

Veronica Mars

by
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Second Draft

Silver Pictures
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COLD OPEN

EXT. CAMELOT MOTEL - NIGHT

Music cue: Air's "La Femme D'Argent."

ANGLE on a rain-streaked, neon-reflecting motel window. Through gauzy curtains we see the SILHOUETTES OF LOVERS heaving toward climax with all the romantic finesse normally associated with Soviet farm equipment.

VERONICA (V.O.)
I'm never getting married.

A middle-aged FAT MAN wearing a cheap, too-short, faux-Japanese robe and nothing else crosses through the frame carrying an ICE BUCKET.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You want an absolute? A sure thing?
Well, there it is. Veronica Mars,
spinster...old maid. Carve it in
stone.

CRANE SHOT follows man down a flight of exterior motel steps.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I mean, come on. What's the point?
Sure, there's that initial primal
drive...hormonal surge...whatever
you want to call it. Ride it out.
Better yet, ignore it...

As the man reaches the ground floor level and heads toward the ICE MACHINE next to the motel office, shot widens and includes the wet blacktop of the parking lot and the flickering neon of the CAMELOT MOTEL sign.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
...Sooner or later, the people you
love betray you.

As the man crosses back toward his room, CAMERA STOPS on the door to the first floor ROOM 8. As the CAMERA PUSHES IN on the keyhole...

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And here's where it ends up -- fat
men, cocktail waitresses, cheap
motels on the wrong side of town.

TN

REVERSE ANGLE on a NONDESCRIPT SEDAN parked on the street facing the motel. There's a figure in the driver's seat, but we can see little more than that.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

And a soon-to-be ex-spouse wanting a bigger piece of the settlement pie.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

CAMERA PANS across the front seat. The first thing we see is a 35 mm camera equipped with a HUGE TELEPHOTO LENS.

VERONICA (V.O.)

That's where I come in.

...then a THERMOS...

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Twenty-two dollars an hour is cheap compared to the long-term fiduciary security sordid photography can secure for you, your offspring...

...then to a MATH TEXT resting in a girl's lap.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...your next lover.

PAN follows a thermos mug of coffee from the girl's lap up to her mouth. We finally see the face of our heroine, VERONICA MARS. She is not cute. She is sexy. Tough. Prematurely jaded. Angelina Jolie at 17.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But do us a favor. If it's you in there. Dispense with the cuddling. This motel tryst? It is what it is. Make it quick. That person sitting in a car across the street might have a Calculus exam in five... make that four...hours, and she can't leave until she gets the money shot.

A ROAR of motorcycle engines forces Veronica to quit staring at the hotel and turn her attention back toward the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - five CHOPPERS ridden by tattooed and helmetless males -- an eclectic mix of Latinos, Anglos and Asians aged 16 through 20 -- slow down as they approach Veronica's car. They gaze into her car, and their expressions turn from disbelief to festive anticipation.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Veronica watches the proceedings with exasperation, but little sense of panic.

VERONICA

Well, this can't be good.

The final skinheaded rider, known throughout the juvenile justice system as WEEVIL (18) slams on his brakes and comes to a stop ten feet from Veronica's driver's side door. His mates navigate quick 360s and end up flanking their leader.

Weevil delivers an evil smile, jackhammers his eyebrows and gives the international signal for "roll down your window."

Veronica sighs, turns down the car radio -- thus reducing the Air score -- then holds down the buttons to electronically roll down both driver's side windows.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

As two of the bikers dismount...

WEEVIL

Car trouble, Miss?

Off the imminent danger, we...

SMASH CUT TO
MAIN TITLES

FIRST ACT

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Veronica gets out of the car. She shoulders a backpack and heads toward the school.

ON SCREEN: 18 HOURS EARLIER.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

A HUNDRED STUDENTS have formed a tight circle around the flag pole. Veronica needs to get through the circle in order to enter the building. As she pushes through the crowd, we hear the voices of random students.

CAT-IN-THE-HAT RAVER

Who put him there?

BAND DORK

Bikers did it.

PEP SQUADDER

Why doesn't someone cut him down?

PENCIL-NECKED GEEK

(sarcastically)

Yeah. I'll do it. I want to be the guy up there tomorrow.

Once Veronica makes her way through the assembled students, she discovers what everyone is staring at.

REVEAL - 16-year-old WALLACE FENNEL, African American, skinny, naked and duct taped to the flag pole. The tape obscures any graphic flesh. The misspelled word "Snich" has been shoe polished in white across his chest.

Some CLOWN from the crowd jumps out next to Wallace and mugs for a CAMERA held by his buddy. Wallace stares straight ahead, refusing to meet anyone's gaze. He attempts bravely, though not completely successfully, to maintain his composure.

VERONICA

(addressing the Clown)

Move.

CLOWN

Who died and made you...

The clown notices Veronica flipping open a large pocket knife. He backs away quickly.

CLOWN (CONT'D)
 ...Jesus. You are a freak.

Veronica begins cutting through the tape releasing Wallace bit by bit. Wallace glances at Veronica gratefully.

VERONICA
 You're new, aren't you?

Wallace nods.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
 Welcome to Peninsula West High.
 (disdainfully scanning the
 faces in the now-
 dispersing crowd)
 Go Pirates.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A teacher drones as CAMERA DOLLIES slowly down a row of public high school students. There is a clear differentiation between the pockets of mostly-white, wealthy kids and the mostly-non-white poor kids that we see.

TEACHER (O.S.)
 Aristotle studied under Plato at the Academy, and, while there, wrote many dialogues that were praised for their eloquence. He tutored Alexander the Great at the Macedonian court, left to live in Stagira, and then returned to Athens. In 335 B.C. he opened a school in the Lyceum...

CAMERA FINDS Veronica, her head laid flat on her desk, in the last seat of the row. The teacher's voice fades out, and the slow, rhythmic sound of Veronica breathing fades in.

CAMERA PUSHES IN tighter and tighter on Veronica's closed eyes. As the shot begins to lose focus, and we believe we are entering Veronica's dreamland...

TEACHER (CONT'D)
 (sharply)
 Veronica! Veronica Mars!

Students turn and stare at Veronica. The fact that she has been asleep is no surprise to anyone. Veronica groggily raises her head from her desk.

VERONICA

Yes?

TEACHER

Perhaps you can tell the class all about syllogism.

Veronica wipes the sleep from her eyes and begins.

VERONICA

Syllogism is a mode of argument that forms the core of the body of Western logical thought. Aristotle defined syllogistic logic. He said that every syllogism is a sequence of three propositions such that the first two imply the third. There are three basic types of syllogism: hypothetical, disjunctive...

TEACHER

(frustrated and impressed)

Okay, thank you, Ms. Mars.

(noticing another student)

Mark Simpson, you can read that copy of Maxim during your own time. Your own very private time. Now... where were we?

Off Veronica laying her head back on her desk.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FIRE LANE - DAY

A customized VW BUG with a HUGE PLASTER GODZILLA affixed to the top of it screeches to a stop in the fire lane in front of the school. The DRIVER gets out, runs around the car, opens the passenger side door, withdraws a HALF DOZEN LARGE PIZZAS and sprints toward the school, giving a campus security guard a little nod.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Veronica picks at a curious, gravy-covered MEAT PATTY on her lunch tray, sighs. She smells the pizzas almost before the delivery guy walks by her table. We can feel her salivate.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Oh, no. Not today.

Veronica watches intently as the delivery guy moves to a section in the center of the cafeteria where tables have been shoved together to create space for a DOZEN of Peninsula West's BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Get this. The school board closed campus last year when teachers complained about students returning from lunch drunk or high.

The delivery guy collects his money. In the b.g. of the shot, we notice Wallace moving toward an empty chair until one of the beautiful people meaningfully drapes a jacket over the chair. Wallace moves away.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Of course, when the sons and daughters of the village elders bitched about cafeteria food, the powers that be implemented the Pirate Points Program. Earn enough Pirate Points and you can have your food delivered.

The IN-CROWD shares the pizzas. Big smiles. Jocularly. High fives. Hair tousling. Flirtatious shoulder touching.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Look at 'em. Like an ethnically-cleansed Gap ad. Proud. Like Star-Bellied Sneetches... Effortlessly ignoring the palpable hatred of the hoi polloi.

CAMERA PANS, FINDS other clumps of students: brains, stoners, drama freaks, band geeks, gangstas, auto shop greasers.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And guess how you earn Pirate Points. Good grades? No. Community service? No. Sports? Cheerleading? Student council? Yes, yes and yes.

ANGLE ON VERONICA completely lost in thought. She doesn't notice Wallace sitting down across from her.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What do you expect, though?

(watching Monica)

Monica Rivers...her dad is the mayor.

(then Scott)

Scott Linehan...his mom is on the city council and a board member of the Chamber of Commerce.

(then Lucy)

Lucy Kendricks.

(MORE)

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Principal Kendricks. That'd be convenient, don't you think?

(then Logan)

Logan Hewitt...his Dad makes 20 million a picture. His family, as they say, carries water in this town.

(finally and importantly)

Duncan Caine...

Veronica trails off. Duncan Caine is the most beautiful of a uniformly stunning group. He seems to have a halo around him.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(stumbling, captivated)

Duncan Caine...billionaire's son.

(attempting, but failing to sound sarcastic)

They say he's going to be President. "President of what?" you rightfully ask. Why of these United States, silly rabbit...

Veronica continues to lose herself in the vision of Duncan Caine until Logan Hewitt steps into her field of vision. He's caught her. Logan licks his lips and begins tracing rings around his nipples. Veronica turns away quickly, but not before she sees Logan laugh and tap Duncan on the shoulder.

WALLACE (O.C.)

You okay?

Veronica looks over, notices that she has a companion at her table. A fact that doesn't thrill her.

VERONICA

What?

WALLACE

You look...I don't know... hypnotized.

VERONICA

Did I say you could sit there?

Wallace sighs, shakes his head, begins gathering his things.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Wait. I'm sorry. Of course you can sit there. You can sit wherever you want.

Wallace stops what he's doing, eyes Veronica.

WALLACE

That was cool...earlier...what you did. Cutting me offa that pole.

VERONICA

Yeah... Well...
(preparing to stand)
Don't mention it.

Before Veronica makes it all the way up, a handful of the members of the P.C.H. Bike Club including Weevil surround the table. Weevil sits down and positions himself well within Wallace's personal space. When he speaks, he is inches from Wallace's face.

