

PARLOR CITY NOIR

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A NICK HOLLIDAY P.I. MYSTERY

**WRITTEN BY
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Off The Wall Plays

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PARLOR CITY NOIR

CAST

Nick Holliday, a Private Detective

Dora Chase, Nick's girl Friday

Kathleen DeLuccci, The client, a widow.

Alysan Asher, An eccentric Art dealer

Mike Shields, A Detective with Parlor City P.D.'s Intelligence Bureau

Gwendolyn Leigh, A struggling artist

Ricco, Hired muscle for Falcone.

JIMMY Falcone, a Gangster

SETTING: The office of Silver Shield Investigations

TIME: The 1940's, the era of Hard-Boiled detectives and Gangsters

A 1940's style detective's office. A large wooden desk and swivel chair are CENTER. An old chair for clients sits in front of the desk. A sofa is set against the right wall of the office. A metal filing cabinet and a coat tree can be found in another corner. On the desk is a name plate that reads NICK HOLLIDAY, PI. A window with the reversed inscription SILVER SHIELD INVESTIGATIONS NICK HOLLIDAY PI painted on it looks out upon the city. A door connecting the outer office to the detective's office bears a frosted glass pane with the reversed inscription NICK HOLLIDAY, PRIVATE DETECTIVE on it. A bottle of scotch and two glasses are set on one corner of the desk. A bulletin board cluttered with wanted posters and other papers hangs on one wall of the office.

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ACT ONE

Scene one

The office of the Silver Shield Investigations

*A single spot comes up on **Nick Holliday** as he enters from stage left and moves center. A single street lamp lights the area. A fog fills the stage. Behind him in silhouette is the skyline of a city. As he reaches Center he takes out a cigarette and lights it. The wailing of a saxophone can be heard*

NICK

This is the city. They call it Parlor City on account of the number of cigar factories once found throughout the city. It was a name meant to bring to mind sophistication, elegance, and prosperity; not any longer. Now it is a cesspool of vice and corruption controlled by the families of organized crime, but it's my city and I do what I can to make it safe for decent folks to live in. My name is Holliday, Nick Holliday. I'm a private Detective. Not by choice but by necessity. I own a small investigation service on the East side of the city called Silver Shield Investigations. I have one employee, a classy dame named Dora Chase. Dora serves as secretary and sometimes partner for Silver Shield Investigations. It was in her capacity as Secretary Dora came to me one warm, summer morning to announce a beautiful, leggy brunette wished to see me. Her name was Kathleen DeLuccci, Mrs. Kathleen DeLuccci. Mrs. DeLuccci was an exotic beauty with dark eyes and a body with curves in all the right places. However, it was her case that nearly shut down Silver Shield Investigations permanently.

(The lights come up full on the office. Dora Chase enters from the door stage right. DORA is Attractive, smart and quick-witted. We see the window on the door says NICK HOLLIDAY, PRIVATE DETECTIVE.)

DORA

Are you busy, Nick?

NICK

(His feet on the desk and the hat pulled over his eyes) Swamped, Sweetheart, why do you ask?

DORA

There's a woman here to see you.

NICK

How does she look?

DORA

Rich.

NICK

(Pushing the hat up and swinging his feet off the desk) My favorite type of client.

DORA

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How's that, Nick?

NICK

One who can pay me. Give me the low down, Angel.

DORA

She's young, pretty, but her attractive features are marred by a recent tragedy, perhaps the loss of a loved one. She looks like she's just coming back from a funeral. I gathered she was rich because I saw her get out of a Rolles and she's wearing jewelry only found in the most exclusive stores in the city. She's married, her finger adorned with the biggest rock I have ever seen. *(Looking at her own hand)* Of course I would be happy with a small rock, Nick.

NICK

You were doing great until the end, Angel.

DORA

You can't blame a girl for trying.

NICK

I give you an A for effort, Angel.

DORA

Shall I send her in, Nick? We still need to pay the rent for this month

NICK

Might as well.

(DORA exits through the door. NICK reaches for the bottle of scotch and pours himself another drink. DORA quickly reenters followed by Kathleen DeLuccci. Mrs. DeLuccci is indeed an exotic beauty. She gracefully crosses to the desk and offers her hand to NICK)

KATHLEEN

Mr. Holliday, I'm Kathleen DeLuccci.

NICK

(Taking her hand) So Dora has informed me *(Directing her to the client's chair:)* Won't you have a seat?

KATHLEEN

Thank you. *(She sits in the chair crossing her legs; as she does so a portion of her legs become exposed).*

DORA

PARLOR CITY NOIR

(Indignant) Can I get you anything, Mrs. DeLuccci? Coffee, tea, or perhaps a longer skirt?

KATHLEEN

(Glares at DORA then smiles smugly) No thank you. That's very kind of you to offer though.

