

STRAIGHT TO THE TOP

a screenplay

By Lauren Ennis

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INT THE QUEEN OF SHEBA NIGHTCLUB NIGHT

The Queen of Sheba nightclub; Chicago, 1933. A The club is an expansive building gaudily decorated in an oriental fashion with imitation palm trees, doors shaped like sarcophaguses, and waitresses dressed in Cleopatra costumes. The club contains numerous tables and a stage in the center. The club is crowded with customers sitting at tables as a group of dancers perform onstage. The dancers are dressed in leotards designed to resemble tuxedos and top hats as they perform a routine to "We're in the Money". The camera focuses in on Hazel Leigh as she performs with the other dancers onstage. She is in her early twenties, attractive, and has bobbed hair dyed platinum blonde. The dancers kick and wink to the audience as they sing the line, "we've got a lot of what it takes to get along".

EXT CHICAGO WAREHOUSE NIGHT

A black Packard pulls into a parking lot with its headlights off and parks outside of a warehouse. Several men quietly exit the car and proceed into the warehouse.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE WAREHOUSE AND NIGHTCLUB

The dancers remove fans made of toy money from their pockets and incorporate the fans into their routine as props.

A group of men is loading a shipment of liquor onto a truck in the warehouse.

The dancers use their top hats as props as they sing the line, "we're in the money, come on my honey".

The men finish loading the truck and enter the vehicle. They drive towards the exit as the door opens revealing a large group of men waiting outside with machine guns. The men outside shoot at the truck and take cover as the truck crashes into a chain link fence. The men rush back to the Packard in the parking lot and speed down the street.

The dancers perform several kicks and tip their hats in synchronization as they sing the line, "let's lend it, let's spend it, send it rolling along" and confetti shaped like gold coins falls from the ceiling onto the stage and closest tables.

INT HAZEL AND CHARLIE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM NIGHT

Later that night at Hazel and Charlie's apartment. The apartment is a luxurious suite which contains several rooms and ornate furniture. The bedroom contains a massive canopy bed, two nightstands, a coffee table, a small sofa, a full length mirror, movie posters on the walls, and a massive closet. Hazel is sitting in bed in a kimono style bathrobe reading a copy of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. She flips the pages to the end of the book and opens the inside cover. She sighs as she reads the inscription "To my preferred blonde" and tosses the book aside. She climbs out of bed and removes a copy of *The Thin Man* from her nightstand drawer. She turns to look at the bedroom door several times as she flips through the pages of the book. She puts the book down with a sigh and removes a cigarette case and holder from on top drawer of the nightstand. She starts to light the cigarette when a door is heard opening outside of the bedroom. She puts the cigarette case and holder aside and leaps out of bed. She walks to the coffee table and removes a pistol from one of its drawers. She raises the pistol as Charlie opens the bedroom door. He is in his early thirties, handsome, and wearing a fedora and suit. He tosses his hat and suit jacket onto the sofa.

CHARLIE

Guess I'm a little late for the show.

HAZEL

And just where the hell have you—

She notices blood stains on his shirt and runs towards him.

HAZEL

I'm sorry, Charlie, I—

She starts to throw her arms around him but he pushes her away and takes the gun from her.

CHARLIE

For Christ's sake, Hazel, how many times do I have to tell you this thing's not a toy?!

He puts the gun back into the drawer.

CHARLIE

I don't know what the hell got into me trusting you with one of these. She takes the cigarette holder and lighter off of the bed and lights a cigarette.

HAZEL

If memory serves me right it was that slug the doc pulled out of your leg.

He sits down on the sofa with a sigh.

CHARLIE

Right.

She follows him to the sofa.

HAZEL

Besides, I don't sport blood stains quite as well as you.

She takes his hand and tries to pull him off of the sofa. He pulls his hand away.

HAZEL

Come on; take a bath like a good boy before you mark up the furniture.

He takes off his shoes.

CHARLIE

I come in after a hard night at work and the best you come up with is 'go take a bath'. Of all the-

He stands.

HAZEL

What do you want me to say? We both know how temperamental you get when I ask questions.

She takes a drag of her cigarette.

HAZEL

But just tell me one thing.

He throws his hands up in exasperation. She walks to the bedroom door.

CHARLIE

I already told you, I can't-

He follows her to the door.

HAZEL

Did you come out on top tonight?

He puts his arm around her waist.

CHARLIE

Don't I always?

He kisses her then pulls away and winces.

HAZEL

That bad, huh?

She takes his hand and opens the door.

HAZEL

Come on, I know just what my boy needs.

He follows her out of the bedroom.

INT THE QUEEN OF SHEBA NIGHTCLUB DAY

The club is empty except for several dancers rehearsing onstage and the director, Frank, sitting at one of the front row tables. He takes notes as the dancers perform "I Got Rhythm" in revealing sequined costumes. Frank claps as the dancers complete a run of the number. He looks at his watch then stands and stretches.

FRANK

Alright, ladies, that'll do for today.

The dancers step off of the stage and exit backstage behind the curtain. Frank writes a final note then takes his coat and hat and starts walking towards the exit.

HAZEL

Um, Frank?

She waves her hand in the air and tries to signal to him, but he continues towards the exit. Hazel jumps off of the stage and chases after him.

HAZEL

Frank!

He turns around with a sigh.

FRANK

Yea?

HAZEL

Can I talk to you for a minute?

FRANK

Right now's not a good time, I've gotta—

HAZEL

It'll only take a minute.

He looks at his watch.

HAZEL

Charlie should be here to pick me up any minute and—

FRANK

Charlie's coming down here?

She enthusiastically nods. He anxiously looks towards the door then sits down at a nearby table.

FRANK

Alright, out with it.

She eagerly sits down next to him.

HAZEL

I've been thinking..

He rolls his eyes.

FRANK

(Under his breath) Never a good sign.

HAZEL

I've been with the show over two years now and I'm still stuck in the chorus.

FRANK

Would you rather be in one of the bread lines out there?

HAZEL

I ain't one to complain, but fair is fair after all.

He stands and puts on his coat.

FRANK

This is a business, Hazel, I have to give customers what they want.

She stands.

HAZEL

And for the past thirteen years they've wanted booze. Without Charlie's help you wouldn't even *have* those customers.

He puts on his hat.

FRANK

I knew you were going there, I knew it.

HAZEL

Well the least you could do is show a little gratitude!

FRANK

I gave you the goddamn job without so much as an audition.

HAZEL

All I'm asking you to do is move me up in the line.

He starts walking to the exit.

FRANK

My penance is served.

HAZEL

But...

A whistle is heard from off screen. Hazel turns and sees that Charlie is waiting for her by the stage. Frank pauses and slowly turns around as Charlie walks across the club to her. Charlie looks at her costume and whistles.

CHARLIE

You sure it's not too cold to be breaking a hot little number like that out?

She playfully hits him in the shoulder.

HAZEL

Ha, ha. Sometimes I think you only keep me in this business for the costumes.

He puts his arm around her waist.

CHARLIE

It's one of the better perks.

He looks up and sees Frank anxiously watching them by the exit then turns back to her.

CHARLIE

So, why aren't you dressed yet? I told you I'd be here at five.

