

DARKER BY THE LAKE

EPISODE 1:



An audio drama by

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From a short story by

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PRODUCTION SCRIPT

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DARKER BY THE LAKE

Episode #1

"Leave it to the Little Ladies"

CAST (In order of appearance- with Original Cast)

ANNOUNCER.....Linda Kimbrough

LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO.....Veteran Chicago cop, 40s-50s

ACTOR: Matt DeCaro

DORIS.....Palermo's Secretary, 20s-30s

ACTOR: Felicia Oduh

JUDSON T. CONNOLLY.....Chicago Daily News Crime Reporter and
man-about-town playboy, 30s

ACTOR: Eric Slater

P.O. ANNA SAWICKI.....Chicago Police Detective, 40s

ACTOR: Hanna Dworkin

P.O. JOSEPH HERNANDEZ.....Chicago Police Detective, 30s

ACTOR: Daniel Mares

MARIE JACKSON.....Chicago Barmaid/Murder Suspect, 23

ACTOR: Rae Gray

DOCTOR RIORDAN.....Chicago Police Physician, 40s-50s

ACTOR: Sean Cooper

MURRAY SCHECHTER.....Chicago Deputy Coroner, 70s

ACTOR: Mike Nussbaum

PETE MILLER.....City 6th Ward Engineer, 40s-50s

ACTOR: Sean Cooper

Place: Chicago

Time: April, 1949

1. MUSIC: INTRO THEME--UP. ESTABLISH. FADE UNDER.

ANNOUNCER: There's an old saying in the big city of Chicago that whatever the temperature in the city, it's always cooler by the lake. That's Lake Michigan, of course. And when night falls in Chicago and millions of lights come on, some say it's always...*darker* by the lake. Often, it's those who skulk in that shadowy tract that forge the unusual and unexplainable in the city by the lake. (STOP)

2. MUSIC: INTRO THEME--UP. ESTABLISH. FADE UNDER.

ANNOUNCER (CONTINUE): This is "Darker by the Lake," a new mystery and suspense series based on stories from the pages of vintage pulp publications. Tonight's story: "Leave it to the Little Ladies."

2A. MUSIC: INTRO THEME--UP. ESTABLISH. FADE UNDER.

The lovely Marie Jackson was new to town. She arrived with a knack for attracting the wrong kind of man. When those men got too fresh, Marie had another knack: for making sure they never tried that again. (BEAT) On a gray April day in 1949, veteran Chicago Police Lieutenant Frank Palermo got a glimpse into Marie Jackson's world. Palermo had seen a lot in his 20 years on the force. But now, as chief of the homicide division, the seen-it-all cop was about to witness the...unforeseeable.

SCENE 1 - INT. CAR - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

3. MUSIC/SFX: MUSIC UP, FADE UNDER; RAIN, CAR ENGINE,
WINDSHIELD WIPERS, POLICE RADIO INTO...

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) The morning after a Southside bartender by the name of Al Romano was killed, my day got off to a bad start. For one thing it was raining - hard. For another, the chilly spring air fired up my gallstones making me feel like my wife's pin cushion. To top it all off, my secretary, Doris, called before I left the house - something she only does to sound the alarm bells about a screwy case. It was the Romano homicide. There were some...peculiarities about it, she said. What kind, I asked. Detective Sawicki needed to talk to me, she said. Sawicki was the highest ranking female detective on the force and she had a way of getting shady ladies to confess. If she wanted to talk to me, something peculiar was percolating.

(BEAT- Continue)

4. SFX: POLICE RADIO

My drive to work was one flooded viaduct after another. I would've made better time in a canoe. I had the police radio on but heard no talk about the Southside tavern.

(BEAT - Continue)

SCENE 2 - EXT. CHICAGO PD HQ - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

5. SFX: CAR COMING TO A STOP, CARD DOOR OPENING AND
CLOSING, FOOTSTEPS IN RAIN, INTO...

I pulled into the parking lot at 11th and State - CPD headquarters - and made a run for the back entrance. But as my shoes soaked up water by the gallon,

(Continue)

6. SFX: WOMEN LAUGHING (DISTANT-HIGH PITCHED)

I heard some footsteps behind me and what might have been...kids laughing. (BEAT) I turned to look, but...no one was there. I thought, maybe the blood isn't reaching my head too good today and sprinted into the building.

(Continue)

SCENE 3 - INT. CHICAGO PD HQ - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, DORIS)

7. SFX: DOOR OPENING, INTERIOR FOOTSTEPS, BG SOUND OF
POLICE HQ; INTO...

Just as I came in, the elevator door was closing so I ran up the stairs to my office in the homicide division, leaving a trail of water that even a north side detective couldn't miss. Doris was at her desk and spotted me coming. She had an exasperated look on her face and the door to my office was open.

DORIS: (EXASPERATED) Good Morning Lieutenant, I...

PALERMO: (DIALOGUE VOICE-CALM): Someone in there?

DORIS: Lieutenant, I tried to stop him.

PALERMO: Who?

DORIS: (ALMOST WHISPERING): Connolly.

SCENE 4 - INT. PALERMO'S OFFICE - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, JUDSON T. CONNOLLY, DORIS)

8. SFX: PALERMO STORMING INTO OFFICE

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE): I burst into my office to find the star crime reporter for the Chicago Daily News sitting on the window sill. His overpriced wingtips on my chair forming a neat little puddle on the seat. In his hands, my daily case reports.

(Continue)

PALERMO: (DIALOGUE VOICE-CALM AT FIRST) Judson Connolly. And here I thought my day couldn't get more unpleasant. (ANGRY) Get your dirty feet off my chair!

CONNOLLY: (SARCASTICALLY CHEERFUL) Good morning, Sonny. You look damp.

