

**THE THUNDERBOLT BROADCAST/FATHER CHARLES COUGHLIN/XERB
RADIO, LOS ANGELES. BOOTLEG TRANSMITTER: TIJUANA, MEXICO.
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1941**

Good evening and *bienvenidos*, a belated *Feliz Navidad*, and let's not forget *próspero año y felicidad*—which means “Happy New Year” in English and serves to introduce the Mexico-at-war theme of tonight's broadcast. And at war we are, my fellow American listeners—even though we sure as shooting didn't want to be in the first place.

Let's talk turkey here. *Es la verdad*, as our Mex cousins say. We've been in this Jew-inspired boondoggle a mere twenty-three days, and we've been forced to stand with the rape-happy Russian Reds against the more sincerely simpatico Nazis. That's a shattering shame, but our Jew-pawn president, Franklin “Double-Cross” Rosenfeld, has deliriously decreed that we must fight *der Führer*; so fight that heroic *jefe* we regretfully must. It's a ways off, though—because we've got our hands full with the Japs right now.

So, let's meander down Mexico way—where the *señoritas* sizzle and more HELL-bent *jefes* hold sway.

Mexico connotes “*PROUDLY CATHOLIC*,” does it not, friends? Add *THEOCRATIC REPUBLIC*, *ANTI-RED*, and *DUTIFULLY RELIGIOUS* to that. It paints a picture, doesn't it? Yes—but the picture is wholly inaccurate and sorrowfully seditious, dating back to the tempestuous '20s and the repugnant Red reign of *Presidente* Plutarco Calles.

Item: Calles instituted a Six-Year Plan for social and political reform, patterned after Red Russia's Five-Year Plan.

Item: Calles set out to eradicate the influence of the Catholic Church, barred religious festivals and processions, and created “workers' collectives” to counter the alleged excesses of industrial capitalism and further secularize the Mexican body politic, despite the stubborn opposition of the *CATHOLIC* Mexican people.

Item: Catholic bishops were forced to suspend public worship.

Item: Calles's "Redshirt" goon squads shuttered churches across Mexico.

Item: priests were murdered, nuns were raped, bishops sought South American asylum, and the Holy Mass was performed as a secret sacrament.

Item: cancerous Calles was succeeded by limp leftist Lázaro Cárdenas. He was a motley mollycoddler of a less malicious sort. His anticlerical policies bore a still Stalinist, but less overt stink. Priests were still murdered, nuns were still raped, provincial despots still shuttered churches and satanically forbade Mass.

Item: these practices continue under current *Presidente* Manuel Ávila Camacho—a purported "leftist-centrist"—read that as one mealy-mouthed *muchacho*.

This brings us to the Cristeros—the ripsnorting, righteous, *CATHOLIC* resistance.

The Goldshirts—not the *Redshirts* of the Calles/Cárdenas/Communist ilk. The armed home guard that fought fire with fire, killed *Redshirts*, lynched Communist commissars and apoplectic apparatchiks, and burned more than a few Red reptiles alive.

The Cristeros flourished under Calles and were forced into hiding under Cárdenas. In '37 they majestically metamorphosed into the Unión Nacional Sinarquista.

Synarchism means "without anarchy." Sinarquismo represents a full-fledged assault on the anti-Catholic Left. Underground *Üntermenschen* now enforce *Presidente* Camacho's atheistic agenda; the Sinarquistas magnificently mount a Catholic counterattack. The Sinarquistas are growing in number. They proselytize for a merged Catholic-secular state. They've been called *fascistas* and Nazis—but that's all Red hoo-ha. Yes, but they surely grew out of the Spanish Falange and *Generalissimo* Francisco Franco's valiant victory in the Spanish Civil War. And, now—with the United States embroiled in a consuming world conflict, and with Mexico situated at our southernmost tip—will the Greenshirt Sinarquistas serve our best interests as the emergent world power both anti-Axis and nationalistically non-Red?

Item: Mexico has remained "neutral" in this world conflict so far.

Item: *Presidente* Camacho closed the German consulate in August '41 but has let a great many pro-Axis Krauts and Japs linger down May-hee-co way.

Enter Baja California.

Baja's that lurid lick of Mexican land south of our own San Diego. It's a hellish hotbed of fascist-*comunista* intrigue. There's a great many resident Japs. The Mex State Police suspect the presence of a great many Jap submarine berths along Baja's Pacific coastline. There's talk of secret Jap air bases being readied for raids on U.S. naval installations and defense plants near Los Angeles.

Enter Sinarquista boss man Salvador Abascal.

Señor Abascal es muy católico. He's the Sinarquista's spiritual and intellectual leader, and wears Sinarquismo's Greenshirt proudly. Like most male adherents to Sinarquismo, he wears a small "SQ" with a coiled snake encircling it, tattooed in the web of his right forefinger and thumb. He's a handsome man of thirty-one—and *Presidente* Camacho seems to fear him.

Item: the Sinarquista membership is growing in Mexico and the U.S.

Item: punk patriarch Camacho has granted them land for an encampment at Magdalena Bay in Southern Baja. Is he isolating the Sinarquistas or readying them for some task?

U.S. Army Intelligence officers are mobilizing in Baja. They will sort out the political gestalt and round up Japs, in a replication of our own Jap-internment efforts. What's the upshot here? Will Mexico end its neutered neutral stance and throw in with Uncle Sam? America is now alarmingly aligned with the repugnant Russian Reds, and allied against the nifty but nefarious Nazis. Will the Mexican peso and the U.S. dollar plummet and will a new gold standard arise? What about those ripe rumors—Nazis and Russkies melting gold bars into swastika and hammer-and-sickle artifacts?

Mexico, my American *hermanos* and Christian countrymen. It's the southern gateway to our cherished shores. Will waterlogged wetbacks breach our borders and sap us with sabotage? Will the Sinarquistas come to our aid as a heroic home guard?



Part One

RAIN

(December 31, 1941–January 23, 1942)



1

ELMER JACKSON

(LOS ANGELES, 9:30 P.M., 12/31/41)

Stakeout.

It's a sit-and-wait job. Some hot-prowl burglar/rape-o's out creeping. He's Tommy Glennon, recent Quentin grad. He's notched five 459/sodomies since Pearl Harbor.

Happy fucking New Year.

Three-man stakeout. Two parked cars. 24th and Normandie. Sit and wait. Endure bugs-up-your-ass ennui.

The rain. Plus war-blackout regulations. Drawn shades, doused streetlamps. Bum visibility.

It's a stag hunt. The PD worked that way. Four victims mugshot-ID'd Tommy. The Chief and Dudley Smith conferred. They called it. Per always: perv shit on women mandates *DEATH*.

Elmer gargled Old Crow. He had the front-house car. Mike Breuning and Dick Carlisle had the alley. Tommy had the crib cased. Two leggy sisters lived there. Lockstep surveillance locked down the gestalt.

Central Burglary tailed Tommy a week running. Elmer moved the sisters out and moved his leggy girlfriend in. She had the legs and the stones for the job.

Ellen Drew. His *part-time* girlfriend and *part-time* Paramount starlet. Ellen glommed raves in *If I Were King* and went *ppffft*. She *part-time* whored for Elmer and his *full-time* girlfriend.

Brenda Allen. *Part-time* squeeze of Chief Jack Horrall. It's who you know and who you blow. Call-Me-Jack set up the bait gig.

Elmer scoped the house. Upstairs lights gleamed. Ellen cracked the shades to spotlight her gams. It violated blackout regs and lit her legs *gooooood*. Tommy G. was a leg man. Elmer read his Quentin file and glommed the gestalt.

Thomas Malcolm Glennon/white male American/DOB 8/19/16. Preston Reform School and Quentin. Tight with pachucos and Four Families tong men.

Fireworks popped somewhere north. The rain drenched the sparks and killed the effect.

“It’s who you know.”

Elmer knew Dudley and Call-Me-Jack. Thus, this shit job. Mike B. and Dick C. were Dudley’s strongarm goons. Dud got the night off. Some unknown geek shivved him three days ago.

Elmer yawned. Elmer futzed with his two-way radio. Police calls spritzed.

Niggertown 211/Happytime Liquor/prowl cars at scene. Dope roust at Club Zombie. *Mexicoon* rumble, 84th and Avalon. Zoot-suit beaners *ex-cape*.

Elmer yawned. Elmer skimmed the dial. He hit a civilian band and got lucky. The PD’s New Year’s bash warbled.

It’s live from City Hall. It features Count Basie’s Band. The Detective Bureau muster room’s rigged with radio mikes. The Count’s at the keyboard. There’s Lester Young’s sax.

Here’s the inside tattle. Two bluesuits popped the Count with reefers. Jack Horrall caught wind and tossed the pitch. Your call, Count. Six months honor farm or a one-night engagement?

Rain slammed the car. Said rain outslammed Count Basie. Elmer skimmed to Band 3. He caught an open line to Breuning and Carlisle.

“Know” and “blow.” Maladroit Mike and Dipshit Dick. This jive New Year’s Eve. What good’s your insider-cop status?

He loved Headquarters Vice. It dispensed yuks and served to scotch his call-biz competition. Then the fucking Japs bombed fucking Pearl Harbor and fucked the white world up the brown trail.

He got detached to the Alien Squad. It was Japs twelve days a week. Japs, Japs, *JAPS*. Foreign-born, native-born, for sure and alleged Fifth Column. Raid their pads. Confiscate their goods. Transport them to ritzy horse stalls at Santa Anita.

Band 3 popped sound. Breuning and Carlisle bullshitted. Who shivved the Dudster? Their rambunctious kids. This meter maid with jugs out to here.

Breuning and Carlisle gassed. They hashed out the Fed’s phone-tap probe. The PD was knee-deep in shit. It’s a nail-biter.

City Hall was bugged and tapped, floor-to-rafters. Rival cop factions

spied on each other. Grifter cops, tonged-up cops, cop strikebreakers. The Feds took note and launched a probe.

Cop fiefdoms. Cop thieves. Cops in the Silver Shirts and German-American Bund. Calls to the DA's Office. Calls to Mayor Fletch Bowron. Detective Bureau cops be *scaaaared*.

Elmer was *scared*. He ran a call-girl ring. He peddled flesh to the L.A. elite. He made biz calls from the Vice squadroom.

The radio browned out. Shit—line crackle, static, hiss. Elmer twirled the dial. He caught some luck there. Good Lord—it's Cliffie Stone's *Hometown Jamboree*.

It was auld lang syne for displaced crackers. That was him, defined. Cliffie connoted hayrides and moonshine. Cliffie brought back Wisharts, North Carolina.

