

DO NOT DELIVER

Roberta Degnore

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FADE IN

EXT. LOS ANGELES TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY (MAY 1932)

A CONDUCTOR watches the CROWD on the platform. Some of them board, wave good-byes from the steaming train.

A calender nearby, "Pacific Railways-May 1932," shows the days to May 15th X-ed out. The TRAIN WHISTLE SCREAMS.

A woman's gloved hand skims over an upright steamer trunk.

The WOMAN moves away from the trunk like it's hot. The crowd flows around her.

A PORTER passes. The woman hails him.

The porter shakes his head. Points to the trunk's bottom.

Thick liquid oozes from the seams, pools slowly. Spreads toward the woman's shoes.

The woman turns. She is PEARL TILD(20s). She runs into the crowd.

EXT. DESERT ARROYO - DAY

HOUNDS pull DEPUTIES on a manhunt, but there is a carnival mood. They laugh like they're telling dirty jokes.

Legs in ripped silk stockings skim past rocks. It's Pearl, angry, and sprinting hard.

PEARL

Damn you.

EXT. DESERT RISE - DAY

Pearl lurches up the crest.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

A sedan wavers in the heat. Headlights blink once.

PEARL (O.S.)

Goddamn you.

EXT. DESERT FLAT - DAY

Pearl runs toward the open car door. Hounds and deputies pour down the rise, close the gap.

A frontrunning DEPUTY wears a "California Sheriff" badge. He aims. The car SCREECHES away as he SHOOTs.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Flashbulbs EXPLODE. Celebrating COPS and REPORTERS jostle for a look at Pearl. She wears a blanket like a shroud.

A cop's badge, "Los Angeles Police," reflects in a FLASHBULB EXPLOSION, blinds Pearl. THE COP hands her a cup of water.

Christlike, Pearl lifts her head. She has been beaten like no one should be. She is dazed.

PEARL

Tell them. I did it by myself.

WALTER WINCHELL (RADIO V.O.)

The whole country wants to see her hang. Yes, even a woman. How could anyone travel with a cargo so gruesome, so bloody? Well, listeners, Mrs. Pearl Tild of Tucson did.

Cops yank Pearl to her feet. The blanket slides off. She is handcuffed, heavily shackled.

The carnival mood peaks as they lead her to the door. Pearl stumbles. A FLASHBULB EXPLODES in her face.

SOUND CROSSOVER TO:

INT. TILD'S BEDROOM - TUCSON - DAY (SIX MONTHS EARLIER)

The CRESCENDO(o.s.) of the last revels of lovemaking makes a flower on a run-down windowsill look even worse. The desert stretches in the b.g. behind it.

A calender on the unpainted wall, "Reservation Hills Service Station-Tucson, Ariz." Only January 1, 1932 is X-ed out.

MARTIN TILD(30s) pushes off Pearl. He's like a robot on speed.

His stunning, but a little sleazy, good looks make Pearl's unmade-up plainness even paler.

Pearl reaches to keep him on her. Not satisfied, but hides it.

PEARL

What will I be without you?

MARTIN

Mine. Couple of weeks, baby. I get back, we'll get that house you want.

PEARL

Here?

Her hands coax him back. She focuses on him like a flower bending to the sun.

MARTIN

Los Angeles, Pearl. Get that staff-doctor job. Nobody can resist me. You know it. Get us out of this damn desert.

Martin does naked jumping jacks in front of a mirror. He watches the frustration she tries to hide.

Pearl's eyes never wander from his body.

INT. TILD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Martin is still naked, packs a suitcase in the dingy room. POSTCARDS swarm one wall, the only color in the place.

Pearl is wrapped in a bedsheet in the doorway, watching. He turns, a vial of white powder in one hand. He beckons her.

The sheet falls as she runs, and she presses into him.

MARTIN

(one eye on the vial)
Baby, baby. Thought I had lost you.

PEARL

Never.

MARTIN

You better believe it.

He taps a mound of powder onto her neck. Snorts it.

He does it again. Licks her neck. It excites her.

Again and again, Pearl moves with it. He gets high. She gets off, almost. The cocaine speediness takes him somewhere else.

MARTIN

Oh yeah.

He turns away, packs. Fingers a mended hole in a shirt. Then he notices Pearl's sadness. Grabs her.

MARTIN

(re her dissatisfaction)

No?

She closes her eyes.

MARTIN

No?

(his hands move down her body)

No?

Pearl reacts. Eyes still closed, head shyly turned.

MARTIN

Yeah. Let me see it.

Her passion falters, dies. He doesn't see it.

MARTIN

Let me see it.

One hand moves rough, rapid. Pearl clings to him to stay on her feet. But she looks at the wall of postcards. When she CRIES OUT her eyes are on them, far away.

MARTIN

That's my baby.

He returns to packing. Pearl wraps in the sheet, exits.

He waits for the door to CLICK shut behind her.

MARTIN

(to the coke vial)

Happy New Year to me. Baby, baby.

EXT. TILD'S BACK PORCH - DAY

Through a porch window Martin dresses between snorts in the b.g. inside.

Pearl takes in the vast desert. Basks in it, seems to open up.

EXT. TILD'S BACK PORCH - DAY (LATER)

The porch door is open. Pearl, alone, writes on a postcard.

Two CIGAR BOXES nearby: one with letters, one with postcards. All addressed to "Mrs. Martin Tild / 14 Samaniego Road / Tucson, Ariz." All in the same handwriting: Pearl's.

Pearl writes "Having a ----- time," then fills-in "wonderful." She adds, "We put another room onto our house here."

INT. TILD'S UPPER FLAT BEDROOM - DAY

Pearl runs in so fast to the open window with the flower that she almost pitches out of it.

PEARL'S POV

EXT. STREET - DAY

Martin's paces at the bus stop. A WOMAN approaches.

He stops, sweeps off his hat. Focuses on the woman.

INT. TILD'S KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl enters slowly from the bedroom.

The "Arizona Herald" lies on the kitchen table. An item, "Socialite Leaves Fiancee At Alter" has a grainy photo of a blonde bride striding from a mansion decorated for a wedding.

Pearl turns to the "Tuscon Movies" page... Garbo's in "Mata Hari," Stanwyk's in "Night Nurse."

Pearl rummages in a tin can on the stove. She counts out coins carefully.

The newspaper is still on the table. Pearl lets her hand skim over the bride's PHOTO as she heads for the door.

From the photo of the socialite bride...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LONG ISLAND MANSION - DAY

CLARE WALSH (30s+) strides from the same mansion as in the news photo, now in a Chanel suit. Tear-stained, she smokes rapidly. Her father, ANTHONY WALSH fumes in the doorway.