

But Her Heart Is Warm

by

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DESCRIPTION

A police officer asks a homeowner to put some clothes on the nude snow sculpture she makes—and the sculpture has something to say about this.

CHARACTERS

- MARIA
- VENUS
- SERGEANT DOMINICK SFORZA

MISCELLANEOUS

- VENUS is dressed in a white unitard or some other sort of white outfit—she is a snow sculpture, after all.
- The ability to have something strobe like a flash camera, or several cameras, going off.
- An Alternate: A dozen or so cheap flash cameras handed out to audience members. At various points in the show, they will take pictures of what's going on onstage.

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VENUS rests comfortably on her base.

MARIA, wearing a muffler and a pair of gloves—just enough to indicate cold weather but not so much to roast the actor onstage—admires her work.

MARIA

Oh, Venus, I have sculpted you as one gorgeous snow-sculpted temptress, I have.

A flash of photographs being taken of the statue and its creator by passing motorists. MARIA waves at the audience

MARIA

Thank you—thanks—take all the pictures you want—

SOUND: The short blurt of a police siren.

This startles MARIA.

SOUND: A car pulling up, car door slammed.

SERGEANT DOMINICK SFORZA appears. This also startles MARIA.

MARIA
Yes?

SFORZA looks distinctly uncomfortable. This makes MARIA even more nervous.

MARIA
Officer?

SFORZA
Ma'am—

VENUS speaks, and though neither of them can hear her, what she says has an influence. It would not be unusual for VENUS to speak on top of the other actors' lines—after all, she is a goddess.

VENUS
Identification first! Don't forget!

MARIA
Sorry—can I see some ID first?

This flummoxes SFORZA—no one has actually ever asked him for his ID.

SFORZA
Really?

MARIA
Really.

SFORZA pulls it out of his pocket and opens it.

VENUS
Hand it over.

MARIA

Please.

SFORZA hands it over. MARIA examines it, hands it back—an intimate exchange without any intimacy.

VENUS

Speak, long arm of the law.

SFORZA

It's a nice—well, not a snow man, I guess, but a—statue.

MARIA

It's Venus. Is the compliment why you stopped?

SFORZA

Not really.

MARIA

I didn't think so.

An awkward silence.

MARIA

Is it the traffic? It's been getting a lot of traffic—I mean, literally, up and down, up and—online, too, you know, online traffic—

SFORZA

No, not the traffic.

MARIA

Then why have you come here?

VENUS

Why have you come, intimidator of the innocent? Hmm?

SFORZA is clearly uncomfortable with what he has to do.

SFORZA

We've had a complaint—

MARIA
We?

SFORZA
Someone—

MARIA
Who?

SFORZA
Someone—about—

SFORZA indicates VENUS. MARIA waits, plays dumb.

VENUS
Be specific, be letter-of-the-law.

SFORZA
About—her—

MARIA
Venus is her name.

SFORZA
Venus.

MARIA isn't giving him any relief.

VENUS
What you've given me to show off.

SFORZA
Yeah—I know, it's stupid, but—

MARIA
You still haven't told me what it is.

SFORZA
Her—exposure—

MARIA looks at VENUS, then back at SFORZA.

MARIA
Really?

SFORZA
Yes, ma'am.

MARIA
Really?

SFORZA
Yes, ma'am.

VENUS
False courtesy—danger, Will Robinson!

MARIA
Wow—I thought—I thought it was something more serious.

SFORZA
Well, you're right, but—

MARIA
No—I mean, you had me—I thought, maybe, like, I don't know, terrorism or la migra—

SFORZA
Why would you think—

MARIA
Because you just never know these days—not to be disrespectful about your profession—

VENUS
I grant you such disrespect.

MARIA
But, you know, Homeland Security, the way you're all deputized—sorry, you got me flustered—look, just what is it you're going to tell me? Because we haven't done anything—

SFORZA takes a step forward—nothing aggressive, just moving into the space, but it makes MARIA very nervous and she steps back. SFORZA notices this and backs off.

SFORZA

I'm not here to—ma'am—

VENUS

Stop moving—you're making her nervous—making me nervous,
and I'm ice.

SFORZA stops. Perhaps a few more pictures, which makes SFORZA a little uncomfortable.

MARIA

The whole world is watching.

SFORZA

Ma'am, I'm just here to tell you that someone has complained—
about—your statue.

MARIA stares at SFORZA for a moment, then laughs.

VENUS

Where she came from—

MARIA

Where I came from—

VENUS

People don't complain about such nonsense.

MARIA

This would not be something people would talk to the police
about—though we don't have snow, so—but you can understand
my point. The police aren't—wouldn't be—trusted.

SFORZA

Just a complaint, a simple—about the nudity. The—parts. Nothing
deeper. Really. I like what you did.

MARIA

So what do you [like]—

VENUS

Don't converse! Don't go soft!

Look, never mind—

MARIA

Just—

VENUS

Not important.

MARIA

Good.

VENUS

Who made the complaint?

MARIA

I can't tell you that.

SFORZA

They can talk to you about me, but you can't tell me who talked to you? It seems I have a coward for a neighbor, sending you in—

MARIA

I don't get to say what's right or wrong.

