

6 **VENUS**

“I didn’t do it!”

7 **MARK**

My files were fat with facts on the voluptuous Venus Velvet: a veritable vamp, twice a two-timer, and once a wandering widow. I stepped away, sideways, and said:

“Pocket your pistol, Pretty One. I doubt you did the deed. That hole in his corduroy's too colossal for your caliber.”

8 **VENUS**

“Help me, Handsome.”

9 **MARK**

She lowered the Luger.

10 **VENUS**

“Eddie said he had a paparazzi’s prize picture here at home. It’d crush my career if the paper published a print.”

11 **MARK**

“Perhaps.”

12 **VENUS**

“Help me hunt, please. I’m pleading.”

13 **MARK**

Venus – vain as ever! Her career'd crashed a year ago August. But *Eye Spy* was famous for photo-features of flashy, fleshy femmes *in flagrante*.

“Why would they want one, anyway?”

14 **VENUS**

“Skin still sells, Sweetie.”

15

MARK

“Forget it. A frame of your flesh is old--*No!* You're not too old to ogle. Belay that barrel, Baby! You'd be a pleasing pinup. *Whew!* What I mean is, Venus, you're old *news* now. *Eye Spy* ran riot with various visions of Venus Velvet last Valentine's Day.”

16

VENUS

“That was then. Posed party pictures. Pure publicity pap.”

17

MARK

“Sure, Sugar, so forget the photo.”

18

VENUS

“Unh unh. Gotta get it. Secure the sneaky snapshot, and I'll give you gossip.”

19

MARK

Learning the lady's lurid low-down might mean money in lean months, so I lingered. She whispered wise, naming a nabob never known to be naughty. Persuaded, I promised, politely. We searched study and studio, fingering files. Checked kitchen cabinets, clothes closets, pantries and porches, terraces, too, but found no photo. I phoned the fuzz.

20

BOB

“Bob Best, Homicide, here.”

21

MARK

“Bob, old buddy. It's Mark Markheim. Come collect a corpse. High-tail it here, too.”

I added the address.

22

VENUS

“Can we cut out, quickly?”

23 **MARK**

“*Vamanos, Venus.*”

24 **SFX – Music [transition]**

25 **MARK**

I drove her directly home, hurriedly, bypassing the black-and-whites that swept up Sepulveda, sirens singing. Venus Velvet made money in movies. Her Hollywood home hung off a huge hilltop, vistas visible at every eave. But that evening, there was rubble in her rec room, the remains of a ruckus: ragged rugs, battered bric-a-brac, a broken breakfront, and shattered shards of two TVs.

26 **VENUS**

“Look left, Lover!”

27 **MARK**

I peered where she pointed. Propped up on the piano top: a calling card from her attentive agent, Arnie Angleman.

“CAME CALLING – ENCOUNTERED ED – HATE HIM! – FIST FIGHT – GETTING GUN – HE’S HISTORY!” was written on the back with a Bic.

28 **VENUS**

“Madman! Murderer! Must be!”

29 **MARK**

“Arnie’s an animal among agents. A lion of a leech. A leading light to the low-life lemmings of Lotus Land. ‘Fraid he’s no fair fighter.”

30 **VENUS**

“See, Sugar – I’m shivering!”

31

MARK

Found a phone under punctured pillows.

“Call him, Cutie. Make him meet us. My outer office, twelve tonight.”

Then we two tarried. She seemed sumptuously sexy, suddenly, sidling up softly, sweetly. I sighed, and huffed a “Hubba-hubba.”

32

VENUS

“Wait.”

33

MARK

“What d'you want?”

34

VENUS

“Can't you cut those constant consonants? Darn it, Darling! You're making *me* do double-whammies with my dental-work.”

35

MARK

“Honey”

36

VENUS

“Huh?”

37

MARK

“Hush.”

38

SFX – *Music [transition]*

39

MARK

After a while we went to my office, where wide windows overlook LaBrea, the town's bleak blacktopped tarpit of prehistoric predators. (Appropriate, eh?)

40 **VENUS**

“Are you armed? Arnie's angry.”

41 **MARK**

“Wouldn't worry, Wonderful. He'll hang himself.”

Arnie Angleman came in, in a khaki jacket, chewing a cheap cheroot, unlit. Said —

42 **ARNIE**

“Can't quite quit.”

43 **MARK**

— and sat.

44 **VENUS**

“Arnie, it's awful. My recently renovated rec room's ruined!”

45 **ARNIE**

“Aw, again? You're partial to parties where people propel punches, Pet. But why wangle me downtown for a midnight meeting at Markheim's? Publicity possibilities, perhaps?”

46 **MARK**

“Say, sir, did you sneak a snapshot from Eddie Edsel, earlier?”

47 **ARNIE**

“No. But *she* knows the nosy newshound. He around? Great guy!”

48 **VENUS**

“Eddie's dead.”

49 **ARNIE**

“No loss! Never liked the lousy loser. While we're here, however, let's make it a meeting. View *this*, Venus: a copy of a contract. Sign, Sweetheart—“

50 **MARK**

He reached around his rump.

51 **VENUS**

“Look out, Lover!”

52 **SFX – 6 gunshots**

53 **MARK**

One shot slit my sleeve. Arnie dropped down on his duff.
She stood, shuddering, her Luger looming large in her hand.

54 **VENUS**

“Had to! Had to! Before he blew us to bits!”

55 **MARK**

“Unh unh. Before he blabbed.”

56 **VENUS**

“But—”

57 **MARK**

“Blurped. ‘Bout you two – you and Eddie – goin’ steady, on
the Q.T., till you quarreled, Queenie.”

58 **VENUS**

“The photo –”

59 **MARK**

[Wolf-whistle] “Phony!”

When I wolf-whistled, cops – cached in corners – crashed in.
Big Bob Best karate-chopped her cannon to the carpet.

60 **BOB**

“Mark my man!”

61 **MARK**

He hastened to handshake.

62 **BOB**

“Thanks for the ‘high-tail’ tip.”

63 **VENUS**

“What? What?”

64 **BOB**

“Mark, my man, told me to tail you two, today!”

65 **MARK**

“Previously partners in police patrol, my ‘high-tail’ was coded communication.”

66 **BOB**

“Kept the Cutie in the cold!”

67 **VENUS**

“But earlier, at Eddie’s, you believed me, Baby.”

68 **MARK**

“I lied. You had a gun and a grin, Girlie.”

69 **VENUS**

Grrrr!

70 **BOB**

“Bad break for you, Beautiful.”

71 **MARK**

But Bob’ll get a bonus for a quick collar. I’ll e-mail an eyewitness eyeful to *Eye Spy* and earn a fast fee.

72

ARNIE

“Victory, Venus! Bad publicity’s better press than no news, now. Could kick-start a come-back.”

73

BOB

“Aha! Arnie’s alive!”

74

ARNIE

“Shirt shredded, sure, but pump un-peppered, Pal. Kevlar under khaki.”

75

MARK

“And Arnie takes away a tale to tickle the twerps on Tabloid TV. I’ll brief you, Bob: *She* shot Eddie Edsel. Venus’s version, aimed at Arnie, was a foul frame.”

76

VENUS

“How in hell’d you make me out a murderess, Mark?”

77

MARK

“Truth to tell, Temptress, in Tinsel Town – and absent all alliteration, as asked – when your career's in the tank, your agent never comes to your house!”

SFX – Music [under ANNCR./credits]