Wisharts was Klan Kountry. Geography is destiny. Klan life fucked up his daddy and big brother, Wayne Frank. That hate-the-jigs diet stuck in young Elmer's craw. He hit eighteen in '30. He joined the Marine Corps. Semper Fi: Parris Island, Camp Lejeune, Nicaragua.

Man-o-Man Managua. The Marine detachment backstops puppet *Führer* Somoza. Jarheads snuff his political rivals and stand embassy guard. They're bellhops and part-time assassins. *El Jefe* loves Lance Corporal E. V. Jackson. Hence a plum job: run *Jefe's* favorite whorehouse.

He learned the biz that way. It spawned his notion of call-service-to-your-door girls. *Jefe* shot him Plum Job #2. He watchdogged the L.A. police chief.

James Edgar "Two-Gun" Davis. One vivid lunatic. Davis and *Jefe* were sordid soul mates. They boozed and whored together. Davis loved Lance Corporal E. V. Jackson. Here's why:

A leftist zealot charged Davis with a machete. Lance Corporal Jackson shot and killed him. Davis shot Lance Corporal Jackson a police department appointment.

Goodbye, Marine Corps. Hello, Los Angeles.

Elmer liked police work. Davis set him up with a cooze pusher named Brenda Allen. Elmer and Brenda clicked. They concocted their phone-exchange biz and saw it flourish. The L.A. grand jury sacked Two-Gun Davis. He poked one Jailbait Jill too many and took it up the dirt road.

Call-Me-Jack's in now. He's got 7% of the call biz. Sergeant E. V. Jackson is twenty-nine. He's one lucky white man.

Cliffie Stone laid down hick ballads. That was Wayne Frank's mawk-

ish meter. Wayne Frank was a hate dog and nativist nabob. Kid brother Elmer notched opportunities. Wayne Frank harvested shit.

Wayne Frank goes Klan, goes rumdum, goes hobo. He habituates the West Coast and clocks an untimely end.

Elmer gargled Old Crow. He was half-tanked. It was 10:18. Tommy G. always hit between 10:00 and midnight.

The hick music rubbed him raw. He doused the radio and gassed on the rain. His prowler car was sunk fender-deep.

He checked the house. Cracked blinds gave him a look-see. Ellen was upstairs. She was pacing and smoking. She provided a Leg Show De-luxe. Smoke plumes plumed out a transom slot.

Elmer tuned in Band 3. Mike B. grouched to Dick C. Dudster this, Dudster that. More drift per their rambunctious kids.

More line fuzz and static. Elmer killed his jug and tossed it out the window. "Whoa, Junior" fuzzed in.

Elmer grabbed the receiver and flipped the talk switch. The fuzz-static cleared.

"Yeah, Mike."

"Our boy's coming south. He hopped the next-door fence. You take the front. Let him sniff Ellen and start upstairs before you sh—"

Elmer jumped.

He shoved out the door. He puddle-leaped and lunged for the curb. His shoes squished and leaked. He pulled his piece and chambered a round.

His hat flew off. The rain stung his eyes and ratched up his vision. He made the lawn/the front porch/the front door.

It's unlocked. Go in slow now. You oiled the hinges and jambs. Tommy won't hear shit.

He got inside. He smelled Ellen's cigarette smoke and perfume. He made for the stairway. He squished all over the living room rug.

Mike and Dick squished toward him. They hit the stairway. Everybody went *sssssbhh*.

They scoped Tommy's muddy footprints. They heard floorboard creaks and foot scuffs upstairs.

Mike winked. Dick did that slice-the-throat thing. Elmer gulped—*mother dog, holy shit*—

Ellen screamed.

Mike whooped. Dick whooped. They ran upstairs and raised a ruckus.

They bumped each other off the walls and hit the landing. Elmer heard front-window glass shatter. Tommy pulled some human-fly stunt.

Elmer ran back out the door. There's that black sky and sluice rain, there's half a glimpse. There's Human Fly Tommy, running northbound—

He's two front yards up. He's cutting toward the sidewalk. There's no soaked grass and more traction there.

Elmer cut crossways and hit asphalt. His flapping raincoat slowed him down. He gained ground, lost ground, gained ground. He aimed at Tommy's back and popped three rounds. Muzzle flash turned the rain red.

Tommy gained ground. Mike and Dick fired—back there, long-distance. Shots ricocheted off front porches.

Tommy ran east on 26th. Elmer caught a sideways look and emptied his clip. The flare messed with his eyes and made little halos.

Elmer ran east. He reloaded and sprinted. His raincoat slipped off. Window shades went up. He got some sight-in light.

He gained ground. His wind faltered. Something dropped from Tommy's pants pocket. He stopped and aimed tight. He had him, he had him, something said *DON'T*. He squeezed three shots wide on purpose.

Tommy cut north. He's a Human Fly. He's a fleet-foot rape-o. Watch him vamoose.

Elmer heard Mike and Dick, way back there. Shots bounced off the street. Them dumbfucks blasted will-o'-the-wisps.

Elmer stopped and caught some breath. He walked east and checked the sidewalk.

Tommy dropped something. Elmer saw it and picked it up. Well, now. Tommy dropped a red leather address book.

Ellen said, "Swell New Year's."

Elmer said, "I had that same thought."

"I guess you're not much of a shot."

"Come *on*. At night, in the rain?"

They drove through Hollywood. Ellen flopped at the Green Gables Apartments. It adjoined Paramount and lubed early cast calls. Ellen had a second marriage going. Two husbands and a kid at age twenty-seven. Her hubby was off with the Air Corps. She serviced Elmer's clients out of ennui. She serviced Elmer, likewise.

Elmer hit Melrose, westbound. Call it Aquacade by Night. Muted streetlamps. The blackout and curb-high floodwater.

Ellen lit a cigarette. “He pulled out his pecker and waved it. That’s when I screamed.”

Elmer yocked. Ellen wagged a pinkie. Tommy Glennon—hung like a cashew.

Elmer yocked anew. Ellen groped his trouser pockets and extracted his roll. She peeled off a fifty and stuffed the roll back.

“That felt nice.”

“Not tonight. The weekend, maybe.”

“I’ve got late duty. My bodyguard gig with Hideo Ashida.”

Ellen said, “He’s cute, for a Jap. Do you think he’s queer?”

“Come on. He’s the best forensic chemist in this white man’s PD.”

Ellen tossed her cigarette. “Tell Jack Horrall thanks for the fifty, and tell him no more bait jobs for this little black duck.”

“Anything else?”

“Tell him I said you should go back in the Marines. There’s a war on, and you should be fighting it, like my husband.”

Elmer said, “Do you love me?”

Ellen said, “No. You’re just my wartime diversion.”

Ellen scrambled at the Gables. Elmer U-turned and booked east. This nutty brainstorm percolated. His short hairs prickled on overdrive.

Tommy G. lived at the Gordon Hotel. Breuning and Carlisle were too lazy to go toss it. The Gordon was straight up Melrose.

Let’s prow! Tommy’s room. Let’s sniff leads. Let’s get some buy-back on that fuckup. Let’s mess with Dudley Smith.

The Dudster gored his goat. Hey, Elmer—toast this guy. That don’t sit right. He ain’t no black-robe killer.

The goddamn rain. Backed-up sewers. Mud slides. No hot toddies, no swell women.

Elmer parked upside the Gordon and puddle-jumped in. The lobby was threadbare. A clerk dozed by the switchboard. He wore a green felt leprechaun hat.

Tommy rented 216. Elmer walked upstairs and braced the door. He caught zero voices and no radio warble. He pulled his piece and shoulder-popped the jamb.

No Tommy. No nobody. Just this flop. Just this twelve-by-twelve den of despair.

No bathroom. One closet. A milk-bottle pissoir by the bed. No chairs. One closet, one chest of drawers.

Elmer locked himself in. Thunder shook the whole building. Geeks yelled “Happy New Year!” out on Melrose.

He checked the closet. It contained nada. That meant Tommy lammed. He had a car or stole a car. He traded shots with three cops and vamoosed. Farewell, you rape-o cocksucker.

Elmer tossed the drawers. He caught some provocative shit.

A teach-yourself-Spanish book. A smut-photo book. Spicy donkey-show pix, à la Tijuana. Note the porkpie hat on *El Burro*.

Nazi armbands. Jap flags. One tattoo stencil. Note the excised parts:

Outlines for swastikas. Outlines for an “SQ” circumscribed by coiled snakes.

Elmer thumbed Tommy’s address book. More odd shit accrued. Look—there’s no addresses and no full names.

Look—a “J.S.” and a Hollywood exchange. “St. Vib’s” and a downtown exchange. It’s probably St. Vibiana’s catholic church.

Look—RE-8761. No names or initials. Republic’s a south-of-downtown exchange.

Look—MA-4993. That number’s familiar. He scoured his brain and snagged it.

Eddie Leng’s Kowloon. A Chinatown slop chute. It’s open-all-nite. It features tasty shark-fin soup.

Eddie Leng was a Four Families tong geek. Tommy G. was a known tong associate.

Plus: three more no name/no initial numbers.

Elmer grabbed the wall phone and roused the switchboard geek. Get me MA-6884, pronto.

The Detective Bureau. The Vice Squad night line. It was manned round the clock.

He got four rings and a pickup. He heard noisemaker squeal. The clerk came off blotto.

“Uh . . . yeah?”

“Rise and shine, dipshit. You got phone numbers to run.”

The clerk yawned. “That you, Elmer?”

“It’s me, so grab your pencil.”

“I got it here someplace.”

Elmer said, “HO-4612. The subscriber’s got the initials J.S.”

“Okay, I got—”

“The number for St. Vibiana’s Church, and the subscriber name for RE-8761.”

The clerk perked up. “I know that last number. It’s a hot-box pay phone, and them *farkakte* phone-probe Feds been looking at it. A lot of hinky City Hall guys make their hinky calls from there.”

Elmer said, “Don’t stop now.”

“Who’s stopping? I was just pausing.”

“Come on. Don’t string this—”

“It used to be a bookie’s hot-box, and the drift is it still is. It’s over on 11th and Broadway, by the *Herald*. That *farkakte* reporter Sid Hudgens stiffes his unkosher calls from it.”

Sid the Yid. Scandal scribe, putz provocateur. St. Vib’s—the papist hot spot. Eddie Leng’s eatery.

Tommy, what does this shit portend?

2

DUDLEY SMITH

(LOS ANGELES, 11:30 P.M., 12/31/41)

Surging brass. Soaring reeds. Driving rain in syncopation.

The muster room jumped. The Count and his boys cranked it. “Annie Laurie” now. Up-tempo and grandly Gaelic.

