.

MURIEL

How could you think we wouldn't meet? She was at OUR EL stop, the place we always met.

Lara tries to talk and fails. Muriel flips the collar on Lara's coat.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Wearing your clothes.

LARA
I let her pretend to be me thinking a legitimate job would get her away from the mob.

MURIEL
You let me think she was you and you led me on. I thought there was something between us.

LARA
There is.

MURIEL
The company you work for does business with the federal government. What if this sister of yours decides to turn me in to the feds because she's mad at you? Did you know what that will do to me?

Lara shakes her head, "Yes." Muriel turns and walks away. Lara catches up.

LARA
Please believe me. I didn't know she'd met you until she'd bragged about setting you up.

Muriel stops and puts the point of her umbrella in Lara's chest.

MURIEL
For someone charged with meticulous shipping, you are incredibly dumb. So, listen to this. My entire life has been about moving to stay ahead of the rumors. There are always rumors. I keep my head down. I blend in. Then, I finally find a job and a friend I can trust and you; you and that whore of a sister; take my friend away from me.

She pulls back her umbrella, turns and walks away. She thinks of one more thing and returns to Lara.

MURIEL (cont'd)

I risked my safety for you. I now wish I'd made up documents proving you were Communist. I could live with a lie. It's easier than living with the truth.

Muriel turns and runs to her apartment building.

INT. ELEVATED TRAIN CAR - EVENING

A gloomy Muriel rides the EL home in a pouring rain. A MAN gets on, shakes his umbrella, spraying water around, and sits opposite Muriel. He opens an afternoon newspaper.

Muriel notices a headline on the front page.

POV MURIEL

(Headline)

Body pulled from river identified.

(Sub-head)

Woman ID'D as secretary to VP of Flores Transportation.

END POV

Muriel leans forward to get a better look. The man notices.

MAN

Excuse me?

Muriel starts.

MURIEL

Oh. Sorry. An article on the front page has my attention.

He looks at the front page and back at Muriel. He shrugs, removes the front page and hands it to Muriel.

POV MURIEL

(Headline)

Body pulled from river identified.

(Sub-head)

Woman ID'D as secretary to VP of Flores Transportation.

(Start of article)

The body pulled from the Chicago River last night has been identified as Lara Baker, 37, secretary to Joseph Shevner, Vice President of Shipping for Flores Transportation. Baker was found floating in the river at 10:30 p.m. Upon being removed from the water, it was discovered she sustained multiple stab wounds.

END POV

Muriel stares out the car window at the rain.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRY - EVENING

Muriel enters the apartment building and shakes off her umbrella. She looks at the newspaper and mechanically checks her mailbox. She steps to the inner door and Superintendent Bill opens it for her, causing her to jump back.

BILL

Evening.

Muriel nods. TWO WOMEN, DOROTHY and HILDA, 40's, come out of Dean's apartment. They are typical 1950's housewives. Hilda carries a fake black leather-bound Bible which looks very new.

DOROTHY

We are done. Burn it. Burn it all.

Bill moves past the women to lock the apartment door.

HILDA

Such a degenerate. I'm going to have to pray for the salvation of both our souls, having gone into that den of depravity.

Dorothy nods. She notices Muriel.

DOROTHY

Is there a reason you are gawking at us?

MURIEL

You must be Dean's sisters.

HILDA

He spoke of us to you?

MURIEL

Not exactly. He mentioned he had two sisters.

DOROTHY

Talking about us behind our backs. Typical of him. How did you know him? Whatever he told you was a lie.

MURIEL

I live above him. Dean was my friend.

Muriel tears up. She removes a handkerchief from her purse and dabs at her eyes.

HILDA

So you know all about his sinful lifestyle. Did you ever tell him he would go to hell for it?

MURIEL

He was friendly. He helped me. I helped him. He might be different but that was no reason not to be kind.

Hilda holds up the Bible and strikes a dramatic pose.