WEEVIL

My bitch. Weren't you supposed to wait for me at the flag pole. Not sure I could've made that any clearer.

WALLACE

(frightened, attempting to laugh it off)
Okay, I get it. Very funny. I guess we're even now.

Veronica takes this in. She stops preparing to leave.

WEEVIL

You get what, bitch? You get that you're a dead man walking. Is that what you get?

VERONICA

Leave him alone.

WEEVIL

When I want you to open your mouth, you'll hear me unzipping.

VERONICA

(chuckles dismissively, then...)

Take it out. Right here. Right now. If it's more than four inches, I'll be your girlfriend. We'll go to prom together. Come on, let's see it.

Wallace's jaw drops. As Weevil finally gives Veronica his undivided attention, Veronica leans over at a table of gaping freshmen girls.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Hey, you. Got a ruler with you?
 Maybe a protractor?
 (off their wide-eyed
 silence)
 McNugget? Stick of gum?
 (turning her attention
 back to Weevil)
 What? What seems to be the problem?
 (tapping watch)
 I'm on a schedule here, vato.

One of the other bikers, we'll call him JESUS, becomes overly concerned that his homie is getting shown up publicly.

JESUS

C'mon, Weevil. Whip it out. Don't let girlie girl talk that shit.

VERONICA

Sounds like your homie here wants to see it, too.. .

JESUS

(reaching down to his fly)
 Hell, I'll show you mi...

A HAND enters frame and grabs Jesus by his collar. The hand belongs to assistant principal VAN CLEMMONS.

MR. CLEMMONS

Jesus Garza, what on God's green earth do you think you're doing?

Jesus doesn't respond. He just stares icily at Veronica.

MR. CLEMMONS (CONT'D)

All right, fellas. Let's move along. Wendell, come with me.
 (looking back)
 Veronica, why does trouble follow you around?

The bikers move along, but not without making intimidating kissy faces at Veronica, whispering what can only be threats in Spanish and Vietnamese. Eventually Wallace and Veronica are left alone at the table.

VERONICA

So what'd you do that has them so pissed off?

WALLACE
 (still mesmerized)
 What?

VERONICA
 Why are you a dead man walking?

WALLACE
 Oh. That. I work at Sac-N-Pac. And
 last night, I was working by myself,
 and a couple of those guys came in.

INT. SAC-N-PAC - NIGHT

Wallace reads an X-MEN COMIC behind the counter of the otherwise deserted store when HECTOR (20, Latino) walks in, trailed by his muscle-bound Vietnamese gangmate, PHUONG (19.) The pair heads directly back to the beer cooler.

As Wallace observes, Phuong and Hector start stuffing huge overcoats with a good dozen, or so, 40S OF BEER.

WALLACE (V.O.)
 They just walk right to the back of
 the store, and start stuffing all
 these 40s into, like, a hundred
 pockets.

Wallace reaches under the counter and pushes A SILENT ALARM, begins eyeing the parking lot, nervously.

WALLACE (CONT'D)
 So, I hit the silent alarm.

ANGLE ON THE SECURITY CAMERA MONITORS next to the cash register. The "heist" is getting caught on tape. Hector and Phuong begin walking toward Wallace. The SOUND OF BOTTLES CLINKING together is impossible to miss.

Hector picks up a pack of gum and sets it down on the counter. Hector surprises Wallace by pulling a ONE DOLLAR BILL out of his wallet. He points at the gum.

HECTOR
 That'll do it.
 (sticking the bill in
 Wallace's shirt pocket)
 Keep the change. You're doing a
 bang up job, here, homes. Employee
 of the month material. Seriously.

Wallace finds himself unable to speak as the pair exits..

WALLACE'S P.O.V. -- a moment later, a police car, flies into the parking lot with it's lights flashing.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

We return to Wallace telling the story to Veronica.

WALLACE

That's when the police came.

VERONICA

We don't have police here. We have a sheriff's department.

WALLACE

(who makes this differentiation?)

O...kay... That's when the car with the flashing lights showed up.

INT. SAC-N-PAC - NIGHT

Sheriff Don Lamb (40, intimidating, gruff, oddly unsettling inappropriate smile, very Bruce Dern) enters the store.

SHERIFF LAMB

You. Come here.

Wallace walks out from behind the counter.

EXT. SAC-N-PAC - CONTINUOUS

Wallace walks outside, and what he discovers scares the hell out of him.

REVEAL - FIFTEEN MEMBERS of the P.C.H. BIKE CLUB -- including the ones we've already met -- sitting on choppers out in the parking lot. Every biker seems to be staring holes through Wallace.

DEPUTY SACKS (doughy, late 20s) has Hector and Phuong handcuffed and bent over the hood of the cruiser.

SHERIFF LAMB

They say they paid.
(annoyed by Wallace's
silence)
Well? Did they?

Off the hard, hard stares of the assembled bikers.

WALLACE

Yeah.

HECTOR

Like I said.

SHERIFF LAMB

Shut up.

(back to Wallace,
condescending)

But you pressed the alarm, anyway?

WALLACE

It was an accident.

Lamb shakes his head in disgust and heads into the store.

SHERIFF LAMB

What a pussy.

WALLACE'S P.O.V. - Lamb goes behind the counter and removes the VIDEO TAPE from the surveillance system. He comes back out of the store and addresses his deputy.

SHERIFF LAMB (CONT'D)

Sacks, get them in the car. We've got enough here.

(then to Wallace)

Grow up. Get some balls.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Veronica addresses Wallace. Her curiosity is piqued.

VERONICA

Grow up. Get some balls -- he said that?

WALLACE

Yeah.

VERONICA

Congratulations.

WALLACE

What?

VERONICA

You've already managed to piss off the duly elected Sheriff of Playa Del Costa.

Off Wallace's "can things get worse" expression.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Veronica reads at her desk. Her classmates are goofing off.

TEACHER 2 (O.C.)

Veronica?

Veronica looks up from her homework, sees a teacher holding up a PINK PASS.

TEACHER 2 (CONT'D)

They need to see you at your locker.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Veronica walks down the hall.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Random locker searches. It's the latest Gestapo tactic the administration has adopted in their war on drugs. Except the searches aren't really random. I know when they're going to happen before Vice Principal Clemmons does.

Veronica turns a corner. She discovers herself in a hallway alone with Duncan Caine who is walking toward her in the opposite direction. The two walk toward each other in complete silence. Veronica looks at Duncan, but he doesn't glance in her direction. Once Duncan has passed...

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He was more attentive the year he was my boyfriend.

Veronica turns another corner. She finds Vice Principal Clemmons and Deputy Sacks (who we recognize from Wallace's flashback) holding the leash of a GERMAN SHEPHERD.

DEPUTY SACKS

(darkly enthusiastic)

Veronica Mars! This should be good.

Clemmons shoots Sacks a "don't be a moron" look.

MR. CLEMMONS

Veronica, please open your locker.

Veronica begins doing her locker combination. As she does, the German shepherd begins to whine, then bark.

VERONICA

Helga, heel!

The dog stops whining and barking, and sits quietly at attention as Veronica finishes her combination. Deputy Sacks is frustrated by Veronica's control over his dog. Veronica opens her locker and lets the police and the assistant principal get a look inside.

REVEAL the interior of the locker. There is absolutely nothing inside. Not even a scrap of paper.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

A little anti-climactic, huh?

A QUICK PAN of the deputy and principal reveals that, yes, they expected something more.

EXT. THE COMMODORE APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Veronica arrives at a low rent apartment complex. She enters a courtyard through a metal gate. An EMPTY SWIMMING POOL occupies most of the courtyard. A couple feet of standing brackish water tells us that the pool is out of service.

As Veronica walks past the swimming pool, Coldplay's "DON'T PANIC," begins playing out of an open apartment window.

COLDPLAY

*We live in a beautiful world/Yeah,
we do.../Yeah, we do...*

Veronica whips her head up toward the window. As she does, we hear the huge SPLASH of someone CANNONBALLING into the pool. Veronica turns her attention back toward the pool, but when she does, she's no longer at the Commodore, she is in...

EXT. MARS BACKYARD - FLASHBACK - DAY

...and surfacing at the side of the pool is Duncan Caine. He smiles up at Veronica and speaks.

DUNCAN

Hey, baby. It's our song.

Veronica glances up and sees a full dozen bathing-suit-clad beautiful people from the cafeteria -- including Monica, Scott, Lucy and Logan -- gathered around a table on the patio of a gorgeous upper-middle class house.

Angle on Veronica attempting vainly to compute what she's seeing. Then...

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)
Happy birthday, Veronica. Are you surprised?

VERONICA
(lighting up)
Mom? MOM?

But when Veronica turns, she is back in...

EXT. THE COMMODORE APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Veronica's P.O.V. - elderly, African-American neighbor ESTELLE WHITE is attempting to get through the gate with an arm load of GROCERIES. She gives Veronica a quizzical look.

MRS. WHITE
It's me, honey. Can you give me a hand?

Mrs. White takes Veronica out of her trance. Veronica gives one last look back at the brackish pool, shakes the cobwebs from her head, and jogs toward the gate.

VERONICA
Yeah, sure. No problem.

INT. MARS APARTMENT - DAY

Veronica is greeted at the door by a very affectionate and excited PIT BULL.

VERONICA
Oh, look at you. Who's been a good boy, today? Who's been a good boy?

The pit bull clearly thinks he's been a good boy.

SERIES OF SHOTS -

Veronica spooning a HUGE CAN OF DOG FOOD into a bowl while the pit bull waits impatiently.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
Okay. Attack.

The pit bull does so, with gusto.

Veronica pours a POWDER PACKET into a pot of MACARONI.

Veronica puts the finishing touches on BOLOGNA AND CHEESE SANDWICHES. Cuts them.

Veronica places Tupperware BOWLS OF MAC AND CHEESE, an APPLE and SANDWICHES into PAPER BAGS.

Veronica grabs a LEASH hanging from a hook and attaching it to the excited pit bull's collar.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Veronica sits at a picnic bench. She throws a tennis ball and the big pit bull chases it down with frightening efficiency. She hears an odd sound -- the HIGH-PITCHED WHIRRING of a small engine. Looking up, Veronica spots a RADIO-CONTROLLED AIRPLANE doing laps around the park sky.