DORA

(Perching on a corner of NICK'S desk) I'm just doing my job.

KATHLEEN

(Annoyed at DORA'S presence) Mr. Holliday, this is a private matter.

NICK

I understand that, Mrs. DeLuccci. However, Dora is the very soul of discretion. Not only is she great with numbers, she's a marvel with short hand.

KATHLEEN

Really? Where's her notepad?

DORA

(Tapping her temple) Right here, Honey.

KATHLEEN

(To NICK) If you say she's all right.

NICK

She's all right.

DORA

Thank you, Nick.

NICK

Don't mention it, Angel. Now Mrs. DeLuccci.....

KATHLEEN

Kathleen.

NICK

Excuse me?

KATHLEEN

Call me Kathleen. Mrs. DeLuccci makes me feel old.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

All right Kathleen, what can I do for you?

KATHLEEN

Mr. Holliday.....

NICK

Nick, please, if we're going to be informal.

KATHLEEN

Alright, Nick. I wish to hire you.

NICK

I didn't think you came here to swap recipes, Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

I don't think I like your attitude, Nick.

DORA

Get used to it, Honey, it only gets worse.

NICK

Do you want my help or not, Kathleen?

KATHLEEN

Yes, Nick, I do.

NICK

Then let's get to the reason you came here. What's your problem?

KATHLEEN

My problem, Nick, is murder.

NICK

(Leaning back in his chair) Go on, *(taking a drink of his scotch)* who's been murdered?

KATHLEEN

My husband, we buried him today. I came straight here from the funeral.

NICK

(Sharing a look with DORA) You have my condolences.

KATHLEEN

Thank you. *(Seeing the scotch on the desk)* May I have a drink, Nick?

NICK

PARLOR CITY NOIR

Sure, Baby. (*He pours some scotch into the second glass and hands it to KATHLEEN*)

KATHLEEN

(*Taking the offered drink*) Thank you.

DORA

This may be none of my business, Mrs. DeLuccci, but if you suspect your husband was murdered shouldn't you go to the police?

KATHLEEN

I've already talked to the police, Ms.....

DORA

Chase, Dora Chase.

KATHLEEN

Ms. Chase. I didn't like the attitude of the detective in charge of my husband's case.

NICK

Who is the detective in need of an attitude adjustment?

KATHLEEN

Detective Mike Shields.

NICK

Ah yes, the Prince of the Intelligence Bureau.

KATHLEEN

You know him?

DORA

They have a love-hate relationship.

KATHLEEN

How's that?

NICK

He loves to hate me and I love to be hated. What did Detective Shields have to say?

KATHLEEN

He asked me if I had a reason to kill my husband.

NICK

Did you?

KATHLEEN

PARLOR CITY NOIR

I loved my husband, Nick.

NICK

I'm sure you did. Okay, give me the dope on your husband and go slow. I want Dora to be able to get every word.

KATHLEEN

My husband was Peter DeLucci of Delucci's Art Emporium.

DORA

(Impressed) He owned the gallery over on the West Side?

KATHLEEN

He did, and now I own it.

NICK

What is Delucci's Art Emporium?

DORA

(To NICK) Nick, Delucci's Art Emporium is the most prestigious art gallery in the city. Every established artist in the city has had a showing at the gallery, and every aspiring artist tries to get one.

NICK

Never heard of it.

KATHLEEN

(Insulted) You have never heard of Delucci's Art Emporium?

NICK

'fraid not, the closest I come to art is the double feature at the Lust Palace.

KATHLEEN

Why doesn't that surprise me.

NICK

To each his own, Baby.

DORA

You need to broaden your horizons, Nick.

NICK

Make a mental note, Angel, tomorrow I get cultured.

KATHLEEN

Barbarian! May I continue?

NICK

PARLOR CITY NOIR

You may (*He rises and crosses to the large window behind his desk and looks out onto the street*).

KATHLEEN

Earlier this week I decided to surprise my husband for dinner. I dismissed his secretary and started to enter his office. Peter was in a heated argument with another gallery owner, a woman I have met once or twice, named Alysian Asher. Alysian was Peter's only real competition in the city. She owns a second rate gallery over on South Main.

NICK

You think she killed your husband?

KATHLEEN

I think she could have.

NICK

Why?

KATHLEEN

From what I could hear Alysian owed Peter some money. She came to pay off her debt but Peter refused to take her money. He told her he would take her gallery if she tried to walk away from their arrangement. Alysian told Peter she was through and that if he tried to take her gallery she would kill him. We nearly collided as she stormed out of the office.

NICK

A confession of guilt if I ever heard one.

KATHLEEN

The next day I get a phone call from Detective Shields. Peter's secretary had gone into his office to put a file on Peter's desk. That's when she found him; his head slumped down on his desk in a pool of his own blood. He had been shot in the head at close range with his own gun.