HILDA

Oh merciful father. Forgive this woman for not having eyes to see the truth.

MURIEL

What?

DOROTHY

The truth.

MURIEL

I saw it. Dean was a nice guy.

DOROTHY

Dean was a homosexual; an aberration. They are not "nice guys."

MURIEL

Dean was my friend.

HILDA

That doesn't change the fact that he was perverted.

MURIEL

He wasn't perverted. He was just trying to live; like we all are.

HILDA

How dare you say this?

MURIEL

Dean was your brother! He was a kind, caring, person.

DOROTHY

He was a pervert! If you're defending him, that must mean...oh my god! Hilda!

Hilda holds the Bible toward Muriel.

HILDA

Begone Satan!

MURIEL

I'm defending my friend who simply wanted to live his life.

HILDA

He. Was. A. Pervert! His soul will rot in hell for his depravity.

Bill pushes through the women.

BILL

Ladies!

DOROTHY

How can you defend this?

BILL

I'm not defending anything. I got another building to go to. If there's nothing else you want to see, I gotta go.

Dorothy puts her face into Muriel's.

DOROTHY

Nothing. Burn it. Burn it all.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF JOHNSON AND MILLER DETECTIVE AGENCY -
DAY

Muriel wanders into the office. She looks like she hasn't slept in several days. Ivy rolls her eyes. Howard and Archie come out of Howard's office.

IVY

Nice of you to grace us with your presence.

Georgina smirks.

GEORGINA

I should be so lucky to have your schedule.

MURIEL

I hope the two of you lose all the friends you have. Oh wait...you don't have any friends, that's right, so the grief of losing a friend means nothing to you.

Ivy and Georgina gasp.

IVY

Well...I never...

Muriel passes close to Ivy's desk. Her purse clips Ivy's "in" tray, knocking it to the floor.

IVY (cont'd)

That's just rude.

Muriel shrugs. Howard and Archie look at each other and stifle a laugh.

ARCHIE

Hey Muriel? Could we...could we see you for a moment?

GEORGINA

Now you're going to get it.

Muriel stops, turns around, and puts her hands on Georgina's desk, her face inches from Georgina's.

MURIEL

At least I'm not trying to charge my lunch fucks to the company.

Georgina gasps and backs away from her desk.

MURIEL (cont'd)
You forgot who does the books and I
don't reimburse ripped hose,
sweetheart.

Archie grabs Muriel by the shoulders and steers her toward
Howard's office.

INT. HOWARD MILLER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Archie seats Muriel while Howard closes the office door. He
crosses his office to the desk, stops, turns back and whips
open the door, catching Ivy and Georgina approaching the
door. They freeze.

HOWARD
I can't get you two to do a goddamn
job but you'll eavesdrop on a co-
worker. OUT!

Ivy and Georgina look at each other.

HOWARD (cont'd)
Grab your bags and get out. Go for
coffee or whatever useless thing you
do on company time. Out!

Howard stands in the doorway of his office. The women leave.
He goes to his desk and sits on the edge looking at Muriel.

MURIEL
I'm sorry. I'm not having a good
week.

ARCHIE
You've taken a lot of crap from them
over the years.

HOWARD
So, a guy who lives on the first
floor of your building was shot to
death. What do you know about this?

Muriel drops her purse.

ARCHIE
I...he was my friend.

HOWARD
What were you doing down there?

ARCHIE

You had to be there for a reason. That guy I can see. Gay clubs are everywhere underground, but you? Was he blackmailing you into tagging along with him?

Muriel stares at the two men.

MURIEL

What? How?

HOWARD

You know we work for anyone who will pay us. Surely you've noticed that some of our income comes from, shall we say, other sources.

MURIEL

I don't ask where. You hired me to keep the lights on. That's what I do. You're Pi's. Money comes from anyone who will pay us, assuming you two get on them to pay up.

