

“A Girl’s Best Friend”

Cast of Characters:

Ruby Starr
Detective (ret.) Vincent “Hatch” Hatchersen
Lenny Mills
Two-Tone Tony Malone
Ezekiel Rabin
Veronica Lake
SSG Myrl Schamus
Victoria Scott/Libby Slaverson

Setting:

Aja’s, a quiet upscale restaurant & bar
Los Angeles, CA, 1944

Scene 1: Upstairs bar – Hatch talks to Lenny the bartender
Scene 2: Upstairs bar – Tony hits up Zeke for money he owes
Scene 3: Upstairs bar – Hatch approaches Tony for information
Scene 4: Upstairs bar – Libby & Myrl talk alone
Scene 5: Upstairs bar – Myrl – Libby//Victoria – Zeke
Scene 6: Upstairs bar – Myrl accosts Zeke, re: Victoria/Libby
Scene 7: Upstairs bar – Hatch questions Libby/Victoria
Scene 8: Downstairs – Hatch brings all of the suspects together

Act 1
Scene 1

At rise: Your typical 1940’s bar scene. A jazz band is playing in the far right corner of the bar. Various patrons nurse drinks around the bar. A quiet man in a trenchcoat sits on the right-hand side of the bar, slowly emptying his glass while talking to one of the bartenders. The band finishes their number and a sultry singer in a long red dress sidles up to the front. She begins singing a hot number, drawing everyone’s attention. The man in the trenchcoat starts absentmindedly playing with his now empty glass. When the song ends, the bartender comes around to the front of the bar, bringing two drinks, one of which he hands the man in the trenchcoat, snatching the empty glass out of his hand. The bartender sets the glass to the back edge of the bar, and turns back to the man in the trenchcoat.

Hatch Boy she’s got a set of pipes on her, don’t she?

Lenny Yeah, and that ain’t all...

Lenny throws back his drink.

Hatch You started drinking on the job now?

Lenny Hey, I’m on break; what’s it ta you? Anyways, like I was saying, this dame was up here last night. She’s around here all the time, but

usually stays downstairs, right? She's some movie star wannabe or something like that. But anyways, she's upset cause her producer boyfriend and her got in a fight, so she comes up here for company, right? Thing is, most of the folks around here, they know better, ya know? So she ends up talking to me most of the night, and she's showing me this new purse her boyfriend got her. It's got this really cool little secret pouch in the side, right? So you can hide stuff in there and nobody'd know. So, like, I figured this was information you could use, you know, being a detective and all...

Hatch How many times I got to say this, Lenny? I am not a detective anymore. 23 years of being a gumshoe is enough for any guy.

Lenny Aw, c'mon Hatch. You were the best. Why else woulda that Chandler guy write so many stories about you? I mean, sure he changed the names, but we all know who he was really writing about – especially after he spent all that time in here interviewing you and all.

Hatch Lenny. Chandler writes fiction. No one lives a life as exciting as he writes. Besides, that was ten years ago.

Lenny Still, I thought you might be interested in this purse thing, in case it ever came up in a case or

something. You know, someone steals something and no-one can find it, and it's in this dame's purse, in this secret compartment.

Hatch (*giving up*) Yeah, okay, Lenny. If that situation ever comes up, I'll keep it in mind.

Lenny Yeah, that'd be great. Ya know, I always wanted to be a detective, like Sherlock Holmes, or maybe that Watson guy. Couldn't pass the physical, though. Still, maybe sometime I'll help you solve a case. Now wouldn't that be cool? You and me, Hatch, now that'd be a story they'd write down. Maybe even make a movie or radio show about us...

Hatch What's up, Lenny? You're acting awfully peculiar tonight. I can't remember the last time you talked my ear off.

Lenny Oh, it's nothing. I just got a meeting later that I'm a little nervous about. I'll be okay. It's just a meeting. Hey, speaking of, did you hear about the show the manager's putting on tonight? He got Dufrane Jewelers to let him borrow a necklace worth like 5-G's, and he got Veronica Lake – now there's a hot little number – ta wear the ice around the restaurant and bar. I guess he figures, if he's got this dame and the stones, people come to see it and blow a wad or two of dough. Lord knows this place could use it. He

even got a bunch of them producer guys to come out with their movie star girlfriends and show off their rocks. It was all in the paper.

Hatch Lenny, you know I don't read the paper. Reminds me too much of LA.

Lenny But you live in LA...

Hatch That doesn't mean I have to like it.

Hatch spins on his stool to the right, surveying the room, studying the faces in the room. Lenny goes back behind the bar and fiddles with something in the back. Suddenly, the lights flicker and go out, then come back up a second later. The phone behind the bar rings, and Lenny goes to answer it. He speaks for a moment, then turns to Hatch, just as he spins his stool back to its original position.

