

Veronica Mars

“You want to know how I lost my virginity? So do I.”

We will use the following noir style elements...

1. The episode and series will revolve around **crime** – in the case of the series, a major crime.
2. A **corrupt authority system** (both the local sheriff’s office and the high school administration.)
3. There will be **unstable alliances and allegiances**, i.e. Veronica and her father.
4. There will be a male equivalent to the **Femme Fatale**, in our case, Duncan Cain.
5. **Bizarre plot twists**, i.e. is Veronica the half-sister of Duncan and Samantha Cain?
6. **Voice over narration.**
7. **Disjunctive, non-linear time.**
8. **Scenes at night.**
9. **High contrast lighting/shadows.**
10. **Wet streets/neon.**

Back story...

When she was 13, **Veronica Mars** had no idea how good she had it. She assumed her comfortable, middle class existence was the norm. Her family had a nice home in a nice neighborhood in a nice, Petaluma / Carmel / Santa Barbara / Santa Cruz-like beach community. Veronica was popular. She made good grades. She wore fashionable clothes. Her father, **Keith Mars**, was the local sheriff.

Three years later, it’s all gone to hell.

Three years ago, **Samantha Cain**, daughter of community paragon/software mogul **Jake Cain** and twin sister of Veronica’s primary love interest **Duncan Cain** disappeared. The case drew national attention a lá the Jon Benet Ramsay / Polly Klass cases. Keith Mars was the chief investigator of the disappearance, and from the onset, he believed Jake Cain was responsible. He had one piece of hard evidence – a cell phone record that mysteriously disappeared from the sheriff department’s record room. The fact that Keith Mars’ investigation seemed to center on the very visible, very popular community leader angered many in the city. The national press painted Keith Mars as some kind of bungling Barney Fife character.

Five months later, after the Crimestopper Reward for information tops \$100,000, a witness, **Strom Jenkins**, steps forward and provides a make and model of a van that he saw leaving town on the night of Samantha Cain’s disappearance. The van is easily tracked down. At the residence of the van’s owner, Keith Mars finds various personal affects of Samantha Cain: her blood-spattered backpack,

earrings, and schoolbooks. Her body is not discovered, but the odd hermit, **Abel Koontz**, confesses to the crime. Koontz waives his right to an attorney, asks for and receives the death penalty. He's currently on death row.

When Strom Jenkins asks for his reward, the Crime Stoppers account is empty. Jake Cain "generously" provides the reward money, but Keith Mars takes the fall for both the botched investigation and the embezzled reward money. He is removed from office in disgrace. **Don Lamb**, Keith's former right hand guy, takes over as Sheriff. Keith suspects Don was working against him. The two haven't spoken since.

Any normal man would leave town immediately. Keith Mars doesn't. Over his wife **Rebecca Mars'** strenuous objections, he stays and opens a private detective agency, "**Mars Investigations.**" The size of the city hardly has enough business to support a P.I. Agency. The family barely scrapes by. They have to sell their house and move into a downscale apartment. But more than the loss of income, the loss of social status affects the family. Once on the inside of city society, they are now pariahs. Her peers — who loved their classmate Samantha and resented what Keith Mars did to the Cain family — ostracize Veronica. She is effectively shunned at school. The pain is doubled by the fact that her first boyfriend was Duncan Cain. She hasn't spoken to him in three years.

Still, Veronica sticks by her father. She believes in him utterly. She believes that he's right about Jake Cain, and she believes that someone else was responsible for the disappearance of the Crime Stoppers reward money.

Rebecca Mars can't take it, though. Initially she crawls into a bottle, creates more than one spectacle in town providing further humiliation for the Mars family. When Keith still refuses to move, Rebecca splits. She asks Veronica to come with her, but Veronica refuses. She's that loyal to her father. She's that LIKE her father. Her father's not leaving until he exonerates himself, and Veronica isn't either.

When Rebecca leaves, Veronica writes her off. Her mother writes her a couple of times, but Veronica sends the letters back unopened. Veronica hasn't heard from her mother for a couple of years. Veronica believes her mother gave up on her too easily.

