

BUBBLE GUMSHOE

"Pilot: The Maltese Penguin"  
(partial sample)

Written by

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COLD OPEN

Black.

SAM (V.O.)  
Welcome to my town.

EXT. MOUNT PLEASANT - DAY

We are flying over a suburban small town. A patchwork of green lawns and white houses pass by.

SAM (V.O.)  
Where dark shadows lurk around every  
corner...

Now we are moving down a pleasant, tree-lined street.

SAM (V.O.)  
And danger looms just out of sight.

We turn suddenly between two houses, into the shadows.

ANGLE ON: A SHADOW OF A HAND POINTING A GUN

SAM (V.O.)  
A city of hardened criminals...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

An eight-year-old boy drenches another boy with a squirt gun, then turns tail and runs. We follow him until we come upon a FEMININE SHADOW holding a cigarette to her lips.

SAM (V.O.)  
And dames with something to hide.

A seven-year-old girl steps out of the shadow, pulls a lollipop from her mouth and skips off.

SAM (V.O.)  
A city crying out for someone to set  
it straight.

We ascend a tree, revealing a treehouse.

INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

SAM (V.O.)  
And that someone is me.

A shadowy figure in a trench coat sits at a desk, a fedora hiding his face. He looks up, straight into the camera. He is ten years old.

SAM

My name's Sam. I'm a detective.

TITLE SEQUENCE.

ACT ONE

INT. OFFICE - DAY [FILM NOIR VIEW]

A small, slightly shabby detective's office. The sign in the window reads "Stark Investigations."

SAM STARK (10) leans back in his chair, feet on the desk. He lazily blows a bubble.

SAM (V.O.)

It all started with a dame walking into my office.

A blonde woman in a cocktail dress and veil walks in.

SAM (V.O.)

I don't usually stand for dames in my office - on account of the cooties - but a paying customer is a paying customer, and bubble gum doesn't pay for itself.

Sam's bubble pops all over his face.

CUT TO:

INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

The office is now a treehouse. Sam is an average kid in a raincoat and an oversized fedora.

The woman is now VERONICA (11), blond and stylish. She looks around disdainfully. She's followed by EVA (6), a miniature version of Veronica, whose lip quivers. Sam tries to pull the bubble gum off his face; some lands on the floor.

SAM (V.O.)

Veronica LaRue was her name. I didn't know her, but I'd seen her onstage in The Princess and the Pea.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Veronica, center stage, strikes a pose and belts a high note.

SAM (V.O.)  
She had the audience eating out of  
her hand...

SPLAT! A spitball hits her forehead, choking off her note.

SAM (V.O.)  
...Until an unfortunate spitball  
incident in the second act.

Veronica squints angrily into the dark audience.

INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

Veronica squints angrily at Sam as pulls gum from his face.

SAM (V.O.)  
She'd brought her little sister  
along. The kid was all broken up.

Eva dabs her eyes with a handkerchief.

SAM  
What can I do for you ladies?

VERONICA  
Is it true that you can find things  
that have gone missing?

SAM  
Depends on the thing. What is it?

EVA  
(wails)  
Mr. Wobble!

Sam arches an eyebrow, and looks at Veronica.

VERONICA  
Mr. Wobble is a penguin.

Sam smirks.

SAM  
If I'm going to Antarctica, that'll  
cost you extra.