PALERMO: Get out!

CONNOLLY: (STILL AFFABLE) What's eating you, Sonny? Rain got your gallstones palpitating again?

PALERMO: My stones are none of your business. And what's "eating" me is your unwelcome presence in my office soiling my chair as you riffle through confidential police files. (continue)

9. SFX: PALERMO SHOVING CONNOLLY'S LEGS OFF DESK

I said get your feet off the chair!

CONNOLLY: Ok! Ok, Sonny, no need to get physical. Relax. Here, I'll wipe off your chair. Take your hat and coat off. Tell me, what's new in town?

10. SFX: PALERMO TAKING COAT OFF; SITTING DOWN,
SHUFFLING PAPERS

PALERMO: A possible arrest in my office were it not for your jammy ties to the police commissioner. Other than that, nothing as far as you're concerned.

CONNOLLY: But I'm always concerned about your work, you know that.

PALERMO: Your only concern, Connolly, is *you* and your hokey fame as the prince of true crime at the Daily rag. Get out!

CONNOLLY: The prince has a noon deadline for the late edition and I'd like a plumb scoop involving a south side barmaid who apparently iced her boss. Sounds like front page banner stuff. You think I can get it in about an hour?

PALERMO: (SARCASTICALLY, STILL ANGRY): Connolly, the one and only thing that prevents me from physically throwing you out is that I like to eat. So, as not to risk my job, I *politely* request you leave me to my work and go...back to the press room and...say, where are the other homicide bloodhounds, anyway?

CONNOLLY: Apparently they heard something something...

PALERMO: (UNDER HIS BREATH) ...Something, something...

CONNOLLY: ...about a domestic triangle on the North side...

PALERMO: (UNDER HIS BREATH) You don't say?

CONNOLLY: ...and a newly minted widow.

PALERMO: You rebuffed a grieving widow?? A North side dame?!

CONNOLLY: Look, Sonny, just asking for any tidbit... anything you know so far.

PALERMO: (GETTING INCREASINGLY ANNOYED) What I know is that I don't like your attitude, I don't like your blabby mouth, I don't like your imitation Errol Flynn mustache and I definitely do not like the sight of finding you in my office with police reports in your hand – even if your brother-in-law Commissioner doesn't mind.

CONNOLLY: (CALMLY) You're right. I should be more considerate and not use my sister's opportune marriage to my advantage. I had no business going through your reports. Besides there isn't one there that's any good.

PALERMO: Any good for your slimy column, you mean.

CONNOLLY: You call it slimy, I call it informational. That's the mission of the Daily News, you know. Don't you want all those law abiding readers apprised of how you're guarding their safety?

PALERMO: Connolly, I know you think of me as just another stupid flatfoot. While, in this city, you're the authority on women, murder and salacious tales. And your antenna goes up when you find all three in one shapely skirt.

CONNOLLY: (LAUGHS) Now, now, Lieutenant, I don't *personally* like homicidal dames. But my

readers do. And I have a reputation for delivering what my female following wants.

PALERMO: And a reputation for following females who deliver...

CONNOLLY: (FEIGNING OFFENSE) Now, Sonny, *that's* tasteless. I happen to worship women...

PALERMO: Then go write a romance column. Now, before I do something that would definitely make the afternoon papers, I suggest you...

11. SFX: CONNOLLY GETTING UP TO LEAVE

CONNOLLY: Ok, ok, but a reliable source in the seventh district says the preliminary report on the tavern murder includes a... kooky twist. And if Anna Sawicki is on the case – which I hear she is – she'll get the goods from the suspicious barmaid.

PALERMO: I'll read the report and decide what's kooky or...

CONNOLLY: (PRESSING) It's not in that folder yet. Which seems unusual. Why doesn't crackerjack crime fighter Frank Palermo have a sensational overnight report waiting for him on his desk?

PALERMO: (FORCEFUL) When I get it, you'll be the last to know. And if I ever find you in here again I'll...

12. SFX: CONNOLLY FOOTSTEPS

CONNOLLY: Alright, Sonny, alright. I'll take your suggestion and show myself out. I'll go see if the top cop – my relation by marriage, as you

point out – has more respect for the fourth estate. Gimme a ring if anything comes up.

PALERMO: (LOUDLY AS CONNOLLY EXITS) Here's a suggestion for the fourth estate...

13. SFX: OFFICE DOOR CLOSSES AS CONNOLLY EXITS

PALERMO: (TO HIMSELF): And don't come back you active duty son of a...

14. SFX: KNOCK AT THE OFFICE DOOR

PALERMO: (ANGRY) Connolly if that's you again, I'm going to throttle your...

15. SFX: OFFICE DOOR OPENS; EXTERNAL AMBIENT SOUND OF HQ

DORIS: No, Lieutenant, it's me. I'm sorry but I didn't want to bring this report in while he was here.

PALERMO: Doris, if that conceited ink slinger comes back I authorize you to call the police on him.

DORIS: (NERVOUS LAUGH) Oh Lieutenant, you know I couldn't do that.

16. SFX: PALERMO FLIPPING THROUGH FILE HE JUST RECEIVED

PALERMO: I know. This the tavern homicide report?

DORIS: Yes, sir. Detective Sawicki brought it over first thing this morning. Like I mentioned before, she's anxious to talk to you.

PALERMO: Do you know why?

DORIS: She wouldn't say. Except... (TRAILS OFF)

PALERMO: (BEAT) :...Except?

DORIS: Well, Lieutenant she said that..well that..she well... the suspect has a screwy story..

PALERMO: (EXASPERATED): Screwy! Kooky! I'm learning a lot of new police jargon today.