NICK

Anything else?

KATHLEEN

Nothing comes to mind.

NICK

What can you tell me about this Alysian Asher?

KATHLEEN

I can tell you she's a queer bird.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

A queer bird?

KATHLEEN

An odd duck, a little cuckoo.

NICK

I get the picture. I'll be sure to have plenty of bird seed on hand when I talk to her.

KATHLEEN

Then you'll take the case?

NICK

(Rising out of his chair) I'll do what I can. *(He helps KATHLEEN out of her chair).*

KATHLEEN

(Cozying up to NICK and playing with his tie) what's your fee?

NICK

(Pushing her gently away) I get Fifty dollars a day plus expenses. You can give my retainer to Dora.

KATHLEEN

(Annoyed with her advances being rejected) Bill me *(She turns and leaves the office).*

NICK

(Watching KATHLEEN leave) Now that's a woman, Dora.

DORA

(Indignant she hops off the desk and crosses to the client chair and sits) What does that make me, Nick? Chopped Liver?

NICK

More like chop steak, Angel, grade A chopped steak.

DORA

I'm not sure I like being compared to a piece of meat, Nick.

NICK

PARLOR CITY NOIR

You started it, Angel. Now, what is your unbiased opinion of Mrs. Kathleen DeLuccci?

DORA

I don't trust her.

NICK

Neither do I. Aside from that, what else?

DORA

I don't think she loved her husband like she said.

NICK

What makes you say that?

DORA

She showed no emotion whatsoever while explaining to us the circumstances leading up to and the subsequent murder of her husband, and her make-up was too perfect.

NICK

Her make-up was too perfect? There's a sure sign of guilt.

DORA

What I meant was that it was too perfect for someone just getting back from a funeral, especially the funeral of her husband. If you ask me I think she did it.

NICK

Let's find out what this Alysian Asher can tell us. Get her number and give her a call.

DORA

Who shall I tell her is calling?

NICK

Tell her you represent someone who has an interest in the death of Peter DeLuccci, a silent partner who wishes to discuss her arrangement with the late Peter DeLuccci.

DORA

(Rising out of the chair and crossing to the office door) I'm on it.

(DORA exits through the office door. As DORA exits the lights go down and a single spot picks up NICK.)

NICK

PARLOR CITY NOIR

Dora put the call into Alysian Asher and an hour later she came into the office. Alysian was indeed a strange duck with a flair for the dramatic and horrible fashion sense. But she was nervous, really nervous; you could tell that right away. *(He exits stage R as the lights go to black)*

Scene Two
Nick's Office

(The lights come up on the office. DORA is seen moving about the office straightening it up when ALYSAN ASHER enters from the outer office. She is dressed in a gaudy, flowing smock and matching scarf wrapped around her head. She is loud and flamboyant. She looks about nervously before spotting DORA and crossing to her.)

ALYSAN

Excuse me, Darling.

DORA

(Startled) Do you make it a habit of scaring people to death?

ALYSAN

The door was open.

DORA

Is there something I can do for you Ms.....?

ALYSAN

Asher, Alysian Asher, and yes, Darling, there is something you can do for me. I received a phone call that someone associated with the late Peter DeLucci wished to discuss an arrangement I had with him. They said he was a silent partner.

NICK

PARLOR CITY NOIR

(Entering the office) That would be me.

ALYSAN

(Instantly attracted to NICK) Well aren't you just scrumptious.

NICK

(Giving ALYSAN a once over) Forget it, Ms. Asher, you're not my type.

ALYSAN

(Cozying up to NICK) That's a shame because you're just my type.....

NICK

What is your type?

ALYSAN

A man. Sure you're not interested? I would give you the time of your life.

NICK

I bet you would. Not interested. My name is Holliday, Nick Holliday.

ALYSAN

What do you want from me, Mr. Holliday?

NICK

(Directing her to the client chair) Won't you sit down.

ALYSAN

(Crossing to the client chair and sitting down) This won't take long will it?

NICK

(Sitting on a corner of his desk) No. Can I get you anything?

ALYSAN

Do you have anything to drink, preferably something with a bite to it?

NICK

I have some scotch.

ALYSAN

Scotch would be fine.

NICK

Dora, would you pour us a couple of scotches.

DORA

Two scotches coming up *(She crosses to NICK'S desk takes out the glasses and the bottle of scotch pours out two drinks)*

PARLOR CITY NOIR

ALYSAN

So what's this all about, Mr. Holliday?

NICK

I wanted to have a little chat with you, Alysan. May I call you Alysan?

ALYSAN

(Caressing NICK'S leg) You can call me whatever you like.