The room broiled. Steam heat fights cold L.A. winter. Dance-once-a-year cops danced tonight and overdid it. They quaffed table booze and tossed their dates, willy-nilly. The Count observed. White folks were circus clowns. This confirmed it.

Dudley watched. He had a side table and a cracked-for-air window. He wore his Army dress uniform. Claire wore a kelly green frock.

The Archbishop played to her. J. J. Cantwell liked women. He observed his vows and properly abstained. Monsignor Joe Hayes ignored

Claire. She converted. It proved her inauthentic. He reluctantly served as her confessor.

Women repulsed Monsignor Joe. He liked boys. He contravened his vows and indulged his bent.

Father Coughlin liked raw discourse. His trinity was booze, slander, and foment. He loathed the Reds and the kikes. He played to the nuns at St. Vib's and sundered them with hate tracts. He lived to sway souls and spawn discontent.

A waiter restocked the table. He bowed and laid out scotch, gin, and ice. The waiters were county jail trusties. This lad was a weenie waver. He habituated schoolyards and slammed his ham.

Claire freshened drinks. The clerics lit cigarettes and imbibed. The Archbishop ogled Claire. Monsignor Joe ogled the waiter. Father Charles doodled up a napkin. He drew swastikas dripping blood.

Dudley adjusted his sling. His left arm had sustained multiple shiv wounds. A pesky Chink, surely. Tong intrigue, most likely. He was allied with Uncle Ace Kwan and Hop Sing. Said alliance might have spawned rival-tong enmity. Said shiv man would soon be sternly rebuked.

Claire shared her morphine. It facilitated his rapid recovery. Her love for him outweighed her habit. The drug salved pain and rendered the world elegiac. It granted noblesse oblige.

It deadened his recent failures. Pearl Harbor and the Jap roundups as one big botched business deal.

He hatched war-profit schemes. Ace Kwan assisted him. They all went blooey. He chased a heroin stash in Baja. Mike Breuning, Dick Carlisle, and Hideo Ashida assisted. That went blooey. It was Captain Carlos Madrano's stash. Madrano and the Mex Staties interdicted the Smith cartel. A Jap sub fiasco played in. He planted nitro in Madrano's car and blew up *El Capitán*. It was small recompense.

Father Coughlin knew Madrano's replacement. José Vasquez-Cruz was anti-Red and anti-Jew, but less overtly *Fascista*. Baja bodes again now. Police Sergeant Smith as Army Captain Smith. He'll meet Vasquez-Cruz and perhaps seek to suborn him. Baja bodes as opportunity reborn.

Count Basie kicked off a Latin-tinged ballad. Claire squeezed his good arm. Let's dance, *mi corazon*.

The sling curtailed movement. Dudley let Claire help him up and lead him. She cradled his bad arm. They danced close. Claire laid her head on his shoulder.

She said, "We'll be there in two weeks. We'll get tired of this music."

“Major Melnick has secured us a grand hotel suite. We’ll have our own terrace, with a lovely ocean view.”

Claire nuzzled up. “We’ll go to Mass and observe all the saints’ days. We’ll be taller and better-looking than everyone else, and they won’t believe how well we speak Spanish.”

Dudley laughed. “The hoi polloi will adore you. They’ll call you ‘*La Gringa*’ behind your back, and wonder how this mick thug got so lucky.”

“Don’t deride yourself, dear. Never forget that I’ve civilized you more than you’ve corrupted me.”

“It’s a toss-up, isn’t it? It’s a determination that time and fate will reveal.”

Claire said, “Yes, darling. It is all of that.”

The dance floor was packed. Revelers bumped and tangled up their feet. Dudley swapped grins with his fellow policemen.

There’s Lieutenant Thad Brown. He’s jawing with a high-yellow songstress. There’s ex-Chief Davis, spiking the punchbowl. There’s Captain Bill Parker and Kay Lake. They comprise a dashed romance. There’s a full room between them. They shoot sparks across it, nonetheless. Parker’s a persistent burr in his tail. Miss Lake’s comely, if fatuous.

Parker’s in uniform. Note his soggy blues and drooping gunbelt. He’s been clocking traffic grief in the rain. He’s hiding out from his wife. He’s here to ogle comely Kay Lake.

Many men find La Lake brilliant and alluring. Parker surely does. He himself does not. She’s a dilettante and a round-heeled police buff. She’s nonconjugally shackled with surly Officer Lee Blanchard. Parker is pious and dangerous. He may ascend to Chief one day.

Bill Parker. The Watanabe case. Roadblocks on his sprint, post–Pearl Harbor.

Fujio Shudo. The Werewolf psychopath. He was Sergeant D. L. Smith’s proffered slayer. Bill Parker worked for a true solve. Bill Parker failed. Hideo Ashida assisted Sergeant Smith. It cinched the whole deal.

Claire swayed close. Dudley felt her tremors. She’d excuse herself soon. She’d retrieve her hypodermic.

He steadied her. She steadied him. It was a new love affair and a most tender pact.

His arm ached. He’d lost weight. The attack climaxed his post–Pearl Harbor sprint.

He vowed vengeance. Mike and Dick were meeting him later. They recruited some Alien Squad muscle. A grand tong sweep loomed.

The Count segued to “Adios.” Soft reeds with low-brass punctuation. A Mexican motif.

Claire said, “Good-byes are never that beautiful.”

Dudley kissed her neck. She was damp there. He knew her body and her dope habit already.

“It’s our song, for the war’s duration. It prohibits all farewells.”

Claire shuddered. He eased her back to their table. Father Charles launched a raw joke. “Have you heard it, Your Eminence? It’s the swell tale of Come-San-Chin, the Chinese cocksucker.”

J. J. Cantwell roared. Joe Hayes glowered. Claire snatched her clutch and made for the loo.

She cuts a swath. Drunken cops step aside. She betrays no haste and smiles at each one.

Dudley checked his watch. It’s 11:51. Where’s Mike and Dick? Where’s dim bulb Elmer Jackson?

Quo vadis, Tommy Glennon?

Tommy self-decreed his extinction. A three-count indictment levied charges. Count One: Tommy raped women and thus annulled the civil contract. Count Two: Tommy was Sergeant D. L. Smith’s ex-snitch and pal of current-snitch Huey Cressmeyer. Count Three: Tommy ran wetbacks for ex-Baja kingpin Carlos Madrano.

Count Three, subordinate clause:

He visited Tommy at Quentin, mid-November. Tommy pumped him per Madrano and his own Mexican plans. He has *grand* Mexican plans. He will exploit his Army SIS status to implement them. He will push heroin and run wetbacks. He will sell jailed Japs into slavery. Tommy could fuck it all up. Thus, Tommy must die.

Dudley chased pills with club soda. Two for knife-wound pain. Three bennies for late-night woo-woo.

Cantwell, Hayes, and Coughlin were shit-faced. They defamed the coons and Red scourge Joe Stalin. The English prattys concocted this war and brought in the Jew bankers. They fixed the ’36 Olympics. That shine Jesse Owens? He runs slow as me old Irish granny.

Ten seconds to midnight. Count Basie rolled the trumpets—9, 8, 7, 6—

Dudley stood up. Cops waved table flags. Dudley waved the Stars and Stripes and Irish Republican green.

—5, 4, 3, 2—

Mike and Dick walked in. Dudley saw them. Such grand goons they were. They saw Dudley and cringed.

Dudley waved and went *Tommy?* Mike and Dick shook their heads *no*.

—1, zero, *HAPPY NEW YEAR*—

Shouts, back slaps, popped corks galore. Noisemaker blare and flags on sticks—

The Count kicked off “Auld Lang Syne.” Dudley reeled. The mock ballroom went hothouse hot and spun topsy-turvy.

His arm throbbed. He thought he’d faint. Claire sailed up to him.

She steadied him and kissed him.

She said, “It’s our time, love.”

3

JOAN CONVILLE

(SAN DIEGO, 12:15 A.M., 1/1/42)

Should auld acquaintance be—

Yells and hoots. Noisemaker shriek. Shouted toasts and *Remember Pearl Harbor!!!*

Revelers crammed up the Sky Room. You’ve got Navy brass on a toot. There’s grabbing and groping. There’s full-length necking on the dance floor.

Stan Kenton presents “Artistry in Rhythm.” The Misty June Christy purrs select vocals. The Sky Room was glass-walled and umpteen floors high. You got wide views of battle-dressed beachfront. You got storm clouds and the world’s darkest sky.

Joan dodged gropes. She clutched her purse and made for the door. She was half-gassed. L.A. was three hours north. Army checkpoints would stall traffic. The shoreline blackout would drop shroudlike.

She dodged last-ditch gropes and escaped. She made the elevator and pushed 1. Mirrored walls hemmed her in. They were too good to pass up.

She winked. She whistled. She was too proud to falter and too tall and good-looking to lose.

Her red hair. Her green eyes. Her bold six-foot sway. Her trim winter uniform. Gold buttons and braid.

Lieutenant Junior Grade J. W. Conville, USNR. You shitbird Japs better watch out.

She enlisted in L.A. on Pearl Harbor day. It was pure impulse. She kicked out her one-night lover and drove downtown. The Fed building was deluged. She stood in line six hours straight.

Anchors aweigh.

She was a registered nurse and graduate biologist. Her jazzy CV got her a rank jump at the gate. Nurse Corps training camp loomed. She put in for battleship duty. Point Loma, here I come.

The elevator jarred and stopped. There's the lobby. Joan pushed her way through swarms of rich stiff.

The famous El Cortez Hotel. Dowagers and old guys in tuxedos. Walls festooned with tricolored bunting. THWAP THE JAP! signs. Fat Wallace Beery, signing autographs.

Joan ducked out to the parking lot. Short men google-eyed her. Holy moly—*the rain*.

She got soaked. She found her car and huddled in. She kicked the heater and ran the wipers. She lit a cigarette. She popped over to the coast road, northbound.

She observed blackout regs and rode her low beams, exclusive. They lit up this *loooooong* rain sluice. Beach waves crashed off to her left.

She chain-smoked. She knew the sober-up drill, inside out. Fix on task and quash those dozen highballs.

She blew out of Dago proper. Traffic thinned. She hit a clear stretch and goosed up more speed.

Barrel through. It's the Conville family code.

It was Earle Everett Conville's code. It's his elder daughter's now. It's not the kid sister's. She married a papist and smeared Big Earle's legacy.

That clear stretch telescoped. It formed one black hole, here to always. Joan floored the gas. Her low beams hit rain smashing down.

Wind slashed it horizontal. Just like Tomah, Wisconsin.

The wind played tricks. Snow flew horizontal. Uprooted trees flew likewise. Big Earle was the Monroe County game warden. He made Joan blast felled trees with a 10-gauge shotgun. Five trees supplied all-winter kindling.