Veronica scans the park until she spots the plane's owner.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - Wallace Fennel operates an antennaed radio control unit some 75 yards away. He's already seen Veronica. He looks down from the plane, gives Veronica a pleasant wave and smile.

Veronica smiles despite her best intentions. She offers Wallace a SELF-CONSCIOUS WAVE in return. As she observes him, we get a sense that Veronica is being won over by him. Whether it's his bravery in showing up outdoors by himself or a kinship derived from a their similar solitary statuses.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

Veronica gets out of her car at a low-rent downtown intersection carrying the lunch sacks. She moves toward a door next to a liquor store. She stops when she sees a JAGUAR CONVERTIBLE parked in front of the door.

CLOSE ON the license plates which read "CAINE 2"

Veronica attempts to absorb what this might mean as she makes her way to the door.

STENCILLED on the door are the words: MARS INVESTIGATIONS.

Veronica opens the door and a small bell above the door rings. She immediately begins climbing stairs. The office itself is above the liquor store.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS, OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Veronica enters the outer office. She can hear the MUFFLED VOICES of her father and a client in the office. Veronica tries to listen to no avail. We hear the JINGLE OF THE BELL.

Public Defender CLIFF MCCORMACK (35, oily like William Hurt in Body Heat) enters without knocking and catches Veronica attempting to listen at her father's office door.

MCCORMACK
(grinning, too loud)
Veronica Mars!

Veronica furrows her brows and shakes her head in silent attempt to silence McCormack.

VERONICA
My dad's with a client.

MCCORMACK
Apparently. That's okay. I'm happy to sit out here and chat with you. I've got a case...

VERONICA
Like I said, my dad's with a client...

MCCORMACK
(knowing, toying with her)
Yeah. I heard you. But, c'mon, your dad's out skip tracing half the time, and, yet, somehow, all the cases that come in here still get handled. How is that?

VERONICA
We're efficient.

MCCORMACK
Emphasis on the we. Look. I'm just going to leave this file here, open on your desk, if you choose to take a look at it, cool.

(sliding a folder toward
Veronica)
One of my clients, Brandy Diamonds, dances at the Seventh Veil.

VERONICA
Classy.

MCCORMACK
Yeah, well, everyone deserves a defense. She was busted for vandalism, taking a baseball bat to a washing machine that stole her quarters at Suds-N-Stuff.

VERONICA

Wow. Sounds like you really need a P.I.

MCCORMACK

Here's the thing. She says that the Seventh Veil has an interesting way of keeping their liquor license. She wants to make a deal.

(standing, moving toward door)

If your dad has time, he should look into it.

McCormack winks, then exits. Veronica looks down at the folder for a pregnant moment. Sighs. She reaches for it...

Before Veronica can open the folder, however, CELESTE CAINE, (42, glamorous, icy) steps out of the office followed by KEITH MARS (45, average-Joe looks, cheap suit, rings under his eyes.) Celeste is talking as she emerges from the office. She doesn't see Veronica initially.

CELESTE

Don't get the wrong idea, Mr. Mars, I don't like you. I hate the fact that I'm here. But I do know that if there's anyone who will be dogged and resourceful in this matter, it will be...

Celeste finally notices Veronica. She gives Veronica the sort of once over one might give to rotten meat.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

...you. Don't call the house. I'll get a hold of you. I'll need it soon.

Celeste exits. Veronica's jaw is on the floor as she turns her attention to her father who is, likewise, flummoxed. Veronica rolls her chair to the window and gazes out of it.

VERONICA (V.O.)

I suppose you can understand her anger. After all, my dad did try to send her husband to jail for murdering their daughter. Then again, she hated me even before that. She never thought I was good enough to date her son.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS - DAY

Veronica and Keith eat the dinners that Veronica prepared earlier. There is a closeness, an us-against-the-world vibe to their chemistry.

KEITH

How was school?

VERONICA

If you think we're going to talk about my school day and not the fact that Celeste Caine was in your office ten minutes ago, you've got another thing coming.

KEITH

Making good grades?

VERONICA

Her husband's got something on the side, doesn't he?

KEITH

(lifting a forkful of
macaroni and cheese)

Say what you want about real cheese, I'm a fan of the orange powder packets.

VERONICA

(exasperated)

Okay. School was school. Locker searches. Drug sniffing dogs. Motorcycle gangs terrorizing skinny sophomores. The social elite ostracizing the poor and huddled masses. My grades are fine. I like the orange powder, too. Now, tell me about Mrs. Caine.

KEITH

Yes. She thinks he's seeing someone. Late nights. Motel matches. The usual.

VERONICA

Sexual appetite?

Keith looks at his daughter. It's moments like this that he fears he's not raising her "appropriately."

KEITH

Gone.

VERONICA

They were never a good couple
anyway.

KEITH

You're jumping to conclusions.

VERONICA

You take the case?

KEITH

We need the money, Veronica.

VERONICA

Good. I would've been pissed if you
hadn't.

KEITH

(good-naturedly)

I wouldn't have cared if you were.
Give me some of that apple.

Veronica smiles at her father, hands him an apple section.
The PHONE RINGS. Veronica answers it before the first ring
has ended. We get the sense that Keith might have let the
machine get it during dinner.

VERONICA

Mars Investigations.

(beat)

Just a sec.

Veronica hands the phone to Keith.

KEITH

Keith Mars.

(beat)

How long ago?

(beat)

What's he driving?

(beat)

All right. All right. I'll get the
7:30 out of Santa Cruz and meet you
at the place by the thing by the
fountain. Yeah. And, Andy...good
work. Thanks.

Keith hangs up and stands. Dinner is over. He's on the move.
Keith begins going through an overnight bag, sifting through
its contents.

KEITH (CONT'D)

My guy's on the move. Andy picked him up in San Diego. Another day and he'll probably try to cross the border. I've gotta head out.

VERONICA

You go. I'll have the flight booked by the time you get to the airport. You want a rental car in San Diego.

KEITH

Nothing fancy this time, Veronica. Seriously.

VERONICA

A Blazer isn't that fancy, and we bill it anyway.

Keith gives his daughter a look.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Fine. I'll get you a Crown Vic. Once a cop...

KEITH

And don't do anything on the Caine case. I'll handle it.

VERONICA

Okay.

KEITH

Given our relationship with that family, I just don't think...

VERONICA

Fine. I said okay.

(full of energy, fun)

C'mon. Chop. Chop. Time's a wastin'. We're burning daylight. Let's go. Let's go. L.E.T.S.G.O.

Keith smiles, puts on a shoulder holster followed by his rumpled sports coat.

KEITH

With any luck, I'll be home tomorrow night. If not, the night after. I'll call and check in.

VERONICA

You always do.

KEITH

And, Veronica...?

VERONICA

Yes?

KEITH

When you go out after Jake Caine...
take backup.

VERONICA

I always do.

Keith kisses his daughter's forehead and heads out the door.

EXT. HILLSIDE ROAD - DUSK

Veronica is parked in her car on a hillside road.

VERONICA (V.O.)

I read somewhere that in Rio De Janeiro the wealthiest citizens, those with European blood, live in the valley next to the ocean, and poor people, the dark-skinned Indians who work in their houses and shops, live in hovels in the surrounding mountains.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - The 15 million dollar CAINE ESTATE is in the foreground. Behind it is the PACIFIC OCEAN.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's the opposite here. More millionaire's per capita in Playa Del Costa than any town in California, and they all want a view of the ocean. They just don't want to get wet or sandy.

JAKE CAINE (43, handsome, fit, dangerous -- think Ari Emannual) emerges from the house. Veronica reaches up and turns over the ignition as it begins to rain.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The higher up the hill you live, the better person you are. The Caines live at the very top.

Caine pulls his RANGE ROVER with plates that read CAINE 1 out of the private drive. Veronica waits a moment, then follows.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When my dad was sheriff, we had a house in the hills. It was near the bottom, but it was in the 94409 zip code. We were 09ers. We were accepted. If not accepted, tolerated.

EXT. CAINE SOFTWARE - NIGHT

Veronica follows Jake Caine until he pulls into the private drive of the what looks like a SCALED-DOWN GETTY MUSEUM. As the Range Rover disappears into underground parking, CAMERA HOLDS on the CAINE SOFTWARE sign.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Streaming video. You wouldn't have it if it weren't for Jake Caine and the fine people at Caine software.

Veronica whips into a parking spot where she can have a view of the building. The lights on the top two floors of the five story building are off.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As the legend goes, he spent 16 months holed up in a Holiday Inn suite with a handful of college computer science buddies until they emerged with a killer app that would change the way we thought about computers and the internet. He made 300 million the day the company went public. Everyone, in fact, who worked on the project became a millionaire.

As Veronica watches, a the lights in a huge corner suite office turn on.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That's why, when Jake's daughter, Lilly...

(Veronica momentarily loses her detachment)

...my friend, Lilly...didn't make it home from a dance team car wash fund raiser, everyone assumed she'd been kidnapped.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - FLASHBACK - DAY

MUSIC CUE: "Lady Marmalade." The Christina Aguilera version.

Twenty or so cute teenaged girls scrub and rinse their peers' cars. Short-haired, cute as a button, fellow dance teamer 15-year-old Veronica watches with amusement as Lilly dances while she scrubs.

VERONICA

God, Lilly, aren't you Little Miss Prozac Nation.

LILLY

High on life, Veronica Mars.
(then, conspiratorially)
I've got a secret. A good one.

DANCE TEAM ADVISOR

Girls! Less talk. More scrub.

LILLY

(rolling her eyes, then
mouthing to Veronica)

Later.

EXT. CAINE ESTATE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Veronica, still in her car-washing clothes -- sits in the passenger seat of a sheriff's cruiser, an In-N-Out sack in her lap. The entire Caine living room area is visible through huge floor to ceiling glass walls.

VERONICA (V.O.)

I'll never forget that night. Dad
and I were coming home from In-N-
Out when the call came in.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - her father, dressed in full sheriff regalia -- is talking to Jake and Celeste Caine. Even from this distance he shows obvious empathy. Another sheriff's department car with flashing lights arrives.

As Veronica watches, then-deputy, DON LAMB gets out of the car and heads toward the house. He notices Veronica in the car and shoots an imaginary hand pistol at her, smiles and winks before heading in. It's meant as playful, but it's absolutely the wrong time and place. Veronica rolls her eyes.