NICK

(Removing ALYSANS hand) I want to talk to you about Peter DeLuccioni. *(DORA hands a drink to NICK and then one to ALYSAN)* Thanks, Angel.

DORA

Need me to stick around, Nick?

NICK

I would certainly feel safer with you in the room.

DORA

(Sitting in the sofa) Afraid you might succumb to her charms, Darling?

NICK

Something like that. *(To ALYSAN)* Now tell me about Peter DeLuccioni.

ALYSAN

(Nervously taking a sip of her drink) He's dead isn't he? The world's a better place without him.

NICK

He was murdered, Angel.

ALYSAN

My hat's off to the person who did it.

NICK

There are some who think you did it.

ALYSAN

What reason would I have?

NICK

You didn't like him much.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

ALYSAN

So? A lot of people didn't like him, Darling.

NICK

That may be true, but they weren't heard threatening him, you were.

ALYSAN

(Starting to become agitated) Darling, I have no idea what you are talking about.

NICK

Sure you do, Alysan. You were into Peter DeLucci for a lot of money.

ALYSAN

(Becoming more uncomfortable) I wasn't the only one.

NICK

He threatened to take your gallery, Alysan. You threatened to kill him if he did so. The next day Peter DeLucci is found dead in his office, shot in the head at close range with his own gun.

DORA

You have to admit that makes you look pretty suspicious.

ALYSAN

(Jumping to her feet and moving away from NICK. As she does so she pulls out a gun from the pocket of her smock. Both NICK and DORA react by also coming to their feet) Put your hands up, Mr. Holliday. *(Waving the gun in DORA'S direction as well)* You to, get them up.

DORA

(Putting her hands in the air) Easy, Honey, I'm just a secretary.

NICK

A gun, Alysan?

ALYSAN

I said get your hands up, Mr. Holliday. I don't know who you're working for now but I'm through running numbers for you.

NICK

I hate guns. *(He lunges at ALYSAN grabbing the gun and wrenching it out of her hand while at the same time wrenching her arm behind her back. DORA moves up to NICK who hands her the gun).*

ALYSAN

(Whimpering) You're hurting me.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

I'll do more than that, Darling, if you don't start giving me some straight answers. What's it going to be, Alysan?

ALYSAN

Okay, okay, just don't hurt me. I have a low tolerance for pain.

NICK

(Guiding ALYSAN back to the clients chair before he lets go of her arm) I'm listening. What did you mean when you said you were through running numbers? *(He once more sits on the corner of his desk).*

ALYSAN

(Sitting down in the chair) Peter DeLuccci operated the largest numbers racket on the West side.

DORA

(Once again sits in the sofa) I thought he ran an Art Gallery.

ALYSAN

He used the Gallery as a front for his "Policy Parlor". No one in the city would believe an Art Dealer could be a criminal mastermind, an extortionist none-the-less.

DORA

That's debatable. You see how much they charge for a painting?

NICK

So how did you get involved with him?

ALYSAN

I needed money fast.

NICK

Why?

ALYSAN

I owed several back payments to the bank and they were threatening to foreclose on my gallery. So I went to Peter. We were lovers once upon a time and I thought if anyone could help Peter would. He agreed to give me the money if I ran numbers for him out of my gallery and if I used my gallery as collateral in the event I would be unable to pay him back the money he loaned me. I agreed. He gave me the money to get out from under the bank plus extra for any accrued expenses. However, every time I went to pay the money back he pushed up the interest on me. First it was ten percent then twenty, then thirty.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

Is your gallery that important to you?

ALYSAN

It's all I have, Darling. Everything I have is tied up in the gallery. If I were to lose my gallery, I would lose everything. I learned later Peter wanted my gallery, so that he could expand his numbers racket into the South side. I started receiving threats from another crime boss that if I didn't stop running numbers for Peter DeLuccci in his territory he intended to shut me down permanently. He even gave me the money I needed to pay off my debt to Peter.

NICK

Does this crime boss have a name

ALYSAN

Jimmy Falcone; I took the money to Peter and told him I was done running numbers for him. He told me I was done when he said I was done, and then he threatened to take my gallery. That's when we got into a heated argument.

NICK

You still shouldn't have threatened him, Baby.

ALYSAN

Who said I had?

NICK

A reliable source.

ALYSAN

It was his shrew of a wife wasn't it? She and I collided with each other outside Peter's office after I told him I would no longer run numbers for him. She must have heard us arguing.

NICK

What do you know about Mrs. DeLuccci?

ALYSAN

Enough, I know she was the daughter of Vinny DeAngelo.

NICK

The crime lord?

ALYSAN

PARLOR CITY NOIR

Ex-crime lord, Darling; Peter DeLuccci use to run numbers for him. That's how he and Kathleen met. A year ago Vinny was murdered. Rumor was Eduardo Cardoni had him hit. After Vinny's death Cardoni took over his operations and Peter went to work for Cardoni running Vinny's West Side numbers racket. Kathleen grew angry with Peter because he went to work for Cardoni. She believes Peter betrayed her. She hated him.

