

"MAX YELLOWBACK in DIME NOVEL TRAMP"

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Page 1

1.1

Splash Page. We are in a gritty private detective's office. A desk, chair, file cabinets, and a ratty couch. Heavy black/white shadows through the window. Our private dick- rugged, movie star features- sits in a chair in the middle of the room, a white cloth draped across his shoulders. His secretary stands behind him with a pair of barber shears- the pointy metal kind with the extra hook for the middle finger. She is ostensibly giving him a haircut. Perhaps a slightly low angle to emphasize the melodrama.

Narration: Did you see that? I don't even get second billing in this sordid affair. Just a glancing reference in the title. As usual, it's all about Max. The famous Max Yellowback. But what he neglected to mention is that my name is Penny Dreadful. And before I stab him in the brain with these scissors, I thought you deserve to know that, and something in the way of an explanation.

Page 2

2.1

CU- she cuts his hair. A tear rolls down her cheek.

Narration: I don't blame Max for the tragic circumstances that have resulted in my irresistible attraction to hopeless men. Something about my father leaving us when I was a child, I don't know. Psychologists can tell you that, not that I could afford one on the dirty salary Max pays me to be his secretary. So when he suggested a little part-time action on the side, I naturally jumped at the chance.

Detective: Just a little off the top, sweetie. Nothing fancy.

2.2

Flashback - The Detective and Penny indulge in a classic noir kiss - seedy and desperate.

Narration: What a fool I was, to think I could fill the role of his leading lady!

2.3

Wide shot - the noir entrance of the lady into the detective's office. You know it - a sexy silhouette with a big hat. He's in the foreground, feet on the desk, impassive. Rain on the window.

Narration: When I walked into his office on that stormy night, did he really love me at once, as he so often said after the fact? Or was he merely a pawn of the situation, forced to play the role dictated by the archetypical circumstances of our encounter? And I the cheap bit part that could be played by any passing beauty?

2.4

At a restaurant. The Detective looks slightly out of place in a coat and tie, his hair slicked back. They share a small candlelit table by the window.

Narration: Oh sure, he wined and dined me at first. They all do that.

2.5

Penny at her secretary's desk looking slightly disheveled. A shamed sidelong glance at The Detective who broods at the window.

Narration: But eventually our rendezvous dwindled to the perfunctory performance at work, a job I took on only to be with him. But that I now felt a growing hatred towards; a sickness in my stomach that surpassed all previous forms of loathing I had yet encountered in my short, disastrous life.

Page 3

3.1

The Detective and an informant in the FG. Their whispered conference has been interrupted by Penny who is trying to bring them coffee on a tray. They're both glaring at her.

Narration: And even as our relationship descended into negative perpetuity, I made overtures. I gave him every chance. But he made more time for the seedy characters that populated his ignoble profession than he ever did for me. He made me feel less than insignificant, and although my desire to salvage an abusive affiliation was never stronger, I began to think I couldn't bear to see him another day.

3.2

Penny weeps bitterly on the ratty couch, file folders slipping from her lax fingers and splaying across the floor. We see The Detective's retreating shadow outside the frosted glass of the office door.

Narration: But even more than remaining with him, I feared the consequences of our parting. What would become of me without him? What livelihood, what prospects did I have outside the meager existence he allowed me? Even as I clung to him I resented his

recalcitrance and longed to revenge myself on him for the compromising situation in which he barricaded me.

3.3

Similar to panel 4 on the previous page, but The Detective is with some blonde chick, and we're pulled out to include Penny standing in the rain.

Narration: And then it happened. I saw him at dinner with the blonde hussy, and I've been with him long enough to know it wasn't work related. Even though he was stuck with me for the time being, binding contracts and all that, he was looking to replace me at the first opportunity!

3.4

CU rain drips off Penny's face - an expression of pain mixed with rage.

Narration: The feeling was beyond betrayal. Indignation at the atrocious unfairness of his action overwhelmed me. He refused to accept the established cycle of self-inflicted torment we supposedly shared. Why did he get to be less miserable than me? I guess that's why they call it cheating.

3.5

Silhouette - present - The Detective is in the improvised barber's chair, and Penny stands behind him, sharpening her scissors.

Narration: Max was all I had holding my miserable existence together, and even though he disgusted me, I would rather die than give him up. And so I started thinking, as long as I'm going to die, maybe he should too. That's how these things begin to grow and take hold in a stricken woman's mind. It's not passionate or cold-blooded viciousness. It's a slow, masochistic balancing of the equation whose inevitability she comes to accept.

3.6

Two-shot, low angle. She raises her arm, the scissors gripped point-down. He's blissfully unaware.

Detective: Get me a cigarette, will you, sweet-cheeks?

Narration: I'll get you a cigarette. One last cigarette.

Page 4

4.1

Same poses as the last panel but now both characters look off panel as someone is yelling...

Director (off-panel): Cut, cut!

4.2

Wider. The lights are up; crewmembers are bringing the detective munchies. The director- a short, paunchy, Roman Polanski looking fella- has come onto the set to bawl out Penny who is wilting in fear and embarrassment.

Director: Penny, honey, just because I dated you doesn't mean you can do whatever you want on set! You're supposed to be manipulating the scissors absentmindedly. It's a symbol of your considering severing your ties with this man.

4.3

The director paces, gesticulating. Penny looks for a place to hide.

Director: You can't just loom over him, holding them like a dagger! Anyone would think you wanted to kill the guy. Okay, let's try it again, and try to keep your train of thought in the station, will you honey?

4.4

She grips the scissors tighter, her knuckles white.

Penny: Yes, Max. I'll do better this time, I promise.

4.5

The lights go down. A spotlight remains on Penny.

4.6

Same.

Narration: Will I always be nothing more than a formulaic femme fatale in his sordid shilling shocker?

Director (off-screen): And...Action!

The End