HAZEL

I was just talking to Frank about—

Frank walks towards them.

FRANK

About Hazel's new spot in the line.

CHARLIE

No kidding!

Frank removes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes his face.

FRANK

You know how it is; you've got talent on the payroll, you've gotta' use it.

HAZEL

I'll drink to that.

CHARLIE

Speaking of drinks, you'd better get changed if we're getting any.

She kisses him on the cheek.

HAZEL

I'll just be a few minutes.

She starts to walk away then stops and smiles sweetly.

HAZEL

And thanks, Frank. I really don't know what to say.

She turns around and smirks as she walks backstage.

INT MIKE FISHER'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Later that night Hazel and Charlie are attending a party at the apartment of Charlie's boss, Mike Fisher. The apartment is crowded with various members of Fisher's gang and their wives/girlfriends, all of whom are dressed in expensive formal attire. The apartment contains several rooms furnished with simple but high quality furniture. The living room contains a piano, a sofa, a coffee table, several bookcases, and several armchairs. Charlie is sitting in one of the armchairs as Hazel sits on his lap. One of the men approaches Charlie and whispers something to him. Charlie nods and the man follows several other men out of the room.

CHARLIE

(To Hazel) Duty calls.

She puts her arms around his neck.

HAZEL

Let them wait.

He pinches her backside and she jumps off of his lap with a yell.

HAZEL

Well pardon me for being affectionate.

He stands.

CHARLIE

How about we make up for the lost time when we get home?

He leans in to kiss her on the cheek but she turns her head away. He shrugs.

CHARLIE

Suit yourself.

He follows the other men out of the room. Hazel lights a cigarette and walks to her friend, Ginnie, who is leaning against the piano and humming along as the piano player plays "Stormy Weather". Ginnie steps away from the piano.

GINNIE

Some party this is; if I'd known it was gonna' turn into a hen party I would've stayed home knitting.

HAZEL

No kidding.

Hazel takes a drag of her cigarette and turns to watch the door of the room.

HAZEL

What do you suppose they're talking about in there?

Ginnie shrugs and removes a compact mirror from her purse. She adjusts her hair and puts on a fresh layer of lipstick.

GINNIE

Damned if I know.

She takes a final glance in the mirror and puts it back into her purse.

GINNIE

Hey, wasn't Rose supposed to be here?

HAZEL

I haven't seen her tonight.

GINNIE

She was supposed to bring my mink; I left it at her and Jeff's last week.

Hazel shrugs and takes a drag of her cigarette as Ginnie leans against the piano.

GINNIE

(To the Piano Player) Know anything to liven up the joint?

PIANO PLAYER

How about "Happy Days are Here Again"?

HAZEL

(Sarcastically) That's a laugh.

Ginnie gives her a reprimanding look.

GINNIE

That'll be just fine.

Ginnie sings along with the piano player as he plays "Happy Days are Here Again". Hazel hums along with them as she watches the door.

EXT HAZEL AND CHARLIE'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Later that night a taxi stops outside of Hazel and Charlie's apartment building. The building is a large brick building with other, similar buildings, on either side. Charlie exits the cab and the driver opens Hazel's door. Hazel exits the cab in an extravagant fur coat as Charlie pays the driver. The driver enters the cab and proceeds down the street. Hazel follows Charlie up the steps of the building. She sees something out of the corner of her eye and looks down the street

She sees a man watching them from a nearby street corner, and grabs Charlie's arm as he unlocks the front door.

CHARLIE

What?!

HAZEL

Who's that over-

She looks to the street corner again but the man is gone.

HAZEL

He was there just a second ago.

CHARLIE

Sounds like someone's had a little too much tonight; I told you to lay off that tiger sweat Rick brought in.

She looks down the street again then follows him inside the building.

INT HAZEL AND CHARLIE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM NIGHT

Later that night Hazel and Charlie are lying in bed asleep. She is wearing a silk slip and he is wearing a pair of boxer shorts. Charlie sits up as the telephone rings. Hazel puts a pillow over her head. He answers the phone.

CHARLIE

(Groggily) Hello?

He rubs his eyes as he listens.

CHARLIE

Wait, what do you mean he-

He runs his hand over his face in agitation.

CHARLIE

Yea, I will.

He pulls the blankets aside and stands.

CHARLIE

When I get my goddamn clothes on, alright?!

He slams the receiver down and walks to the closet. He removes a suit from the closet and starts putting it on. Hazel sits up and turns on a lamp on the nightstand. She looks at a small clock on the nightstand and watches him in confusion.

HAZEL

Isn't it a little early for you to be going in to work?

He starts putting on his pants.

CHARLIE

I've gotta meet Mike, I'll be back later.

She gets out of bed and walks over to him as he finishes getting dressed.

HAZEL

Can't it wait until morning?

He raises his hand to slap her then turns back to the closet and removes a hat. He puts the hat on and turns to her.

CHARLIE

It's business.

He puts his hand to her cheek.

CHARLIE

Stay here in case anyone calls.

She nods and puts her hand over his.

HAZEL

How bad is it?

CHARLIE

I'll find out.

He kisses her and walks out of the bedroom. The door of the apartment is heard closing off screen as Hazel sits down on the bed and stares at the phone.

INT HAZEL AND CHARLIE'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM DAY

The next morning Hazel is sitting in an armchair reading a magazine and wearing a casual dress. The living room contains a radio, a phonograph, a liquor cabinet, several chairs, a large mirror hanging on the wall, and a small table on which a telephone lays.

Hazel's head starts to fall forward as she begins falling asleep while trying to read. She sits up straight and yawns as she resumes reading the magazine. She looks up as Charlie opens the door and enters the apartment. She rushes over to him, but he walks past her into the bedroom.

INT HAZEL AND CHARLIE'S APARTMENT BEDROOM DAY

Hazel follows Charlie into the bedroom.

HAZEL

And?

CHARLIE

The feds picked up Jeff.

He walks to the closet and removes a suitcase. She watches him in confusion.

So...

CHARLIE

So he talked.

She leans against the wall and swallows hard.

HAZEL

How much did he tell them?

He removes several items from the closet and puts them into the suitcase.

CHARLIE

Enough.

He puts the suitcase onto the bed then removes several items from the nightstand and places them in it.

HAZEL

When do we leave?

She removes several dresses from the closet and walks to the bed. He closes the suitcase with a sigh.

CHARLIE

We don't.

She puts the dresses down on the bed.

HAZEL

So that's how it is.

CHARLIE

It wasn't my idea; I'm just following Mike's orders.

She takes the dresses and throws them into the closet.

CHARLIE

What do you want me to do?

She slams the closet door shut.

HAZEL

Nothing. If Mike wants you to treat me like one of the girls in his cathouse then what can you do?

CHARLIE

Don't start that. It's for the best.

She walks to the bed and picks up the suitcase.

HAZEL

Yea, I haven't heard that one before.

She walks to the bedroom door and starts to throw the suitcase out of the room. He grabs the suitcase from her and slams the door shut.

CHARLIE

You really are one selfish bitch aren't you?

He tosses the suitcase onto the bed.

