FADE IN:

EXT. HIDDEN COVE BEACH - 1932 - DAY

Gray-sky morning on a California beach. The ocean waves break around a series of boulders and lick at the corner of a picnic blanket spread just at the water's edge.

A nude woman, OLIVE MARTIN, 19, lies on her back trying to hold steady the newspaper that rattles in her hand. She shifts and bumps the woven basket that rests at her knee sending the oranges inside rolling.

OLIVE

I'm sorry, Nevan. There's too much breeze.

Perched above her on one of large rocks, NEVAN DOUGLAS, lowers his camera. In his thirties, bespeckled and thin, Nevan nods.

NEVAN

The weather is against us today, Olive. I think we're done.

Olive hurries to retrieve her dress draped on a nearby rock as Nevan climbs down the boulder to the sand.

She pulls the garment over her head and smooths it into place.

OLIVE

It's almost seven, anyways.

She finder her bag and checks her reflection in a compact.

NEVAN

How does Wednesday look for you? Perhaps we'll catch the sun.

He hands her a five dollar bill which she folds and snaps into her purse without seeming to look at it.

OLIVE

I'll see you then.

From the road above that edges the beach there is a wheeze of a car horn.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

It's Susan. I'm late.

Retrieving her shoes, she starts up the beach.

NEVAN

Wait, I have a letter. For you.

He closes the distance and offers her a sealed envelope.

NEVAN (CONT'D)

Read it when you have a moment.

She smiles, takes the letter and runs up the incline of the beach to the road.

Holding the letter above her head, she waves. Nevan lifts the camera and takes a photo.

CAROLYN (O.S.)

(reading)

My dearest Olive, If this should fail, why then I scarcely know what I should do. Mine is a soul whose feelings lie deeper than words and yet here I write.

INT. LIVING ROOM, APARTMENT - NIGHT

CAROLYN BRIDGES, 25, earnest to a fault, sits on the floor of her apartment living room surrounded by a dozen bankers boxes.

She lowers the old letter sealed in a archival plastic sleeve and offers it to her roommate, MINA WONG, just across from her.

CAROLYN

It's romantic.

Mina, 25, a tougher cookie, studies the letter.

MINA

(reading)

"I can only say that your beauty has illumed my life. To see you and to love you are one."

She places the letter on top of some other already sorted and bagged items.

MINA (CONT'D)

When I was a kid, my dad used to say similar things about a neighbor's '62 Corvette.

Mina opens the lid on one of the boxes, finds an envelope stuffed with negatives and begins to lift each to the room's overhead light in turn.

MINA (CONT'D)

How much did you pay for this stuff?

CAROLYN

\$312. And I was lucky. It would have been tons more if they knew what they had.

MINA

Right.

CAROLYN

Really. They didn't know. If the people on eBay had advertised this as Nevan Douglas' work I could have never afforded it.

MTNA

That would have been a tragedy.

CAROLYN

I promise it'll be out of your way by tomorrow. Wednesday at the latest. I'll dedicate the book to you.

MINA

It's fine. Can I see the picture of the murdered girl, again?

Carolyn stretches out and pulls a folder across the hardwood to her. She sorts through pages. We catch glimpses of xeroxes of old newspaper headlines with words like MISSING, BELIEVED DEAD, PORNOGRAPHY RING before Carolyn finds a portrait of Olive.

CAROLYN

This is Olive Martin.

MTNA

And I think this is, too.

She holds up the negative and reveals the scene of Olive waving.

INT. COUPE, ROADSIDE - 1932 - DAY

Olive slides in the passenger seat of the car and smiles at her friend SUSAN, 38, stout, a little hungover and wearing a relentless cheerful apron emblazoned Bluebird Cafe.

OLIVE

Good morning.

Olive twists around to reach in the backseat. She retrieves her apron and her stockings.

SUSAN

How did the artist treat you today?

OLIVE

Five dollars. And he gave me a letter. I need someone to read it for me.

SUSAN

Mrs. Hodgins is always in the diner about this time. She used to teach school.

OLIVE

It might steam up Mrs. Hodgins' glasses.

SUSAN

Do her good.

Olive begins to roll on her stockings.