DORIS: Oh, Lieutenant, I didn't mean anything by that..

PALERMO: (REGAINING HIS CALM): No, no, of course not. Sorry for flying off the handle...it's just that that stiff-necked yarn peddler raised my blood pressure on a day my stones are on fire.

DORIS: (INNOCENTLY) Your what?

PALERMO: Nevermind. The barmaid downstairs?

DORIS: Yes, sir. In the detective bureau.

PALERMO: Anyone else on the case?

DORIS: Detective Hernandez.

PALERMO: Hm. Both good investigators.

DORIS: And. Lieutenant, the State's Attorney's Office has called twice already this morning.

PALERMO: When they call a again, as I'm sure they will, tell them we're still investigating. I need to see Sawicki! This riddle is starting to annoy me.

SCENE 5 - INT. CHICAGO PD HQ HALLWAY - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

17. SFX/MUSIC: MUSIC UP AND UNDER; FOOTSTEPS IN HALLWAY,
AMBIENT OF VOICES, PHONES, ETC AT POLICE HQ

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) The report from the Seventh District said a woman called the station at

11:02 P.M. She didn't give her name. Told the sergeant the bartender at the Kickback Inn, 1146 East 67th St., was dead. A couple of radio-car boys arrived at 11:16 and found the tavern door open. Inside, a barmaid was calmly sitting at a table. On the floor was a stiff named Alfred Romano, identified as the tavern owner and bartender. Coroner's preliminary observation: skull fracture on back of head from blunt instrument. No weapon found. No sign of robbery. 67 dollars in the cash register. Report was signed Anna Sawicki and Joseph Hernandez. Nothing for me to get excited about but also nothing about the intrigue I still wasn't privy to. When I got to the Homicide Bureau, Sawicki and Hernandez were in Interrogation Room 1 questioning the barmaid. Through a cigarette soot covered window, I saw her. She looked like a country kid who just arrived in the big city. Her nose was freckled. Her eyes a clear, innocent blue, honest looking—and a knock out. To my discomfort she wore a dress with more curves than Lake Shore Drive. Between her trembling index and middle fingers she massaged a cigarette where a thread of smoke drifted up like a delicate rope that could lasso a hapless chump. She was quite a dish but looked like a scared kid. I wanted to send her back to school. She caught sight of me and so did Sawicki who came out to give me the lowdown.

SFX 18: DOOR OPENING FOOTSTEPS SAWICKI, AMBIENT OF VOICES, PHONES, ETC IN ROOM

SAWICKI: Morning, Boss. You saw the report?

PALERMO: Yeah. What's her story?

SAWICKI: Marie Jackson, 23. Came to town from downstate 3 months ago.

PALERMO: Why?

SAWICKI: Not very clear. Says she doesn't have family here and doesn't know anyone. Lives at 6692 South Dorchester, a rooming house. Started working at the bar about two months ago. The bartender was a creep, she says, always making moves on her.

PALERMO: Any history on the victim?

SAWICKI: Alfred Romano, 37 years old. Lived alone near the joint. Did a couple of sixty day stretches for assault and battery.

PALERMO: That kind of rap sheet could be an alibi for her.

SAWICKI: But she claims she didn't do it.

PALERMO: Does she say who did?

SAWICKI: That's where the story gets crazy.

PALERMO: So I'm told. By my secretary and a cut-rate newspaper reporter. I've heard a lot of crazy over the years, Sawicki. Let's have it.

SAWICKI: Maybe you'd better talk to her first.

PALERMO: Why? Is she 99 cents short of dollar?

SAWICKI: Hard to say, Lieutenant. But I think she might have a history with bad men. But then, don't we all?

PALERMO: Sawicki, I don't know where you're going with this but I'll hear what this barmaid is serving.

SCENE 6 - INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, THEO SAWICKI, MARIE JACKSON, JOSEPH HERNANDEZ, JUDSON CONNOLLY)

19. SFX: FOOTSTEPS LEADING INTO INTERROGATION ROOM

SAWICKI: Marie, the lieutenant here wants to ask you a few questions. Just routine that's all.

MARIE: (CALM BUT SCARED): I told these officers everything already.

PALERMO: Now I'd like you to tell me, young lady.

MARIE: (BREAKING DOWN): It was horrible! Just horrible! Al was so nasty after the customers left, and then they came in and-

PALERMO: Ok, ok, slow down, get ahold of yourself. You're new in town is that right, Miss Jackson?

MARIE: Yeah, I guess.

PALERMO: Where you from?

MARIE: West Frankfort.

PALERMO: Oh, that's way south downstate, isn't it?

MARIE: Yeah.

PALERMO: What brought you to Chicago?

MARIE: Just wanted a change.

PALERMO: So you hopped on a train and came to the big city, just like that?

MARIE: Yeah.

PALERMO: (FATHERLY) Miss Jackson – Marie, did you come to town to get away from something bad back in West Frankfort? Maybe a romance that went sour? Or trouble at home?

MARIE: If you're asking if I ran away from home, Mr. Policeman...

PALERMO: Now Miss Jackson, that's not what...

MARIE: ...can't you see I'm all grown up and can go wherever I want?! I've been all grown up for a while...since seventh grade when one of my teachers, Miss Hutchison to be exact, heard the older boys making crude remarks to me and she said it was because I had grown up too early. She said to pay them no mind but I couldn't do that. The things they said made me scared and mad and I couldn't do anything! My mother said it was because I was being "suggestive" and that I showed off in front of them. But that wasn't true! So I yelled at the boys to stop but they laughed at me and I wished them dead. (EMPHATICALLY) But I've never done anything wrong if that's what you're thinking! I...only HOPED they would die... and I know it's a horrible thing to hope for. The boys in high school and even some of the old, filthy men in town said ignorant things, too. Then... a few months ago...as I was walking home...I...I (SUPPRESSING

HER THOUGHTS) I just decided to come here and I did.