NICK

You seem well informed for a queer gallery owner.

ALYSAN

Pillow talk, Darling, I told you Peter and I had been lovers for a time.

NICK

Did Mrs. DeLuccci know?

ALYSAN

I don't believe so. It was before they got hitched.

NICK

So what happened between you and the late Peter DeLuccci?

ALYSAN

He ended the relationship.

DORA

Did that bother you?

ALYSAN

Not at all, Darling. He had become quite a bore in bed.

DORA

I could have done without *that* little tidbit of information.

ALYSAN

You asked.

NICK

You said Kathleen hated her husband? Do you think she hated him enough to kill him?

ALYSAN

It wouldn't surprise me. Since his death she has got what she wanted, the gallery and the money.

NICK

Who besides you and Kathleen might want to see Peter DeLuccci dead?

PARLOR CITY NOIR

ALYSAN

Perhaps Gwen Leigh.

NICK

Who is Gwen Leigh?

ALYSAN

She's an artist, and not a very good one. I've seen her work. She wanted Peter to give her a showing in his Gallery.

NICK

Why his?

ALYSAN

Because his gallery was the most prestigious gallery in Parlor City and I turned her down. From what I could learn Gwen and Peter had an affair, but he dumped her. Discarded her like a cheap strumpet, never giving her the showing.

NICK

It seems Peter DeLuccci was no angel.

ALYSAN

No, Mr. Holliday, he wasn't.

(DETECTIVE MIKE SHIELDS enters from the outer office)

DORA

(Seeing MIKE enter) Nick, you have company.

MIKE

I'm looking for Alysan Asher.

ALYSAN

That's me handsome.

MIKE

(Crossing to ALYSAN) Are you Alysan Asher?

ALYSAN

I can be whoever you want me to be, Darling. What's your name, Handsome?

MIKE

(Showing his badge) Detective Mike Shields, Parlor City Intelligence Bureau.

ALYSAN

PARLOR CITY NOIR

You're a cop?

MIKE

You got a problem with cops, Lady?

ALYSAN

(Rising and crossing to MIKE) Not at all, Darling, I love a man in uniform *(looking NICK over)* and out of one.

MIKE

(To NICK) Is she for real?

NICK

I'm afraid so. It's always a pleasure to see you, Mike.

MIKE

Cut the crap, Holliday. You're no happier to see me than I am to be here. What's your interest in this fruit loop?

NICK

She's helping me to get cultured.

MIKE

Really? Well you'll have to get it elsewhere. Ms. Asher is out of business as of right now. *(Crossing to ALYSAN)* Alysyan Asher, you're under arrest for the murder of Peter DeLuccci.

NICK

(Getting out of his chair and crossing to MIKE) Since when is murder the jurisdiction of the Intelligence Bureau, Mike?

MIKE

Everything connected to organized crime is the jurisdiction of the Intelligence Bureau, Holliday. It is well known in the bureau Peter DeLuccci was running a numbers racket and that Ms. Asher here was running numbers for him.

ALYSAN

How did you find me?

MIKE

Your secretary told me where you were.

ALYSAN

That's it, he's fired.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

What have you got on Ms. Asher, Mike? I'm sure my client would like to know.

MIKE

Client? Someone actually hired you? Who? I should arrest them for poor judgment.

NICK

I'm pretty sure that's not a punishable offense.

MIKE

It should be. Who is your client?

NICK

You know I can't tell you, Mike. Suffice it to say it is someone who has a major interest in the death of Peter DeLucci. Come on, Detective, throw me a bone.

MIKE

All right, Holliday. We received an anonymous phone tip that Alysan here had been heard arguing with DeLucci. The caller said Alysan here threatened to kill him.

DORA

Is that all you got, Mike?

MIKE

Ms. Asher's fingerprints were also found on the gun used to kill Peter DeLucci.

ALYSAN

I didn't kill him, Darling. (*ALYSAN crosses to center followed by MIKE*) That night I received a phone call from Peter's secretary, at least I thought it was his secretary, telling me Peter wanted to see me. So I went. When I got there I found him dead. But before I could get out of there someone hit me on the head from behind. When I came to I found the gun in my hand.

MIKE

Tell it to the judge, Sweetheart. (*He puts handcuffs on ALYSAN.*)

NICK

Come on, Mike, can't you see this is a frame up?

MIKE

PARLOR CITY NOIR

As far as I'm concerned, Holliday, I have my man (*pauses, looks at ALYSAN*) more or less. (*MIKE leads ALYSAN out of the office. NICK returns to his chair and DORA crosses to the client chair.*)

DORA

What now, Nick? Mike just took our only lead.