OLIVE

Isn't it funny? I can be completely in the all-together around him but I can't put on my stockings in front of him. It's too personal.

SUSAN

Ready?

Susan sends the car trundling forward with a spray of sand and smoke.

EXT. ROADSIDE, HIDDEN COVE BEACH - 1932 - DAY

Carrying his camera case and the picnic basket, Nevan gains the roadside just as Susan's car lurches away. He watches it go and then walks to his Cadillac parked further down.

He climbs behind the wheel and starts off.

He passes but does not notice a plain black sedan parked in one of the many canyon roads cut into the mountains that edge the road.

INT. BLACK SEDAN - 1932 - DAY

Behind the wheel of the sedan, WILLIAM SETON, 35, barrel-chested with a boxer's face, bumps over some rocks.

His jacket on the passenger seat slides and reveals a police badge and a gun.

INT. LIVING ROOM, APARTMENT - NIGHT

A newspaper clipping of a photo of William Seton rests just at Mina's knee.

Alone in the living room and surrounded by debris -- photos, menus, matchbooks, a battered cigar box -- she glances down the hallway off the living room.

MINA

You sure you don't need any help?!

CAROLYN (O.S.)

I'm fine!

Mina picks up the photo of Seton.

MINA

He was her boyfriend?! This Detective Seton?!

Lugging an overhead projector, Carolyn returns to the living room.

CAROLYN

Maybe.

She places the projector on the floor and angles the lens toward the ceiling.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

She was a waitress at a place where a lot of cops had lunch. She was pretty.

MINA

He looks like an ass.

CAROLYN

In the research, I found that he had thirteen complaints for brutality before he was killed in a shootout in 1940. I need an extension cord.

MINA

Vacuum cleaner is in my room.

CAROLYN

Thanks.

Carolyn hurries out of the room.

MINA

I was just thinking that if a guy with a shortfuse found out his girlfriend was doing nudies he'd be your number one suspect.

Carolyn returns with the extension cord and sets to work on the projector.

CAROLYN

Look at Douglas' booking photo. I got it from the LAPD archives. It should be the last thing in the file.

Mina holds up the photograph of the badly beaten Douglas.

INT. NEVAN'S PHOTO STUDIO - 1932 - DAY

Lunging into the doorway of the darkroom in the sparsely furnished photography, Seton grabs Nevan and hurls him and a tray of developing chemicals to the floor.

The morning session of Olive at the beach flow across the floor.

Seton bends, grabs the other man's collar and punches in the face over and over.

He lets Nevan drop to the floor. He kneels and peels free one of the photos and looks at the laughing Olive.

He stands and delivers a hard kick to Nevan's midsection.

SETON

I'm going to kill her. I'm going to snap her neck.

He stalks from the room and slams the door after him.

Seton coughs up blood and rolls over on his side.

He drags himself across the floor and reaches a sidetable near the door that holds a phone. He tips the table and the phone clatters to rest in front of him.

He dials.

INT. BLUEBIRD CAFE - 1932 - DAY

The Bluebird Cafe, a counter, elbow to elbow tables and lots of loud voices.

Olive leans across the counter as close as she can to the rather polished MRS. HODGINS.

MRS. HODGINS

(reading from the letter)
"...I commit my fate and my fortune to
you. Leave me not too long for your
reply, Nevan.

Mrs. Hodgins fans herself with the letter and hands it back to the grinning Olive.

MRS. HODGINS (CONT'D)

That's quite a letter, my dear.

Susan approaches and refills Mrs. Hodgins' cup.

SUSAN

I think it's him. On the phone. He asked for you.

Making sure the MANAGER chatting with a customer at the door does not notice, Olive hurries over to the phone.

OLIVE

Nevan, I can't really talk here.

We cut back and forth between the studio and cafe.

NEVAN

Listen to me Olive, can you get to Grand Central Airport?

OLIVE

What? You sound bad. Are you all right?

NEVAN

There was a police officer here. He saw the pictures.

OLIVE

William.

NEVAN

He said he was going to kill you. I believed him. I'll wire for a ticket. Go to New York. 481 Albans. My brother will help you. Hurry.

A shaken Olive drops the phone. She looks to Susan.

OLIVE

I have to go. I need your car. I'll leave it at Grand Central Airport.