Veronica spots her boyfriend Duncan Caine rocking back and forth on the end of a couch. Though she was told to stay in the car, she gets out and enters the house behind Lamb.

INT. CAINE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Veronica silently makes her way to Duncan. She kneels down in front of him and puts her hands on top of his.

VERONICA
(w/absolute conviction)
My dad will find her.

Duncan looks up through teary eyes. Registers hope. Veronica notices something curious behind Duncan. Keith has noticed something on the carpet. He reaches down, feels it, sniffs his fingers. He is clearly bothered by something. Jake is consoling Celeste, so they don't notice what Keith is doing.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK - DAY

Fifteen-year-old Veronica scans the hallway. She is waiting for someone.

VERONICA (V.O.)
But no ransom note ever came, and
my dad never found Lilly.

Veronica stands on her tip toes, spots Duncan making his way down the hall. He is accompanied by Logan and Scott.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A couple of months later, no one
was looking for a kidnapper. They
were looking for a body. And a
murderer.

Buoyed by his buddies, Duncan passes Veronica in the hallway without even acknowledging her.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I learned the hard way that what
people were saying was true -- my
dad was going after Jake Caine.

EXT. CAINE SOFTWARE - NIGHT

As Veronica observes, the lights at the top of Caine software turn off. She starts her car.

EXT. CAMELOT MOTEL - NIGHT

Veronica pulls into the exact spot she was in for the cold open. She observes as Jake gets out of his car, makes his way to the door of one of the rooms and knocks.

VERONICA (V.O.)

So Mrs. Caine was right. Not a lot of high powered business meetings taking place at the Camelot at one in the morning. They say the divorce rate is twice as high for parents who lose a child.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL COMPUTER LAB - FLASHBACK - DAY

Veronica at 15. She notices a group of incredulous boys surrounding a computer monitor.

VERONICA (V.O.)

"Lose a child." Now there's a euphemism for you. Lose a child.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

What? You guys figure out some way to unlock the porn?

The boys turn their attention to Veronica. They look busted, but indignant. Angry, even. One of the boys addresses the boy at the keyboard.

YOUR FAVORITE BAND SUCKS T-SHIRT

Show her.

METALHEAD

She ought to see it.

BOY AT KEYBOARD

It's her Barney Fife dad who needs to see it.

VERONICA

What?

YOUR FAVORITE BAND SUCKS T-SHIRT

It's the Lilly Caine video.

Veronica goes white.

VERONICA

Trust me, my dad's seen it. But no one is supposed to have that.

BOY AT KEYBOARD

Yeah, well, it's on the net, so it's too late now. Take a look.

Veronica hesitates.

VERONICA (V.O.)

The video had arrived a week earlier. All anyone knew is that it confirmed that Lilly was dead. And that the killer had a sick sense of humor. He sent it on streaming video.

Veronica's curiosity gets the better of her. She steps toward the computer monitor.

ANGLE ON THE MONITOR - where a Real Time-esque video begins to play. The image on screen is horrific.

The LIFELESS BODY of Lilly Caine is completely submerged in fifteen feet of ocean water, her eyes wide open. FISH circle her. She is wearing the same CAR WASH OUTFIT that Veronica last saw her in.

YOUR FAVORITE BAND SUCKS T-SHIRT

So...? Your dad still think Lilly's own father did this?

Veronica rushes out to vomit. She won't make it in time.

INT. MARS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

A QUICK PAN of the room reveals that most of the possessions have been boxed. The Mars will be moving out soon.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Whether or not my father still thought Jake Caine was responsible became a moot point. An emergency recall election removed him from office.

CAMERA FINDS Veronica positioned on the couch. She is bathed in the light from the television. Her hair is still short, though she has dyed the tips. She is starting to become the Veronica Mars we know today. Veronica manages to ignore the muted SOUNDS OF A MAN AND WOMAN ARGUING behind her.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Mom wanted to move out of Playa Del Costa. The loss of status, loss of income, loss of reputation was too much for her. We were going to move, all right. We had to. But Dad wasn't going to be run out of town, and neither was I.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Dad! Come here.

Keith appears, approaches Veronica from behind the couch.

KEITH

I'm sorry, honey. Your mother and I...

VERONICA

Look.

ANGLE ON THE TELEVISION where a special news bulletin is being broadcast.

ON SCREEN, new sheriff Don Lamb is leading a man in handcuffs through a crowd of reporters. Lamb is once again wearing an INAPPROPRIATE SHIT-EATING GRIN.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

The Playa Del Costa sheriff's department, reacting to information received through the Crimestopper hotline, has apprehended Abel Koontz, a disgruntled former Caine software employee...

The news camera pushes in tighter and tighter on the face of ABEL KOONTZ. In his 50s, Koontz has the face one might expect from the Boogeyman. Koontz stares without remorse into the camera. There can be no doubt: he's a murderer.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Koontz, a software designer, was fired during the development stage of the streaming video project.

NEW SHOT - Don Lamb standing on the deck of a houseboat holding up a couple items: a backpack and a pair of shoes.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Shoes and a backpack belonging to the deceased were discovered on Koontz's houseboat by Sheriff Don Lamb who said...

Veronica doesn't hear anymore as Keith has used the remote to turn off the TV. Veronica looks up at her father, reads the pain in his face before he heads back to the bedroom.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

The five members of the P.C.B. Bike Club that we met in the cold open, cruise down the street, weaving in and out of traffic, raising hell, terrorizing lost tourists, hopping up on sidewalks, making kissy faces at female motorists.

They turn down a nearly deserted road. We notice the flickering neon of the CAMELOT MOTEL ahead of them. The first biker notices Veronica's car parked along the side of the road. He points it out to the others.

TIGHT ON WEEVIL'S FACE as he realizes what it is. Weevil skids to a stop in front of Veronica's car, makes the international gesture for "roll down your window."

As Veronica electronically rolls down both passenger windows.

WEEVIL

Car trouble, Miss?

Veronica scans the five guys positioned around her car. Two of the bikers are dismounting. One moves toward her.

VERONICA

Yeah, as a matter of fact. I think it's a loose belt, but if you wouldn't mind checking under...

As she's speaking, the dismounted biker, let's call him MOUTH, approaches Veronica. He's reaching in to grab her as he's talking to his leader.

MOUTH

Hey, Weevil, who gets to...

But as soon as Mouth's hand gets close to Veronica, a BLUR from the back seat EXPLODES outward.

Suddenly, Veronica's pit bull has Mouth on his back. Mouth's wrist is in the pit bull's mouth. The pit bull growls, but seems to be awaiting further instructions.

MOUTH (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Get him offa me.

VERONICA

Backup! Chill!

We now understand what Veronica's father meant by "Take Backup." Backup lowers his growling, but he doesn't let go of Mouth. Jesus is off his chopper in a heartbeat.

Jesus comes straight at Veronica aggressively.

JESUS

Girl, you better get your dog offa
him.

Jesus lifts Veronica's door lock and begins to open her door. Veronica reaches out and applies a police-issue STUN GUN to her attacker. Jesus drops like a rock. Veronica steps out of her car, her door already partially open. She addresses a surprised, yet darkly-amused Weevil.

VERONICA

Tell you what. We'll call a truce.

WEEVIL

Oh, baby. It's too late for that.

VERONICA

You leave that kid at school alone
for a week, and I'll make sure your
boys walk.

The other bikers shoot looks at Weevil. This is big.

WEEVIL

How you gonna make that happen?

VERONICA

I could explain it, but you just
wouldn't understand it.

Weevil knows he's being insulted. Two can play that game.

WEEVIL

So why you care so much for that
skinny negro? Things I heard about
you...he must really lay the pipe
right.

VERONICA

Yeah. That's it.

Veronica and Weevil notice Jesus crawling bravely toward Veronica's feet. Veronica pushes a button on her stun gun and we see the sparks fly between the connection points.

WEEVIL

All right, Jesus, we get it. You're
a badass. But for once, don't be
stupid.

VERONICA

Not bad advice.

Weevil looks up at Veronica, smirks. He gets her point.

WEEVIL

All right. A week. After that,
we'll come for you, your boy...
(using Wicked Witch voice)
...and your little dog, too.

Backup growls.

VERONICA

Backup. Be cool.

Backup lets Mouth's wrist go, and allows him to crawl out from under him. Weevil smiles at Veronica, the lust quotient is extremely high. As Mouth and Jesus make their way back to their choppers...

WEEVIL

Yeah. That's not bad advice,
either. You be cool, Veronica Mars.
And if you get lonely out here
sitting by yourself in your car,
remember, Weevil love you long
time.

Weevil punctuates his overture by KICK STARTING his chopper. The other bikers follow suit. Veronica issues an ironic thumbs up to the proposition. She watches as the bikers drive off into the night.

CAMERA PUSHEES IN on Veronica's face as she watches them go. There's a hint of sadness.

VERONICA (V.O.)

Quite a reputation, I've got, huh?
(beat)
You want to know how I lost my
virginity?
(another beat)
So do I.

INT. MONICA RIVERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

A happening party. FORTY, or so, OF THE BOLD AND BEAUTIFUL from Peninsula West High cavort in a mansion overlooking the Pacific. Though she is in a pretty, WHITE PARTY DRESS, Veronica's DYED TIPS are terribly out of place.

VERONICA (V.O.)

I tried to put on a brave face,
hold my head high after the arrest
of Abel Koontz. I went to a party
just to show everyone that their
dirty looks and backstabbing didn't
affect me.

Veronica moves through the party. No one will catch her eye
let alone speak to her. She is a pariah.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was a mistake.

INT. MONICA RIVERS' HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Veronica pushes through a crowd waiting to get in a BATHROOM.
As she gets to the end of the hallway, she realizes someone
has put a DRINK in her hand. She glances back, but she has no
idea who did it. She considers for a moment, then drinks it.

EXT. MONICA RIVERS' HOUSE - POOLSIDE - NIGHT

Veronica staggers her way toward an outdoor chaise.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - the people staring at her as she makes
her way to the chaise are BLURRY. She's either unimaginably
drunk from one drink, or she's been slipped something.

INT. MONICA RIVERS' POOL HOUSE - DAWN

Veronica wakes up alone on an UNMADE BED. Like the audience,
she has no idea where she is. She is completely disheveled.
There's no way to hold her head that doesn't hurt. Veronica
struggles to sit up on the edge of the bed. She spots
something on the carpeting that disturbs her.

