

It's 1937 in Pre-War Los Angeles. Dangerous Sally, Elegant Lilly, and Hard-Boiled Detective Phil D'Bourbon tangle with Japanese Submarines, Nazi spies, and L.A. Cops, getting help from patriotic Jews, Japanese-American teenagers, and a Movie Star Spy. Book #2 in the Frisco Noir Pulp Series, continues where "Frisco The Dead Client" ended.

FRISCO Honeymoon For Three

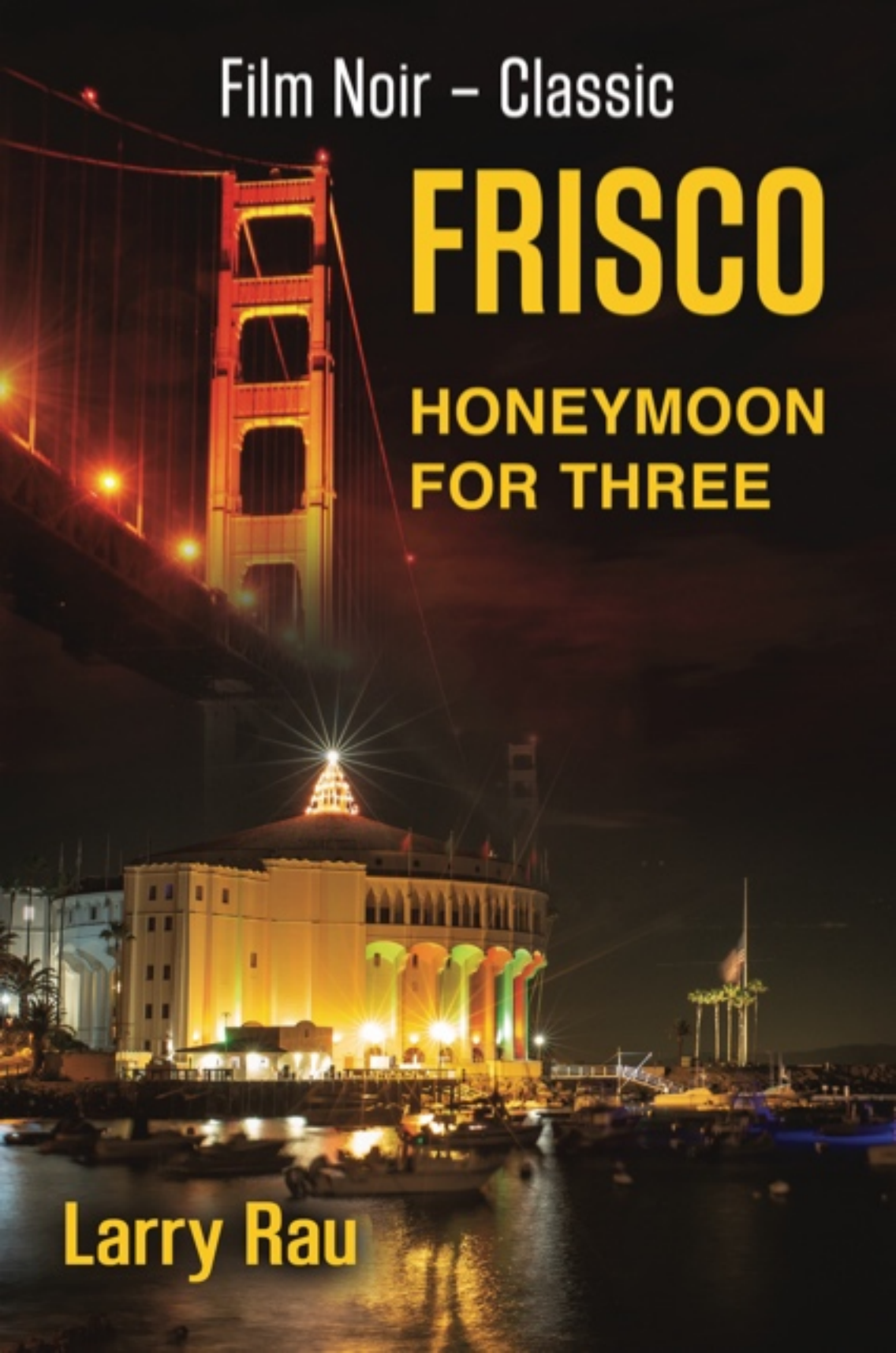
The Dead Fisherman

by Larry Rau

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A nighttime photograph of San Francisco. The Golden Gate Bridge is illuminated with warm orange lights, its towers and suspension cables visible against the dark sky. Below the bridge, the Palace of Fine Arts is brightly lit with yellow and white lights, its domed roof and classical columns clearly visible. The building's lights reflect on the water in the foreground, where several small boats are moored. In the background, palm trees and other city lights are visible under a dark, starry sky.