HAZEL

Me?! You're the one who-

CHARLIE

Who got you that job.

He walks to the closet and removes several of her dresses.

CHARLIE

Bought these clothes.

He holds up the dresses then throws them onto the floor.

CHARLIE

And pays for this apartment.

He gestures around the room.

CHARLIE

My neck's on the line and all you can think about is yourself!

She sits down on the bed, buries her head in her hands and pretends to cry.

HAZEL

I'm sorry, I just..

CHARLIE

You can drop the act, you're not fooling anyone.

He pulls her hands away from her face as she pretends to sob.

CHARLIE

No wonder you can't get out of the chorus.

HAZEL

I-

She tries to pull her hands away but he tightens his grip.

CHARLIE

Shut up and listen. I have a hunch Jeff cracked a little too easy; Mike's got something up his sleeve, and I want to know what. That's where you come in.

HAZEL

Me?

He sits down next to her.

CHARLIE

With liquor on the way out he'll need a new racket. He won't want to share, but I'll be two steps ahead of him.

He puts his arm around her.

HAZEL

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

Because I'm gonna' have another set of eyes and ears watching him while I'm gone.

HAZEL

What about the feds?

CHARLIE

You've always wanted to be an actress; now's your chance. Just play the dumb blonde routine.

She stares ahead and nods.

CHARLIE

I'm gonna' come out of this thing on top, but I need you there with me. Alright?

She turns to him and nods.

HAZEL

But for God's sake be careful.

CHARLIE

It's at the top of my list.

He pushes the suitcase off of the bed.

CHARLIE

Now, come here and say goodbye to me.

He pulls her into a kiss as the scene fades out.

INT THE QUEEN OF SHEBA NIGHTCLUB DAY

Hazel and the other dancers are rehearsing a dance routine to "A Guy What Takes His Time" as Frank observes. The dancers are wearing saloon girl costumes as they dance. Frank writes a few notes as the dancers finish the number.

FRANK

Not bad, but it needs work. Same time tomorrow.

The dancers exit behind the curtain and step off of the front of the stage. Hazel walks to the back of the stage.

FRANK

Hazel.

She turns around.

FRANK

Come here, I need to talk to you.

She walks to the front of the stage and stops.

HAZEL

Yea?

FRANK

Down here if you don't mind.

She jumps off of the stage and sits down next to him.

FRANK

Look, kid, I tried everything I could. I sincerely tried.

HAZEL

Tried what?

He removes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes his face.

FRANK

You're a nice girl and all, so it's nothing personal. But business is business.

HAZEL

Can you stop talking in circles and come out with it already?!

FRANK

I have to let you go.

He stands and starts walking to the exit.

HAZEL

Let me go?! But you just moved me up in the line last month.

He turns around and shrugs.

FRANK

Like I said, it's just business.

She follows him to the door.

HAZEL

Who the hell do you think you are?! You're pulling one over on me?! I-

FRANK

You had a good run while it lasted, but now you don't have a horse in the race. There's nothing I can do.

He starts to open the door. She pushes him away and pulls the door shut.

HAZEL

And what's that gibberish supposed to mean?

FRANK

It means that you're a second rate chorus girl and there's no one here to make me lie about it anymore.

She slaps him across the face. He laughs and opens the door.

FRANK

It just doesn't have the sting it used to.

He slams the door in her face. She stands staring at the door a few moments then slowly walks back to the stage, dejected. She climbs onto the stage and turns around, looking out at the empty seats. She shakes her head as she turns around and exits behind the curtain.

INT EL HAVANA NIGHTCLUB LOBBY DAY

Hazel is smoking a cigarette as she waits in the lobby of the club. She is wearing a gaudy hat and fur coat. The lobby contains a coat/hat check booth, several chairs along the wall, a set of stairs leading up to the manager's office, a door to the street, and a large door leading to the main club. The door to the club is ornately decorated with stained glass images of a Caribbean sunset. Hazel looks at her watch then walks to the hat/coat check booth and rings a small bell lying on the counter. She looks around the lobby and sees that there is no one in the room to answer the bell. She sighs and walks up the staircase. Knocking is heard from the top of the stairs.

HAZEL

Mr. Ryan?

Ginnie enters the lobby through the doors of the club and removes a hat from the hat/coat check booth. She is wearing the club's cocktail waitress uniform; a Caribbean inspired two-piece skirt and revealing top with a flower in her hair. Ginnie starts to walk back into the club with the hat, and then stops when she notices a sign on the floor. She picks up the sign and places it on the counter of the booth. She starts to walk back into the club then turns around when she hears Hazel knocking at the top of the stairs.

HAZEL

Mr. Ryan?

Ginnie looks up the stairs.

HAZEL

I have an appointment!

GINNIE

Hazel?

The knocking stops.

GINNIE

What are you doing up there?

Hazel storms down the staircase.

HAZEL

Where does he get off?! What, my time isn't valuable? I don't have—

Ginnie holds up the sign which reads, "The chorus positions have been filled. No further applicants need apply".

GINNIE

According to this, you don't have an appointment.

Hazel takes the sign, reads it, and throws it down. Ginnie picks the sign up and puts it back on the counter.

GINNIE

Can you try not to make more work for me?

HAZEL

When was it filled?

Ginnie shrugs.

GINNIE

How should I know?

Ginnie looks in a mirror at the back of the hatcheck booth and adjusts the flower in her hair.

HAZEL

You only work here.

GINNIE

The talent doesn't mix with the help, remember?

Hazel sits down on the stairs with a sigh.

HAZEL

(To herself) Or with ex-talent for that matter.

Ginnie turns away from the mirror.

GINNIE

Huh?

HAZEL

And this is the fifth club this week.

Ginnie walks to the stairs and leans against the railing.

GINNIE

Well, you know what they say...

HAZEL

If you give me even one prosperity line I swear I'll ring your neck.

GINNIE

Then why don't you buck up and try something off the stage?

HAZEL

Because the stage is all I know besides shopping and drinking.

Hazel stands.

HAZEL

And last time I checked you can't put either of those on a resume.

Ginnie laughs.

GINNIE

I'd be as rich as Rockefeller if you could. But griping ain't exactly a skill either.

Ginnie touches the sleeve of Hazel's coat.

GINNIE

And in the meantime it wouldn't hurt to tighten your belt a little.

Hazel looks confused, then laughs bitterly.

HAZEL

You mean this old thing? This and four empty rooms are all I've got to my name.

Hazel brushes off her coat and walks down the steps.

HAZEL

And at the end of the month I doubt I'll even have that left.

GINNIE

Serves you right for blowing through all that money that Charlie-

Hazel looks away.

GINNIE

You mean he didn't send it?!

Hazel stands straight and glares at Ginnie. Hazel starts to say something then walks to the lobby exit.

HAZEL

I'd better be going; I can't pound much pavement from inside a lobby.

Hazel starts to open the door and turns around. She forces a smile.

HAZEL

It was good seeing you.

GINNIE

How would you feel about seeing a lot more of me?

Hazel closes the door and looks confused.

GINNIE

My rent's not so easy to pay anymore either. It's no four room suite, but it's something.

Hazel walks to Ginnie.