Her hometown curriculum. Dead, like her parents. Absent, like her sister and inbred cousins in Bilgewater, Scotland. Usurped by nursing school and grad work at Northwestern. Gone, like her numerous men.

Holy moly—this rain.

She barreled through. It's what Convilles do. She chain-smoked. It fought her booze load. She slowed for an Army checkpoint. Saboteur Alert. She slowed for a cop checkpoint. Wetback Alert. White thugs smuggled wets in car trunks and flatbed trucks.

The cops wore blue serge and fat gun belts. They brought back this L.A. police captain. He all but swooned for her.

Northwestern. Spring 1940. This skinny sad sack with glasses. He followed her everywhere. He watched her shoot skeet off Lake Michigan. He eyeballed her at sock hops. She almost asked him to dance.

Nobody knew his name. He was in for some traffic cops' seminar. He peeped Joan Woodard Conville in his spare time.

The seminar ended. The captain vanished. Here's the weird epilogue. She saw him in L.A., three nights back.

Hollywood Boulevard. A war-bond rally. The Ritz Brothers grovel for laughs. *Poof*—she sees him. *Poof*—he sees her. *Poof*—he's gone again.

The checkpoint cops waved her through. One cop whistled. Joan blew him a kiss and floored the gas.

Rain came down vertical. Wind kicked it horizontal. Rain brought back Big Earle—a forest fire casualty.

Big Earle, firefighter. Big Earle, shitkicker and drunk. Big Earle, friend and foe of migrant Indians hooked on bathtub juice.

He hired them to fight forest fires. They blew their pay on hooch and started more fires for more wampum. A big blaze hits—April 9, '38. Maybe it's the Indians. Maybe it's not. Maybe it's premeditated arson.

E. E. Conville, dead at forty-nine. Her father, burned alive. The U.S. Forest Service investigates. Their call: "No evidence of arson extant."

Joan disagreed. She switched grad-school majors. She dropped pre-med for biology. She studied *forensic* biology. She haunted the blaze site. She studied soil and tree-wood samples. She interviewed Indians and compiled a suspect list. A soused Indian fondled her. She blew his left foot off with her shotgun.

She shredded her suspect list. It wasn't liquored-up redskins. The fire felt deliberate—not haphazard.

She discovered an airplane-fuel spill. It was near the fire's flash point. She examined fuel-laced soil. She determined the molecular content and

the fuel's brand name. She traced the fuel to a charter-airplane service in Duluth, Minnesota. The service pointed her to Mitchell A. Kupp.

Kupp called himself an inventor. He lived off of family money. He was pals with Charles Lindbergh. Kupp chartered a small aircraft on 4/9/38 and flew it over Monroe County.

She learned all that. Her case fizzled, then. Her fuel-spill evidence was erratically collected and logged. She could not attribute motive. She could not connect E. E. Conville to Mitchell A. Kupp in any discernible way.

Barrel through. It's what Convilles do. Big Earle expects it.

She held down night-nurse jobs. She crash-coursed her master's degree. She read extensively. She devoured monographs by L.A. coroner Norton Layman and police chemist Hideo Ashida. She took her degree and moved to L.A. She got a lab job and applied to the doctorate program at Cal Tech.

Joan barreled through. It's what Convilles do. She'll return to Wisconsin and avenge Big Earle's death. Vengeance is *thine*.

Banzai. Pearl Harbor preempts her. She's a sucker for hot dates. It's her hot date with History.

Rain battered her car. Visibility decreased. Pooled water doused her low beams and cut sight lines down to zero.

Thunder boomed. Joan sighted in off lightning flare. She hit close-to-L.A. traffic. She chained cigarettes. She downshifted, fishtailed, swerved. She saw a sign for Venice Boulevard.

She pulled right. She went woozy and white-knuckled the wheel. She got light-headed. It's that booze-catching-up feel—

Lights hit the windshield. Big full-on *headlights*. They violated black-out reg—

Joan went glare-blind. She rubbed her eyes and lost the wheel. She smashed the lights and this great big something.

4

HIDEO ASHIDA

(LOS ANGELES, 2:30 A.M., 1/1/42)

The Werewolf sleeps. He's fetal-curl'd and looks pacified. Oblivion becomes him.

He has a one-man/vacant-tier cell. Jailers keep him penned up and sedated. Fujio Shudo/age thirty-eight/male Japanese. He's bought and paid for. He's down for four counts of Murder One.

A sanity hearing pends. It's strictly rubber stamp. He allegedly killed the four Watanabes. It was a sex lust/pro-fascist caper. He's green room-bound. He'll be dead inside six months. Police chemist Hideo Ashida stands complicit.

Ashida watched the Werewolf sleep. Lee Blanchard watched and kibitzed. Big Lee. Kay Lake's faux lover, ex-heavyweight contender.

"The Werewolf and the Wolfman. I don't know the difference. Maybe it's the actors who play them."

They stood in the vacant-tier catwalk. Thunder echoed. Barred windowpanes shook.

Ashida said, "It's one symbolic character, with differing narratives."

Blanchard yawned. "I don't mind bodyguarding you, Hideo. But the Central Station jail ain't my idea of New Year's Eve kicks."

The Werewolf snored. The Werewolf twitched and sucked his thumb.

Blanchard said, "Talk to me, Wolf. Tell me something I don't know."

Ashida ventriloquized the creature. He kept the spiel internal. He mimicked the Werewolf's pidgin-English/Japanese stew.

Dudley Smith framed me. Sensei Ashida assisted. Dudley Smith coerced him. Dudley Smith applied pressure and made the frame stand. Sensei Ashida fawns for Sergeant Smith.

Blanchard nipped off his flask. "Here's to you, Werewolf. You want my opinion? You deserve the loony bin more than the gas chamber."

Ashida grabbed the flask. "We should go upstairs. I'm on call to Traffic. Captain Parker might call in."

"He was at the City Hall bash. Him and Kay were making with the big eyes."

Ashida sipped brandy. He rarely drank. This small dose induced a small glow.

“I’m sure she makes you uncomfortable. She must be difficult to live with.”

Blanchard grinned. “My shack job’s ‘difficult,’ but my shack job’s Kay Lake, which has its compensations. She’s always off to something new. You want the latest? She’s fallen in with these classical-music types, out in Brentwood. Mostly Reds and Jews, on the run from *der Führer*. I don’t know how much time she’s got for Bill Parker.”

Ashida passed the flask. His eyes burned. The cold jail went warm. Ashida felt antsy. He was backlogged. Pearl Harbor put the lab in arrears. The Japanese roundups spawned massive confiscations. Evidence log-ins stood un-logged, back to mid-December.

He stood un-jailed. His family stood free. The roundups would resume, tomorrow. Dudley Smith’s patronage vouched his freedom. He lived in a Biltmore Hotel suite. His mother and brother had their own rooms. Dudley’s patronage carried a price. Call the Werewolf frame part and parcel.

Blanchard said, “You’re in a trance, Hideo. Maybe it’s all that caustic shit you been sniffing.”

Ashida smiled. They walked out to the jailside hallway. Ashida heard snores.

Blanchard went *ssssbb*. He pointed to the Alien Squad cot room. They walked over and peeked in.

Confiscated swag covered the floor. Radios, flags, Nazi Lugers. Kanji script and English-language hate tracts. Hate the Chinks, hate the Jews, hate all Americans.

Plus three plainclothesmen, sprawled out on cots. They were stripped to their skivvies. Their sidearms and belt gear were piled adjacent. Brass knucks, leather truncheons, beavertail saps.

Three big guys. Cop heavies. On-call strikebreaker types.

Blanchard said, “Lunceford, Rice, and Kapek. You’ve got the Silver Shirts and the Thunderbolt Legion represented here. These dinks chasing down Fifth Column Japs? Don’t tell me I don’t know what’s ironic.”

A bluesuit walked up. He was blitzed. He wore a dumb party hat and a WELCOME 1942 button.

“Captain Parker called, Ashida. He needs you in Venice. It’s a vehicular homicide. There’s four dead wetbacks and some Navy woman in custody.”

Pole-mounted tarps held the rain back. A sawhorse barricade held off the looky-loos. It's a Car-Crash Inferno and Car-Crash Holocaust.

Head-on collision: '36 Dodge coupe hits jalopy. No visible skidmarks. Eastbound Dodge, westbound heap. Two front ends accordion-pressed.

The Dodge: minus the driver's-side door. The heap: compressed to the rear seats and trunk ledge.

Flares marked the crash site. Prowl cars stood close. Two morgue sleds were parked snout-to-snout. There's four sheet-draped stretchers, out in the wet.

Blanchard pulled up to the flare line. Ashida got out and eyeballed the site. He deployed Man Camera. *Click, click*—a wide-lens shot.

Click—no skid marks. *Click*—the rain erased them. *Click*—the blown door saved the Navy woman's life. *Click*—there's more damage to the heap. *Click*—the Navy woman was speeding. *Click*—the jalopy driver was slowing down.

Ashida walked up to the stretchers. Wind tugged at his hat. Rain stung his eyes.

All four sheets were blood-soaked. Ashida pulled them halfway down. Four clicks clicked. Let's extrapolate.

Four male Mexicans. All dead. Two men in the front seat, two men in the back.

Head-on impact. The frontseat men sustain massive chest wounds. Their hearts explode. The backseat men sustain downward-thrust trauma and are thus disemboweled.

Ashida looked up. Bill Parker stepped out of his prowl car. An empty pint jug fell from his lap.

It clattered and rolled. Ashida looked away. He heard a muffled shriek.

He tracked it. He walked up to the jalopy. He flashed his Man Camera, in tight. The trunk lid's ajar. Something's in there.

He jammed up the lid. He saw a little boy. The boy was crushed dead under a spare tire. A little girl murmured and coughed blood.

She tried to say something. Ashida picked her up and held her close. She clawed at his face and died in his arms.

5

(LOS ANGELES, 3:15 A.M., 1/1/42)

Kwan's Chinese Pagoda. It's open-all-nite. It's a cop haunt. It's Hop Sing Tong HQ and *the* Chinatown hot spot.

Here's Uncle Ace Kwan. He's a PD puppet. He's your warlord-restauranteur.

The rain killed business. Local Chinks and night owls stayed home. The boys hogged a prime table.

The Dudster held court. Ace laid on pupu platters and mai tais. He was sixty-six years old and too thin. He switchblade-skewered fried dumplings and snarfed them.

Oooga-booga. All-cop summit. It's that botched stakeout. There's this fugitive rape-o at large.