REVEAL a pair of panties wadded up a few feet from the bed.

Veronica leans down and picks them up. She stands and makes
her way, uncomfortably, to an adjoining bathroom.

EXT. MONICA RIVERS' POOLHOUSE - DAWN

Veronica, having put herself together as best as she can,
steps out of the poolhouse. We see the remnants of a party.
Garbage. Bottles. Cigarettes. Veronica's expression is no
longer pitiful. It is defiant. No one will see her cry.

EXT. ROAD IN FRONT OF MONICA RIVERS' HOUSE - DAWN

Veronica arrives at where she's parked her car. Her tires
have been slashed.

A circle has been shoe polished on the windshield to indicate where the driver will be sitting, and the word "SLUT" has been scrawled next to it.

Displaying no emotion, Veronica walks around the car and discovers a different sentence on the back windshield. This one reads...ABEL, IT SHOULD'VE BEEN HER.

Veronica absorbs this, then turns and begins making the slow walk down the hill into town.

END OF ACT TWO

TN

EXT. CAMELOT MOTEL - NIGHT

The door of the room Veronica has been staring at for the past two hours finally opens. The first person out is a WOMAN IN HER MID 20S, pretty.

SNAP - the image is frozen for a moment as Veronica takes the first of many photos.

Jake Caine steps out of the motel room. He helps the mystery woman with her coat.

SNAP - Veronica freezes this image as well.

ANGLE ON VERONICA sitting in the car taking photos.

VERONICA (V.O.)

C'mon. Give me the money shot.

But it doesn't happen. There is no overt act of affection. The pair make their ways separately to their cars as Veronica continues to take photos. Off Veronica's mild frustration.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - MORNING

Veronica is arriving for school. Again, she is exhausted. As she moves toward the school, a big LEXUS SUV with SURFBOARDS strapped to the roof pulls up beside her. Logan Hewitt rolls down the window and speaks.

LOGAN

Hey, Ronnie. We've decided we'd rather surf than study today. Wanna come with?

Veronica looks up at the Lexus. She notices Duncan in the passenger seat refusing to look in her direction. Three more guys are in the back seat. One is sucking down a CORONA. The other is WAGGLING HIS TONGUE through his first two fingers at Veronica. Veronica doesn't dignify the query with a response which only eggs Logan on further.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

C'mon. Duncan'll promise to take off his shirt.

The guys in the back seat cackle. Duncan shoots Logan an angry look. Then, assertively...

DUNCAN

Shut up.

LOGAN

All right. All right.
(holding flask out window,
wagging it)
What do you say to a little hootch?

Veronica keeps walking, gives Logan the finger.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

What's the matter? Aren't you your
mother's little girl? Now, there
was a woman who would do anything
for a drink. What's she up to
nowadays? Maybe she'll join us. You
know where she is? Any clue?

DUNCAN

C'mon. Let's just go.

LOGAN

She used to be fun.

Logan hits the gas, and the car squeals out of the parking
lot leaving Veronica to stew.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON VERONICA'S FACE...

VERONICA (V.O.)

It's been a year since I've heard
from my mother.

INT. KEITH MARS'S CAR - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Veronica at 16 sits in the back seat of the family car and
watches while Keith pulls a staggering ABBIE MARS out of a
bar and into the car.

VERONICA (V.O.)

She became a basket case, this
drunken mess, during the Lilly
Caine investigation.

INT. VERONICA'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - MORNING

Veronica-at-16 awakens, finds a note in an envelope on the
night stand next to her bed.

VERONICA (V.O.)

She said good bye in a note that
she left by my bed. She didn't even
bother to wake me up.

Veronica, having perused the note, stands and heads to the bathroom, crumpling and tossing the NOTE into a WASTE BASKET.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Veronica sketches something in a NOTEBOOK. She looks like she's really concentrating on it.

REVEAL the sketch. It's of an ERECT PENIS that seems to stand on its SCROTUM BASE.

A GIGGLE alerts Veronica that others are watching. She looks up, notices a BOY and GIRL staring wide-eyed at her sketch. Veronica gives them a hard look, and they turn away quickly.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Veronica enters, discovers that Wallace has taken a seat by himself at her table. She considers for a moment, then goes over and wordlessly takes a seat. Wallace studies her, then...

WALLACE

You should hear some of the shit people say about you.

VERONICA

So what are you doing sitting here?

WALLACE

You sat next to me.

VERONICA

This is my table.

WALLACE

(slides hand across table)
And what a fine table it is.
(rapping it with knuckle)
What do you suppose this is made of? Oak?

VERONICA

(allows a smile, then...)
Seriously, if people are saying such awful things...

WALLACE

Well, I figure I've got a choice. I can hang with the motherfuckers who laughed and took pictures when I was taped to that flagpole, or I can hang with the chick who cut me down.

Veronica weighs the sincerity of Wallace's words. It's not easy for her to trust anyone. Finally...

VERONICA

So...you wanna get the P.C.H. Bike Club off your ass?

Off Wallace's intrigued and hopeful look.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL ART CLASSROOM - DAY

CORNY, a dreadlocked white senior in a ZIPPY THE PINHEAD T-shirt, looks up from a NOTEBOOK and begins laughing uncontrollably. Behind Corny, we notice rows of student-crafted pottery and the door to a KILN.

CORNY

(finally able to speak)
Oh my god! Oh my god! This is so twisted. I love it.

REVERSE ANGLE reveals Veronica and a confused Wallace.

VERONICA

So you can do it? We need it fast.

Wallace leans in, takes a look at whatever Corny is finding so damn funny. Wallace gives Veronica a "what's wrong with you" look which Veronica ignores.

CORNY

Hell, yeah. For you, anything. You know what would be cool? Veins. Purple. Thick.

VERONICA

Go to town.

Off Corny looking like he'll do just that.

INT. TINY DARK ROOM - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS that show....

Veronica expertly processing a roll of film.

Veronica choosing a negative to print.

Veronica printing from the negative.

Veronica moving an 8 X 10 print from tray to tray.

In the final tray, the image becomes clear. It's a CLOSE UP OF THE WOMAN exiting the Camelot with Jake Caine.

Veronica dries TWO PRINTS with a blow dryer. The prints appear to be identical. Veronica studies them, chooses one, crumples the other and throws it in a TRASH CAN.

INT. VERONICA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Veronica steps out into her bedroom, and we realize that she possibly the only teenaged girl in the world who has replaced her walk in closet with a DARK ROOM.

WIDE SHOT reveals that the room is neither the stuffed animal and boy band poster room of a certain breed of teen girls. Nor is it done in the black on black on black affectation of the Sylvia Plath set.

Veronica's room, rather, shows an almost complete lack of effort. There's a bed on which Backup rests, his tail wagging in anticipation. A wardrobe. A chest of drawers and a desk. The only bit of decoration in the room: the wall above her desk has been covered in CHEAPLY-FRAMED BLACK AND WHITE 8 X 10s much like the one she's holding in her hands.

As Veronica gathers materials from her desk, CAMERA REVEALS the subjects of these photos: all images of infidelity, hung like trophies, hung like reminders.

INT. MARS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Veronica is plowing through homework at the kitchen table when Keith enters. He looks like he hasn't slept since leaving the previous night, but he's in a great mood.

VERONICA

And?

KEITH

Who's your daddy?

VERONICA

I hate it when you say that.

KEITH

This is very important. Remember this: I used to be cool.

VERONICA

(dubious)

When?

KEITH

Seventy-seven. Cruising the hard streets of Omaha. Trans Am. Blue Oyster Cult in the eight track. Foxy, stacked blonde riding shotgun. Racing for pink slips.

(considering, joking)

No. Wait. I'm thinking of a Springsteen song. Scratch everything. I was never cool.

VERONICA

I don't know which bothers me more: "foxy" or "stacked." Where's my present?

Keith fishes a matchbox car out of his inside coat pocket, tosses it to Veronica. This feels like a ritual.

KEITH

Gran Torino. I believe that rounds out the classic Fords.

VERONICA

(genuinely excited)

The Starsky & Hutch car.

(then, considering)

How'd they ever stake out in this thing?

Keith ignores the rhetorical question. He slaps a check down on the table.

KEITH

Check it out. Twenty-five hundred dollars. Nailed our bail jumper a hundred yards from Me-hee-co. No sack dinners tonight. Tonight we eat like rock stars, assuming those rock stars aren't vegetarians.

Off Veronica's smile.

Music Cue: Blue Oyster Cult's "Don't Fear The Reaper."

EXT. MARS APARTMENT PATIO - NIGHT

Keith grills a couple of steaks on a Hibachi. He's grooving as he's flipping the meat, spicing it. Veronica watches her father; we can see why, when everyone else turned on Keith Mars, Veronica never did. She loves the man.

VERONICA

Jake Caine went to the Camelot last night, met some sweet young thing.

KEITH

Didn't I say something about you not getting involved in that?

VERONICA

I remember you saying to take Backup.

Backup, lying nearby, lifts his head at the mention of his name. Keith focuses on the meat for a pregnant beat. He has not given his daughter a normal life. Finally...

KEITH

You get pictures.

VERONICA

No money shot, but, yeah, a couple pretty good shots of the woman in question.

KEITH

(giving up, smiling)

Lemme see.

INT. VERONICA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Keith and Veronica arrive in the bedroom, Veronica takes the PHOTO off her desk and hands it to her father, betraying a hint of pride in her accomplishment. Keith moves into the light to take a look. Almost immediately, the good mood Keith's demonstrated all evening is gone. He looks as though he's seen a ghost.

KEITH

Stay away from Jake Caine. I don't want you doing anything else on this case. We're dropping it, anyway. I'll let his wife know.

Veronica is dumbfounded. "What just happened?" As Keith exits the room, Veronica starts to follow him.

VERONICA

We're dropping the case? What's wrong? Who is that?

INT. MARS APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Veronica follows her father.

VERONICA
Why can't you just tell me...

Keith stops and spins back toward Veronica. Then, sharply...

KEITH
Veronica. No. It's done. Over with.

Veronica is stung. Her father doesn't usually talk to her like this. She's left to stew in the hallway.