HAZEL

It's a hell of a lot more than something, Ginnie, it's-

Ginnie's boss enters the lobby from the club.

CLUB MANAGER

Since when does it take all day to get a damn hat?

GINNIE

Sorry, I-

CLUB MANAGER

You're taking tables five through ten and you'd better be ready in the next ten seconds. One, two...

Ginnie rolls her eyes and salutes the Manager.

GINNIE

Sir, yes sir.

She turns to Hazel.

GINNIE

(Whispering) Come by tonight and we'll talk about it.

Ginnie follows the Club Manager to the door of the club then turns back to Hazel and winks.

INT GINNIE'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM DAY

Hazel is sitting in a chair in the living room of Ginnie's apartment reading a fashion magazine and smoking a cigarette. The living room contains a small sofa, two chairs, a coffee table, and a bureau. All of the furnishing and decorations in the apartment are gaudy and inexpensive. Several newspapers are spread across the coffee table and a radio lies on top of the bureau. Hazel looks up as she hears the apartment door being unlocked. She quickly picks up a newspaper and hides the magazine behind it. Ginnie enters the apartment wearing a casual dress and coat with the flower from her uniform still in her hair. She stretches as she kicks her shoes off and tosses her coat onto one of the chairs.

GINNIE

Any calls for me?

Hazel shakes her head and continues reading.

GINNIE

You should have heard that band last night!

Ginnie starts humming to herself as she removes a comb from her purse and combs her hair. She spins then lands on the sofa as she continues humming.

GINNIE

It almost took the sting out of waiting on drunks half the night.

She removes the flower from her hair and throws it at Hazel with a laugh. Hazel puts the flower aside and resumes reading.

GINNIE

So sour puss...

She stands and walks to Hazel.

GINNIE

What exciting careers did you find today?

She takes the newspaper from Hazel and Hazel tries to grab it from her, causing the magazine to fall to the floor. Ginnie picks up the magazine.

GINNIE

I didn't realize you were applying to modeling agencies.

Ginnie tosses the magazine onto the coffee table.

HAZEL

I can't take a break for a few minutes?

Ginnie sits down on the sofa.

GINNIE

Sure, but you've been taking one for the last month.

Ginnie stretches across the sofa.

GINNIE

But, lucky for you, we should be getting a call from El Havana any day now.

HAZEL

You don't mean that hat-check job again?

GINNIE

You bet I do.

HAZEL

I already told you that I-

GINNIE

You've been telling me a lot of things, and I still don't have that money for the rent.

HAZEL

You know that's where Fisher's gang hangs out.

GINNIE

Among others...

Hazel sits down with a sigh. She puts her head in her hands and takes a deep breath, then looks up.

HAZEL

I can barely face them, never mind wait on them.

Ginnie sits up.

GINNIE

Sure you can!

Ginnie stands and pretends to be working an imaginary hat-check counter.

GINNIE

(Overly perky) May I take your hat sir?

She takes an imaginary hat and greets another imaginary customer.

GINNIE

(Tearfully) May I take your hat sir?

She takes an imaginary hat and greets another imaginary customer.

GINNIE

(Seductively) May I take your hat sir?

Hazel laughs and starts clapping as Ginnie takes a bow.

GINNIE

Nothing to it; just like the stage.

HAZEL

Without the curtain call and pay raise.

Ginnie sits down the sofa.

GINNIE

And it ain't a bad way to meet men either. If you ask me, a fresh layer of lipstick with someone to wear it for is just what the doctor ordered.

Hazel rolls her eyes and takes a drag of her cigarette.

HAZEL

And just who said I was asking?

GINNIE

You know that's how I met my Dean, he was at table five and—

HAZEL

Dean, huh? Is that the new flavor of the week?

GINNIE

Month, I'll have you know!

Ginnie throws a sofa cushion at Hazel.

GINNIE

Besides, with Charlie gone and all...

Hazel stubs out her cigarette in irritation.

HAZEL

I'll find something on my own; thanks.

GINNIE

Sure, just as soon as those dusty plains drown in flooding.

Ginnie takes the magazine from the coffee table and stands. She walks to the bathroom door then turns around.

GINNIE

I'm taking a bath.

She holds up the magazine.

GINNIE

I hope you'll be able to manage without this for a few minutes.

Ginnie enters the bathroom and closes the door behind her. Hazel takes a newspaper from the coffee table and sits down on the sofa.

HAZEL

(To herself) Hat-check girl my ass. I'd sooner get a drink with J. Edgar Hoover himself!

Hazel smirks to herself and stretches across the sofa. Ginnie slightly opens the bathroom door.

GINNIE

(From behind the bathroom door) Well then I hope he's paying!

Hazel sits up as Ginnie closes the door and locks it. She punches one of the sofa pillows in frustration and reluctantly opens the newspaper.

EL HAVANA NIGHTCLUB LOBBY NIGHT

Crowds of customers enter the club at the start of a business night. One of the customers rings the bell at the hat-check booth. He waits several seconds then rings the bell again. Hazel reluctantly appears behind the booth in a Caribbean style dress and fruit hat. Hazel forces a smile as a line forms behind the customer.

HAZEL

May I take your hat sir?

The customer throws the hat down onto the counter and proceeds into the club. She hangs up the customer's hat then walks back to the counter and sees a group of dancers from the Queen of Sheba. She tries to avoid looking at the dancers but one of the them moves into the hat-check line. Hazel proceeds to check the coats and hats of the other customers in line until she reaches the Dancer.

HAZEL

May I take your hat, miss?

DANCER

Well you sure as hell won't be taking my regards to old Broadway anytime soon.

The Dancer tosses her hat onto the counter. Hazel cringes and hangs up the Dancer's hat then walks back to the booth.

DANCER

Oh, and Hazel, I'll be sure to tell Frank and the girls you said hello.

Hazel starts to say something then sees the manager enter the lobby from the main floor and stops herself. The Dancer rejoins her friends and proceeds into the club snickering and pointing in Hazel's direction. Hazel glares at them then resumes checking the hats and coats of the remaining customers.

EL HAVANA NIGHTCLUB LOBBY LATER THAT NIGHT

Hazel retrieves the hats and coats of the last couple leaving the club. As the couple reaches the exit, Hazel notices that the man has dropped his wallet on the floor. She rushes out of the booth and grabs the wallet.

HAZEL

Excuse me! Sir?!

The man turns around and walks to Hazel as the woman waits by the door.

HAZEL

You dropped this.

CUSTOMER

So I did.

He takes the wallet and counts the money in it. He looks to make sure that the woman is not looking and hands a bill to Hazel.

CUSTOMER

Thank you, miss.

He winks at Hazel.

HAZEL

No, thank you!

Hazel stuffs the bill into her dress as the man turns and walks to the door. She walks into the booth as the couple exits the club. She removes several bills from inside her dress and places them in her purse. One of the waitresses enters the lobby from the main floor.

WAITRESS

Goodnight, Hazel.

HAZEL

Goodnight.

Hazel puts on her coat and exits the booth.

HAZEL

Say, have you seen Ginnie?

WAITRESS

Not since that number in the pinstripe came looking for her; she must have left as soon as her shift ended.