The boys noshed and boozed. Elmer chased two bennies with Bromo Seltzer and went *aaabb!* Mike Breuning and Dick Carlisle sulked. Also present: Catbox Cal Lunceford, Wendell Rice, and George Kapek. Tag them shithead goons roused from sleep.

All eyes on Dudley. Elmer's the most. This mick fuck sends him out to kill a man. That don't sit right.

The Dudster played off-key. His voice fluttered. His arm sling seeped. His Army threads fit slack. Elmer eyed him surreptitious and tried to look contrite.

Dud passed out roust sheets. Tommy Glennon's KAs and known haunts. Chink-o-phile Tommy. He perched in C-town. The sheet tagged juke joints, whore cribs, and dope dens.

The boys skimmed the sheets. Dudley tapped his fork. *Achtung, meine kameraden!*

"We're here to redress tactical errors committed earlier this evening, and perhaps accrue collateral leads on the man who shanked me in the basement here three days ago. He was a slight man, well within the bodily range one expects to see in the Chinese. He also wore a lacquered-wood mask, one depicting Oriental features, such as the masks worn by Japanese actors in the Japs' more arcane theatrical productions. I sense a baroque and oddly playful sensibility at work. You would honor me by

bringing in this rare bird alive, as you would by shooting Tommy Glennon on sight.”

Mike and Dick fawned. They went *Yeah, boss* and dispensed grins. Catbox Cal cracked his knuckles. Rice and Kapek glared. Elmer scoped their belt shit. Per always—they packed saps and throwdown guns.

Elmer reskimmed his roust sheet. One column tagged locations. He noted boocoo spots nearby. Yeah—but where’s Eddie Leng’s Kowloon?

He’d memorized Tommy’s address book. It held damn few listings. Eddie’s joint stood out.

Rice said, “We should take these guys to the Bureau? Put the boots to them there?”

Dudley lit a cigarette. “Brace them where you find them. Bring your likely suspects here.”

Ace knifed a fried shrimp. “You bring to basement. We put balls in vise and burn with cigarettes.”

Elmer gulped. His windpipe bobbed. Dudley clocked it. Elmer clocked his clock.

Kapek said, “Say we get us a whole shitload. Call for a whore wagon then?”

Dudley said, “Shackle chains. Hook them up and march them down Broadway. Create a stir. Make a statement. The PD stands with Hop Sing. Four Families *chingasos y putasos*.”

Lunceford said, “Dud’s practicing. He’s Mexico-bound.”

Ace knifed a rumaki. “Viva the Chinaman and white man! Kill all jigaboos and Japs!”

Elmer yukked. Ace was a moon dog psycho. He ran afield sometimes.

Breuning drained his mai tai. “Tommy’s tonged up the ying-yang. Him and Four Families go way back.”

Elmer unwrapped a cigar. “We should issue an APB and call the Immigration cops. Tommy used to run wetbacks. He’ll have a green sheet, sure as shit.”

Dudley smiled. “No. You precipitated this fuckup, Elmer. Now, go forth with your grand colleagues and remedy that.”

Two squads swamped C-town. They wore rain slickers and packed shackle chains and belt gear. Lunceford went with Breuning and Carlisle. Elmer went with Kapek and Rice.

North Broadway was all bars and slop chutes. Local Chinks and

white stiffs hobknobbed. New Year's increased foot trade. The big rain decreased it. Both squads trekked north.

Elmer's squad took the west flank. Elmer packed his .45 and a buckshot-stitched sap. He walked point and carried the billy club. It was Chink sweep de rigueur.

Rice and Kapek lugged the shackle chains. They were six-two beef-cake types and well suited. They shoulder-draped the chains and went hunchback. It pissed them off.

The PD was Hop Sing-allied. Uncle Ace was Jack Horrall's #1 Chink. Hop Sing joints were sacrosanct, Four Families the converse. Fuck last month's tong truce.

Elmer walked point. He smashed front windows and galvanized attention. He went in the door first. Rice and Kapek fanned out behind him. They ignored eeeeks, shrieks, and flustered women. They braced blue-kerchief tong guys and went in tough.

Elmer took the bar-stool guys. He sap-smashed hands on bar-tops and broke bones. He kicked over bar stools. He logged bilingual eeeeks and shrieks.

Rice and Kapek took the booths and tables. They donned sap gloves and broke faces. They dunked said mugs in tureens of shark-fin soup.

The boys hovered close and tossed questions. They pushed past eeeek and shriek. They got *Don't know nothing, don't know nothing!* They got *Nobody know who slice Dudster—not us, not us!*

Elmer stood by. He posed tough. He looked *untough* upside Kapek and Rice. He leaned close. He logged gibberish laced with rat-outs.

Tommy Glennon know Huey Cressmeyer! Tommy go queer up at Preston!

It was pidgin English. Elmer called it "*Chinklish*." Sputters and nonsense talk. Some enticing tattle. Huey C. was a known Dudster snitch.

That's it for bars and slop chutes. That's it for North Broadway. It's all lackluster leads. There's no shackle bait yet.

The boys cut west on Ord. Elmer smashed clubhouse windows. Rice and Kapek kicked in doors. They tore down to basements and stormed opium dens.

They encountered noxious smoke and hopheads on pallets. Coolies packed pipes and lugged water bowls. *You know Chiang Kai-shek, papasan? You know famous sleuth Charlie Chan?*

The dens served a Chink clientele. Some white swells made the scene. There's a city council hump. There's Ellen's studio rival—ice-blond Veronica Lake.

Rice and Kapek thumped blue-kerchief guys. They imitated Jap Zeros. They knocked tong punks off pallets and hauled them down from Cloud 9. Elmer water-doused them. The noxious fumes messed with his gourd.

He clubbed “O” fiends. Ankle and wrist shots. Eeeek-and-shriek inducers. Rice and Kapek lobbed queries. Gibberish and half-baked leads accrued.

Tommy G. run wets from T.J.! Tommy G. supply truck farms in Imperial Valley! Don't know who slice Dudster—don't know, don't know, don't know!

Elmer laid on the hurt. Rice and Kapek worked their sap gloves. They got more eeeek and more shriek, and more *Chinklish*.

Tommy nancy boy! Don't know where he is! Tommy poking some priest!

Elmer caught *that* one. It brought back Tommy's address book. It underlined the St. Vib's listing.

Rice and Kapek went pure rogue. They lifted wallets and plucked cash rolls. The fumes got to Elmer. “O” plus bennies induced all this weird wispy shit.

He went *eeek* his own self. He upchucked on some Chinaman's shoes and made for the door. He bumped into Veronica Lake. She said, “Whoa, sailor.”

The rain felt good. It cleared his skull somewhat. All those colored rain-drops went neutral again.

He lost his billy club. He still had his hat, badge, and roscoe. His watch said 4:35. It was still dark. It was still Chinatown and still Ord Street.

He recalled Tommy's address book. He recalled that number for Eddie Leng's Kowloon.

Kantones Kuisine. Ord & Hill. Your gracious host, Eddie Leng.

It's a block up. Why not? Maybe Veronica's there. Maybe she'll smile at you. Maybe she'll sleep with you. You won't know till you try.

He walked over. The rain felt good. There's Eddie's place. It looks dark. That plays wrong. It's a 24-hour dive.

Elmer pressed up to the window. He left nose prints on the glass. Okay—the kitchen doorway's lit up.

He shook the doorknob. The door was ajar. He walked in and shut the door behind him. His eyeballs adjusted. He popped through the dining room. He smelled something all scorched up.

He knew from scorched. He'd flamethrowered Nicaraguan insurgents. It dispersed crowds good. Those humps got their tail feathers singed.

Elmer weaved toward the kitchen. He bumped tables and chairs. He made the doorway and saw all the stoves and deep-dip fryers. Well, shit—it's *fried* flesh, not scorched.

Eddie Leng was rope-cinched to a four-burner stove. He was bare-foot. Charred anklebones extended from two fryer thingamajigs. Residual grease and blood bubbled. Eddie's feet got deep-fried.

Elmer reeled and caught himself. He double-scanned the stiff. Eddie wore reet-pleat pants and a Hawaiian shirt. Some fuck folded his hands on his chest.

Note the tattoo. It's there on the right forefinger-thumb web. It's an "SQ" circled by snakes. Remember Tommy Glennon's tattoo stencil? It's flat out just like that.

6

(LOS ANGELES, 4:45 A.M., 1/1/42)

Opium.

His private room at Kwan's. The tar, the match, the pipe. It's a tainted locale now. He was knifed in this selfsame spot.

Dudley smoked opium. It stamped his travel visa and whooshed him off to wispy locales. Stopover, Baja. Seaside Ensenada appears.

There's shoreline coves. There's Jap subs stashed out of sight. Nitroglycerin explodes. There's Carlos Madrano—now particulate waste.

There's Tommy Glennon. He's wearing a sombrero and bullfighter chaps. Mike Breuning and Dick Carlisle mewl. They've been transmogrified to *dos perros*. There's no dead prey for their master. There's Elmer Jackson, bad shot and bumptious trash.

Dudley smoked opium. He succumbed to pictures and colors. His mind still logically tracked.

Stopover, Beverly Hills. Claire De Haven's Colonial manse. The Red Queen spars with the Cop Arriviste.

They express inimical views. They walk upstairs. There's the too-bright bedroom sun. He counts the freckles on Claire's back.

Stopover, Dublin.

His trek to the New World. Joe Kennedy and Father Coughlin wave. Uncle Joe donates gun money. J. J. Cantwell funnels it to Republican causes. It's 1921. Dudley Liam Smith's a schoolboy killer. Uncle Joe says he'll sponsor American citizenship.

There's a Grafton Street skirmish. Schoolboy Smith shoots three Black-and-Tans. Their faces explode.

Dudley trembled. He dropped the pipe, the pallet shook, the colors and pictures dispersed. He saw Tommy Glennon as he looks today.

Another wayward Irish lad. A Coughlinite, a rape-o, a snitch.

Tommy at that costume party. Brentwood, winter '39. The Jewish Maestro's home, sublet. Nazi antics reenacted. Orgiastic overtones. *Sturmbannführer* D. L. Smith injudiciously attends.

Dudley fought back jitters. He reached for his pipe. He saw an envelope on the floor.

Popped through a door crack. A colored envelope. A Western Union telegram.

Dudley slit the envelope and read it. The tone was brusque. The gist was *this*:

It's an active-duty summons. We're calling you in, early. Report to the Special Intelligence Service command post in Ensenada, *NOW*.

7

(LOS ANGELES, 6:30 A.M., 1/1/42)

Thumps. Muted squeals. Dream fade—you're half in, half out.

Murmurs now. Sing-song voices. You're more out than in.

They're foreign voices. They're all female and all Jap. It's a movie encore. It's that film they show Navy recruits.