When Veronica was 15, Keith Mars began skip-tracing. Because he was having trouble making ends meet, and he couldn't be two places at once, he began using Veronica who liked hanging out at the office any way. He simply asked her to stand in a certain spot and take a picture of whoever comes out of a certain door. Now, two years later, Veronica has all the skills of a modern private detective.

11. She can lie to get information. It's almost second nature to her. She seems to have no compunctions about it. She's the sort of girl who could pass a lie detector test because she's so cool.
12. She can take and develop her own photos. She's very experienced with cameras, film, flashes, timers, etc.

13. She's extremely computer savvy. Tracking down any sort of info available online is no sweat.
14. She knows how to tail cars, follow people.
15. She can operate bugging/surveillance equipment.
16. She can either get or create false documents. She's got the best three fake IDs in town. She has an ID identifying her as a Stanford college newspaper reporter.
17. She has a drawer full of every type of hall pass, excused absence form, and she's copied most of the keys to the high school.
18. The one thing that Keith Mars *did* steal from the police department was Backup, a police-trained Pitt Bull that would only answer to Keith anyway. Now Backup is Veronica's. Keith feels much better knowing the Veronica has Backup with her most of the time.
19. Additionally, she's just plain smart. She's absorbed everything she can read about the business. She doesn't know it as well as her father, yet, but she's close.

Defining Scenes:

Introductory Scene:

Veronica outside of the Camelot Motel. She's pouring herself a cup of black coffee from a thermos. We notice a camera in the seat next to her with a giant telephoto lens. Her trigonometry book is in her lap. She glances up at a specific room. We learn in voice over that she's there because an angry wife thinks her husband is cheating on her, and guess what, she's right. We get a taste of Veronica's caustic, misanthropic world view. If you think he's cheating, you're probably right. Ask yourself, do you really want to know. We establish many of the elements of noir here: the wet streets, the neon, the use of voice over, even the disjointed treatment of time.

Classroom Scene

Veronica is dead asleep at her desk after a late night of staking out the Camelot. A teacher lectures. Other students are laughing at Veronica, pointing out the drool puddle beneath her mouth. The teacher notices Veronica, sighs, walks over to where she's sitting, taps her on the shoulder. Veronica lifts her head. The teacher asks a question straight out of the lecture she's been giving. Without any hesitation, Veronica answers the question. The teacher sighs, walks back to the front of the classroom. As she does, Veronica puts her head back down on the desk to sleep.

Veronica arriving at school

Veronica arrives at school. She pushes her way through a crowd that has gathered around the flag pole. When she gets to the middle she finds what everyone is gawking at: **Wallace Collier** has been duct taped to the flagpole. Ignoring the warnings that the PCH Bike Club has taped him up that and that no

one better cut him down, Veronica walks up deliberately, whips out a pocket knife and cuts him down.

Veronica in the cafeteria

Veronica sits in the corner of the cafeteria, very much by herself. After witnessing one of the golden children getting some kind of preferential treatment, Veronica vows that she will be Prom Queen two years from then. She does this in voice over. It's impossible not to think it's ridiculous. She's a leper.

A Story Beats

- Wife of Don Lamb comes to Mars Investigations. She believes that her husband is cheating on her. She knows no one will go after him with the kind of glee that Keith will. Keith takes the job.

- Keith goes on a skip tracing job. He asks Veronica to cover for him one night.

- Veronica takes Don Lamb to the Camelot Motel. She stakes it out. Emerging from the hotel is an attractive young female. Nabbed. But the two don't kiss. There's no money shot. Nothing that'll help Mrs. Lamb in divorce court.

- Veronica follows the woman. Turns out she's a reporter for the local paper.

- The second time he follows Don Lamb to the motel she has a different experience.

Emerging this time from the hotel are Don Lamb, Jake Cain and Strom Jenkins. This is amazingly weird. There's no good reason that these three people should be in the same room together.