HAZEL

Hell! She was supposed to catch the subway with me.

The waitress shrugs.

WAITRESS

There's always a cab.

HAZEL

I didn't work all night to pay the cabbie's bills.

WAITRESS

Touche. In that case, I'll see you tomorrow night.

The waitress exits the club and Hazel starts to follow after her. Hazel sees her reflection in the glass door and notices she is still wearing the fruit hat. She runs back to the booth and tosses the hat behind it then exits the club with a sigh of relief.

INT EL HAVANA NIGHTCLUB LOBBY NIGHT

Hazel arrives for work the next night before the club opens to the public. She is wearing a casual dress and carrying a large handbag. She walks behind the hat-check booth and removes her costume hat from one of the hat racks. She removes her costume dress from the hand bag then walks down the hall, leaving the hand bag on the booth counter. Detective Mitchell enters the building from the main entrance wearing a trench coat and fedora and proceeds to main floor of the club. Hazel enters the lobby from down the hall in her full costume and walks behind the hat-check booth. She removes a cosmetics case from her hand bag and removes a tube of lipstick and compact from the case. She adjusts her hair and puts on lipstick as the Club Manager enters the lobby from the main floor. The Club Manager walks behind the booth and starts to pull her out of the booth by the arm.

CLUB MANAGER

Didn't anyone ever teach you to answer when your name's called?

Hazel pulls her arm away.

CLUB MANAGER

The last thing I need is another dame to go AWOL.

Hazel follows the Club Manager to the door of the main floor.

HAZEL

Can't a girl put on her costume without getting—

She stops as he opens the door.

HAZEL

What do you mean another dame?

CLUB MANAGER

Ginnie didn't show up tonight.

HAZEL

That's got to be the longest date I've ever heard of.

The Club Manager shakes his head and walks to the main floor of the club, letting the door close behind him. Hazel catches the door as it is about to close in her face and follows him to the main floor.

INT EL HAVANA NIGHTCLUB MAIN FLOOR NIGHT

Hazel follows the Club Manager into the main floor of the club. The club is decorated with tropical scenes painted on the walls and fake flowers hanging from the ceiling. The club contains numerous tables, a stage, and a back door leading to the kitchen. Detective Mitchell is sitting at a table talking to one of the waitresses and taking notes as the Club Manager attempts to read the notes over his shoulder.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Thank you, that will be all for now.

The waitress stands with a sigh of relief and walks into the kitchen. Detective Mitchell looks at the Club Manager.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

(Sarcastically) Did I miss anything?

CLUB MANAGER

(Embarrassed) Nothing I noticed.

The Club Manager clears his throat and signals to Hazel. Hazel walks to the table.

CLUB MANAGER

This here is the one I was telling you about.

Detective Mitchell gives the Club Manager a reprimanding look. The Club Manager nods, walks to another table and starts reading a menu.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Alright, sit down, Miss...

Hazel remains standing with her arms crossed.

HAZEL

Leigh, Hazel Leigh.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Right, is it true that you were Virginia West's roommate?

HAZEL

Still am, last I checked.

He looks uneasy and clears his throat.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

And how did the two of you become acquainted?

Hazel sits down as Detective Mitchell lights a cigarette.

HAZEL

Mutual friends.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Would one of those mutual friends be Dean Powell?

HAZEL

No, I didn't have enough time to meet all of Ginnie's boyfriends.

He writes down a note.

HAZEL

Do you mind telling me what this is all about, Officer?

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

It's Detective, actually.

HAZEL

Well, good for you.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

And when did you last see Miss West?

HAZEL

We came in to work together last night. I waited to go home with her but her date must have picked her up early.

He writes down another note. She rolls her eyes and stands.

HAZEL

If that's all, I've got a shift to get ready for.

Hazel starts to walk towards the lobby. Detective Mitchell stands and follows her.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Miss Leigh.

Hazel continues towards the lobby without slowing down. He follows her and grabs her by the shoulders, turning her around.

HAZEL

What is this?!

Hazel tries to pull away from him but he tightens his grip.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

There are some things you ought to know about.

HAZEL

Well...

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Is there somewhere private we can talk?

HAZEL

There's the boss' office.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Alright, I'll see you in there.

He lets go of her and walks to the Club Manager. He whispers something to the Club Manager as Hazel walks into the lobby.

INT EL HAVANA NIGHTLCUB MANAGER'S OFFICE NIGHT

The office contains a large desk and matching chair, two smaller chairs, and a large cabinet. Hazel is sitting on top of the desk as Detective Mitchell enters the manager's office. Detective Mitchell picks up a half full whiskey decanter lying on the desk.

HAZEL

Just because we don't sell the stuff...

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Right.

Detective Mitchell takes a drag from his cigarette.

HAZEL

I see you're not big on sharing.

He looks confused. She gestures to the cigarette.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Sorry, want one?

HAZEL

I thought you'd never ask.

He hands her a cigarette and match. She strikes the match off of the desk and lights the cigarette.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

About Miss West...

HAZEL

These aren't bad.

She gestures to the cigarette as her hands shake.

HAZEL

(Quickly) Most cops smoke that cheap home rolled stuff.

She looks past him at the wall.

HAZEL

I never could stand those, they taste like—

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

(Sternly) Miss Leigh.

She takes a breath and forces herself to look at him.

HAZEL

Is it bad?

He nods.

HAZEL

How bad?

He retrieves a handkerchief from his pocket and hands it to her.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

I'm sorry.

She lets the handkerchief slip through her fingers onto her lap.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

They were found gunned down in Powell's apartment late this afternoon. Judging from the scene photos, she opened the door and got it first.

Hazel puts her hand down on the desk, letting the cigarette rest on the wood.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

I was hoping that your boss had told you when he was sent to get you.

She slowly shakes her head.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

I'm sorry for the shock.

He takes the cigarette from her hand and holds it up in front of her. She shakes her head and he stubs it out in an ashtray on the desk.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Right now it's looking like it was ordered by Mike Fisher.

She looks up, alert.

HAZEL

But that doesn't make any sense.

He sits down in one of the smaller chairs.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Doesn't it? Powell was one of Fisher's top men.

He opens his notebook to a marked page.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

That is until he started playing footsy under table some of Rossetti's boys.

HAZEL

I know how it looks, but that ain't Mike.

He gives her a knowing look.

HAZEL

Oh I know; they're all the same according to you cops.

He turns to another page in his notes.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

I'm surprised you of all people would disagree.

HAZEL

Meaning?

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

You've seen Fisher's handiwork first hand.

He takes a long drag from his cigarette.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

You were Charlie Collins' girl, weren't you?

HAZEL

I am.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Don't you mean were?

HAZEL

I mean am, as in present tense, as in I don't know what the hell you're implying.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Charlie started getting big for his britches, same as Powell. And, when exactly was the last time you heard from him?

She glares at him.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

It doesn't take a detective to string those facts together.

He removes a card from his pocket and hands it to her.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Here's my card.

HAZEL

I—

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Yea, I know you'll never talk, 'cross your heart and hope to die'. But if you don't watch it, that's just what you'll do.

