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L.A. Movie



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The Purple Palace

The woman with platinum blonde hair and green eyes put her little finger in her mouth.

‘Hey!’ she said. ‘For an old guy, you’re not bad-looking. She sipped some champagne from her glass. Then she smiled. She smiled, and suddenly her whole face changed. Before, she had looked like a naughty child. Now she was a beautiful woman. She had high cheek-bones below her beautiful green eyes. She had a long, straight nose and a wide mouth. Her shiny blonde hair was cut short. Her eyes were shining as she looked straight at me.

‘Yeah!’ she went on. ‘You really don’t look too bad. Do you know something, mister? I could fall for² a guy like you.’

What could I say? I’m in my early thirties – well, that’s what I tell people. The truth is that I’m nearer forty, and the woman I was looking at couldn’t have been a day more than twenty-three. I meet lots of women in my line of work², but I rarely⁴ meet anyone as beautiful as this one. And on the few occasions when I have met a real stunner⁴, she certainly hasn’t wanted to have anything to do with me.

Still, the woman had a point². I’m not bad-looking – dark hair, brown eyes, good teeth, nice clothes. And I’ve kept myself in shape². I go to the gym three times a week. It’s true that my face shows the marks of my time as an amateur⁴ boxer. There are some small scars round my eyes, and my nose isn’t quite straight any more – somebody broke it in a fight.

‘The only problem,’ the woman continued, ‘is your job. No one ever got rich by doing your job. And I like expensive things.’

She smiled again. She had another point! I was sure that she

spent a lot of money, and I certainly wasn't rich.

I'm a private investigator – that is, a private detective – in Los Angeles, California. My clients are often people who live on the edges of L.A. society⁴. Protection, security, blackmail, corruption, missing persons, small crimes⁴ – these are the things I deal with every day. Sometimes, I even have a murder case. The only jobs I don't do are divorce cases and marriage problems.

My life isn't easy, but there is usually enough money each month to pay the rent for my apartment and the rent for my office. But there isn't any place in my life for a woman who looks like a million dollars² and dresses as if she *had* a million dollars. And the woman I was looking at now was obviously one of those!

'Still, what the hell²,' the blonde said. She put down her glass of champagne and took a step towards me. 'Come on, Charlie, we're alone tonight. Kiss me.'

Charlie? My name's not Charlie. It's Lenny, Lenny Samuel. Some people call me Len. Still, I wasn't going to argue. I stood up and took a step towards the blonde.

'Hey, fella³, sit down!' a man's voice shouted.

The blonde smiled. I opened my arms.

'Hey, fella! I told you to sit down!' the man shouted again.

I stared into the blonde's beautiful green eyes. Then I felt a hand on my shoulder.

'Sit down! *Now!*' the voice said.

I turned around. The man standing behind me was taller than me, and heavier. I'm one-metre-ninety tall, and I weigh just over ninety kilos – all muscle! But this guy was bigger than me in every way. And he was angry.

'Sit down, fella!' he shouted. 'I can't see the screen if you stand there!'

I sat down and I looked up at the movie screen again. Now the blonde actress was kissing a man. It was a close-up shot¹.

The woman was thirty metres away from me and her face was five metres high. Her name was Gail Lane. She was the hottest actress¹ in Hollywood, and this was the closest I had ever got to her!

‘I’m sorry, fella,’ I said to the man behind me. ‘I guess I got carried away².’

I go to the movies a lot, especially when business is bad. And just then, business was very bad indeed. My last case had ended a few weeks before. Someone had stolen a racehorse from a beautiful woman. I’d found the horse, but I hadn’t earned any money. Since then, I’d tidied my office, cleaned my car, gone to the gym a lot, and waited for the phone to ring. It hadn’t rung. I didn’t have any new clients. So, most days, I went to the movies.

—

The movie ended and the lights came on. I got up and went to the men’s washroom. There was a floor-to-ceiling mirror there, and I stood in front of it and looked at myself. It was true – I wasn’t bad-looking. I was wearing a black leather jacket, a bright checked shirt and a pair of new black trousers. My brown Timberland boots completed the picture.

I took out my dark glasses and put them on. ‘Cool³!’ I said to the mirror, and I walked out of the movie theatre¹.

It was just before midnight. I decided that I didn’t need the dark glasses. I walked round the corner to the parking lot³, and I got into my old grey Chrysler. Then I drove slowly past the bars and clubs, trying to decide what to do. It was too early to go to bed. But it was too late to start calling friends to see if they wanted to go out. I was bored. I wanted something to happen.

I was just passing the Purple Palace, one of L.A.’s most expensive nightclubs, when something did happen. A shiny, white open-top car suddenly pulled out from the sidewalk³. I hit the brakes² and the Chrysler stopped. But the white car didn’t

stop. It hit the side of the Chrysler with a loud crash!

I was OK. I got out of the car. The Chrysler was OK too – they don't make cars like that any more. But the white car wasn't OK and neither was its driver! The front of the car was badly smashed, and oil was running out from under the engine. The driver was still sitting at the wheel and there was some blood on his face.

The driver of the white car was wearing a smart suit and he had short, well-cut hair. He looked about twenty-five, but his hair was steel grey.

After a few moments, he opened the car door. He walked towards me with an angry face.

'I'm going to make you pay for this,' he said.

He tried to grab my arm. His breath smelt of whisky. Then he tried to hit me. He tried, but he didn't succeed. I used to be a boxer, and this man was drunk! I leant back, and the blow missed. I was about to knock the man to the ground, when he suddenly closed his eyes and fell over. I hadn't touched him.

I felt a hand on my shoulder.

'That guy's a fool,' a voice said.

I turned around. It was a woman with platinum blonde hair and beautiful green eyes!