Film Noir – Classic

FRISCO

HONEYMOON
FOR THREE

Larry Rau

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CHAPTER 1

The fisherman was dead. Four more working stiffs dumped him at our feet on the San Pedro docks like he was just another cold halibut. Most stood around mumbling and smoking, while a few roped his sinking boat into the shallows where it would settle along the bank and be forgotten. All we wanted was smoked barracuda, but this guy had been shelled and then fried, his boat's cabin and hull blown away almost to the water line.

Lily side-stepped the body. Hungry men's eyes followed her beauty all the way to the fish shack. Momentarily made invisible, Sally and I lingered. My stunning new bride knelt next to the dead man. Her left hand touched the cold dead face, while the other deftly lifted a soggy pamphlet protruding from his pocket. Any men who might have noticed weren't watching her hands.

Sure. The gals I loved were the best magic act working the West Coast, but what I needed was strong coffee. We caught up with Lily at the fish shack. I lined up our three coffees on a counter looking out over Los Angeles Harbor. We sat down to read the paper and watch the Catalina Sea Planes land and take off. Sally took the middle stool making a big deal of spreading open the L.A. Times which trumpeted: "San Pedro Cops Arrest Bolshevik Labor Agitators."

Lily and I leaned in to read the wet political flyer hidden inside the decoy newspaper. Big red print jumped out at us at the top and bottom:

"Who Is This Man?" - there was a picture with no face -

"He Looks Like an American", "He Dresses Like an American",

"He Talks Like an American", "But He Hates Democracy",

"He Hates Unions of Working People."

"He Is A Fifth Columnist."

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Sally folded the flyer and hid it. I looked at the girls.

"Something stinks in L.A, and it sure isn't these fish." Like trained ducks they turned in unison, giving me the look. "So much for honeymooning with you two!"

"Ah, you needed a rest anyway Phil. Maybe a nice little murder will relax you." Sally dug at my ribs.

"It's always something with you people, no fun for Suzi Li." Lily parroted the hat check girl from her Chinatown Club back in 'Frisco but we both took a whack at her and she gave up.

Coffee finished, we bought our smoked barracuda, gawked at the giant octopus in the shallow tank like the rest of the mokes, then wandered back to investigate the mysterious explosion and the dead fisherman. Sally's cheap little Kodak captured shots of the sinking boat like it was just another fun ride at the Pike. We wandered away aimlessly, as tourists do. Like it or not, we'd grabbed the brass ring good for a free ride on a deadly merry-go-round.

Burning down the German Embassy at dawn was our parting gift to the Nazis in San Francisco who'd killed Sally's family and had tried to do the same for us. That made our trip to Los Angeles, where we had no reason to be, seem advisable. At least it did until another victim landed at our feet.

All I know is our honeymoon didn't last 'til lunchtime. Maybe that was better than average for two dangerous women traveling with a pet detective, while trying to hide in plain sight. Nobody hides in Los Angeles, but we didn't know it. Not yet.

CHAPTER 8

We heard the Cub circling low enough to see Sally from the porch of our hill top cottage. We both waved until she flew off to land at the San Pedro army airstrip. Our General friend at the Presidio in 'Frisco had not only rushed the new paint, he'd made her the gift of a military radio, and a pass that got her treated like a military plane, not civilian. This bought us privacy, and armed security. We needed it badly.

Sally arrived on a blue Navy bicycle. She made us forget about everything for a few hours. But that's our business.

Later, beer, bourbon, smoked barracuda from the pier, and rockers with a view of the harbor, all eased the ugliness of telling our story. Sally's flying trip had been good, coming and going. With the thug-lump sidelined, we turned our attention to submarines and the dead fisherman.

"With Clancy's charts and logbook, my aircraft charts, and a road map, maybe we can get started." The way we felt, anything Sally wanted was ok with us.