NICK

Not our only one, Dora.

DORA

You mean this Gwen Leigh Alysan spoke about?

NICK

I do. Someone over at Delucci's Art Emporium must know where she is, or how to get a hold of her. Find out where she is and give her a call.

DORA

What do I tell her?

NICK

Tell her I'm a buyer interested in her paintings and would like to meet with her here at the office.

DORA

Do you think that will work?

NICK

I don't know much about the Art world, Dora, but I do know artists. They are looking for any opportunity to sell their work. She'll come.

DORA

I'll try to find her, Nick.

(As DORA exits the lights go to black and a single spot picks up NICK as he crosses to center)

NICK

Dora was able to locate Gwendolyn Leigh and the next day she walked through my door. Gwen Leigh was a stunning beauty with soft, bedroom eyes who exuded a sensuality that made men's knees weak and women jealous. However, when she came into the office she was very nervous, someone was following her. *(The lights fade to black).*

Scene Three

PARLOR CITY NOIR

THE OFFICE OF SILVER SHIELD INVESTIGATIONS

(As the lights come up NICK crosses to the sofa and lays down putting his hat over his eyes. From the outer office DORA ENTERS)

DORA

Nick, *(Seeing NICK stretched out on the sofa)* Late night last night?

NICK

(Not looking at DORA) Something like that. What's up?

DORA

Gwen Leigh, the artist, is here to see you.

NICK

(Sitting up) How does she look?

DORA

Scared.

NICK

How do you know?

DORA

She's pacing the office like a caged animal, and she's constantly looking out the front window at something in the street.

NICK

Any idea what has her spooked?

DORA

You're the detective, Nick, not me.

NICK

(Rising from the sofa and crossing to the desk where he pours himself a drink)
Go ahead and show her in, Angel.

DORA

(Crosses to the door) You can go in, Ms. Leigh.

GWEN

(Entering frantic) Mr. Holliday, you need to help me.

NICK

Easy, Baby, relax, would you like a drink?

PARLOR CITY NOIR

GWEN

Please. (*NICK fills the second glass and hands it to GWEN*) Thank you.

NICK

Now tell me, what seems to be the problem?

GWEN

I think I'm being followed.

NICK

Any idea by whom?

GWEN

I've never seen him before.

NICK

Him?

GWEN

A tall man in a black hat. He's outside now watching your office.

NICK

Dora, take a look outside and see if this man is still there.

DORA

Sure, Nick. (*She exits into the outer office.*)

NICK

You sure you've never seen him before?

GWEN

Yes, Mr. Holliday, I'm sure.

DORA

(*Reentering the office*) She's right, Nick. There is a man fitting her description across the street.

NICK

Thanks, Angel. Keep an eye on him.

DORA

Will do. (*She exits back into the outer office closing the door behind her.*)

GWEN

You're a private detective, Couldn't you just shoot him?

NICK

PARLOR CITY NOIR

I don't carry a gun, Ms. Leigh.

GWEN

A tough guy like you doesn't carry a gun, why?

NICK

I don't like them (*Sitting in his chair*).

GWEN

(*Crossing behind the desk*) I'm curious, Mr. Holliday, what interest does a Private Dick have in my work?

NICK

None, I wanted to talk to you about Peter DeLucci.

GWEN

How did you know about Peter and me?

NICK

I'm a detective, it's what we do. Now let's talk about Peter DeLucci

GWEN

(*Sitting on the UR corner of the desk*) I'd rather talk about you.

NICK

Not much to talk about.

GWEN

Oh I think there is. Why don't you tell me why you don't carry a gun?

NICK

I already told you, I don't like them. (*He rises and crosses out from behind his desk*) Now tell *me* about Peter DeLucci.

GWEN

What about him? He's dead.

NICK

He was murdered, Angel.

GWEN

It couldn't have happen to a nicer guy. If you ask me someone did the world a favor. (*Rising and crossing to NICK*) Now why don't you tell me why you don't carry a gun? Most Private Dick's I know have big guns.

NICK

Do you know many Private Dick's?

PARLOR CITY NOIR

GWEN

You'd be surprised. None of them are as handsome as you, though.

NICK

Private Dick's with big guns are usually compensating for something.

GWEN

Not all of them. Come on, Nick, what do you have to lose? You tell me why you don't carry a gun and I'll tell you whatever you want to know about Peter DeLucci.

NICK

You want to know why I don't carry a gun. All right I'll tell you. (*GWEN sits in the client chair*) Before getting into the PI business I was a beat cop, one of Parlor Cities finest, most decorated, officers on the force. I was responding to a disturbance at the lower end of State Street. As I entered an alley there someone shot at me. I returned fire, and then waited, nothing happened. When I went to investigate I discovered lying in the refuse littering the alley the body of a ten year old boy, my bullet in him and a gun in his hand. Internal affairs called it a justifiable shooting, but how do you justify shooting a kid. After that I resigned from the force and put away my gun, determined never to use it again. End of story.