ARCHIE

Yeah. Yeah. We know. You're really good at your job, which is why we hired you. But didn't you wonder when it was all cash?

MURIEL

You don't pay me to ask questions. I do numbers. Numbers don't lie.

HOWARD

Shevner sells pieces of what he ships to the mob who resells it through a third party, back to the US at inflated prices. Everyone keeps a piece of the extra price.

ARCHIE

But, Shevner decided he was dividing up the proceeds among too many people.

MURIEL

But if you know this, why send me out? Pretending to P.I. is not what I do.

ARCHIE

We didn't know it. The FBI came to us with...

He looks at Howard who shifts his weight uncomfortably.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

...an offer. No one beats up Archie Johnson and gets away with it, except someone working undercover for the FBI. They wouldn't prosecute my working over their informant if we told them what Shevner was paying us to find.

Archie leans forward.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Your accounting was the final nail that Shevner was stealing and selling to the mob, getting a cut and a kickback.

HOWARD

The FBI decided to pull a sting. You did the bookwork and they were scared you'd tipped their hand. They had to move. Why were you there?

MURIEL

She gave me a note. The address.
"Meet me here at 7:00."

Howard sits behind his desk. He purses his fingers before leaning forward.

HOWARD

How deep into this are you?

Muriel starts.

MURIEL

I...I'm not. Honest. Honest. I'm not. I can't see her anymore. She killed Dean.

ARCHIE

The guy from your apartment building?

MURIEL

My FRIEND, Archie.

HOWARD

You know, Chicago Police fished a body out of the river two days ago.

MURIEL

I know.

ARCHIE

Ties up that end neatly. You really can't see her now.

Archie grabs a check off Howard's desk and flashes it at Muriel.

ARCHIE (cont'd)

Shevner paid us, in full, yesterday.

MURIEL

How...nice.

HOWARD

Yes, but there's a problem.

Muriel looks up at Howard.

HOWARD (cont'd)

We took Shevner's money to try to make Lara a Communist. You did a great job of not only proving she wasn't but also proving that whatever was happening was an inside job.

MURIEL

I don't understand. What's the problem?

HOWARD

Bluntly, you need to lay low, Muriel. The mob knows it was you who shut off their pipeline.

ARCHIE

We need to not have you on the payroll until the heat is off.

MURIEL

You're firing me?

ARCHIE

Not exactly. Slowly clear out your desk so the snakes...

He motions toward Ivy and Georgina's desks.

ARCHIE (cont'd)
 ...don't notice. Your last official day will be Monday. We're getting some severance together and we got a new place for you. Nice guy. He needs a bookkeeper.

HOWARD
 He's in Milwaukee. You can't stay here. They'll trace you back to us and it'll be bad...

MURIEL
 ...for business.

She stands.

HOWARD
 This is strictly business, Muriel. In a year, you maybe come back. Let us simmer this down.

Howard hands her a note with a name and address.

ARCHIE
 Milwaukee's not a bad place to live.

EXT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Muriel walks up the street toward her building and sees men moving furniture and goods out of her building. She recognizes the items and breaks into a run.

Superintendent Bill holds open the building's front door as men move chairs out of Dean's apartment and set them in the parkway in front of the building.

MURIEL
 What's happening? What are you doing?
 This is Dean's stuff!

Bill lets go of the door and approaches Muriel.

BILL
 I know, but he's dead and his stuff isn't claimed and the owner wants to rent his apartment.

Muriel frantically paws through things.

MURIEL
 This is his life.

BILL
WAS his life.

Bill watches Muriel pick out items and set them aside.

MURIEL
It's not fair. He doesn't deserve
this.

BILL
I don't make the rules. The owner
wants to lease the apartment.

MURIEL
The investigation isn't done!

BILL
I don't make the rules!

Muriel stops, looks at Bill, and then at the pile. She picks up the few things she wanted and goes into the building.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

Muriel pulls her mail from her mailbox. Above the mailboxes is a crudely hand-written sign. "Communists not welcome here. Report any and all un-American activities to Bill immediately."