- Veronica reports this fact to her father. She's very excited about this news, and she expects Keith to be excited as well. He's not. He tells her it's nothing and to stay away from the case. Veronica is stung and her curiosity is piqued. (She believes that her father may think it's too dangerous, and so he's blowing her off.)

- Veronica in various detective beats. She finds out that the reporter suddenly resigned without giving notice. Something is fishy.

- Somehow, possibly with the help of Wallace, Veronica gets ahold of the reporter's personal laptop. After sifting through a bunch of stories, she finds what she's looking for – a story revealing that Abel Koontz has terminal brain cancer.

- Veronica visits Abel Koontz in prison. (She claims she's a Stanford Reporter to get access.) Trouble is, Abel Koontz knows who she is immediately. He implies that his grudge with Jake Cain goes back twenty-years and that the murder was really a way to exact vengeance. He says that his only trouble was deciding which of Jake's three children he would kill. Veronica says he only has two. Abel says, "No, he had three."

- Veronica goes to the storage shed where she and her dad put all of Rebecca's stuff. She's freaked out. She finds her Mom's old high school yearbook. There's a picture of her. She's Prom Queen. The Prom King is Jake Cain. Jake has signed her Mom's yearbook in such a way that indicates that they are a couple and very much in love. He will love her always, etc. etc.

- Veronica freaked out beyond words, finds the combination to her father's safe. She breaks into it. Inside she finds a couple of things that rock her world

completely. A stack of postcards from her mother who has been writing her every couple of weeks since she left, and a statement from a Cayman Island bank account.

Story Ideas:

High School...

20. Veronica is hired by one of her former friends/current enemies to find her math book. Turns out the girl was accidentally handed a Teacher's Guide. It's the only way this girl is going to get through math and get into college.
21. Is my girlfriend/boyfriend cheating?
22. I'm adopted. Can you find my birth parents?
23. My boyfriend took nude photos of me. Now he's threatening to post them on the internet if I don't stay together with him.
24. In a school wide locker search of the school, administrators find 50 hits of ecstasy in a girls' locker. This is exactly the girl everyone would think would be selling drugs. She's busted. Kicked out of school. Turned over to the police. She puts all of her faith in Veronica to prove it wasn't hers.
25. A boy comes to Veronica. His girlfriend has left him, and he believes it's for his extremely successful/popular high school tennis coach.
26. A teacher hires Veronica to prove she's not gay. Trouble is, she is gay. But she is not, as reported, seeing another female staff member at the school. Okay, at least not AT SCHOOL. An upset student is spreading the rumor, making it impossible for the administration to ignore it as they have for years.
27. Do a background check on someone for me. I'm considering dating him/her. (This info turns out to be damning, but it also turns out that Veronica was hired in order to discredit the guy.)
28. Scarlet Letter – a star volleyball player quits the team. Turns out she's pregnant. She won't tell anyone who the father is. Veronica expects that the father is someone that she wants to GET. With a little investigation, she finds out the answer is much more disturbing than she was really expecting.

Agency Stories:

29. A desperate local comes in. His identity has been stolen. Someone is using this man's private information. At first, it seems like this is being done for profit, but something tips Veronica off that the motive is revenge. The person is not only using the client's credit, it turns out, but doctoring his police record, adding him to the privately maintained sex offenders web sites. The twist is that when Veronica figures out who is doing it, it is the clients step son who Veronica has a crush on.
30. A woman comes in and wants the agency to find her husband – a deadbeat dad. The mother was never interested in finding him before, but she is now trying to get money so her gifted kid can go to a prestigious college. Veronica realizes the kid is a classmate who has been under the

- impression that Dad has been dead for years. Sure, Veronica can help find the dad, but does she tell the classmate that his father is alive.
31. Veronica takes a case in which she's supposed to find a man – based only on a picture who embezzled from one of the local high tech companies. Veronica finds him, hands over the address and information. Immediately following this, she realizes she's handed his address to someone who is going to try to kill him. She has to call her father in for help.