GWEN

I'm sorry.

NICK

Yeah well things are tough all over. (*He sits in the sofa*) Alright, I held up my end of the deal now it's your turn. Spill what you know about Peter Delucci.

GWEN

(*Getting out of the chair*) He was a pig, Nick. I let him do what he wanted to me because he promised me a showing in his gallery. But after a time he told me it would be a cold day in hell before he gave me a showing in his gallery. He said my work was amateur at best. Then he discarded me like some cheap whore. (*Joining NICK on the sofa*) Yes I hated Peter enough to kill him if that's what you want to know.

NICK

Did you kill him?

GWEN

(*Leaning back against the sofa*) Isn't that for you to find out?

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

(Getting up and crossing to the desk to fix himself a drink) What about his wife?

GWEN

Kathleen the Hell-Hag?

NICK

Is that what you call her?

GWEN

It's what Peter called her.

NICK

(Sitting on the down right corner of the desk) What do you know about her?

GWEN

(Getting off the sofa and crossing to the desk to fix herself a drink) More than I should. Peter was afraid of her.

NICK

What was he afraid of?

GWEN

(Sitting in the client chair) Her ambition; Kathleen wanted control of Peter's numbers racket. Apparently whatever Kathleen wanted she got. Peter believed she would stop at nothing to get what she wanted, even murder.

NICK

You know about the Numbers Racket Peter was running?

GWEN

Of course I knew about the racket he was running, I'm just surprised you know about it too. In the end I think that was the real reason he dumped me. I knew too much about his operation.

NICK

Maybe, more likely you were just the flavor of the month. Did Kathleen know about you?

GWEN

God no! If Kathleen knew about Peter and me she would have killed me or at the very least have hired someone to do it. I think even if she learned about me now she'd try to kill me.

NICK

Why?

GWEN

PARLOR CITY NOIR

Because of what I know.

NICK

What do you know?

GWEN

Kathleen was the one running the Numbers Racket for Peter.

NICK

I thought DeLucci ran it.

GWEN

Peter controlled the racket but Kathleen ran it for him she even has her own enforcer to do her dirty work for her.

NICK

Who is he?

GWEN

He's some guy by the name of Tanzini. I've never seen him, but from what I've heard he's got a vicious streak. He likes to hurt people.

NICK

What more can you tell me about Kathleen?

GWEN

I know running the racket wasn't enough for her; she wanted to be the one in control not the one being controlled. Now with Peter dead she gets control of the money, the Gallery and more importantly the Numbers Racket. If that's not a motive for murder I don't know what is.

NICK

What about a rival? Know of anyone else who might have wanted Peter dead?

GWEN

Just about anyone who knew him I suppose.

NICK

Could you narrow the list down a little more?

GWEN

Maybe Jimmy Falcone.

NICK

What do you know about him?

PARLOR CITY NOIR

GWEN

Nothing, all I know is Peter had nothing but contempt for Jimmy Falcone, said he would kill him one day. Maybe Falcone got to him first.

NICK

Maybe, *(crossing to the door to the outer office)* thank you, Ms. Leigh, you've been very helpful. Come on I'll show you out.

GWEN

(Getting out of the client chair and crossing to NICK) Wait!

NICK

Something else you remember?

GWEN

Aren't you forgetting about my shadow?

NICK

I'll deal with him. *(Opening the door to the outer office)* Dora, could you come in here.

DORA

(Entering) Sure, Nick, what's up?

NICK

Is Ms. Leigh's shadow still out there?

DORA

He hasn't moved since he got there. I think he's starting to get restless.

NICK

Take Ms. Leigh out the back.

DORA

Sure, Nick, but what are you going to do?

NICK

I have a phone call to make, and then I'll go meet up with our visitor.

DORA

Be careful, Nick.

NICK

You know me, Angel.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

DORA

Yes I do, that's why I said it. Come on, Ms. Leigh I'll show you out. (*As DORA and GWEN leave the lights slowly fade to black.*)

Scene four

The Street

(The street outside NICK'S office, RICCO is under the street light looking up and out over the audience. From RIGHT comes NICK in trench coat and fedora. A fog fills the stage that is lit with blue/white light giving the scene a film noir feel to it)

NICK

Looking for someone, Gungel? She's not coming out.

RICCO

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

NICK

The dame you followed here. She's not coming out.

RICCO

Where's the bird, shamus?

NICK

How did you know I was a private Detective?

RICCO

Says so on your window; Now I'll ask you again, where's the skirt?