Know Your Foe. Loose Lips Sink Ships. Jap Women Report to Jap Men.

Joan woke up. She assessed it all, quicksville.

Booze blackout. You're driving up the coast road. Then something happens. Now you're *HERE*.

A jail cell. A hard bunk. Her scuffed palms. Her rumpled uniform.

She heard real voices. She distinguished them and counted five altogether. There were five Jap matrons, crammed in a cell down the tier.

Joan stood up and stretched. The Jap ladies stared at her. Joan stared right back.

They looked down and went *I'm so humble*. Joan looked past them. She saw dawn out a window and more goddamn rain.

No purse, no cigarettes. This goddamn cell. Odd aches and pains.

Joan tucked her blouse in. She flexed her hands and smoothed out her coat and skirt. She stood by the front bars and willed panache.

A door clanged. A uniformed cop walked up. He was mid-sized and slight. Joan loomed over him.

Captain's bars and three hashmarks. Wire-rim glasses. They magnified his dark brown eyes. He'd never be handsome. He'd always be unnerving.

So, it's you. Northwestern—spring 1940.

He said, "Lieutenant Conville."

A prairie drawl. The Dakotas, maybe.

Joan said, "We haven't met, but I've seen you before."

"My name's Parker. I'm with the Los Angeles Police Department. I command the Traffic Division."

"Acknowledge me, will you? 'I've seen you before.'"

Parker gripped the bars. "You might well have. I checked your enlistment file. We attended Northwestern concurrently."

Joan gripped the bars. Their hands were close. Joan moved hers away.

"Can you be more emphatic? You seemed to be surveilling me then."

Parker got out his cigarettes and offered the pack. Joan took one. Parker lit it.

Joan tossed her head and exhaled. It telegraphed vamp move. She felt stupid and out of her league.

"What happened? Why am I here?"

Parker lit a cigarette. "You've been arrested for four counts of vehicular manslaughter. Four men are dead because you drove inebriated in a heavy rainstorm. If you're lucky, you'll do five years at Tehachapi."

Joan stepped back. She grazed the bunk ledge and almost tripped. She caught herself and stepped back up to the bars.

"I need a lawyer. I'll be charged and arraigned, and there'll be a trial."

Parker said, "I've had some experience with this sort of matter. Most inebriate killers evince regret or remorse and ask questions about the people they killed. You went to your own survival immediately. I don't know whether to be impressed or appalled."

Joan gripped the bars. Her hands brushed Parker's. She kept them there.

"Tell me about the people I killed. I'll react, and you can decide whether to be impressed or appalled then."

Parker said, "They were Mexican illegals. They were transporting marijuana, and had extensive criminal records. Their offenses included strongarm robbery, aggravated assault, kidnapping, white slavery, and first-degree extortion."

Joan dropped her cigarette and crushed it. "I'm evincing regret now. I can't quite embrace remorse."

Parker grinned a tad. "You're a cum laude forensic biologist. A prison sentence would scotch whatever degree of success you might ultimately achieve."

"You're leading me, Captain. There's something going on here."

"Oh, *really*? And what would that be?"

Joan winked. "*Really*, sir? It wasn't that long ago."

"Lieutenant, now *you're* lead—"

"I was shooting skeet off the Evanston Bridge. You were watching me. I thought, That man should go home and be nice to his wife, because his attention has surely strayed."

Parker blushed. It was almost but not quite endearing.

"You rid the world of four vicious thugs. I'll extend muted bravos, and add that all opportunities carry a price. If you resign your Navy commission, I'll see to a dismissal of all charges against you. I'll secure you a position with the PD's Central Crime Lab and personally vouch your wartime employment."

Booze blackouts, skeet guns, cop voyeurs—

"Is this your *métier*, Captain? Have you made a career out of entrapping young women?"

Parker said, "I've only done it once before."

"And when was that?"

Parker said, "Last month."

Joan laughed. "I've read monographs by your Dr. Ashida. I greatly admire them."

“Would you like to meet Dr. Ashida?”

Joan said, “When?”

Parker said, “Now.”

8

(LOS ANGELES, 7:45 A.M., 1/1/42)

The bash felt stale now. '41 was old news. '42 was au courant.

Nobody danced. Count Basie's boys dozed in their chairs. A few cops and dates schmoozed. A buffet dispensed Bloody Marys and stale bagels.

Lee Blanchard was out cold. He topped out his bodyguard shift. The dead kids got to him. He hit the party and drank himself insensate.

The day-shift man was due. Elmer J. always ran late. Blanchard said he had late work with the Dudster.

Thad Brown circulated. He ran the Homicide Squad. Kay Lake circulated. She was the PD's favored seductress. Brenda Allen table-hopped. She ran call girls with Elmer. Jack Horrall and Fletch Bowron dozed on a couch. The Count dozed with them. His head brushed the mayor's shoulder.

The dead kids.

Ashida teethed on it. He teethed each and every split second. He sipped coffee and stayed alert.

Bill Parker issued a gag order. No reporters, no public exposure. Four male wetbacks, *muerto*. It stands at *THAT*. The Navy woman must not know.

Parker called Catholic Charities. He had oomph there. A private hearse hauled the kids off.

Parker admonished Blanchard and Ashida. *I demand silence. Do not talk about this.*

Ashida trawled the room. The Count was up and bleary-eyed. He chatted with Kay. La Grande Katherine looked up-all-night fetching.

Brenda Allen blew a kiss. Ashida waved back. Colored sax men fish-eyed him. Yeah—we ain't white, but you're a *JAP*.

Elmer walked over. He straddled a chair and drained Blanchard's highball.

"Sorry I'm late. Dud had us hopping."

Ashida sipped coffee. "You tend to be overextended."

Elmer said, "It'll get worse, starting tomorrow. The roundups'll kick in again, and your few remaining countrymen on the loose'll be headed for the pokey."

"We're backlogged on your confiscations. You're bringing in more than we can process."

Elmer relit a cigar. "You're lucky we got thieves on the squad. Georgie Kapek and Wendell Rice got your swag appropriated."

Ashida laughed. Elmer eyeballed the room. He said, "Kay looks swell, don't she?"

"Are you in love with her?"

"I'm entranced. That's worse. You acknowledge that you ain't got a chance, so you act even dumber than you usually do."

Ashida jumped topics. Romantic intrigue bored and vexed him.

"I read a Teletype from Fourth Interceptor. There's allegedly hidden air bases out in Indio and Brawley. The command picked up coded pay-phone calls from here to Baja."

Elmer shrugged. "Dud's headed south. He'll nip that grief in the bud. 'Knock, knock, who's there? Dudley Smith, so spies beware.'"

Ashida smiled. Elmer scoped the doorway. Ashida tracked his gaze.

Bill Parker walked in. He wore a fresh uniform and looked all spruced up. He brought a date.

A Navy lieutenant. Rumpled blues, red hair, quite tall and statuesque. Vehicular manslaughter/six counts/two counts unacknowledged.

Elmer waggled his eyebrows. Elmer wolf-growled.

Ashida deployed Man Camera. He framed Parker and the redhead. He panned to Kay Lake and caught her reaction. He zoomed in for a close-up. Kay and Parker shared This Big Freightened Look.

Parker and the redhead hit the buffet. They ignored the food and mixed high-test Bloody Marys.

They clicked glasses. Their hands brushed. Kay saw it all.

Thad Brown walked up. He ignored dozed-out Blanchard. He braced Ashida and Elmer.

"Let's go. We've got mud slides in Griffith Park. They've dislodged a body by the golf course."

9

(LOS ANGELES, 8:30 A.M., 1/1/42)

They ran Code Three/red lights and siren. It goosed squarejohn drivers curbside. Thad Brown hauled. Ashida rode shotgun. Elmer hogged the backseat.

First reports state *this*:

The stiff is a long-term decomp. That means all bones. It washed up on the par-3 golf course. Said course adjoined Mineral Canyon—i.e., the spot where Wayne Frank Jackson died.

Elmer agitated it. Elmer segued to more pressing shit. Eddie Leng's deep-fried feet. Tommy Glennon's address book.

He'd dropped the book on the day-watch Vice clerk. He'd slipped him a yard and told him to run a phone-number check. Chop, chop. I need results, pronto. And don't blab on this.

Brown hauled up Vermont. Rainwater jammed the wheel wells. The car belly-flopped and drifted. Brown veered right and caught a flat surface. They shimmied down a golf course access road.

Elmer saw two black-and-whites and a prowl sled. Plus a snack hut. Plus green fairways and the dump site.

There's two harness blues and two plainclothesmen. They've got arc lights and a rain tarp set up. They've got a steep hillside all lit.

Brown fishtailed over and yanked the brake. They all went *whew*. Elmer bundled into his hat and trench coat. They all got out and ran.

Elmer got there first. He saw Al Goossen and Colin Forbes—Hollywood Squad hard-ons.

Nods circulated. The tarp fluttered and dripped rain. Brown and Ashida caught up. The arc lights lit *this*:

Soaked grass up the fairway. The mud spill and all this loose soil. A big dirt hole. Exhumed mud sluicing down to this flat spot.

The spill dislodged a box. It tumbled down the hillside. It's a pine box—six-six by two feet.

It's charred black. They're char marks, for sure. Intermittent marks—mud-and-root-matted.

The lid was warped and soil-eroded. The mud slide sprung it off,

clean. It's a jig-rigged casket. There's green goo caked inside. There's skeletal remains.

Ashida pointed to the goo. "That's congealed quicklime. It serves to speed decomposition."

Elmer relit his cigar. Forbes and Goossen lit cigarettes. Brown spit tobacco juice.

"That tags it Murder One."

Ashida leaned in close. Elmer said, "Genius at work."

Bluesuit #1 rolled his eyes. Bluesuit #2 said, "Like Charlie Chan." Elmer said, "Charlie Chan's a Chinaman, dipshit."

Bluesuit #2 blanched. Ashida foot-tapped the box.

"Note the width of the pelvis and the overall length and breadth of the remains. The victim was male, tall, and heavyset."

Brown said, "Talk to me, dead man."

Forbes said, "Who killed you, boss?"

Ashida futzed with the stiff's jawbones. They went *creak*. He pulled them loose.

"The killer knocked his teeth out. Note the mandible fractures. The uppers and lowers are unidentifiable stubs."

Elmer studied the box. The fire aspect gouged him. October 3, '33—the Griffith Park blaze.

Ashida tapped a shattered rib bone. "It's a knife-thrust homicide. The killer hit hard, went in deep, and twisted the knife."

Brown leaned low. He studied the skull. He pointed out a hole and faint cracks adjacent.

"He was shot once. You'll find a spent round embedded."