He walks to the door.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

Call the station if you think of anything else; ask for Mitchell.

HAZEL

You can take this card and stick it up—

He opens the door.

DETECTIVE MITCHELL

You talk pretty tough for a girl with two roommates in the morgue.

She takes the ashtray off of the desk and throws it at the door as he closes it.

INT GINNIE'S APARTMENT DAY

Hazel is rushing around the apartment packing her belongings into a suitcase. She is wearing her bathrobe and a towel over her hair. She puts the suitcase down on the coffee table and removes the towel from her hair, revealing that she has dyed it brown. She closes and locks the suitcase, then removes it from the coffee table. She sits down on the sofa with a sigh and notices a stray flower from Ginnie's uniform lying between the cushions. She picks up the flower and starts to sob.

INT TRAIN DAY

Hazel is sitting on a train. She is wearing a casual dress and matching hat. She taps her foot against the wall as she stares out the window. Across the aisle, Ray is reading a newspaper. He is in his mid-thirties and well dressed. He looks up from the newspaper in irritation as he hears Hazel tapping her foot. He starts to say something then stops as she removes her foot from her shoe and uses it to scratch the back of her leg. He moves his gaze from her foot up the rest of her body then stops as she turns and glares at him.

HAZEL

(Sarcastically) Which stocking has the rip?

RAY

I...

HAZEL

Or is it something that happens to have spilled on the middle of my dress?

He puts his newspaper down and chuckles.

RAY

Nothing I can see; and I would have noticed by now.

HAZEL

I'll bet.

She turns back to the window. He picks his newspaper up and chuckles to himself. She turns back to him.

HAZEL

What's so funny?

RAY

Nothing much. I was thinking it's just my luck to get called out the one time I have honest intentions. I couldn't help but look; you reminded me of her so much.

Hazel rolls her eyes.

HAZEL

Who?

RAY

Would you believe me if I said Myrna Loy?

HAZEL

No.

He shrugs and picks his newspaper back up.

RAY

Well suit your-

She smiles.

HAZEL

But I'll take it.

RAY

How far?

She looks confused.

RAY

How far are you taking the train, I mean.

HAZEL

I was thinking of switching lines and heading to New Orleans.

RAY

It's quite a city. Of course there's more atmosphere if you go by ferry. Moonlight over the bayou...

HAZEL

And snakes in the river. I'll take my chances on land.

She starts to turn back to the window.

RAY

You're not from around here, are you?

HAZEL

Well, I...is it that obvious?

RAY

Only to a trained eye. Let's see...you look like you'd hail from-

The train jerks to a stop. She looks out the window.

HAZEL

That'll be me.

A Ticket Collector enters their car and begins checking customers' tickets. Hazel reaches to remove her suitcase from a compartment above her seat. The Ticket Collector approaches her.

TICKET COLLECTOR

Ticket please, miss.

HAZEL

Just a second.

She struggles to remove the suitcase.

TICKET COLLECTOR

Miss, I need your ticket.

She stops trying to take the suitcase down and looks in her purse. She looks up at the Ticket Collector, panicked, and then empties her purse onto the seat.

HAZEL

I had it when I got on the train...

She starts searching her coat pockets.

HAZEL

It's here somewhere, I know it is.

She searches through the items on the seat again. The Ticket Collector takes her by the arm.

TICKET COLLECTOR

You'd better come with me.

Hazel pulls her arm away.

HAZEL

Like hell I will!

TICKET COLLECTOR

Then I'll be forced to call the authorities.

RAY

There's no need for that.

Ray stands and removes his wallet from his pocket.

RAY

(To Hazel) This is your stop?

She nods. Ray hands several bills to the Ticket Collector.

RAY

That ought to cover it.

TICKET COLLECTOR

But—

RAY

The lady and I appreciate your discretion.

The Ticket Collector starts counting the money as Ray removes Hazel's suitcase from the overhead compartment. The Ticket Collector looks at the money in his hand then looks at Ray and nods.

TICKET COLLECTOR

Thank you, I apologize for the misunderstanding.

RAY

The thanks is all ours.

The Ticket Collector clears his throat and resumes checking the other customers' tickets.

HAZEL

Thanks. Look, I've only got a few dollars with me, but—

He walks ahead of her with the suitcase.

RAY

I'll settle for your name.

They reach the door of the train and he hands her the suitcase.

RAY

It might come in handy the next time we meet.

HAZEL

Who says there's going to be a next time?

RAY

Isn't there?

He tips his hat and steps off of the train. She pauses then rushes off of the train as she hears the wheels starting to move.

EXT TRAIN STATION DAY

Hazel exits the train carrying her suitcase. She walks down the platform to a ticket booth. She waits in line behind several other customers at the ticket booth. As she reaches closer to the front of the line she removes her wallet from her purse and starts searching

through it for cash. She removes several bills and continues to search the wallet and purse for more.

TICKET SALESMAN

Can I help you?

Hazel looks up, panicked and realizes that she is now at the front of the line. She opens her purse to search it again then closes it and regains her composure.

HAZEL

I'd like a schedule please.

The Ticket Salesman points to a shelf on the side of the ticket booth filled with schedules and maps of Missouri.

TICKET SALESMAN

Help yourself.

She nods and walks to a nearby bench. She opens her purse and wallet on the bench and searches through them. She places the bills back into her wallet with a sigh and leans back against the bench. She watches the trains arriving and departing and sees a sign ahead, which reads 'Welcome to Oakdale, Missouri'. After several seconds she stands and walks out of the train station.

EXT MRS. BAILEY'S ROOMING HOUSE NIGHT

Hazel is walking down the streets of Oakdale after spending the day searching for a room. Her makeup has worn off and her hair is disheveled. She reaches a run-down house with a sign outside which reads "Mrs. Bailey's Rooming House for Young Ladies". The house is large and designed in an ornate turn of the century style. The house has fallen into disrepair and the paint on the sign outside is chipping. Hazel climbs the creaking stairs to the porch and walks through the front door.

INT MRS. BAILEY'S ROOMING HOUSE LOBBY NIGHT

Hazel enters the lobby of the boarding house. The lobby contains a registration counter and staircase and adjoins a hallway. A radio lies behind the counter playing 'Melancholy Baby'. At the registration

counter Mrs. Bailey, a matronly middle aged woman, is reading a ledger as she hums along with the radio. Mrs. Bailey doesn't notice Hazel enter the room and begins to sing along with the radio.

MRS. BAILEY

(Singing) Every cloud must have a silver lining. Wait until the sun-

HAZEL

Excuse me.

Mrs. Bailey looks up, startled.

MRS. BAILEY

Where did you-

Hazel holds back a laugh as Mrs. Bailey clears her throat in embarrassment and attempts to appear professional.

MRS. BAILEY

I mean, can I help you?

HAZEL

Got any vacancies?

MRS. BAILEY

Too many. How long do you plan on staying?

HAZEL

That's a million dollar question.

Mrs. Bailey looks at her disapprovingly.

HAZEL

Let's say a week for now.

Mrs. Bailey nods.

MRS. BAILEY

That will be nine dollars a week.

HAZEL

Sorry, but that's a little out of my price range.