NICK

What do you know, he can read. She's gone; I had my secretary take her out the back. Now answer my question, Mug, why are you following her?

RICCO

I represent someone who has a score to settle with her.

NICK

This someone got a name?

RICCO

(Crossing to NICK) You ask a lot of questions, Gumshoe.

NICK

Occupational hazard.

RICCO

Putting your nose where it doesn't belong could also be hazardous.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

NICK

I can take care of myself. Besides you don't look all that tough to me.

RICCO

You don't know me yet. If my boss wants you dead, Shamus, you'll be dead, and I'll be the one to do it. Tell me where the skirt is and I'll be sure to put in a good word with the boss.

NICK

Here's my answer. *(He hits RICCO with a haymaker that drops him to the ground)* Take that to your boss.

RICCO

(Sitting on the ground) You've made a big mistake, Flatfoot.

NICK

I make a lot of them. *(He grabs RICCO by the lapels of his jacket and hauls him to his feet)* Now I think it's time for you to scram, Lug, you've worn out your welcome here.

RICCO

I'm going, but I'll be back, Peeper.

NICK

I wouldn't advise that. Next time you'll have to be carried away.

RICCO

We'll see who walks away next time, Shamus.

NICK

Get moving!

RICCO

I'll be seeing you again, count on it.

NICK

Looking forward to it.

RICCO

I wouldn't be if I were you *(RICCO exits, as he exits the lights fade to black)*.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

Scene Five
Nick's Office

(The lights come up on the office. DORA is sitting in the sofa reading a magazine. NICK enters from the outer office)

DORA

Everything okay, Nick?

NICK

Couldn't be better, Angel. *(He hangs his coat on the coat tree and crosses to the desk to fix himself a drink)* Care to join me in a drink *(He crosses to the desk and pours himself a drink)*.

DORA

Why not, make mine a double. *(She crosses to the client chair and sits)* So did you learn anything useful from Ms. Leigh before we had to hustle her out of the office?

NICK

Quite a bit actually, *(he hands DORA her drink)* Here you go, Angel.

DORA

(Taking the drink from NICK) Thanks Nick.

NICK

Sure, Angel. *(He crosses to his chair and sits down)* In the course of our conversation Ms. Leigh mentioned Jimmy Falcone.

DORA

The same guy who threatened Alysan?

NICK

That would be my guess, Angel. From what Ms. Leigh told me the two didn't like each other very much.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

DORA

Do you think he might have killed Peter?

NICK

Hard to say, Angel.

DORA

Did she have any idea who this Jimmy Falcone might be?

NICK

No, all she could tell me was that he was someone Peter DeLuccioni didn't like very much. I'll know more when our friend from the Intelligence Bureau gets here.

DORA

What makes you think Detective Shields is coming?

NICK

Because I called him.

DORA

When?

NICK

Before dealing with Ms. Leigh's shadow. Mike was overjoyed to hear from me.

DORA

I'll bet he was.

MIKE

(From the outer office) Holliday!

DORA

Speak of the devil, Nick; your biggest fan has arrived. *(She gets out of the client chair and crosses to the sofa as MIKE enters from the outer office).*

MIKE

(As he's entering) You better have a damn good reason for calling me here, Holliday.

NICK

(Leaning back in his chair) Detective Shields, always a pleasure to see you.

MIKE

I assure you the feeling isn't mutual.

NICK

I'm not a bad guy once you get to know me.

PARLOR CITY NOIR

DORA

That's true, he's not.

MIKE

What I know about you, Holliday, is you're wasting my time. What do you want?

NICK

What does the Intelligence Bureau know about Jimmy Falcone?

MIKE

What's your interest in Jimmy Falcone?

NICK

I'm making out my Christmas card list.

MIKE

(Crossing to the client chair and sitting) Listen to me, Holliday; Jimmy Falcone is no one to screw around with.

NICK

Who is he?

MIKE

He's a killer. He used to be a high priced hit man for Eduardo Cardoni. Rumor has it he was the one who offed Vinny DeAngelo for Cardoni. Now he runs a numbers racket out of the South side for Cardoni. We have been trying to get into his organization for years, but every undercover cop who gets close to bringing down Falcone finds themselves pushing up daisies. Do you hear what I'm saying, Shamus? Tangle with Falcone and you're as good as dead.

DORA

Careful, Mike, Nick might think you're worried about him.

MIKE

Don't flatter yourself, Dora; I don't give a damn about him. If he wants to take on Falcone, that's his business. Just make sure your will is up to date, Holliday. Your next of kin are going to need it.

NICK

I'll take that under advisement.

MIKE

(Rising) Sure you will. *(Starting to exit)* It's your funeral, Holliday. Just don't say I didn't warn you *(he exits into the outer office)*.

PARLOR CITY NOIR