"Needle in a big haystack. An underwater haystack." Lily put her finger on exactly what the Japanese were counting on – being an invisible target in a vast featureless expanse of water.

"Maybe so. But we've got a detective on our side. Phil, what do you do to track down a suspect?"

It was nice to be asked, since they were usually two steps ahead of me. "Well, you find out where they live, what they do."

"You mean what their habits are?"

"Yeah Sally. Habits, friends, places they get seen, who they talk to, where they get their grub, gas, booze, and sex, where they work. Where they are likely to go if they want to lay low. If anybody else is

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looking for them, then you talk to them. See what they know. Find out just where they don't want to go. Saves time."

"And this works with submarines? Where'd we find this guy?" Sally looked at Lily.

"In the phone book ...under Private Dick... didn't we?"

"Nothing's private with you two around! Besides, we've had this conversation before, haven't we...and frankly the yellow pages joke is getting pretty old."

"Me thinks he doth protest too much." Lily gave me a tender whack.

"No shit Lily!" Sally got in a less tender whack and we carried on.

"Why won't it work with submarines? What makes then different from any other Marines? I've found plenty of them!"

"Mr. Big Shot Detective!" they told me in unison. But they had the bourbon, so I put up with it.

"Anyhoo... we put the sightings down on both charts. We put the times and positions down on a list. We get the fishermen to report any more sightings, with the time and the location. We put that on the list and the charts too. Pretty soon we have an idea of their habits, and where to look for them."

"So, what about that other stuff you said?"

"Grub, gas, sex, who they talk to..."

"Yeah, what you said Phil." I reached over and took away Sally's beer.

"Try to follow along, brat." I shrank away from the whack I knew was coming.

"She *is* kind of a brat isn't she!"

"I knew you loved me, Lily." I told her sincerely.

"She was more than I could handle alone."

"In vino veritas! Now the truth comes out!" It was my turn to give them both a whack.

"A-hmmm." Sally gave us both the look.

"As I was saying... who they talk to and what their habits are. If they are spying...it's a safe bet, they won't wait till they get back to Japan to spill the beans. And since they are in submarines, they have to do two things."

"What would that be Mr. submarine expert?" Sally was determined to give me a hard time.

"Well, I mentioned sex. They have to come up for air, and they have to re-charge their batteries."

"Why is it always about sex?" Lily poked me.

"I wanted to explain it in terms you girls understood. Besides, Sally's the one. I'm just minding my own business."

"Oh yeah? Then how come there's two napkin rings in both glove boxes?" Sally was getting uppity.

"I'm just a detective. I don't solve the great mysteries of life. Now. As I was saying... They have to surface to charge their batteries, and they probably send their messages back to God's chosen ones at the same time."

"And we already know one place they have a habit of surfacing."

"Give Sally the Gold Ring!" Lily faked a pout. It was a good sign. But she went on. "Can we listen for them? Can't we find out where they are, using radios?"

"I sure hope so, Lily. 'Cause without that we haven't got a hope in hell. It'd be blind luck for us to catch a sub otherwise."

"Well, what is the airplane for then...if not to search for subs?" Sally was getting pissed again.

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"Remember what Lily said. Needle in a haystack. After we get a fix from a couple of radios, or a sighting from a boat...THEN we use the airplane to fly out to them."

"And what then?" They both wanted to know but I was damned if I knew.

"How the hell should I know? It's gonna take time to make finding them work. Hardest part will be finding out what frequencies they use. To do that, we must know where they have surfaced and when. Then we listen. After we discover their frequencies, we will know if they are transmitting, just by listening. Then, when we have receivers in two different places, both with directional loop antennas, we can get two lines of position. Where those lines cross on the map...that's where our submarine is!"

"Yeah, and so...?" Sally seemed unconvinced.

"And so, while all this is going on, we have time to figure out how to capture or sink a sub!"

"Aren't you glad it's so simple, Lily?" Sally looked at us both.

"Well, you *married* him. What's simple about that?"

"Hey! I'm sensitive!" I gave them both the look, but they wouldn't stop laughing. "It's always something with you people. No fun for...." I left it at that and went for a bike ride, wondering if my pal Shultz in Homicide had gotten together with Suzi Li, back in 'Frisco? Better him than me. All this "relaxing" could wear a guy out.

Like all mice and men, I thought I had a plan. I forgot all about the rats as I pedaled along the water front, and I rang my little bell.