PALERMO: (BEAT) I see. I understand you're staying at a rooming house?

MARIE: Yeah. It's ok. I rent by the week.

PALERMO: And then you got a job at the tavern?

MARIE: (GETTING AGITATED AGAIN) At first it was alright. Except for Al. Always trying to get fresh. He was the night bartender, you know. The one who was - who was..

PALERMO: ...Found dead at the tavern last night.

MARIE: Yeah. See, there was always some customers around. But not last night. Last night business was bad and the last customer left about ten o'clock and - (CHOKING BACK TEARS)

PALERMO: And what?

MARIE: I couldn't keep him away. I tried to but I couldn't. Finally, I ran in the storeroom and closed the door and he-

PALERMO: Go on.

MARIE: He locked me in and he told me he wouldn't let me out until - until I decided to be agreeable. He was horrible!

PALERMO: So what did you do?

MARIE: I just stayed in there. And after a couple minutes I heard some noise. Kind of a scuffle around the bar. There was some laughing and then a thump and then it ended. I didn't hear Al walking around so I peeked out-

PALERMO: But you said you were locked in. Did you have a key?

MARIE: No, of course not. Only Al had a key.

PALERMO: Then how did you get out of the storeroom?

MARIE: Why, they unlocked the door, I guess.

PALERMO: They? You said the last customers left. Who's they?

MARIE: Well, the ones who killed him.

PALERMO: So... you think some men came in while you were locked in the storeroom?

MARIE: No...it was...women...ladies. A group of them. Five or six.

CONNOLLY: (IN THE DOORWAY *Whistles in surprise*)

PALERMO: (SURPRISED, STEAMED): Connolly! Who let you down here?? Throw him the hell out!

20. SFX: HERNANDEZ AND SAWICKI CHAIRS MOVING, FOOTSTEPS

CONNOLLY: Easy, easy there, kids. I have the O.K. from the big boss. Besides I have to run soon. It's getting close to noon.

PALERMO: I swear, Connolly, the Commissioner is going to be attending a family funeral if you-

CONNOLLY: Relax, Sonny, I'll just stay here in the doorway quiet as a church mouse. Miss Jackson, as you were saying?

PALERMO: (EXASPERATED, HEAVES A HEAVY SIGH. MARIE OCCASIONALLY SOBBING THROUGHOUT):

Just ignore that nuisance, Miss Jackson and-

MARIE: He seems familiar.

CONNOLLY: Maybe you've read the Connolly Chronicles in the Daily News- That would be me.

PALERMO: He's a notorious man about town, Miss Jackson. Maybe you saw him somewhere?

MARIE: I don't think so. But there's something about him.

PALERMO: There certainly is. And it eventually goes away. Back to your story, Miss Jackson.
(GETTING INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED) A group of...women...they came into the tavern hit Al over the head and killed him, unlocked the storeroom without even knowing you were in there then left. They didn't clout the register, leave any clues or do another blessed thing! That doesn't sound very logical does it, Miss Jackson? Unless you put someone up to it.

MARIE: Me? How could I? I don't know anyone here!

PALERMO: Why don't you tell me the truth then?

MARIE: CALMING DOWN): I did tell you the truth... except...

PALERMO (SENSING A CONFESSION):
Except?

MARIE: (HESITATING) I just didn't explain who *they* were.

PALERMO: Well now we're getting someplace. Who were *they*?

MARIE: (IN A FLAT, DULL VOICE): The little ladies.

PALERMO (INCRECULOUS): You said that. *What* little ladies?

MARIE: (QUIETLY) It was the little ladies that help me.

PALERMO: So, you know them?!

MARIE: I don't know them!

PALERMO: What do you mean you don't?? You say they help you. You must know them. Who are they?!

MARIE: I don't know! I've never seen them! But when I need help they come!

PALERMO: (BEGINNING TO LOSE PATIENCE) If you don't see them, how do you know it's a group of women?

MARIE: I hear them laughing. Sometimes I can hear them running around in their bare feet.

PALERMO: (BEAT, EXASPERATED): Miss Jackson, what did you do when you came out of the storeroom?

MARIE: I saw Al lying there. I knew he was dead so I called the police. Then I just sat there and waited for them to come.

PALERMO: (CALMLY) Look, Miss Jackson, even if you did kill him, it was probably self-defense and you won't be brought to trial. So why don't you just tell...

MARIE: But I didn't kill him! I swear I'm telling the truth!

PALERMO: Is that all you have to say?

CONNOLLY: (EXCITED): Oh boy. That's all I need to hear.
(continue)

21. SFX: FOOTSTEPS CONNOLLY WALKING AWAY

(VOICE TRAILING AS HE RUNS OFF) See you in the afternoon paper, boys...and ladies.

PALERMO: (UNDER HIS BREATH) Connolly, you son-of-a...

MARIE: (ANGUISHED): Can I go home now?

PALERMO: Not just now, Miss Jackson. Maybe later. You try to calm down. Hernandez, get Miss Jackson something to eat.

HERNANDEZ: Sure, Lieutenant.

PALERMO: Sawicki, come with me.

SCENE 7 - INT. DETECTIVE BUREAU - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, ANNA SAWICKI)

22. SFX: FOOTSTEPS LEADING OUT INTERROGATION ROOM

PALERMO: Sawicki, for the love of Pete—

SAWICKI: Yes, sir...

PALERMO: Get Dr. Riordan to talk to her this afternoon. See if her wiring's rusted.

SAWICKI: Yes, sir. (BEAT) But Lieutenant?