INT. MARS APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Two hours later, Keith Mars has fallen asleep on the living room couch. Veronica snaps a leash onto Backup's collar and heads out into the night.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - NIGHT

We're inside Veronica's car. CAMERA ONCE AGAIN PANS across the front seat, finding Veronica's usual stake-out equipment. Telephoto-lensed camera. Video camera. Coffee thermos. Backpack. Homework.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - We find that Veronica isn't tailing Jake Caine. Instead, we discover that Veronica is positioned outside of THE SEVENTH VEIL, the strip club that public defender Cliff McCormack mentioned to her in the first act.

REAR VIEW MIRROR P.O.V. - A SHERIFF'S CAR approaches.

Veronica scrunches down. As the sheriff's car passes and turns into the Seventh Veil parking lot, she sits back up, observes.

INT. VERONICA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Veronica gets home from her stakeout, takes her camera into...

INT. DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Veronica begins unrolling her film, but as she does, she notices the LEFTOVERS from her photo printing from the Jake Caine case. She pauses. She knows she should be done with this, but curiosity gets the better of her. She picks up a contact sheet and the PHOTO LOUPE.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - through the magnification provided by the LOUPE, we see a frame in which Jake and the young woman are parting company. The woman is getting in her car. We don't see anything particularly interesting in the photo, but Veronica does. She takes a negative strip out of its sleeve and turns off the lights.

INT. DARK ROOM - 20 MINUTES LATER

Veronica flips the lights back on and exits the dark room. CAMERA PANS to the photo bath, FINDS the print Veronica has just produced. It's not of Jake or the woman. It's a BLOWN UP PHOTO of the front of the woman's car. Her LICENSE PLATE is now easy to read.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Wallace stands next to the CARD CATALOG, attempting, not-terribly-successfully, to look nonchalant.

ANGLE ON VERONICA entering the library, moving purposefully. She heads straight to the card catalog.

VERONICA
C'mon. It's time.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Wallace struggles to keep pace with a speed-walking Veronica.

WALLACE
Hey, Flo-Jo, slow your ass down.

Veronica stops suddenly, holds her hand in a "stop" gesture.

VERONICA
Stop. Here.

Wallace rolls his eyes. This is not a girl in need of assertiveness training.

WALLACE
What are we...?

Veronica points down the hall, where we discover Logan arguing with Vice Principal Clemmons and Deputy Sacks. A smile blooms slowly on Veronica's face. She looks down at her watch and nods just before the SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

As students fill the hallways, Deputy Sacks begins leading a furious Logan down the hall by his arm.

CLOSE ON DEPUTY SACKS' HAND. In it is a huge, PENIS-SHAPED BONG. Corny has done his job.

Students begin putting two and two together. They become hysterical as they spot the COCK BONG and the asshole getting led away. Logan is humiliated. He doesn't stop his ad-libbed rant to Sacks until he spots a smirking Veronica observing the scene. Logan has an epiphany.

LOGAN

You! It was you. I know it was you.
You bitch. I'll get you for this.
This isn't over.

Veronica feigns a yawn as Clemmons attempts to quiet Logan.
Once Logan has been led away...

WALLACE

You're right. That was funny.

VERONICA

Meet me at my car after school.
Let's see if you've done your part.

EXT. COURTHOUSE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Angle on a well-maintained, modern building, lovingly landscaped. The sheriff's department cars and a sign lets us know where we are.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - DAY

Veronica is parked across the street. Wallace sits next to Veronica nervously eyeing the building.

WALLACE

We could get in a lot of trouble.

Veronica exhales in frustration.

VERONICA

Give it here.

WALLACE

Hold on. I'm gonna do it. I just thought one of us should state the obvious.

We now see what's in Wallace's hand. It's the RADIO CONTROLLER to his model airplane. He extends the antenna, takes a deep breath, and flips a switch.

INT. LARGE CLOSET - DAY

A PAN along a ROW OF SHELVES on which rest TVs, CAR STEREOs, DVD PLAYERS, etc. CAMERA EVENTUALLY finds the PENIS BONG which suddenly begins to belch smoke.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - DAY

Veronica and Wallace observe the station.

WALLACE

I wonder if it worked.

VERONICA

We'll know in a minute.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - LOBBY - DAY

A WOMAN with a shock of white hair cutting through her dyed-black beehive hair-do looks over at a closet with a small "Evidence" plaque on the door. Smoke has begun to billow out from under the door.

The woman jumps up from her desk, rushes over to the door, opens it. A wave of black smoke collapses on her. She SHRIEKS, then rushes over to the PHONE and dials 911.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - DAY

We're on Veronica and Wallace as we begin to hear sirens in the distance. Veronica looks over at Wallace, smiles.

VERONICA

It worked.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - LOBBY - DAY

A COUPLE FIREMEN enter the lobby. They move efficiently over to the evidence room.

WE'RE TIGHT on one of the firemen as he leans his head into the room. He moves over to a FIRE EXTINGUISHER on the wall, takes it down and enters the evidence room. We hear the SOUND OF THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER making short work of the "blaze."

INT. FIRE HOUSE - LOUNGE - DAY

A couple young firemen play pool at a table. One looks up from a shot, his eyes widen.

REVEAL Veronica entering the room, looking for someone.

YOUNG FIREMAN

Well, hello. What can I help you with?

Before Veronica can respond, an OLDER MAN'S VOICE responds.

FIREMAN BILL (O.C.)

She's seventeen, Wilson.

REVEAL Fireman Bill (late 30s.) He's the fireman we saw with the fire extinguisher. Now he's boiling pasta on a stove.

Wilson shrugs; Veronica's age doesn't matter much to him. Bill uses his finger to motion for Veronica to follow him.

INT. FIRE HOUSE - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Veronica follows Bill out into the garage. He turns and presents her with a big envelope.

FIREMAN BILL
Here's what you wanted.

VERONICA
Thanks, so much. This is going...

FIREMAN BILL
(cutting Veronica off, he
wasn't comfortable doing
this)
Your father's a good man. He was
great cop. I owed him. But we're
even now.

Veronica nods solemnly. She catches his drift. She takes the envelope and heads out of the station.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS - DAY

Veronica enters, takes a seat at her outer office desk. She pulls a spiral notebook out of her backpack. Inside, she finds the blown up photo of the license plate.

Veronica weighs her options. She glances at her father's office door. She doesn't disobey him often. Finally, she can stand it no longer. She picks up the phone and dials.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Carmel P.D.

VERONICA
(in harsh German accent)
Tony, it's Inga. Guess what? Our
computers is down again.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Inga! Upgrade already. This must be
the tenth time.

VERONICA
You preach to the choir, Tony.
Listen, we had a hit and run last
night. Victim got the plates, and
we need someone to run them.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

No prob. Hit me.

VERONICA

Four. V. G. Zero. Zero. Zero.

Veronica waits as we hear the FAINT SOUNDS of Tony TAPPING AWAY ON A COMPUTER. Then...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Jesus Christ.

VERONICA

(suddenly very curious)

Ja? Vat is it?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

That car is registered to one Abel Koontz.

QUICK POP - a CLOSE UP of Koontz's face as he's being taken into custody by Don Lamb.

Veronica inhales sharply at the news

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Must be a heck of a trick. Hit and run at night, back in his death row cell by light of day...

Off Veronica's astonishment.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. PRISON VISITOR CHECK-IN - DAY

CLOSE ON A STANFORD UNIVERSITY ID that features a photo of Veronica Mars. The name on the card is SANDY WILLIAMS.

A humorless, uniformed FEMALE PRISON GUARD scrutinizes the card, then looks up at Veronica.

PRISON GUARD
The death penalty, huh?

VERONICA
It's my senior project. Koontz will be the twelfth I've interviewed.

PRISON GUARD
I'll see what I can do.

Veronica pulls a fax out of a notebook.

VERONICA
Uh. I received this fax. My request for interview was granted by...

PRISON GUARD
I'll see what I can do.

Veronica can do little more than nod. She turns and heads to the only available chair in the crowded waiting room.

INT. PRISON VISITOR CHECK-IN - LATER

Veronica is bored out of her skull. She is reading one of the available copies of Time Magazine. The cover story concerns the death of Princess Di. A voice from the counter.

PRISON GUARD (O.S.)
Williams.

Veronica looks up.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - DAY

The prison guard walks Veronica down a drab hallway.

PRISON GUARD
Fifteen minutes is the max time. Do that button on your blouse. No sense getting him riled up.

Veronica looks down at her blouse. She isn't showing the least amount of skin, but there is one undone button right at her neck. She buttons it rather than argue.

INT. PRISON VISITATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On Veronica's side of the room, there is a BANK OF SIX PHONES. VISITORS we may recognize from the lobby shot are on this side of the room. Prisoners, presumably, are on the other, but they aren't visible, yet, as the visiting stations are separated by PARTITIONS.

PRISON GUARD

All the way down. Number six.

Veronica nods. She makes her way to the far end of the room, glancing at the animated conversations between frightening, ORANGE-JUMPSUITED PRISONERS and their guests. When she makes it to her CUBICLE, Koontz is already seated across from her.

Koontz's penetrating stare makes Veronica feel immediately naked. She reflexively reaches up, makes sure that her top button is indeed done. She picks up the available PHONE.

VERONICA

Hello. My name is Sandy Williams. As my letter stated, I'm a sociology student at Stanford. I'm working on a project...

KOONTZ

You look just like your mom, Veronica Mars.

Veronica is stunned. Koontz enjoys seeing her flustered.

KOONTZ (CONT'D)

So, to what do I owe the pleasure?

VERONICA

How do you know who I am?

KOONTZ

Like I said, you look just like your mother.

VERONICA

How do you know my mother?

KOONTZ

Tell me why you're here, Veronica.

VERONICA

Research.

Koontz stares at Veronica for a beat. Registers mild disappointment, then hangs up the phone and stands. Veronica shouts into the phone and smacks the glass with her palm.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

No! Wait!

A GUARD on the far end of the room, takes note of the exchange, but doesn't move any closer. Koontz sits and picks the phone back up.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you.

(off Koontz's silence)

I saw Jake Caine meet a woman at this motel in Playa. She left in a white Honda Accord. Your Honda Accord.

Koontz considers for a beat, then laughs, unnerving Veronica

KOONTZ

I see. I see. You discovered some "mysterious" connection between Jake Caine and me, and you so want to believe that misguided father of yours is...was...right...right about something...anything...that you've come here for confirmation. I wish I could do that. I do. But I can't. Your father was a patsy. He was wrong about everything, and he nearly did the impossible...turn Jake Caine into a sympathetic character.