CHAPTER 11

Sometimes the best way to decide something important, is to think about something else, or nothing at all. It was Sunday. The camera stores were all closed, but the Pike was wide open, full of sailors and plump shop girls ready for cheap thrills in the Tunnel of Love after some fun knocking over lead bottles, and 25 cent beers.

The clatter of the wheels on the steel track of the wooden coaster echoed out over the waves underneath it, mixing with the screams of girls, reports of .22's in the shooting galleries, and the rumble of the revolving wooden drum in the fun house. Lovelorn teenage boys hung around, waiting for blasts of compressed air to blow up the skirts of girls they didn't know – hoping to meet the ones who lingered longer than the rest showing off their underwear with a dramatic “oooh” - all hoping their last hot quarter would get them where they wanted to go, and sometimes it did.

My gals mounted the merry-go-round's brightly painted moving wooden horses. They rode on the outside, just as set on grabbing the brass ring as any happy 6-year-old. Detectives like carousels too but holding 3 hot dogs made it challenging. I kept hearing Laughing Sal, but whether it was the boardwalk or the bourbon's revenge, I'll never know.

All sorts wandered, leered, and pandered in the huge amusement park on the beach, melding into a sea of ordinary humanity like cotton candy spun around a paper cone. Sailors, bike boys, tarts and girl scouts, pimply kids and goons, all seemed to share a taste for hot dogs, bumper cars, sun burns, and after the sun set, as it was doing now, they sometimes enjoyed an occasional switch blade, pair of brass knuckles or a sap.

We took a break from the noise, wandering along the shoreline toward downtown Long Beach. At the end of the pier we sat in a café. We ate fish and chips while watching the sun set - looking for the elusive green flash. When we wandered back signs beckoned us into the underground arcade of shops at the foot of the long broad

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Avenues called Atlantic and Pacific, where we found a rare stamp and coin dealer oddly lodged next to a dress shop, and an accountant. The echo of hard leather soled shoes followed us in the dim cement cavern illuminated only by the last remnants of the twilight above, and those few shop lights which would remain on all night.

I whistled in the dark as we window shopped and wandered up the stairs to the surface. In the reflections of the shop windows, I kept seeing glimpses of a man shadowing us. He blended into darkened door ways, his hard leather tell-tale almost out of hearing and sight yet not far enough to lose us.

I shoved the girls into a cab at the top of the stairs.

"Beat it!" I yelled to the driver. I shoved a fiver at the cabbie. "Make time. Drop us at the Pike. Let us out at a cross walk in a crowd. Then, keep on going without us, go to Wilmington. Get yourself a hamburger." He'd have gladly driven the 30 miles to Pasadena for that \$5 bucks. It was only four to Wilmington. He'd do it gladly.

The amusement park crowd swallowed us up in the darkness. The girls got some funny hats perfect for the Fun House. They held their skirts disappointing the lechers and mashers loitering around the entrance. We staggered hilariously through the rolling drum. I spread my arms and legs trying to wedge myself in for a ride around. I proved this is how to fall on your head. No extra charge. I wobbled into the room with the weird mirrors, dazed but trying to keep up with the women. They grew wavy, got fat, skinny, tall, short, and distorted. An arm with a syringe attached to a big limping lump reached out from between the revolving cloth barrels and nailed me in the shoulder blade, dragged me into a dark corner then beat me stupid.

The lump, dressed neatly in a gray double-breasted suit, limped after the unsuspecting girls. They headed up a steep narrow stairway, sandwiched between a deluge of happy fun seekers as they made their way slowly to the top of the tall hardwood fun-house slides. The beast tried to muscle his way through the lined-up teens and sailors, past kids, and fat ladies toward his target. Their irate curses got Sally's attention. They too began trying to push their way forward toward the top of the tall wooden slides and a fast escape.

Sally told a tall sailor, "If you can help us get away from my drunken husband, I'll meet you under the Roller Coaster at midnight and thank you properly." It was more than enough encouragement, but the way she rubbed against him as she squeezed by didn't hurt either. Her four quarters bribed the kids waiting to go down next, letting Lily and Sally escape into the crowds, while the sadist tried unsuccessfully to convince the horny sailor he was still a tough guy.