PALERMO: (EXASPERATED) What is it, Sawicki?

SAWICKI: She told us before you came down that the uh..the little ladies have saved her two other times.

PALERMO: I don't care how many times! I don't buy it. She remains the main suspect. And we're proceeding with that unless you find another suspect.

SAWICKI: Yes, sir, I just thought you'd want to—

PALERMO: Want to what?

SAWICKI: -Hear about those other times. I took her statement.

PALERMO: That dame even got *you* believing in her spooky fable? OK, go ahead. Once upon a time...

SAWICKI: Well, the first time, she said, was about six months ago in her home town of West Frankfort. She was walking home alone when a man jumped out at her. She took off and he ran after her. Then she heard the sound of little footsteps and laughing. And when she looked back the man was stretched out in the street. The next day it was reported in the newspaper that he was dead. The second time was on the train to Chicago when some drunk tried to corner her in the club car. She was a little vague about this one but she says she heard the laughing and footsteps again and the man disappeared while the train was speeding somewhere around Paxton, Illinois.

PALERMO: Wadda you saying Sawicki?

SAWICKI: Boss...her stories got me thinking of...the wandering spirits...from the old world.

PALERMO: (CALMLY, SARCASTICALLY) Sawicki, could it be, *might* it be, we have a wicked witch on our hands?

SAWICKI: I know it sounds crazy, Lieutenant, but when I was little, my mother used to tell me of the Boginky and the Rusalky, women who were drowned for their sins and wander the earth as spirits getting revenge on men who mistreat

women. I'm sorry, Lieutenant, but Marie's stories brought back those memories.

PALERMO: Sawicki, I can't remember you ever being made all muzzy by a suspect. And I hope it's just a passing case of nostalgia.

SAWICKI: Might be, boss. But you might not want to tempt the little ladies.

PALERMO: Sawicki, stop that! Now, see if she has anything new to say after a sandwich and coffee. And eat something yourself to bring you back to your senses. The boys still canvassing the neighborhood around the tavern?

SAWICKI: Yeah, but so far nothing.

PALERMO: Crime lab turn up anything?

SAWICKI: Nothing, boss. No weapon, no blood, no prints.

PALERMO: Give Miss Jackson a little more time. Then let's go down there.

SAWICKI: Sure, Lieutenant.

PALERMO: This may be hard to believe, Sawicki, but I've never been to a fairy tale crime scene.

SCENE 8- INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS HALLWAY - MORNING
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

23. SFX:MUSIC FOOTSTEPS AND MUSIC UP THEN UNDER

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) As days go, this one wasn't one for the books - yet. But it had potential if maybe some little ladies magically appeared. And then I suddenly remembered...that laughing I heard coming into headquarters.
(FACETIOUSLY) Maybe it was those little women.
(BEAT) I shook my head and wondered if I might

be going crackers myself. I decided that maybe it was time for a vacation with the wife to rest my aching stones.

(BEAT - Continue)

SCENE 9- INT. PALERMO'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON
(JUDSON CONNOLLY, LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, DORIS, DR. RIORDAN)

I went back to my office to catch a breath and make sense of the Marie Jackson case..but no sooner had I gotten a moment of peace and quiet,

(Continue)

24. SFX:MUSIC

APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS

a pest who could lead to my first rap sheet made on encore appearance.

CONNOLLY: Wow! What a dame! Did you see her give me the eye, Sonny?

PALERMO: No, I didn't. And I don't need to see you either. I'm busy. Get out.

CONNOLLY: Already filed the story. And what a story. Afternoon lead. She's quite a number. You going to release her?

PALERMO: When I find those little ladies, she can go.

CONNOLLY: Let me know when she's sprung. I want to conduct a personal interview.

PALERMO: (PLAYFULLY, FOR A CHANGE) If you're not careful, loverboy, your tabloid is going to

run a lead story about you: (ANNOUNCER-LIKE)
"Reputed Lady-killer Killed by Lady of Ill-
repute."

CONNOLLY: (SMUG) Clever, Sonny, but she gave me the
come-on. And I know how to unscramble that
kind of dame.

(Continue)

25. SFX: FOOTSTEPS. FADING OFF

Gotta run. (TRAILING OFF) Got more angles, may
be some curves, to explore.

PALERMO: (ADAMANT, YELLING AS CONNOLLY RUNS OFF) Stay
away from her, Connolly! I mean it!

Doris!

26. SFX: FOOTSTEPS

DORIS: Yes, sir. I'm sorry, I try to stop him but he
just won't-

PALERMO: Never mind him. I need you to send a couple of
wires.

DORIS: Yes sir, to who?

PALERMO: Police Chief in West Frankfort, Illinois. Ask
about an apparent homicide about six months
ago. Happened on a street. Can't be that many
in a chicken farm like that. Then one to the
Sheriff of Ford County. See if there was an
incident about three months ago involving a
man on a train somewhere around Paxton.

DORIS: Is that all Lieutenant?

PALERMO: No. If Connolly comes back, shoot him.

DORIS: Lieutenant!

PALERMO: Shoot him an angry look, Doris. What do you think I meant?

DORIS: Ohhh, goodness. I'll send these wires right away.

27. SFX: DORIS FOOTSTEPS LEAVING; PHONE RINGS; PALERMO PICKING UP RECEIVER

PALERMO: Palermo.

DR. RIORDAN: (ON THE OTHER END OF THE LINE) Lieutenant, Doctor Riordan here.

PALERMO: Ok, Doc, tell me is she bugs?

DR. RIORDAN: That's some girl, Lieutenant. Some girl! Now if I were young and single again-

PALERMO: Riordan, I need your professional view, not indecent thoughts.