Pale and shaken, she struggles to keep her teeth from chattering.

SUSAN

Go honey, just go. If anyone asks I don't know nothing.

Olive runs for the door.

EXT. PARKING LOT, BLUEBIRD CAFE - 1932

Olive runs out into the parking lot, searches for a second and climbs behind the wheel of Susan's car.

She gets in gear and whips out of the parking lot just seconds before Seton's black sedan rolls to a stop.

He throws open the door, steps out, considers Susan's disappearing car.

He drops back in the car. He wrenches the wheel and pursues Olive.

INT. NEVAN'S PHOTO STUDIO - 1932 - DAY

Gathering the photos as he goes, Nevan crawls across the floor smearing blood wherever he goes.

He reaches the darkroom and using the doorframe as a brace forces himself up.

INT. DARKROOM, DOUGLAS' PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Nevan leans against the massive iron cabinet that lines the wall of the darkroom. He grabs the negatives and drops them and the photos down the tiny space between the cabinet and wall.

He hears voices and stumbles from the room.

INT. NEVAN'S PHOTO STUDIO - 1932 - DAY

A uniformed police OFFICER and his PARTNER burst into the studio. They take in all the blood and the wobbly Nevan. He offers a weak smile.

NEVAN

Hello.

The Officer grabs Nevan and knocks him to the floor.

OFFICER

Put in a call. Tell Detective Seton we got him. Better call the lab boys. We've got a lot of blood.

He drags Nevan toward the door.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM, POLICE STATION - 1932 - DAY

The Officer slams Nevan into a chair in the interrogation room at the police station.

The room is a cube with a wobbly metal table and the single chair where Nevan sits.

A bright light comes on from one corner. Nevan blinks.

Seton and another Detective RODGERS stand just at the edge of the light.

SETON

What did you do with her body?

NEVAN

I don't know who you are talking about.

SETON

Right, smart guy. Olive Martin.

NEVAN

I haven't seen Olive since mid-February.

SETON

You're lying.

Seton steps in and slams his fist down on the table within inches of Nevan's face.

Nevan studies the other man's face. The anger from Seton is almost tactile.

NEVAN

You didn't win.

INT. LIVING ROOM, APARTMENT - NIGHT

On their backs in the center of their living room, Mina and Carolyn look up at the projected image of Olive reclining on the beach with her newspaper.

They are surrounded by xeroxes of stories about the scandal and murder.

CAROLYN

She disappeared from her work on March 2nd. Douglas claimed he hadn't seen her since a few weeks before.

MINA

He was lying.

CAROLYN

You sound like you know that for sure.

MTNA

Look at the headline of the paper. Lindbergh Baby Kidnapped. That happened in March in 1932. Discovery Channel.

CAROLYN

He lied. He could have killed her.

MINA

I don't think so.

CAROLYN

What's this? You started out not liking him.

MTNA

He was my only suspect at that point.

CAROLYN

You don't think I wasted my \$312 at this point, so you?

MINA

While you were looking for the overhead. Cigar box.

Carolyn rolls over and grabs the box. She opens it to find a series of color snapshots of later vintage.

MINA (CONT'D)

It's the third or fourth one in.

Carolyn finds a photo of Nevan standing beside a lanky teenage girl. They both hold badminton rackets and stand on the edge of a bright red and white checked blanket.

She flips over the photo to find blockish writing.

CAROLYN

(reading)

Simone and Nevan, 1951.

She turns the photo back over to look at the image.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

He moved to New York after the scandal. He married a woman there named Nicole Randolph. Simone was his oldest daughter.

MINA

Look at her face. Cover her forehead.

Carolyn obeys and the face that looks out is a slightly more severe version of Olive's.

CAROLYN

Her daughter.

MINA

She so got away.

CAROLYN

But Nicole Randolph.

MINA

What's the thing about a picture being worth a thousand words. At least a few of them have to be names.

CAROLYN

To protect her, he let them destroy him. He spent months in jail. He was branded a pornographer. It took years before he could sell photos again.

MINA

"If spirit to spirit call then I know you will not turn your face from me. I commit my fate and my fortune to you."

Mina laughs.

CAROLYN

And he meant it.

MINA

He so meant it.

FADE OUT:

THE END