MRS. BAILEY

That's the rate.

Hazel walks to the door.

HAZEL

Thanks anyway.

MRS. BAILEY

Well, I can't just change the rate for every sad story that comes in here, you know.

HAZEL

Naturally. Besides you seem to managing with those vacancies just fine. Goodnight

Hazel starts to open the door.

MRS. BAILEY

What about eight fifty?

Hazel shakes her head.

HAZEL

I can do five.

MRS. BAILEY

Five?! What does this look like, a shanty?

HAZEL

(Under her breath) Do you really want me to answer that?

MRS. BAILEY

What?

HAZEL

Six.

Mrs. Bailey looks at her ledger and mutters under her breath. She looks up and nods.

MRS. BAILEY

Six.

Hazel walks to the desk and holds her hand out to shake hands with Mrs. Bailey. Mrs. Bailey looks at Hazel contemptuously and hands her a key.

MRS. BAILEY

Straight up the stairs, it will be your first door on the left.

Hazel tosses the key in the air and catches it.

HAZEL

(Sweetly) Thanks!

Hazel rushes up the stairs.

INT DIME-A-DINER RESTUARANT

Hazel enters the Dime-A-Diner restaurant after spending the day searching for a job. The diner contains several bar stools along a serving counter and several small tables. Hazel is wearing a plain blouse and skirt and looks tired. She sits down at a table and picks up a menu. She starts to fall asleep as she blankly stares at the menu. A Waitress approaches Hazel's table carrying a notepad and loudly chewing gum.

WAITRESS 1

What can I get for you?

Hazel drops the menu on the floor as she is startled awake.

HAZEL

(Half awake) Got any job?

The waitress picks up the menu and glances at it.

WAITRESS 1

(Sarcastically) Sorry but that's tomorrow's special.

HAZEL

I mean coffee. A cup of coffee please.

The waitress rolls her eyes.

WAITRESS 1

Right away.

Hazel resumes reading the menu as Waitress 1 talks to one of the other waitresses while she retrieves a cup from behind the counter.

The restaurant manager, Sophie, enters from the kitchen carrying a clipboard. Sophie is a brassy middle aged woman who dresses in comfortable, practical clothes. Sophie sees Waitress 1 giggling and pointing in Hazel's direction.

WAITRESS 1

I'll have to use that bit next time I'm looking for a job.

Waitress 1 laughs at her own joke as Sophie approaches them.

SOPHIE

I'll remind you to this afternoon.

WAITRESS 1

This afternoon?

SOPHIE

You'll be needing a good interview line by then if you don't quit the gabbing.

Waitress 1 pours a cup of coffee.

WAITRESS 1

For crying out loud, Sophie, I was just-

SOPHIE

Just leaving that coffee to pour itself by the looks of it.

Waitress 1 sighs and brings Hazel a cup of coffee.

WAITRESS 1

Something to eat?

HAZEL

I need another minute.

Waitress 1 blows a bubble gum bubble and walks back behind the counter. Sophie holds out a napkin as she writes on her clipboard.

SOPHIE

Gum.

Waitress 1 spits the gum into the napkin. Sophie tosses the napkin into a nearby trash can.

SOPHIE

Next time at least *try* a little discretion.

Waitress 1 nods and enters the kitchen. Sophie reads the notes on her clipboard as Waitress 1 enters from the kitchen with a customer's order.

SOPHIE

And one more thing.

Waitress 1 sighs in exasperation.

WAITRESS 1

What?

SOPHIE

Does that kid really need a job?

Waitress 1 looks at Hazel and shrugs.

WAITRESS 1

Looks like it.

Waitress 1 brings the order to a customer. Sophie approaches Hazel's table. Hazel puts the menu aside.

SOPHIE

Anything I can get for you, miss?

HAZEL

I think I'll just stick with the coffee.

Sophie sits down at the table.

SOPHIE

That's too bad. It turns out we have one order of job interview left if you're interested.

Hazel looks up alertly and tries to adjust her hair and clothes.

HAZEL

Yes, of course, I—

SOPHIE

Got any experience?

HAZEL

A...a few years ago.

SOPHIE

That ought to work. What about references?

HAZEL

I just got into town a few weeks ago, and...well...

Sophie shrugs and gestures to Waitress 1.

SOPHIE

A lot of good the glowing reviews on that one did me.

Sophie leans back in her chair and thinks for a moment.

SOPHIE

Tell you what; I need someone who can do their job without giving me hell while they're at it. You think you can do that?

Hazel smiles sweetly.

HAZEL

Whatever you need.

Sophie stands.

SOPHIE

That's just what I want to hear. Come by tomorrow and we can talk some more about it.

HAZEL

I'll be here.

Hazel shakes Sophie's hand.

HAZEL

Thanks!

Sophie starts to walk back to the counter. Hazel signals to Waitress 1

HAZEL

Miss?

Waitress 1 walks to Hazel's table.

WAITRESS 1

Ready for the bill?

HAZEL

Actually, I decided to order something after all...

INT MRS. BAILEY'S ROOMING HOUSE HAZEL'S ROOM NIGHT

Hazel is listening to the radio play 'I Only Have Eyes For You' downstairs as she stands by the window in her apartment. The apartment is a small room which contains a small bed, a desk, and a dresser. She sits down at the desk and removes a pad of paper from one of the drawers. She writes a letter then reads it to herself. She starts to tear up the letter then removes an envelope from another drawer and places the letter in the envelope. She writes Charlie's old address on the envelope and puts it down on the desk. She leans back in the chair to stretch then stands and walks back to the window. She stares out the window as the scene fades out.

INT DIME-A-DINER RESTAURANT NIGHT

Hazel is wiping down tables as the staff closes the restaurant for the night. Sophie enters from the kitchen with a schedule in her hand.

SOPHIE

Ladies?

The staff continues working without noticing her. She sits down at a table in the center of the restaurant. She places two fingers in her mouth and whistles. The waitresses turn to her and stop working.

SOPHIE

Which one of you can take an extra shift Saturday?

Several of the waitresses rush to Sophie's table.

WAITRESS ONE

I can!

WAITRESS TWO

I need the hours.

WAITRESS THREE

You promised me I could have the next extra!

Hazel finishes cleaning the tables and wipes her forehead as she watches the waitresses clamor around Sophie.

SOPHIE

Alright! Let's handle this nice and democratic.

Hazel takes a broom from behind the counter and starts sweeping the floor.

SOPHIE

How about—

A bell rings as Ray enters through the front door of the restaurant carrying a newspaper. Sophie resumes reading the schedule.

SOPHIE

(Gruffly) We're closed.

Ray sits down at one of the tables and opens his newspaper.

SOPHIE

(Irritated) I said we're—

Sophie stands and sees Ray sitting at the table.

SOPHIE

(Sweetly) Why, Mr. Thompson, I didn't see you there.

Ray looks up from his newspaper at the waitresses.

RAY

Quite the fan-club you have here.

SOPHIE

Oh, just some business details. Having your usual?

He nods.

SOPHIE

(Calling across the restaurant) Hazel, get Mr. Thompson a coffee.

Hazel nods and puts the broom away. She walks behind the counter and pours a cup of coffee.