SFORZA

Can you tell me what they didn't like?

MARIA

Just everything.

SFORZA

MARIA moves to VENUS, runs her hands over the curves—she doesn't have to actually touch VENUS—unless the actors are okay with that—but simply outlines the shapes.

You mean like here? And here?

MARIA

I suppose.

SFORZA

Don't forget here.

VENUS

MARIA
And here?

SFORZA
Ma'am, I get—

MARIA
And this?

SFORZA
—the point.

VENUS
Which part of him is getting pointed?

MARIA
Do you like the things this invisible neighbor of mine didn't like?

SFORZA comes closer to VENUS and looks.

SFORZA
I think it'll be a shame when this melts. Ma'am.

MARIA
Does this mean this visit is over?

SFORZA
No—a complaint has to be—well—

VENUS
Can't leave till he's made you suffer.

SFORZA
Well, both served and acted upon.

MARIA doesn't say anything, just waits—internal struggle notwithstanding.

SFORZA
It would make things easier if you could cover her up.

VENUS

Think about the choices running through your mind. Remember he has a gun.

MARIA waits a bit longer before answering.

MARIA

Covered how?

SFORZA

It wouldn't take much, I think—a—top—thing, and—

MARIA

And if I don't?

SFORZA, in his reaction, shows that he doesn't really want them to go down that road.

VENUS

Push him.

MARIA

If I leave her just as she is?

SFORZA

Then the traffic on the street would become a problem. Whatever causes the traffic problem would have to be removed.

MARIA

And that's the way it works.

SFORZA

That's one of the ways it works.

VENUS

Beauty versus punishment—not worth it.

MARIA

She's going to melt anyways.

SFORZA

Later—won't solve this problem now.

They wait, then MARIA exits. SFORZA fidgets.

VENUS

Hard to feel any job satisfaction when the only strap-on you can use is a gun.

MARIA returns with a bikini top and a length of cloth and two gold tassels. She hands the tassels to SFORZA, throws the top over her shoulder, and begins wrapping the cloth around VENUS like a sarong.

Then MARIA pulls some safety pins out of her pocket and pins the tassels to the cups of the top, talking to SFORZA as she pins on the tassels.

MARIA

From the graduation caps for my two degrees—two of them. I have been higher educated twice. How about you?

SFORZA

Just one. Once.

MARIA

Ah—just one. Once.

MARIA then puts the top on VENUS, the two gold tassels in prominent and pendulum splendor.

MARIA

Covered.

MARIA's wicked little grin makes SFORZA both embarrassed and irritated.

SFORZA

You can't—those—

MARIA

Will the complainer now be satisfied, do you think? You should go check with him, or her—obviously calling the shots in this case.

SOUND: A great grind of wind tunnels through.

All focus is now on VENUS, who has unmoored herself and is now free to move. MARIA and SFORZA are still—not frozen necessarily, but suspended, like a breath.

MUSIC: "Bluesy All Alone" from Jampy's "The Unemployed"
[<http://www.jamendo.com/en/album/12064>] kicks in, loud.¹

The music lasts one minute. During that one minute, VENUS bends the bodies of MARIA and SFORZA into tableaux that illustrate the possibilities that she presents. VENUS moves herself and them gracefully and grindingly and urgently.

VENUS

What will it be for these two in this instant of their universe? The law versus art? The hammer and the spike? Or their twin breaths braided? Contact without bruise? Force or fusion?

The actors and director are free to add any other phrases to fill out the music and come up with a choreography that satisfies them.

MUSIC: Ends.

VENUS

I hope they choose fucking brilliance over the snarl of their walls and fear.

VENUS re-takes her place. Time shifts to whatever would now be considered normal.

SFORZA

You can't—

MARIA

Will the complainer now be satisfied, do you think? You should go check—

Something makes them realize that they have traveled somewhere and come back to their starting point. Their bodies ease.

SFORZA

You know—

VENUS

Go on.

¹ The music is royalty-free.

SFORZA

I think it's fine the way it is.

VENUS

Ah.

SFORZA

We get to use our discretion.

MARIA

Maybe a little—much—maybe—you know, the two—

VENUS

Make a suggestion.

MARIA takes the top off. She unpins one of the tassels and pockets it. She pins the second tassel to the cloth between the two cups and puts the top back on VENUS.

MARIA

Less of a—you know—

MARIA makes the Italian gesture for “fuck you.”

SFORZA

Yeah—what you just said.

Not sure what to do next.

SFORZA

Weather will be getting warmer soon anyway, so—no more problem.

MARIA

No problem at all.

The silence between them hints at something more—but VENUS will have none of this.

VENUS

Don't ruin it, you two.

SFORZA smiles, shrugs, waves, leaves. MARIA watches him go, then turns and looks at VENUS.

VENUS

No reason to force it over the border into “the nice”—be thankful for the gift of a truce. They’re rare enough.

MARIA arranges the cloth, the top.

MARIA

Yeah. They are.

MARIA leaves.

MUSIC: _____ The first seven seconds of “Bluesy All Alone”

VENUS does a short movement piece of melting away.

Blackout.