Elmer looked up the hill. Lightning backlit the whole golf course.

"You remember that big fire, back in '33? I'm thinking it could have whooshed over the box and caused all the charring."

Ashida said, "I don't think so. There's too much mud for the fire to have gone that deep."

Brown poked at some rags. They were quicklime-caked and bore singe marks.

"That green shit dissolved the clothes off the body."

Forbes said, "Who killed you, dead man?"

Goossen said, "It's a missing-person job. That stuff puts me to sleep. Give me a nigger homicide any day."

Brown said, "You're out of luck there. Get the box and the stiff to Doc Layman at the morgue."

Forbes and Goossen sulked. Elmer chewed his cigar. He recollected Wayne Frank. He felt all razzle-dazzle.

“Here’s what gets me. Some of the box is burned, but some ain’t. I don’t see no special flame pattern on the wood.”

Forbes said, “Elmer’s brother died in that fire. He’s got fires on the noggin.”

Goossen said, “I remember that day. Fire trucks were backed up all the way down Los Feliz.”

Forbes said, “It was the Reds. They never proved arson, but some Red cell was supposed to be good for it.”

Ashida studied the box. Genius at work. All eyes on Ashida now.

He said, “Elmer could be right. I think the box was burned concurrent with an aboveground fire. 1933 might be a good guess.”

The rain let up. Black clouds hovered. Thad B. drove Elmer and Ashida back downtown. L.A. was hungover. Shops closed, nil traffic, local yokels sleeping it off.

Ashida hopped out at the Biltmore. Elmer snagged his civilian sled at City Hall. That Vice clerk delivered. He’d stuck the phone-call list under the wiper blades.

Elmer had a bachelor flop at 1st and Saint Andrews. He drove by and fed his tropical fish. Brenda had a house up Laurel Canyon. He part-time shackled there. Brenda might be home. She might toss him some New Year’s woof-woof.

He drove over and let himself in. The place was done up Spanish Hacienda. Brenda scrounged used sets from *The Sword of Zorro*. Some homo art director went nuts.

Elmer built a highball and buzzed the call-service switchboard. The dispatch girl delivered the dish. She knew Elmer was het up and voyeurized.

Dig tonight’s roster:

Fletch Bowron booked a threesky. DA Bill McPherson booked a colored cooze. Sheriff Gene Biscailuz booked a tall blonde.

The service featured house calls, plus three fuck flops. Apartment-building tryst spots. Replete with hidden wall peeks and cameras. Folks paid to peep bedroom action. The camera shit doubled as potential shakedown gear.

The Chapman Park flop was booked tonight. Cary Grant, Butch

Stanwyck, and Ruth Mildred Cressmeyer were tricking with “Ten-Inch” Tony Mangano.

Tony tricked switcheroosky. He turned Ruth Mildred straight in one-night allotments. Ruthie was a disbarred physician and scrape doc. Ruthie was tight with Dudley Smith. Ruthie recruited lez girls for Brenda.

Fourteen peepers had booked seats for the show. The peepers peeped anonymous. They paid fifty scoots a head. Butch and Tony commanded top dollar.

Also, on tonight’s roster:

Mickey Rooney booked a girl. Likewise John “Cricket Dick” Huston. Eight girls for a USC frat bash. Six boys for a Brentwood hen party.

Elmer signed off the call. The phone rang and startled him. He snagged the new call.

“Talk to me.”

“It’s Kay, Elmer.”

“Well, then. Some weather, huh? It’s like the flood in the Bible. You think it’ll ever stop?”

Kay laughed. “I didn’t call to discuss the weather.”

Elmer laughed. “Well, it sure ain’t the war, because we hashed all that out the last time we talked.”

“Don’t be a C.T. You know what I’m angling for.”

“Oh, yeah? And what’s that, pray tell?”

Kay stage-sighed. “Come on, Elmer. Give.”

Elmer stage-sighed. “The party? The big redhead with Bill Parker? That catch your eye?”

“Now, he gets to it.”

“Hard not to notice, huh?”

Kay laughed. “I’ve known William Henry Parker the Third for twenty-seven days, and during that time he has repeatedly cast his eyes about for tall, red-haired, naval-officer women.”

Elmer said, “You’re counting the days since you’ve met him. What’s that tell you about yourself?”

Kay said, “You’re deliberately tweaking me.”

Elmer said, “I don’t know no more than you do, except how much you love that man.”

Kay blew him a kiss and hung up. The ten-second phone call was her standard MO.

Elmer yawned and kicked his shoes off. He got out the Vice clerk’s list. He studied Tommy G.’s address book and put shit together.

St. Vibiana's Church. He decoded that one already. It's the home of papal poobah J. J. Cantwell. He's the Dudster's old pal.

The Deutsches Haus. 15th and Union. Pro-Nazi hot spot. Kraut regalia for sale.

Let's backtrack. We're in Tommy's hotel room. There's that tattoo stencil. It features swastikas and an "SQ" circled by snakes. The "SQ" snake job was embroidered on the late Eddie Leng.

More names, more phone numbers. Huey Cressmeyer. A Hollywood phone exchange. That's no surprise. He's Ruth Mildred's perv-o son and a Dudster informant. C-town tattle: Huey and Tommy were reform-school chums.

Monsignor Joseph Hayes. A West L.A. exchange. More C-town drift: Tommy and "some priest" travel the Hershey Highway.

Jean Clarice Staley. A Hollywood exchange. That rates a *Hub*? She's a woman—but Tommy runs Greek. He *rapes* women—he don't *call* them.

That hot-box pay phone. It's right upside the *Herald*. It's drilled for slug calls. Plus *this* head-scratcher. It rates a big *Hub*?

Fourteen pay phones. All down in Baja. All in Ensenada. All eighty miles south of T.J.

Let's backtrack. Tommy ran wetbacks for Carlos Madrano. That Spanish-language book in Tommy's room.

Head-scratchers. Brain-broilers. Code 3 Alert. Look out, son. You're brushing upside Dudley Smith.

Rain kicked up hard. Elmer walked to the front window and looked out. He saw fresh mud slides. He saw storm crews on Crescent Heights.

Let's backtrack. The Griffith Park slide, the old-new DOA. Let's backtrack. The 1933 fire.

It's October 3. It's 103 degrees in L.A. Santa Ana winds change course. CCC workers are out cutting brush. Wayne Frank's among them.

Thirty-four men die. It gets ambiguous here. There's sloppy rosters and files and fly-by-night work crews. Who died and who didn't? There's un-ID'd bodies. There's Wayne Frank—ID'd off old dental charts.

Arson or not? It gets ambiguous here. It's the Depression. There's Red revolt in the vox populi. Garment workers agitating. Labor marches. Kreepy Kremlin prophecies. Fires, tidal waves, storms.

Elmer dug out his scrapbook. Wayne Frank pix consumed four pages. Wayne Frank in a boxer's pose, 1924. Wayne Frank in a Klan sheet, 1926. Elmer V. in Marine green, 1930. Wayne Frank giving him the horns.

Wayne Frank was taller and handsomer. Wayne Frank was smarter

and meaner. Elmer V. was slow to rile. He could kick big brother's hate-dog ass all day long.

What made Wayne Frank tick? Nobody knew. Wayne Frank was whimsical. Wayne Frank imagined impossible shit and convinced himself that it was true. Wayne Frank developed this big gold-heist fixation.

May '31. A mint-train job. A Frisco-to-L.A. gold-transfer run. Gold bars. A small number. Triple-locked in a cage. Shackled passengers under guard. San Quentin convicts bound for retrials in L.A.

Chaos attends a track switch in Monterey County. All eight cons escape. Seven men are hunted down. They're shot on sight *faaaaaast*. One man remains at large still.

More grief. A downed-track snafu two hours south. Chaos atop chaos. Guards and crew succumb to frayed nerves. The heist occurs then. The heister or heisters are smart. Just one box's worth of bars leaves the train.

The train treks south. Santa Barbara's a coal stop. The theft is discovered then. Suspicion falls on Leander Frechette. He's the train's odd-job man. He's dim-witted, Negro, fucking-A strong. The Santa Barbara cops posit a single-o heister. He walked the bars off the train two or three at a clip. It had to be Frechette. Nobody else had the strength. *Somebody* bossed him. He was too dumb to concoct the plan himself.

The Santa Barbara cops beat Frechette *baaaaaad*. He refused to confess. A colored preacher with cop clout intervened. Frechette was released. The case fizzled out. It went to open-file status, stale bread.

Wayne Frank hoarded news clips and treasure-magazine pieces. He studied the heist and worked himself up to fever pitch. Wayne Frank, the dreamer. Wayne Frank, the fantasist. What makes Wayne Frank tick? He's a news-clip hoarder and treasure-magazine collector. He's an all-time fabulist.

"Oh, Lord. He's in a fugue state. He's got his scrapbook out, and he's gone stir-crazy from the rain."

Elmer flinched and spilled his highball. Brenda walked soft. She snuck into her own house. It was some trick on high heels.

"You know what Kay says. 'Keep referring to me in the third person. It sends me.'"

Brenda shut the door. "Katherine Ann. She's the first thing out of your mouth. She's the only one you'll ever love, in case you ain't figured it out."

Elmer checked his watch. "It's almost noon. The party must have run long."

“I spent some time with Jack. I’ll tell you, so you won’t ask. It was a paid date, and Jack said he wants you to run bag to some city councilmen. Him and Fletch got worries on that phone-tap probe. They’re buying forgiveness in advance.”

Elmer smiled. “Let’s hit the kip. We ain’t spent time there in a coon’s age.”

Brenda said, “The weekend, maybe. You know I do my best work by appointment.”

Elmer scoped the world at large. Hard rain hit, palm trees wiggled, palm fronds flew.

“There’s too much going on out there. God’s telling us something.”

Brenda said, “You’re at loose ends, Citizen. You’re looking to louse something up and put yourself in a jam. Go see Ellen and get your ashes hauled. You’ll do us both a favor.”

Ellen tapped his forehead. “You’re broody. Something’s going on in there. And don’t tell me it’s the Fate of Mankind, because you’re not that deep.”

They were naked. Ellen’s mattress sagged. Her baby boy dozed one room over.

Elmer said, “It’s too warm in here. You get that with these big buildings. They don’t leave you no choice with the heat.”

Ellen lit a cigarette. She sat up crossways and blew smoke rings. Their sweat was all mingled up.

“That’s not a real answer. I could turn down the heat if I wanted to, but I keep it warm for the baby.”

Elmer said, “We’ve got this rule, remember? We’re not supposed to talk about him.”