SOPHIE

(To the waitresses) Let's take this to the kitchen, girls.

The waitresses continue arguing about the schedule as they follow Sophie into the kitchen. Ray resumes reading his newspaper as Hazel brings him his coffee.

HAZEL

Will that be all?

RAY

For now anyway.

He looks up from his newspaper as Hazel walks back to the counter and picks up a menu.

Ray

Well hello, stranger.

Hazel turns around and looks confused.

HAZEL

Excuse me?

RAY

I thought you'd be livin' it up at Mardi Gras by now.

Hazel looks at him then smiles as she recognizes him.

HAZEL

Well, hello.

She walks back to his table and hands him the menu.

HAZEL

Let's just say I got a little side tracked.

RAY

Lucky for me; after all how else would I have collected on that debt...
Hazel was it?

Hazel looks back towards the kitchen and shakes her head.

HAZEL

You're a good listener.

He finishes his coffee.

RAY

When I want to be, anyway.

HAZEL

Can I get you anything else?

Sophie and the other waitresses enter from the kitchen.

RAY

I'll have to get back to you on that.

He folds up his newspaper and puts several bills on the table. He
stands and hands her the money.

RAY

Goodnight.

She starts to walk to the counter as she counts the money then stops
and rushes back to the door.

HAZEL

Wait!

He stops and turns around.

HAZEL

There's been a mistake, I-

He chuckles and shakes his head.

RAY

There's no mistake.

HAZEL

But-

She tries to hand him back the money but he closes her hand over it.

RAY

You are new to this business, aren't you?

He looks past her at the other waitresses.

RAY

(Lowering his voice) Haven't you ever heard of a gratuity?

He winks at her and walks out of the restaurant. She puts several in her pocket and cleans his table as Sophie watches her curiously.

SOPHIE

Well, it looks like you're fitting right in.

Hazel finishes cleaning the table and removes her apron as the other waitresses leave the restaurant.

HAZEL

Huh?

SOPHIE

I was just saying you're fitting in; for being so new to town and all.

HAZEL

Oh, I don't know about that.

SOPHIE

Ray Thompson seems to.

Hazel shrugs and removes her coat from the coat rack. She puts on her coat and hands the money for Ray's coffee to Sophie

HAZEL

You know customers, give them one smile and-

Hazel looks out the window then turns back to Sophie.

HAZEL

You don't mean he's the same Mr. Thompson who-

Sophie nods.

SOPHIE

Uh huh.

HAZEL

Then all those ships-

Sophie removes her own coat from the coat rack and puts it on.

SOPHIE

All his. And that goes for the loot they're carrying too.

Hazel looks out the window again and starts to remove the money from her pocket. Sophie puts her hand on Hazel's shoulder.

SOPHIE

Yea, I'd say you're fitting right in.

Sophie walks to the door and holds it open as Hazel stares out the window a moment. Hazel puts the money back into her pocket and follows Sophie out of the restaurant.

INT DIME-A-DINER RESTAURANT DAY

Hazel is bringing a customer their order as Ray enters the restaurant. Hazel rushes to his table, heading off another waitress as she approaches the table. The waitress folds her arms and remains standing by the table as she looks disapprovingly at Hazel.

HAZEL

(To the waitress) Would you mind taking tables six and seven for me?

The waitress nods and approaches the customers at another table.

HAZEL

Should I get your usual ready, Mr. Thompson?

Ray reads through the contents of a menu.

RAY

Please.

Hazel writes down an order on a notepad and brings the order into the kitchen. She enters from the kitchen and prepares a cup of coffee behind the counter. She brings the coffee to Ray's table as he looks out the window.

HAZEL

Here you are.

Hazel puts the coffee down on the table.

RAY

Thank you.

She turns and starts to walk towards the kitchen.

RAY

Hazel?

She turns around and walks to the table.

RAY

Tell me, does the customer-bartender confidentiality apply to waitresses too?

She laughs.

HAZEL

Well, there's no written rule, but you can try me.

RAY

I have a terrible problem.

He signals her to lean in to listen. She looks uneasy.

RAY

I'm supposed to be meeting a friend of mine tonight, but his wife talked him into buying theater tickets.

HAZEL

It sounds like you're off the hook to me.

RAY

I thought so too.

He removes two theater tickets from his pocket and puts them on the table.

RAY

But not quite.

He sighs.

RAY

I guess I could always sell the extra ticket back to the theater, but I never like going stag to these things. I'm old fashioned that way.

HAZEL

That *is* a dilemma.

She picks up one of the theater tickets and reads it then puts it back on the table.

HAZEL

Do you think they'd fall for it if you faked sick?

He clears his throat.

RAY

Actually...I was sort of hoping for more than advice from you.

HAZEL

Oh, I...

He picks the tickets up and straightens them on the table.

RAY

I understand if you're busy; it was a last minute plan.

He starts to put the tickets back into his pocket but Hazel grabs his hand.

HAZEL

I don't remember saying no.

She lets go of his hand and he hands her one of the tickets.

RAY

I'll pick you up tonight then. Is seven alright?

HAZEL

Fine.

She writes her address down on her notepad.

HAZEL

Here's the address.

Hazel turns around and notices Sophie watching her from behind the counter.

HAZEL

I'd better get back to work then. Thanks.

She starts to walk to the counter then turns around.

HAZEL

Wait, I...

She looks embarrassed.

RAY

What?

HAZEL

Well, I'm not sure if I have a dress for it.

RAY

Haven't you heard the expression 'it's the lady who makes the clothes'?

Hazel smiles to herself as she walks past the counter into the kitchen.

EXT MRS. BAILEY'S ROOMING HOUSE NIGHT

Later that night Ray's Rolls Royce pulls up in front of the boarding house. Ray exits the car from the backseat and walks to Hazel's door. He opens the door and holds his hand out to her. She takes his hand and exits the vehicle. They walk to the porch of the boarding house. He leans back against the railing as she stands by the door. She is wearing a plain skirt and blouse and he is wearing a suit.

RAY

And what's the verdict?

She looks confused.

RAY

On the show.

HAZEL

I liked it. The leading lady was a little hammy, but that's probably just my competitive streak.

She removes a cigarette from her purse and lights it.

RAY

There's a touch of green in those eyes after all. You never mentioned that you were an actress.

She breathes in her cigarette too quickly and coughs.

HAZEL

I...well, I used to want to be when I was in school.

He nods as she takes another drag from her cigarette.

RAY

(Pointing her to cigarette) Got any more of those?

She removes a pack of cigarettes from her purse and tosses it to him.

HAZEL

But I really did have a good time; honest.

He lights his cigarette and stands.

RAY

Glad I wasn't the only one.

He steps towards her as she steps back towards the door.

HAZEL

Goodnight.

She starts to open the door.

RAY

(Disappointed) Goodnight? I didn't realize it was so late.

HAZEL

It is when you're scheduled for the breakfast shift in the morning.

He takes a drag from his cigarette as they stand in awkward silence.

HAZEL

See you at the usual table?

She kisses him on the cheek.

RAY

Yes, ma'am!

She opens the door as he leans in to kiss her.