Muriel sighs and pulls down the notice. She rips it into small pieces and drops them on the floor.

Bill follows her into the building. He opens the interior door before she can and follows her into the area in front of the stairs.

BILL
I've tried everything I know of to
do. He accused me of protecting a
known Communist. I could lose my job.

MURIEL
You are protecting them. I don't know
who it is but I throw out that
newspaper every time I see it.

BILL
I get that but...

MURIEL
...but what?

BILL

Someone saw you picking up their newspaper.

MURIEL

I destroy it!

BILL

I believe you. I can't get him to listen. I'm sorry. I got you a week.

MURIEL

A week? I've got a week to find another place to live.

She looks back toward the street where she can see Dean's things sitting on the curb. Bill holds a piece of paper with names and phone numbers on it.

BILL

I know people. These people will rent to you. I'll vouch for you.

MURIEL

You have to chuck his stuff like that?

BILL

Them broads don't want any of it on account of how he was...he was... well, you know.

MURIEL

No. I don't know, Bill. How was he, besides kind, and a good friend?

Bill shifts his weight from one foot to another.

BILL

I don't mean anything by it, Muriel. He was a fairy, although he hid it. They're different, you know.

Muriel snatches the offered paper, goes to the stairs and looks back at Bill.

MURIEL

You mean everything by it, Bill. I'm guilty because someone I don't know has a vendetta against me and because my best friend in the world was a queer. Stick your prejudices where the sun don't shine.

(MORE)

MURIEL (cont'd)
I'll leave the key on the kitchen
counter so you don't have to be seen
in the same room with me.

She climbs the stairs.

INT. MURIEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Muriel switches on a floor lamp. She drags a large steamer trunk into the middle of the living room. She flips open the top. She puts a record of sad vocal jazz on her record player. She dumps the few items she took from Dean's pile and the items she took before into the trunk.

She walks around the living room taking photos off the wall and putting them into the trunk. She goes into the kitchen and returns with a glass of bourbon.

She sets the glass on the table and goes into her bedroom.

FOOTSTEPS approach Muriel's apartment door. THUNK. KNOCK at the door. FOOTSTEPS retreat down the stairs.

Muriel returns with all the clothes from her closet. She looks quizzically at the door. She dumps the clothes into the trunk and opens the door.

A package with her name on it falls into the room. She picks it up and goes to the landing. She doesn't see anyone as she looks down the stairs.

She returns to the table, drops the package on it, goes into the kitchen and returns with a knife. She sits at the table and turns the package over and over in her hands.

She slices open the package and dumps the contents on the table. She picks up a hand towel stained with what appears to be blood. A knife tumbles out of the towel and falls to the floor.

Muriel uses the towel to pick it up and set it on the table. A note with "Exhibit A" written on it is attached to the knife.

She picks up a wad of cash in a rubber band with a note which reads, "For incidentals". She counts it. Five hundred dollars.

She picks up a train ticket voucher. It's made out to her and is redeemable for a one-way first class ticket on the Panama Limited to New Orleans any time in the next 6 months. A note attached says "Saint Charles Hotel."

There are four photos. The first two show Lara with a woman who looks exactly like her. On the back is written, "Lara and Lucy, 4-18-49." On another, one of the women has a large "X" across her body. On the back is written, "Lara and Lucy in Chicago, 6-6-51."

Muriel flips over another photo and it's a photo of her with hearts drawn around her face and the words, "My love" written across the bottom of the photo.

Muriel flips over the final photo and it's a recent head shot photo of Lara, posing with her sunglasses pulled down on her nose. A slip of paper is taped to the photo. On it are the words, "'Scuse US while WE disappear."

Muriel lays the note from Archie and Howard and the list of apartments next to the \$500 and the train voucher.

FADE OUT TO THE SOUND OF A DIESEL TRAIN WHISTLE