

PREYING for MANTIS
(SCENE)

By

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INT. TENEMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

To the top step, a silky white leg steps with its high-heeled shoe.

Frances comes upon the McGillicuddy Apartment(6A) in a black mink coat, which looks as if it's eating her alive.

knock-knock-knock-knock-knock.

Frances stares around as she waits.

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK.

MA

(O.S.)

Ah, who the hell is it?

FRANCES

Mrs. McGillicuddy, it's Fran--

She pauses and smiles, devilishly.

MA

(O.S.)

Who?

FRANCES

Mrs. McGillicuddy, it's your daughter-in-law... Mrs. McGillicuddy.

She stands there with a smirk on her face as she hears the stomping toward the door.

IT OPENS.

Ma stands there, inebriated all over, with a cigarette in her hand and a frown upon her face.

FRANCES

I'm Frances. Mrs. McGillicuddy, how do you do?

She holds out her hand to shake, but receives only a scowl in return.

FRANCES

I was in the neighborhood. I thought I'd just drop in and see if you needed anything... like say, another bottle of gin?

A plume of smoke twirls around Frances' face.

(CONTINUED)

Ma ashes her cigarette on the floor.

MA

Wit is such a useful sexual device. It's no wonder my seventeen year old son fell so hard... right into your lair. Ya know, I'm not really in the position to be giving things away, but since my son was the gold of your latest heist, is there anything else I can offer you? Perhaps my soul?[stares her up and down] Yours seems to be completely covered in grime.

FRANCES

Mrs. McGillicuddy... Ma...

Ma's eyes shoot open. Her nose flares in fury.

FRANCES(CONT'D)

I've come to bury the hatchet--

MA

What a poor choice of words for a woman who decapitated her first husband. And don't you think you've done enough burying in this city?

FRANCES

Your son certainly has.

MA

What did you just say?

Frances is forced back by Ma's infuriated steps forward into the hallway.

MA

You show your face at my doorstep and imply that my boy is some kind of hit man? One certainly created by you, no doubt. But... he's nothing like you. No! I didn't raise a gangster. It was your influence which corrupted his brain like you did the local government. But his heart, which bleeds through the pours of that face... Make no mistake, he will be reminded that it still beats, one day. I just hope that that day comes before you decide to *bury the hatchet*, once again.

(CONTINUED)

Frances and Ma glare at one another before Frances YOLKS HER UP and dangles Ma over the side of the banister. The black floor at the bottom of the six-floor DROP creates the appearance of a bottomless pit.

FRANCES

I tried, Mrs. McGillicuddy. I made the effort. I came here with the best of intentions. But now, now I'm turning off the lights... Ma. I will not allow your shadow to cast over my marriage.

MA

The bulb blew out long before you two walked down the aisle, you scurvy, cradle-robbing night-crawler. My boy isn't nocturnal and when he is finally able to see, you'll both realize that it was you, and you alone, who replaced it.

They share a stare-off for a BEAT.

FRANCES

Well, it certainly won't be you.

Frances flips her legs over the railing and Ma drops, head first, silently--

WHAM!

Frances stares over the banister, looking down. She then turns to see Ma's next door NEIGHBOR at her apartment door, just staring, mum in shock.

Frances smirks and starts down the stairs.

FRANCES

Oh, you might want to call for an ambulance. [stops, looks]
Actually... tell them to send a coroner.

Frances disappears down the steps.

The Neighbor runs over and peers over the railing, jaw dropping, but barely a sound made.

CLOSE IN on Ma's figure; the white in the center of the black hole. Frances circles down around the body like a crow in her black mink coat.