Drugged, and semi- conscious, I staggered out onto the boardwalk. The arcade lights seemed to describe woozy intertwining circles. My mile-long rubber legs ended in funny looking tiny feet with no feeling. Echoing voices 1000 miles away came from rubber faces that pressed into mine then went away again. A thousand arms and faces were raised and pointed; even more voices echoed between metallic tuneless music that made no sense but would not stop.

Loooooooooooooooooooooooooooooook

uppppppppppppppthaaaaaaaaaaaaayyyyyyyeerrrrrr. The coaster seemed to careen before me, melting and swaying... growing taller changing shape and color in time with the tuneless arcade music punctuated with gun shots and gongs, flashing neon hula girls and spinning cotton candy machines.

The million arms pointed to the cars stopped at the pinnacle of the roller coaster... which oozed and waved shrank and grew but went nowhere. The longer I tried to focus, the longer they went nowhere - the longer the million outstretched tentacles attached to melting faces that shouted Loooooooooooooooooooooook pointed at the grey suited man climbing the wooden structure of the roller coaster high above the waves... like King Kong.

I found myself clutching something strong and metal for support as the whole world undulated like Jello under me. My rubber knees 3 miles below gave out, my face dragged across the metal thing, its handle hurting my mouth. Funny red juice dribbled between my teeth...until my eyes...I think they were mine...stared into these funny cold metal holes. Holes that pointed toward the waving Jello roller coaster with my girls at the top! All my strength held the metal thing as I forced myself to focus, to think, to stop the horrid noisy gaudy colored Jello world. To hold it still...and my gaudy colored Jello mind with it.

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I forced some rubber into my legs. As I went up... the metal thing went down...until I saw through the thing with the handle and the holes the crawling gray lump...the sadist beast, the hater, the rapist, the degenerate Nazi queer, crawling toward everything that mattered in the noisy gaudy violent melting Jello world, and I let go of the metal thing and I moved toward him.

A ladder, white washed over the splinters, seemed as though it led to the swirling Jello stars. I gripped the slats but not hard enough to reduce them to shards. I squeezed rubber down into my legs with my superhuman strength...reached to the heavens with mile-long rubber arms as the world waved side to side in the fun house mirrors taller than the moon, as jets of wind tried to blow me off into the sand and sea which charged at me and then receded, changed colors like an octopus, Jelloed and bellowed with gongs and whistles, fog horns and buoy bells, as I pursued a gray lump of evil pursuing the good ones I call mine.

I smelled it and I felt it, dripping on my rubber face. It came from the gray thing up above me. If you could smell death sideways you could also see it in noisy gaudy Jello gray. I Smelled the hate dripping down its mile-long gray rubber legs, blurring my Jello vision, heard its gray smelly Jello grunts as it neared the top of the million-mile-tall wavy jiggling Jello lattice roller coaster, neared the good ones that call me theirs.

It spit poisonous grey Jello words upward. Fire and noise left its mile-long rubber arms. Gaudy Red Jello noise came from the good Jello women. My long rubber legs wrapped around the white washed splintered Jello wood and held with superhuman strength, while my rubber arms grasped a gray rubber leg a million miles above me which I tried to stretch like an evil gray noodle with the stench of sideways death upon it.

Jello fire and noise from the gray lump burnt my shoulder. I found the giant blue steel cannon that lives in my armpit...extended my mile-long rubber arm until it collided with the gray lump. Where the mile-long gray rubber legs met, I sent my giant blue steel cannon to do it's loud gaudy sounding Jello work.

I watched the smelly gray Jello lump slowly fall away toward the sea and sand a million miles below. Watched the long stream of

gaudy red jello spray into the spiral swirls of rotating arcade lights and stars, from the gray smelly lump of hate. I heard the melting Jello echoes of Laughing Sal, the crashing waves of the real Pacific, and the pleasing bells of the harbor buoys, as I reached the soft Jello arms of those I call mine just as the coaster's cars were released and gravity sent us rushing headlong toward the Jello ground.

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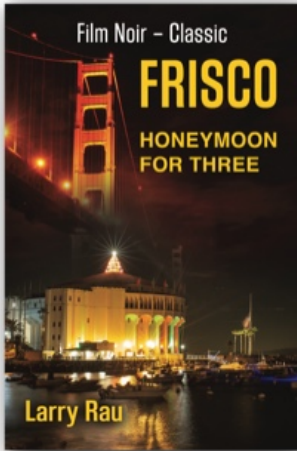
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