DR. RIORDAN: She's as sane as you are, Lieutenant.

PALERMO: Sane? What about the little dames? The ones she says come to her help. Did she tell you about them?

DR. RIORDAN: Of course, of course she did. Perfectly normal.

PALERMO: Perfectly normal?? Riordan I'm starting to think you're a depraved quack!

DR. RIORDAN: Lieutenant, don't you ever think about having an angel on your shoulder? Maybe sometime when you've had a close call?

PALERMO: What the devil does that have to do with the girl!?

DR. RIORDAN: It's the same thing. She believes someone from the other world protects her. Just a harmless

fantasy, Lieutenant, is all I'm saying. We all have them. She's perfectly normal. What I can't tell you is if she killed that bartender or someone else did. Ok, Goodbye, Lieutenant. And good luck!

28. SFX: RIORDAN HANGING UP; PALERMO HANGING UP; MUSIC UP AND UNDER

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) So the brain mechanic for the Chicago Police Department concluded Marie Jackson had all her marbles. Then maybe it was just a matter of time until we got the truth out of her. Or maybe the neighborhood canvass would turn up someone else. About a half hour later more information did come in...

(BEAT)

29. SFX: DORIS KNOCKS ON DOOR

PALERMO: Yeah.

30. SFX: DORIS OPENS DOOR, FOOTSTEPS IN

DORIS: Lieutenant, just got word back from West Frankfort. Should I read it to you?

PALERMO: I hope it's not another bedtime story.

DORIS: (CLEARS THROAT, READING LIKE OLD TIME PHONE OPERATOR) No record such case. Stop. Only violent death around time you mention was automobile hit-run.

PALERMO: (PAUSES WAITING FOR MORE) That it?

DORIS: Yes, sir.

PALERMO: For another nickel he could've added "don't eats no bubbles." Our little barmaid is either cooking up yarns. Or—

DORIS: (BEAT) Or, Lieutenant?

PALERMO: (SARCASTIC) Or a car full of vindictive ghost ladies may have committed vehicular homicide in Frankfort, Illinois. (REGAINING COMPOSURE) Nothing yet about the train incident?

DORIS: No, sir.

PALERMO: Ok, call up Sawicki and Hernandez. Tell them we're heading down to the tavern to look for small footprints, I suppose.

DORIS: Oh, Lieutenant, they left word. Said they were leaving to talk to some witnesses and would meet you there.

PALERMO: Witnesses? What witnesses?

DORIS: (HER IRE RISING) Lieutenant, I'm just a simple secretary answering the phone, sending wires, doing battle with newspaper reporters...

PALERMO: I catch your drift. Call me on the police radio when you hear from Ford County.

DORIS: Will do.

31. MUSIC MUSIC UP AND UNDER;

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) It was after four o'clock. Still had a stack of work on my desk. But this tavern homicide — or whatever it was — was eating up my day. My breakfast was 8 hours ago and my head felt as empty as my stomach. All I wanted was a sandwich, a beer and dry shoes.

Maybe the Kickback Tavern would have some food and drink that wasn't considered evidence and I headed there.

(Continue)

SCENE 10 - INT. CAR - AFTERNOON (LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

32. SFX: CAR ENGINE, TRAFFIC;

I drove to 66th Street only to find Dorchester blocked off. Fresh concrete just poured.

(Continue)

SCENE 11 - EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, JOSEPH HERNANDEZ, ANNA SAWICKI, DORIS)

33. SFX: CAR DOOR OPEN AND CLOSE, FOOTSTEPS;

So I parked and walked the extra block. The humidity was through the roof and a fog started coming off the lake making it seem darker than it would be at 5 o'clock.

(Continue)

34. SFX: NEIGHBORHOOD AMBIENCE; BYSTANDERS MURMURING

As I approached the tavern, gawkers were all around the joint and Hernandez was talking to a couple of them.

35. SFX: FOOTSTEPS

He saw me and came over to give me the latest.

HERNANDEZ: (APPROACHING) Lieutenant, those two say they were parked right across the street from ten o'clock on last night until the district squads showed up.

PALERMO: (SUGGESTIVELY) Were they too busy to see anything?

HERNANDEZ: They say the neighborhood was quiet and nobody came out of that tavern. Not a soul.

PALERMO: Well, that just about ties it.

HERNANDEZ: I guess so. But there's one thing Lieutenant.

PALERMO: Yeah?

HERNANDEZ: Those little ladies. They wouldn't be able to see them anyway. They're invisible.

PALERMO: (IRRITATED) Hernandez, what's that matter with you? You been talking to Sawicki's mother?

HERNANDEZ: No, boss. Just reading the afternoon Daily News. Heck of a headline: "Tavern Wolf Rubbed Out by Barmaid's Lady Gang."

PALERMO: Don't believe everything you read in the papers! Especially if Connolly wrote it. Where's Sawicki? (CALLING) Sawicki?

SAWICKI: (AT A DISTANCE) Over here, boss, at the car. Doris on the radio for you.

36. SFX: PALERMO, HERNANDEZ FOOTSTEPS;

PALERMO: The dame say anything else after I left?

HERNANDEZ: Nothing new. And the neighborhood canvass only turned up that couple.

PALERMO: Maybe my secretary is doing better detective work than all of yous. Ok, Sawicki, let me talk to her.

SAWICKI: She got word from the Sheriff in the Paxton case.

PALERMO: (INTO THE CAR RADIO) Doris?

DORIS: (OVER THE RADIO) Yes, Lieutenant?

PALERMO: Wadda ya got?

DORIS: I'm afraid it's not much help, Lieutenant.

PALERMO: Alright let's hear it.