“You’re broody. Give me a hint. There’s the war, the draft, and you blew that stakeout, so maybe Dudley Smith’s peeved at you. You don’t like harassing these so-called innocent Japs, and you wish you could go back to Vice. Give me a little clue.”

Elmer relit his cigar. Smoke fumes fumed the room up good.

“One little clue. I’ll hold you captive here until you tell me.”

Elmer said, “That’s a swell inducement not to talk.”

Ellen said, “And that’s a swell compliment. But tell me something, or I’ll start brooding on adultery and kick you out.”

Elmer touched her hair and kissed her. Ellen nuzzled his hand.

“My life’s too easy. I got the world by the dick, but it don’t sit right with me.”

Loose ends. The New Year’s blahs. Elmer hit the road.

He drove to City Hall and prowled corridors. The Hall was holiday dead. The PD ran a light crew. The Air Patrol guys stuck to the basement. The mayor’s office and City Council chambers were dark.

Elmer had keys and a briefcase. He hit Call-Me-Jack’s office and unlocked his desk drawers. Jack left four envelopes. They were marked with initials. They were probably five-yard payoffs.

The mayor’s office ran swank. Walnut panels and a Mussolini-size desk. Elmer unlocked Fletch Bowron’s drawers. He grabbed four more envelopes. He saw that familiar green binder.

His binder. Brenda’s. Their merchandise book. Nude pix of their girls.

He leafed through it. He got titillated and broody, simultaneous.

He replaced the binder. He hit the Council chambers and divvied up the gelt. The 4th District guy kept a desk jug. Elmer helped himself. He sat in the guy’s green leather chair and put his feet up.

Loose ends. The New Year’s blahs. Elmer hit the road.

The hard rain subsided. A drizzle held in. Central Station was close. Elmer walked over.

The crime lab was locked. The main squadroom was locked. The Alien Squad pen was lit bright. Elmer poked his head in. He saw Wendell Rice and George Kapek. They were in their skivvies. They were tossing dice and snarfing pizza pie.

Elmer said, “Happy New Year.”

Rice said, “You up and took off last night. Dud wondered what happened to you.”

“You and George started lifting wallets. I got a burr in my tail.”

Kapek said, “You’re pious, Jackson. That, and you don’t need the money. You got your girl racket, and you’re Jack Horrall’s favorite Okie.”

Elmer waved his cigar. “I’m a cracker, not an Okie. There’s a distinction.”

Rice raised his hands. “Peace, brother. We’re all white men, and we’re going back to rousting Japs first thing tomorrow.”

Elmer made the jack-off sign. Kapek said, “Last night was a bust.

We got no good drift on who sliced Dud, and nothing ripe on Tommy Glennon.”

Rice said, “Dud’shipped on Tommy. Something’s going on there that I don’t comprehend.”

Kapek said, “Dud’s right hand don’t know what his left hand is doing.”

Elmer gauged the chitchat. Nothing gored him. Fucking Eddie Leng gored him. There was no dead-body call. These humps would have heard. There was no *Herald* headline: DEEP-FRIED CHINAMAN FOUND! COPS SIFT CLUES!

Kapek rolled snake eyes. He crapped out and moaned. Rice snatched the dice. His undershirt hiked and exposed his left arm. Note the thunderbolt armband.

Still life. Geek cops at play. Exiled from home and hearth. Jap hunters in repose.

Elmer fought off the New Year’s blues. Elmer hit the road.

The hard rain revived. He drove through swamped intersections and sewer floods. Who snuffed Eddie Leng? Who’s the dead man in the box?

Elmer drove to the Gordon Hotel. Tommy’s “SQ” tattoo stencil tweaked him. He braced the desk clerk. Let me retoss Tommy’s room. Tommy’s a fugitive rape-o.

The clerk went *Nyet, sahib*. He said two cops just tore through here. They tossed Tommy’s room. I’m not repeating that grief with you.

The clerk described Mike Breuning and Dick Carlisle. They *retossed* his first toss. That scotched toss #3.

Elmer drove back downtown. He hit 11th and Broadway and parked. He recharged with bennies and Old Crow. He got electricized.

He eyeballed that hot-box phone for no damn good reason. It stood outside the *Herald*. It was just some coin booth.

But:

Tommy called it. Maybe *mucho* times. Tommy’s address book. Think fast, now. Tommy called *fourteen* Baja pay phones.

Elmer glanced across the street. He spotted a Fed sedan. Ed Satterlee was tucked in. He was eyeballing the booth.

Cop life. Circle jerk. Who you know, who you blow. Satterlee bossed the Fed probe. Satterlee tricked with the Brenda-Elmer service. Satterlee was tonged up.

Elmer stared at the hot-box. Baja calls. That's a head-scratcher. Ain't the Dudster Baja-bound now?

10

(TIJUANA, 3:30 P.M., 1/1/42)

Border cops saluted and waved them through. *Bienvenidos, señor y señora.*

They were Falangista thugs. They were Francoesque in dress and demeanor. They saw the staff car and Army *jefe*. They noted the comely *mujer*. They fawned and clicked their heels.

Mexico. Our grand, if raucous, neighbor. A properly subservient hello.

Dudley and Claire breezed into T.J. Claire drove. Dudley's arm sling precluded. A late sun lit rain clouds.

They cut inland and south. The coast road detoured through T.J. proper. It's *muy feo*. Let's see how Claire reacts.

The child-beggar swarms. The cat-meat taco vendors. The women-fuck-donkey clubs. The open-air *farmacias*. Voodoo health cures and sub-rosa dope.

Liquor stores. Niteklubs. Prowling sailors and Marines. Strolling *putas*. He-she's in bullfighter garb.

The cops wore mismatched uniforms and drove mismatched cars. Jackboots, jodhpurs, tunics—all Nazi black. *Der Führer*—style purveyor to the world's great unwashed.

Chevy prowl cars, Ford prowl cars. U.S. confiscations. Wait, there's a Packard. Note the coyote-pelt seats.

Claire said, "I left Beverly Hills for this. It must mean that I love you."

Dudley laughed and squeezed her knee. His bad arm ached. Claire caught a lane back to the coast road. To the east: scrub hills and abandoned-car encampments. To the west: cliffside coves and sea swells.

Claire hit the gas. Dudley read her. She wanted to get there and dose herself. She wanted to craft her rich-leftist-among-the-peons persona.

She brooded her way down from L.A. He brooded in inimical sync. He concentrated on Tommy Glennon.

Mike and Dick tossed Tommy's room. A clerk told them that another cop had already tossed it. The clerk described the doltish Elmer Jackson.

He caught a noon radio broadcast. It stressed "Chinese restaurateur slain." There was no "victim Leng tong affiliate." There was no "close pal of Thomas Malcolm Glennon." Both facts should have been stressed.

Tommy's missing now. Mike and Dick saw a Spanish-language text in his room.

Dudley scoped the terrain. Eyes left: hills and Jap fishing towns. He'd raid them. He'd roust Fifth Column Japs and plain old Japs set for internment. Eyes right: the cliffs, the coves, the sea.

Storm-tossed now. Like last month. Shallow beachfront/glide-in spots/perfect sub concealment.

Like last month. Like the botched dope raid. Like the Jap sub and blown-to-shit Carlos Madrano.

Claire said, "You're clenching, dear. Your jaw is trembling."

Dudley lit a cigarette. "I'm considering failure and the means not to repeat it. Mexico redefines opportunity, and I must not stumble here."

Claire smiled. "You're a war profiteer."

Dudley winked. "Bright lass. I knew you'd figure it out."

Ensenada.

Fishing spot, tourist trap, lovers' hideout. Cliffside hotels and sport-fishing piers. Slum piers crammed with tuna boats and bait shops. Streets named for saints and notable despots.

Claire turned off the coast road. Avenida Costera hugged low cliffs and offered up jazzy views. The Army usurped the Hotel Pacifico del Norte. The third floor was all SIS.

Officers billeted in sea-motif suites. Enlisted men lived in off-site barracks. They were jerry-rigged, post-Pearl Harbor. Convict laborers toiled, posthaste.

The hotel was Moorish-mosque adobe. Eight stories, thick walls, tile roofs. The front entrance was sandbagged. Howitzers and tripod Brownings flanked the doors. Mex Staties stood guard. They held tommy guns at port arms.

Claire pulled into the porte cochere. Greedy valets swooped. Beaners in movie-usher attire. Coolie hats à la Grauman's Chinese.

A full-dress major broached the car. He was forty-five, short, and porcine. He leaned in on Dudley's side. He expelled booze fumes.

“Captain Smith, Mrs. Smith. I’m Ralph Melnick, and I’ll escort you to your quarters, and show you around before you can say *‘más rápido.’*”

Dudley grinned and stuck out his hand. Melnick bone-crushed him. Claire saw something. She ignored the exchange and glanced streetside. Dudley tracked her eyes.

It’s a waif girl. About fifteen, tattered coat and skirt, scuffed Army boots. Dark hair, glasses, feral élan.

Dudley touched Claire’s arm. She turned back and smiled—a dazzler. “I’m not Mrs. Smith, Major. I’m Miss De Haven.”

The tour, then.

The gringo was king here. Army personnel and swank turistas capered. Statie drones worked the desk and switchboard. They wore starched fatigues and packed sidearms. Mix-blood mestizos fetched drinks and scrounged tips. Dark *indios* slaved.

Three restaurants. Seaside lounge. Private fishing pier and Rose Bowl-sized lobby. Dolores del Rio, engulfed by fawning fans.

Captain Smith’s billet: the Plutarco Calles Suite. Dudley roared—the Red priest-killer, *commemorativo*.

Two bedrooms, living room, dining room/kitchen. Ocean-view balcony, mounted trophy fish throughout. Bathrooms with five-foot-deep tubs.

Claire decamped to explore the suite and geez morphine. Major Melnick blushed and curtsied good-bye. He walked Dudley down to 3. The floor had been wartime-gutted. *Arriba*, SIS. The U.S. Army has arrived.

One massive squadroom. Forty-odd cubicles and desks. Floor-to-ceiling corkboards and file banks. U.S./Baja wall maps.

Switchboard. Forty phone lines. Eight Teletypes. All-new photostat. Coding room and armory. Two dozen men on duty. Twenty-four-hour work shifts.

Captain Smith got a full office. He got a large desk and green leather chairs. The FDR wall pic had to go.

Melnick produced a flask. They traded pops. Dudley turned the FDR pic facedown. Melnick yuk-yukked.

“So, right now Mexico’s ‘neutral,’ but it’s just a pose, because *El Presidente* Camacho’s a dick tease, and he wants to extract all the U.S. aid he can get his mitts on before he comes onboard with the Allies. Baja’s full of Japs, with a sprinkling of Krauts, and Camacho’s been dragging his