VERONICA

(growing angry)

Who was in your car? What was she doing with Jake Caine?

KOONTZ

Do your homework. Visiting me... that was step C. You completely skipped step B.

VERONICA

Why was your car...

KOONTZ

That was my daughter. She went to beg Caine to spare my life. He's close with the governor, you know. Caine would've said no, but the sadistic fuck likes to take the meeting, because he knows that it's sweeter if he can get her hopes up. I've told her not to try, but what can I say? She loves her father. Daughters tend to.

VERONICA

(disbelief)

You. You're calling Jake Caine sadistic?

KOONTZ

He built his empire with my brain, then dumped me, destroyed my reputation. The ideas, the code, the vision that built that company ...mine. That's my house he's living in. That's my yacht he sails. My private plane he flies. Hell, by all rights, I should be your father.

It takes Veronica a long beat to realize what Koontz is implying.

VERONICA

What's that supposed to mean?

KOONTZ

Oh, come on, Veronica. An inquisitive girl like you? Anyone ever tell you you look like your father? Ever? Think about it...

(off her silence, smiling)

No. Of course not. Keith Mars, he's a mid-Western rube. All forehead and teeth. But could you be the product of the Peninsula West High 1978 king and queen of the prom? The bold and the beautiful? That I can see. That makes sense. You want to know how I know who you are, Veronica? Back in '86, when we were just getting Caine software off the ground, I saw a lot of your mother.

(MORE)

KOONTZ (CONT'D)

She'd come over, paper bags in hand, draw the blinds in Jake's office and take long lunches. Very long lunches, indeed. Now, I'm not trained as a mathematician, but, when were you born, Veronica?

As Koontz speaks, Veronica's jaw is clenched so tight, it looks like the muscle might burst through her cheek. It's taking every bit of will power not to break down. She breathes loudly through her nose before opening her mouth.

VERONICA

You know, I'm no mathematician either, and here's a word problem I haven't been able to solve. It takes, what, ten, twenty minutes to beg for a man's life. What would a man and a woman do in a cheap motel room for the other three hours they spent together? You're right. Jake Caine must be a sadist.

Koontz begins to seethe. He looks like he might explode, but Veronica finishes what she had to say.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

Lilly Caine was a friend of mine. I hope you suffer as much as she did.

Veronica slams the phone down on its hook, turns and doesn't look back as she exits the visitors' room.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Veronica drives home from the prison, cruising along the P.C.H., weeping openly. Koontz has gotten to her. Her world has been turned upside down, and she can't yet process everything that's been thrown at her.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Veronica's car pulls into the parking lot.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Veronica puts the car in park and shuts off the engine. She wipes her eyes, steels herself. She gazes out at the park grounds.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - Wallace flies his radio-controlled plane around the perimeter of the park.

The sight of Wallace flying the plane actually allows Veronica a slight smile. She picks up a PADDED ENVELOPE from the passenger seat and gets out of the car.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

As Veronica makes her way across the park, Wallace lands the plane at her feet and comes jogging over. Wallace notices Veronica's RED EYES.

WALLACE

Are you okay? You don't look so good.

VERONICA

Thanks.

WALLACE

Seriously. Is everything cool?

VERONICA

(changing topics)

I'm fine. Got a present for you.

Wallace looks inside, smiles.

WALLACE

Man, the way people talk about you...

(off her look, defensive)

I'm just saying...it's surprising you'd help me out.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON VERONICA'S FACE, and we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - FLASHBACK - DAY

...the face of 16-year-old Veronica as she trudges up the sidewalk to the sheriff's department. She is a mess. The TORN STRAP on her WHITE PARTY DRESS, her MATTED HAIR let us know it is the morning she woke up in Monica Rivers pool house.

INT. PLAYA DEL COSTA SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Veronica walks up to the counter. The Bride of Frankenstein coifed woman we met earlier sees her, bolts up from her desk and approaches the counter. When she speaks, we understand the fake accent Veronica used earlier.

INGA

Veronica! Sweetie! Vat happened to you?

VERONICA

(robotic, almost in shock)
I need to report a crime.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The DISTRICT ATTORNEY (40, a white, straight-arrow, get-tough-on-crime Republican) sorts through FOLDERS and BURGER KING DETRITUS on his desk. He addresses Cliff McCormack. Despite their very different personas, the two men have an easy rapport. McCormack finishes a bite of burger and speaks.

MCCORMACK

Who's next?

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Mejia, Hector. Nguyen, Phuong.
Robbing a convenience store. Third strikes. How does five years sound?

MCCORMACK

(finding his file)

"Robbing a convenience store?" You mean a grab and go of a few 40s. C'mon Javere, you can do better.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Gang kids. We want them off the streets. We got tape. You don't want this going to trial.

McCormack considers. Five years is too long for this crime.

MCCORMACK

Let me see the tape.

The district attorney shrugs. No sweat. He pulls a TAPE off a shelf, sticks it in his VCR and hits play.

INT. COURTHOUSE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - FLASHBACK - DAY

We return to Veronica in her torn party dress. She's been waiting a long time. Inga looks up, gives Veronica a sympathetic look.

INGA

I'm sure da sheriff will be vit you any minute. Eets been very busy today.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - she can see down a long hallway. Don Lamb is at the end of it, joking with deputy's, eating a BAGEL.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

ANGLE ON the identical wide-eyed stares of the district attorney and Cliff McCormack. Whatever they've just watched on tape has dumbfounded them.

MCCORMACK

Can we see that again?

INT. COURTHOUSE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - FLASHBACK - DAY

Don Lamb finally takes a few steps out into a hallway and motions for Veronica to come back.

SHERIFF LAMB

Mars....

INT. COURTHOUSE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - FLASHBACK - DAY

TIGHT on Lamb's maddening, inappropriate smile.

SHERIFF LAMB

So let me get this straight... You say you were raped, but you don't remember anything. You're not bruised. No one was with you when you woke up.

Angle on a humiliated Veronica sitting across from Lamb.

SHERIFF LAMB (CONT'D)

Hell, that just sounds like my kind of party. Anyone in particular you want arrested, or should I just pick out the sons of all the most important families in this town? Would that make your family happy? Isn't that what you want? Well, I won't do it. I don't play that game.

Veronica doesn't make a sound, but a single tear runs down her cheek. Lamb notices.

SHERIFF LAMB (CONT'D)

Oh, well, look at this. She cries. Tell you what, Veronica Mars. Why don't you grow up. Get some balls.

Angle on Veronica. We can almost see her hardening. Lamb has pissed off the wrong person.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

We return to Veronica's present-day conversation with Wallace.

VERONICA

I had my own reasons for helping you out. Trust me.

WALLACE

Oh, no. Don't think you're getting away with that. That act might play with the public. But underneath that angry young woman shell, I know there's a slightly-less-angry young woman wanting to bake me something. You're a marshmallow, Veronica Mars. A cupcake.

As is becoming habit, Veronica ends up smiling around Wallace despite her best intentions.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, BULLPEN - DAY

Don Lamb, now sporting grayer, shorter hair, stands in the exact place Veronica saw him more than a year ago. He's eating another bagel, gabbing with his staff when the district attorney appears.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Don, you should come see this.

INT. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

The district attorney leads Don Lamb into his office. Lamb notices Cliff McCormack wearing a slight smirk. The two men don't speak as they don't care much for each other. The D.A. picks up a remote from his desk as he speaks.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

This is supposed to be the Mejia, Nguyen convenience store tape.

ANGLE ON THE TELEVISION SCREEN where handheld digital video pans off of the SEVENTH VEIL sign down to a slightly fuzzy, dark shot of a UNIFORMED MAN leading a LOVELY, YOUNG LADY into the front seat of his squad car. The two remain seated in the car for a moment, then the woman's head disappears into the officer's lap.

ANGLE ON Don Lamb beginning to boil with rage.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY (CONT'D)
(intentionally stating the
obvious)

I'm not sure this gives us quite
enough for a conviction. At least
not to convict Mejia.

MCCORMACK

Is this a bad time to ask for a
dismissal in the Brandy Diamonds
case?

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Veronica flies Wallace's plane. She is staring up in the air.

VERONICA

Okay, how do I make it loop-the-
loop?

But Wallace isn't staring up at the sky. The sound of LIMP
BIZKET from a distant car stereo has captured his attention.

WALLACE

Uh, Veronica.

VERONICA

Yeah?

WALLACE

Your car.

Veronica turns her attention from the sky to the parking lot.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - Logan and the same buddies we saw with
him earlier have used someone's EXCURSION to block in
Veronica's car. The boys are lounging on Veronica's car.

Veronica hands Wallace the radio controller and heads toward
the 09ers. Wallace begins to frantically land the plane. In
the b.g. of the shot, we see him complete the task, grab his
BACKPACK, then jog to catch up with Veronica.

Veronica notices that Logan has a TIRE IRON in his hand.

LOGAN

Veronica Mars. You know what your
little joke cost me?

VERONICA

Well, I'm pretty sure you won't be getting your cock bong back.

Logan leans up and uses the tire iron to smash out Veronica's headlight. Veronica doesn't flinch, doesn't react.

LOGAN

Wrong answer. Want to guess again?

VERONICA

Let's see. It'll cost you...? Hours of sexual gratification?

Logan shakes his head, then furiously smashes out Veronica's other light.

LOGAN

No. Wrong again.

Angle on Wallace, again staring in disbelief as Veronica refuses to be intimidated. Then, he notices something else beyond the 09ers, and he begins to smile.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

My car. My dad took away my car for a month.

VERONICA

(feigning absurd concern)

Oh, my god, Logan. Wow. Dude. Had I known. Are you all right?

One of the random 09ers, let's call him STEVE, notices the same thing Wallace has noticed. He attempts to get Logan's attention as well.

STEVE

Uh, Logan...

But Logan is too wrapped up in his conversation with Veronica to stop. He digs the blade of the tire iron into the paint of Veronica's hood and carves a "C" then a "U" in her hood until the music stops suddenly.

Everyone turns around suddenly to discover the entire P.C.H. Bike Club -- including HECTOR and PHUONG -- surrounding the group. Weevil is already off his chopper. He wades confidently into the fray. He glances down at Logan's handiwork.