DORIS: (READING WIRE-DELIBERATELY, AS BEFORE)
Apparently you refer to death of Elroy
Stenson. Stop. Died in fall from train while
intoxicated. Stop. We have witnesses. Stop.
Thanks for your interest.

PALERMO: (SARCASTIC) Thanks for your interest. My
pleasure, sheriff. Anything else?

DORIS: Coroner phoned. Said his deputy was going to
the tavern to investigate.

PALERMO: When?

DORIS: He didn't say...

HERNANDEZ: He's inside the tavern, boss.

PALERMO: Why didn't you say so!? (TRAILING OFF INTO THE
TAVERN) While I'm here getting greetings from
a hayseed sheriff...

SCENE 12 - INT. TAVERN - AFTERNOON

(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, MURRAY SCHECHTER, ANNA SAWICKI)

37. SFX: PALERMO, SAWICKI, HERNANDEZ FOOTSTEPS; TAVERN
DOOR OPENING, FOOTSTEPS INSIDE

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) The tavern was one of those
old neighborhood joints that probably hadn't
had a good cleaning since before Prohibition.
It had the smell of bathtub gin and ten
thousand cigars. The bar itself had a brass

rail around it and at one end a buggy eyed bald man was having a close look at a certain spot.

PALERMO: You with the coroner's office?

SCHECHTER: Murray Schechter, Cook County Deputy Coroner, officer?—

PALERMO: Lieutenant Palermo.

SCHECHTER: Ah, Lieutenant, apologies. When I talk to the police I get nervous.

PALERMO: You have an autopsy report yet?

SCHECHTER: Why, sure we have, Lieutenant. It'll be on your desk in the morning.

PALERMO: The morning? I'd like it, let's say, now.

SCHECHTER: Something gone wrong? What's the heat?

PALERMO: The heat is I got a pin-up in the lockup who's distracting the boys at headquarters while I try to figure out if she took out her boss in self defense or because she's a killer as well as a looker.

SCHECHTER: I see, Lieutenant. Well...(PATTING HIS SUIT) let me see... let me see here, oh yes, I just so happen to...

PALERMO: (OVERLAPPING) Oh, you just so happen...

SCHECHTER: ...have the autopsy report right here in my coat pocket. (CLEARS THROAT - READS QUICKLY, SLIGHTLY UNDER HIS BREATH) Alfred Romano, male, age 37, 5 foot 10, 170 pounds. No contusions. No lacerations. Slight caudal fracture, likely postmortem. (LOUDER AND

DELIBERATELY) Cause of death: myocardial infarction.

PALERMO: (BEAT) Infarction?! The guy's ticker failed?! That's what killed him?!

SCHECHTER: Yeah, that's right. Heart failure, lieutenant. When his gusto gave out he fell and probably bumped his noggin at this very spot that's dented on the rail.

PALERMO: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! That wack on the head didn't kill him?

SCHECHTER: Unh-uh. No bleeding at all there, Lieutenant. Didn't even break the skin. Probably wouldn't have been fatal anyway. He died of a natural cause.

PALERMO: He was 37! Kind of young for heart failure, isn't it?

SCHECHTER: It happens, Lieutenant. Might have been a family condition. Something like high blood pressure or...a big scare has been known to take a man out... Even one that age. Well, supper's waiting. (WALKING AWAY) And I still have to get to the bank. There used to be a Northwest Federal around the corner here..

39. MUSIC/SFX

MUSIC UP/UNDER PALERMO WALKING IN BAR;

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) It was there, all right. A slight dent at the end of the brass rail that just might have been made by a head that was dead as it fell. I walked over to the storeroom where Marie says she was locked in and nothing seemed to indicate any kind of

trouble. No key in the lock. No blood on the floor. And with no evidence of homicide, we unsealed the tavern. For what I don't know since the owner was deceased.

SAWICKI: We done with the girl, Lieutenant?

PALERMO: For now. Call headquarters and tell them to release her. Have Seventh District make a spot check on her in the morning just in case something turns up.

SAWICKI: Seems like one lucky lady, Lieutenant. Like she has someone watching out for her.

PALERMO: Again, Sawicki? I don't know what happened here but there's always an explanation and Frank Palermo will get it. I'm heading back to headquarters.

SCENE 13 - INT. CAR - NIGHT
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

40. MUSIC/SFX MUSIC UP THEN UNDER; CAR ON STREET

PALERMO: I called my wife before I left the tavern and told her not to expect me for dinner. It was nearly eight o'clock when I got back to 11th and State and I was bleary eyed and bushed.

(BEAT)

41. SFX MUSIC UP AND UNDER; THEN FOOTSTEPS; DOOR
OPENING

As I walked into headquarters, the face I least wanted to see was walking out. Connolly.

CONNOLLY: So you tried to hold out on me, huh Sonny?
This is a hot one.

PALERMO: You got your story, Connolly. Go find a different skirt...wherever it is you prowl at night.

CONNOLLY: Was supposed to have a date with a dish named Nancy but had to break it off. There's a bombshell barmaid on the loose.

PALERMO: And what makes you think that?

CONNOLLY: Boys in the radio room said you ordered her released about an hour ago. Your boys are being real cavalier and driving her to a rooming house at, uh, (Continue)

42. SFX FLIPPING THROUGH NOTEBOOK

let's see here, 6692 South Dorchester.

PALERMO: Connolly, I don't care who your brother-in-law is, I will have you arrested if you're seen anywhere near that area.

CONNOLLY: Can't arrest the press for taking a stroll on the public way, Sonny. And you should know you can't hold out on the intrepid Judson Truman Connolly. See you in the morning edition, Lieutenant Palermo.