Lenny Hatch, I think you oughta hear this. The boss says when the lights went out, that necklace he borrowed; it was yanked right offa Veronica Lake's neck and they need somebody to take a look around and help 'em figger out who did it.

Hatch Lenny, I told you, I'm not a (*Lenny shoves the phone to Hatch's ear*) Yes. Yes, I used to be with the L-A, yes, yes, No, I'm not really an invest... Yes, I'll be right down. (*Lenny takes*

the phone back and hangs it up) I told you I'm not a detective anymore.

Hatch goes to the elevator and presses the down button. The door opens and he enters.

Scene 2

As Hatch enters the elevator, a distinguished-looking older gentleman steps out with a drink, enters the bar and starts moving slowly around the room, stopping to "flirt" with all of the good looking women. He seems confident and debonair until the elevator opens and a large man with some skin discoloration on his face and neck comes out and heads straight for him.

Tony Now you know we had an appointment. You wanna tell me exactly why you've been trying to duck me?

Ezekiel Two Tone Tony... Why, why, why would I try and avoid you?

Tony Yeah, I wonder. You ready to pay up, or do we have to take this somewheres more quiet.

Ezekiel Well, I don't have your boss' money – **with** me, per se. BUT – but... I will have it very shortly.

Tony Something's gonna be very shortly in a minute, if ya get my drift.

You knew the terms of the deal when you signed up with Mr. Dipasquale. You keep making your movies, Mr. Dipasquale makes money.
Now tell me, which part o' that deal ain't working just right?

Ezekiel It's, uh, close. Not too far from here. I sent my girlfriend Victoria back to the, uh, house to get it.

Tony Victoria? Which one's she? The one you had last month with the red hair and the huge (*he gestures*)

Ezekiel No, I mean, yes, I mean... Well, she's not the redhead. That was Cindy.

Tony Oh. So, this new dame o'yours, she's pretty... attractive... too? I mean, I've never seen you with a dog.

Ezekiel Oh, yes, she's very striking.

Tony That mean pretty?

Ezekiel Yes, yes, it does.

Tony Well, maybe you could hook me and her up for a few hours. Might make me forget that you're a little late with your... dues. Later, though.

Right now I'm supposed to be escorting Miss Veronica Lake around, so she can show off her rocks. Funny thing that. I thought I saw you admirin' her downstairs, but when I head your way, you find your way up here.

Ezekiel But what about Mr. Dipasquale?

Tony Oh, he's got some, er, assets, so ta speak in Dufrane's Jewelry.

Ezekiel No, I mean, wouldn't he question why you gave me a break?

Tony The boss knows what I tell him. This'd just be between you an' me, alright?

Ezekiel Right. Okay. But I can't really "promise" anything...

Tony What kindofa guy you think I am? I'll treat the lady with the utmost... admiration – my word, which is better'n yours right now.

Ezekiel Okay. So...

Tony So, right now, I got me other appointments to keep. I'll check back with you in a little bit, and you'll give me the money and hook me up with the girl. See ya in an hour, "Zeke." old boy...

Tony heads towards the elevator while Ezekiel drifts off in the opposite direction, intently searching for someone.

Scene 3

The elevator doors open and Hatch walks out into the bar. He immediately spots Tony Malone, headed for the elevator that Hatch just came out of.

Hatch Two-Tone Tony Malone. Imagine meeting you here.

Tony Outta my way, Hatch. I got appointments.

Hatch Really? Appointments? How many and with who?

Tony You know I ain't gonna tell you, old man. How would it look if everyone the boss does business with knew that some cop had their number? Now I ain't gotten to do any "special collecting" yet today, cause I'm on escort duty, but I got high hopes. Now outta my way; I'm gonna be late.

Hatch Now Tony, you know I can't have you running around, making trouble for people while I'm around. Waitaminute, did you say 'escort duty'? You're the guy who's supposed to be watching Veronica Lake?

Tony Yeah, and now I got to get back to it. Crazy dame wanted to grab another drink – she drinks more'n I do – so I figured I'd come up here and take care of another little... affair

Hatch Well, I hate to break it to you, Tony, but I have a feeling that Mr. Dipasquale ain't gonna be too pleased with you tonight.

Tony Why exactly is that? You planning on making trouble for me, little man?

Hatch Heh... No. While you were up here 'taking care of business,' someone was downstairs yanking the jewels off Miss Lake's neck. Made quite a mark. Course, we don't know when it happened, cause she claims she was conked out, and when she woke up, the rocks were gone.

Tony Sonofa... I only left her alone for a minute or two.

Hatch So, I'm curious, besides Dufrane Jewelers, was your boss in a... limited partnership... with anyone else? Say the restaurant owner?

Tony Naw, there is some business even the boss says is hopeless.