WEEVIL

Yeah, man, I think she's cute, too.

Weevil stands for a pregnant moment, nose-to-nose with Logan. Logan doesn't back down or look away, but he doesn't resist when Weevil takes the tire iron from his hand.

Jesus, who has boarded the EXCURSION to turn off the music, leans out of the driver's door and cuts through the tension by holding up a CD.

JESUS

Hey, is this O-Town any good? My little sister likes it, but she likes ponies and juice boxes.

None of the 09ers respond. As Weevil takes the tire iron and makes his way over to the Excursion, Wallace leans close to Veronica, whispers.

WALLACE

I suddenly feel like I'm in a scene from The Outsiders.

VERONICA

Be cool, Soda Pop.

WALLACE

Weevil thinks you're cute.

VERONICA

I heard.

Steve realizes what's about to happen; he starts to freak.

STEVE

Uh, that's not Logan's car. That's my mom's.

Weevil smirks just before he swings the tire iron and takes out both headlights in the Excursion.

WEEVIL

Just tell your mom you and your four friends were out picking on a girl when a bunch of bikers stopped and scared you away. I'll bet she understands.

(then to all of them)

You can go now. Get out of here.

Logan gives Veronica a look of contempt before starting to head to the car. Weevil notices.

WEEVIL (CONT'D)

Except you. You apologize.

LOGAN

Fuck you.

Wrong answer. Weevil levels Logan with a right hook. Logan struggles to stand.

WEEVIL

I said to say you're sorry.

Logan makes it all the way up, looks right into Weevil's eye.

LOGAN

And I said, "Fuck y..."

Weevil drops Logan again. Weevil looks over at his boys gives them a smile and shrug that betrays a little bit of admiration for Logan. Logan, gushing blood from his nose, begins to pick himself up again.

WEEVIL

Here we go again. Ready to tell Miss Mars how sorry you...

VERONICA

Let him go. I don't want his apology.

WEEVIL

You sure? I could do this for a while.

Veronica nods. Logan makes it to his feet, meets both Veronica's and Weevil's gazes straight on before climbing into the shotgun seat of the Excursion. The 09ers peel out of the lot, leaving Veronica and Wallace with the bikers.

WEEVIL (CONT'D)

They came in this afternoon and just let Phuong and Hector go. No explanation. Just said charges had been dropped.

VERONICA

That's fortunate.

Weevil realizes he'll get no more info. He nods at her car.

WEEVIL

My uncle has a body shop out on the highway. You come in, and I'll make sure your body gets the full service treatment.

VERONICA
Okay, now you apologize.

WEEVIL
(laughs, but...)
Fine. Was that too dirty? In the future...

VERONICA
Not to me, Gaywad. To Wallace.

WEEVIL
(you gotta be kidding)
Shit.

VERONICA
(genuinely angry)
You duct taped him to a flag pole!
You do that to me, and you won't see next week.

WEEVIL
I have no doubt.

Weevil doesn't apologize, doesn't even look at Wallace.

VERONICA
Fine. Wallace has the only copy of the Sac-N-Pac video tape. Wallace, let's go decide what to do with it.

Veronica gets in her car. Wallace moves toward the passenger door, but Weevil stops him and musters some sincerity.

WEEVIL
Hold on. Look, man. Sorry about taping you to the flag pole.

WALLACE
All right.

WEEVIL
Can I get that tape from you, now?

WALLACE
No.

Wallace gets in the car. He's got the P.C.H. Bike Club right where he wants them. Veronica smiles, starts the car, and pulls out of the lot. No one makes a move to stop her.

Off Weevil watching Veronica disappearing from view.

INT. VERONICA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Veronica drives through town.

VERONICA (V.O.)

It's Abel Koontz's fault that I've done three loops around the Public Storage facility.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - The "Public Storage" sign. Rows of hundreds of little storage facilities.

INT. PUBLIC STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Total blackness.

VERONICA (V.O.)

When Mom moved out, she didn't take much.

Light floods the 5' X 10' room as the garage door is rolled up. Veronica's silhouette fills the space.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She was in too big of a hurry.

DISSOLVE TO:

Veronica sifting through BOXES.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

To escape the humiliation. To leave us behind.

DISSOLVE TO:

Veronica rifling through DRAWERS of a stored DRESSER.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

So what would it mean, anyway?

DISSOLVE TO:

Veronica pushing FURNITURE, discovering more BOXES.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If Mom dated Jake Caine. They stayed friends. So what?

DISSOLVE TO:

TV

Veronica opens a BOX. Inside we find the MEMORABILIA from a mid-70s teenaged girl's adolescence: DRIED CORSAGES, a Peninsula West High CHEERLEADING LETTER, a strip of PHOTO BOOTH PICTURES of two teenaged girls. Most importantly -- Abbie's HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOKS.

Veronica moves to a CHAIR in the light and flips open the book. She refers to the INDEX, then flips to a page in the book. We see a PRETTY GIRL PAINTING A SPIRIT SIGN. This means nothing. Veronica refers back again, flips to another page.

The PHOTOS OF STUDENTS IN FORMAL WEAR indicate that we're on the PROM SPREAD. Veronica flips one page forward and discovers a FULL PAGE SHOT OF THE KING AND QUEEN of the prom, slow dancing, lips nearly touching. Two young people very much in love.

Veronica stares at the caption: "Seniors Abbie Reynolds and Jake Caine, king and queen of the prom, take the night's theme, 'Love is Thicker Than Water' to extremes."

PUSH IN on Veronica's face. Her confidence is wavering. There may be too much truth in what Abel Koontz told her.

Veronica flips to the back of the book where everyone has signed her mother's yearbook. Veronica scans through the various epitaphs until she spots the one from Jake Caine.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Abbie. I made a mistake, but I'll always love you. Some day we'll be together again. Jake."

(then, her cynical world-view winning out)

Or maybe Jake and Abbie were together again. And maybe the woman's husband found out. And maybe that blinded him.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS - DAY

Veronica kneels in front of her father's SAFE. She is attempting to open it.

VERONICA (V.O.)

It's the rare individual who chooses meaningless numbers as a combination -- my father taught me that.

(she tries and fails to open safe, begins dialing again)

(MORE)

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Nine times out of ten an individual will select numbers that mean something. Birthdays.

Anniversaries. Addresses. My dad told me that five times out of ten, those little padlocks on suitcases remain set to zero zero zero.

(she tries and fails to open safe, dials again)

My father is smarter than that.

CUT TO:

Veronica now searching Keith's desk.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You wouldn't believe the number of people who keep the combination written down on a Post-it, or tacked to a bulletin board. Or written on the first page of their page-a-day calendar.

Veronica flips to said page. Nothing. Off her disappointment.

CUT TO:

Later. The LONG SHADOWS in the office indicate that the sun is beginning to set. Veronica is slouched down on the floor, across from the safe, staring at it. She's had no luck.

Veronica looks up, notices that a beam of sunlight has just struck the AQUARIUM that rests on top of the safe. In the aquarium, a PLASTIC DIVER stands on the bottom next to a PLASTIC SHIPWRECK. A SOLITARY GOLDFISH swims around the bowl. Veronica has an epiphany. She crawls hurriedly across to the safe and begins dialing in a combination.

VERONICA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I had one more set of numbers I could try...11, 29, 01. The day Lilly Caine disappeared. The day our lives changed for good.

(on second thought)

Not for good. Forever.

The safe opens much to Veronica's astonishment. Veronica stares into the safe for a moment before reaching in and extracting a BULGING FOLDER. Veronica sets it on her father's desk and opens it. She begins spreading out its contents. We recognize it quickly as the CASE FILE OF LILLY CAINE.

Included in the file is the WADDED UP PHOTO OF ABEL KOONTZ'S DAUGHTER at the Camelot with Jake Caine.

Straight out of Veronica's trash can. It's clear that, for Keith Mars, the Lilly Caine case is far from closed.

Veronica's mind is already blown when she looks back in the safe and discovers something else. She reaches in and pulls out a STACK OF POSTCARDS.

CLOSE ON THE POSTCARDS as Veronica flips through them. At first CAMERA SHOOTS UP at Veronica and we see that they have come from all across America: The Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore, A Mississippi River Gambling Boat, etc.

VERONICA'S P.O.V. - the postcards are all addressed to Veronica. They are all signed, "Love, Mom." The snippets of postcards we see are general messages of affection. "Thinking of you." "Miss you." "Saw this play you would've loved."

Veronica has a tear in her eye when she hears the BELL at the bottom of the stairs. As quickly as she can, Veronica returns the file folder and the postcards back to the safe before rushing to the outer office.

CAMERA LINGERS on a postcard that has fallen off the desk.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS, OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Veronica lands in her seat just as the door to the office opens. Keith Mars is rifling through mail as he enters.

KEITH

Hey, let's close early. I'm gonna check my e-mail, then, let's get home in time to catch South Park.

Veronica nods coolly at her father, who furrows his brow, but continues into his office.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Keith plops down in his chair. He takes his computer out of screensaver mode and begins to check e-mail.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS, OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

At her desk, Veronica is deep in thought. She begins rolling the STARSKY & HUTCH MATCHBOX CAR lazily across the desktop. She pauses. Then she pushes the car into a line of 30 matchbox cars, all parked at the edge of her desk.

Veronica eyes the line of cars, a reminder of every trip Keith has taken and every time he has returned to her. Her expression softens.

INT. MARS INVESTIGATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Keith closes an e-mail. Something on the floor catches his eye.

ANGLE ON THE DROPPED POSTCARD

Keith looks suddenly ashen. He picks up the postcard, sets it on his desk and contemplates.

Veronica suddenly appears in the doorway, startling Keith. Her expression and her tone are sunny.

VERONICA

Let's go. Let's go. L.E.T.S.G.O.
C'mon, Pokey. We're burning
daylight.

(clapping her hands twice
quickly -- chop, chop)

Got things to do. South Park to
watch. A dog to feed.

Keith knows they may have to deal with the postcard issue at some point. But it will be later. Keith smiles, puts on a shoulder holster followed by his rumpled sports coat. He puts his arm around Veronica's shoulder as they head out.

CAMERA STAYS ON THEIR BACK AS THEY EXIT.

KEITH

I've got some bad news for you.

VERONICA

What's that?

KEITH

I heard in this one Kenny dies.

VERONICA

Those bastards.

FADE TO BLACK.