SCENE 14 - INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT
(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO)

43. SFX: CONNOLLY FOOTSTEPS

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) Even if I could stop Judson Truman Connolly from his next attempted conquest, I figured *Marie Jackson* had a more... efficient...way to deal with him. It was a vile thought and I cleared it from my head - fast.

There still had to be a rational – and possibly criminal – explanation for Marie’s trail of departed suitors. When I set foot in my office, I saw a desk covered in paperwork. But I was hungry and achy so I called it a night and went to my car.

(BEAT)

SCENE 14 - INT. PALERMO’S CAR - NIGHT

(LT. FRANK “SONNY” PALERMO)

44. SFX: FOOTSTEPS; CAR DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING;
POLICE RADIO

I sat there for a couple minutes with the police radio on when about half past nine, the desk signaled a Code 62 – a body found unresponsive – the location: 67th and Dorchester. The location of the Kickback Inn and near Marie’s rooming house. It couldn’t be. Not again.

(Continue)

45. SFX: CAR ENGINE; POLICE RADIO

I raced back down to the scene, this time pulling up on 67th. (Continue)

SCENE 15 - EXT. STREET - NIGHT

(LT. FRANK “SONNY” PALERMO, ANNA SAWICKI, PETE MILLER)

46. SFX: FOOTSTEPS; CROWD NOISE

The intersection was blocked off by a couple of patrol cars and some beat cops were holding back another crowd of rubberneckers. Sawicki was still there and I spotted her.

(Continue)

PALERMO: (DIALOGUE VOICE) Sawicki! What's going on?

47. SFX: SAWICKI FOOTSTEPS; CROWD NOISE

SAWICKI: (APPROACHING) You're not going to believe it, boss.

PALERMO: Does it have to do with Marie Jackson?

SAWICKI: Could be but we went looking for her and her landlady said she packed up and left saying she was going back home.

PALERMO: And the body on the street?

SAWICKI: Taken to the hospital. Unconscious but alive. No signs of physical trauma. But boss...

PALERMO: What is it?!

SAWICKI: It was Jud Connolly.

PALERMO: Connolly?

SAWICKI: And boss, there's something else.

PALERMO: What?

SAWICKI: In the street, over there on Dorchester. Prints in the new concrete. Little footprints.

PALERMO: What do you mean little footprints?

SAWICKI: Boss, go see for yourself.

48. SFX: FAST FOOTSTEPS, CROWD NOISE

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) At first I thought Sawicki was toying with me which was unlike her— especially at a time like this. But I went to take a look. An officer had a flashlight aimed at the spot where little footprints—bare

feet—were in the pavement poured earlier that day. Sawicki came up behind me.

SAWICKI: Sure are dainty, aren't they?

PALERMO: Could be kids ran through there.

SAWICKI: Yeah. But there's no prints leading from the fresh cement. Kind of strange, huh? You want us to put out an APB on Marie Jackson?

PALERMO: No. No...Just...just let her go. Have the boys look around the neighborhood for witnesses. And, uh, uh...

SAWICKI: (PLAYFULLY MOCKING) Lieutenant, you want we should search for some little ladies?

PALERMO: What I know, Sawicki, is I've had enough superstition for one day!

SAWICKI: (LAUGHS) Ok, Lieutenant. (TRAILING AS SHE WALKS AWAY) But maybe sometime you should meet my mother.

PALERMO: (NARRATION VOICE) Sawicki gave me a sly wink and walked away. And I stood there pondering the crazy idea of ladies from the hereafter settling scores with men in the here and now.

(BEAT)

(Continue)

50. SFX: FOOTSTEPS, CROWD NOISE RECEEDING, PHONE BOOTH DOOR, COINS GOING INTO PHONE, ROTARY DIAL

After a couple, two, three more seconds I strolled up Dorchester and found a phone booth where no one could hear me.

(Continue)

SCENE 16 - EXT. STREET - NIGHT

(LT. FRANK "SONNY" PALERMO, ANNA SAWICKI, PETE MILLER)

The Ward Engineer for that district, Pete Miller, was one of my high school buddies. It was getting late but I gave him a call and, by the sound it, got him out of bed.

MILLER: (ON OTHER END OF PHONE - A BIT GROGGY) Hello?

PALERMO: Pete, it's Frank Palermo.

MILLER: Hi Frank, what's up? An emergency?

PALERMO: No, no sorry to call so late but just wondering. You repave Dorchester between 66th and 67th.

MILLER: Yeah, that's right. We couldn't pour it until this afternoon account of the rain. Saw some of your boys down there.

PALERMO: You're going to need some men to smooth it over tonight unless you want to redo the whole thing.

MILLER: Why? What's the matter?

PALERMO: Was down here following up on that case you saw my boys on and it looks like a bunch of kids might have run through the concrete in their bare feet.

MILLER: I tell ya. Those kids. You never know what they'll pull next.

PALERMO: No. You sure don't. You...sure...don't...

51. MUSIC

THEME UP AND UNDER

ANNOUNCER:

You've been listening to "Leave it to the Little Ladies." An audio play adapted from a short story by Philip Weck which originally appeared in the August 1949 issue of Dime Mystery Magazine. Copyright Steeger Properties, LLC, and used with permission. (Continue)

The cast included

_____ As Lt. Frank Palermo

_____ As Judson Connolly

_____ As Doris

_____ As Marie Jackson

_____ As Theo Sawicki

_____ As Joseph Hernandez

_____ As Doctor Riordan

_____ As Bill Lyons

and _____ As Pete Miller

The production was produced, written and directed by Eddie Arruza.

I'm _____.

Join us next time for another tale of suspense and mystery from the city of a million lights where it's always...

Darker by the Lake.

52. MUSIC

THEME UP AND OUT

--THE END--