

Photo credit: [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Tuesday, August 13th 1929

Variegated stains fanned from a corner pipe on the kitchen ceiling. At least the leak was fixed. Vinnie knew girls would want him to paint, and he wondered when would be a good time. Probably now- 3:45 a.m. on Tuesday morning. Not much going on in the diner at that time. He took a long drag from his cigarette, staring at the ceiling from the floor. Sometimes he laid there at night after the floors dried when he didn't want to sleep. His philosophy was, who would want to eat from a kitchen where you couldn't even lie on the floor? He dabbed out his cigarette and closed his eyes at the thought.

The kitchen phone rang and woke him. Vinnie grunted, not realizing he had dozed off. He stood up as he lumbered slowly to the phone. "The Melody diner on Broadway..." Lips smacking as he rubbed the stubble on his face and head.

"Vinnie, it's Harriet, open up."

He peered through the serving hatch into the dark diner to see Queenie by the door under the streetlight, then Harriet across the street at a payphone by the drug store. He answered with a new grunt, hanging up the phone. Harriet and Queenie were early - meaning they were looking for breakfast. Harriet scurried across to join her sister as Vinnie opened the door, the bell jingling with satisfying familiarity. Harriet and Queenie were close enough in age to be mistaken for twins, and they were the typical night and day personalities to boot. They were also his only friends, but he definitely wasn't going to say that. "Haven't I told you that you ladies will never make it in showbiz if you're early all the time?" His cockney accent was heavier just after he woke up.

Queenie flaunted in, brown curls bouncing with her. She was the 'fun' sister, usually with a giggle on tap. "Oh Vinnie, what would you know about showbiz?" She waltzed past him, her sister rolling her eyes behind her.

"I know enough." He closed the door behind them.

"Yeah, yeah. New York and all that..."

"London," Vinnie emphasized the city of his birth, "has some showbiz elements too, and I was certainly there a lot longer." He trailed them into the kitchen.

Harriet looked to add something, but her sister continued, ignoring the Englishman. "Well, we aren't early. It's almost 4:30!"

"It's so dark in here," Harriet turned on the rest of the lights as she stored her purse. She was the older, protective one who operated like clockwork. "Don't you ever turn on any lights?"

"Vinnie! The stove isn't on!" Queenie exclaimed.

"I was catching some 'z's..." Vinnie shrugged.

"Is that why the door was locked?"

"Hey, I'm one man. And no one comes in between 4 am and 5 am on a Tuesday, so opening a few minutes late won't be terrible." He heated up the stove. "What'll it be?"

"The usual," Harriet said as she started the coffee. Her hair wasn't quite as short or as curly as her sister's, but she put some behind her ear absently all the same.

"Right up. And you, Queenie?"

Queenie grabbed aprons off their respective hooks. "Give me something exotic!"

Harriet grinned at her sister's enthusiasm as she took the apron. Vinnie was not quite on board as he cracked some eggs. "Define exotic."

"Like oranges, or an avocado...or clams!"

Vinnie sighed. "Where am I gonna get clams? We're nowhere near the ocean."

"I bet I know someone who could get us clams," Harriet muttered as she poured them all coffee.

He didn't like where that idea was headed. "Let's not tempt that," Vinnie finished Harriet's breakfast and handed her the plate. "It's not even 5 am yet."

"Just an idea." She shared her smirk with him, and he accepted it.

He cleared his throat to break the moment as he turned to Queenie. "Where'd you get that kind of idea anyhow?"

"We saw The Hollywood Revue last night!" Queenie became excited.

"Is that a play?"

She giggled. "No. It's a movie. And all the MGM stars were in it."

"Garbo wasn't. Or Lon Chaney. I don't think Novarro was either..." Harriet added thoughtfully.

"Well, almost everyone. It was great! And John Gilbert was in it. Swoon!" She pretended to faint onto her sister.

"You'll have to fight Garbo for him," Harriet pushed her sister back to her feet.

"Not if she's not there." Queenie smiled as Vinnie gave her a plate with the same food as Harriet. "Thanks." And sat down with her plate.

"Did you like it?" Vinnie asked Harriet.

She shrugged. "It was all right. I thought John Gilbert's voice was strange. Guess I hadn't heard his voice yet."

"So it was one of them talkies."

The two women chuckled. "They are almost all talkies now."

Vinnie smiled at his non-knowledge of the pictures. "Meh. What do I know?"

"Certainly not the movies." Harriet sipped her coffee.

"Yeah. Don't try and argue about the pictures with these two Arizona girls." Queenie said proudly.

"Pssh. It's hardly a state." He made himself some toast and beans.

"Is too a state!" Queenie objected.

"You were born in old Arizona, not the current state of Arizona." Vinnie gave a straight face, then smiled and they all gave a good laugh. The bell on the door rang for their first customer. "Time to work."

Harriet handed over her plate and walked into the diner with the coffee pot. A tall, unmemorable man sat at the counter. "What'll it be?"

"Coffee, and...is that the special? It says Monday."

"Oh, sorry." She erased the day, picked up the chalk, and wrote Tuesday.

"It's the same thing? What sort of scam you pulling?"

"Sir, I'm not sure what you're getting at," Harriet asked, rather jaded. "We aren't exactly the Ritz..."

"You're trying to shirk innocent customers..."

Vinnie overheard and called through the serving window. "Hey, did you have it yesterday?"

"Well...no..."

"Then what are you on about?"

Embarrassed the man looked to Harriet, "I'll have the special then."

"Great." Harriet shot Vinnie a look. But Vinnie didn't back down. The unremarkable man ate quickly, escaping within twenty minutes.

"Would you look at that?" Harriet held up a dollar, "He even tipped."

Vinnie shrugged. "What are you trying to say?"

"That sometimes, I don't need the English Bulldog in my corner."

"You say that..."

Queenie overheard and giggled. "But we are grateful he is."

"Thank you, Queenie. See, someone understands." More customers came in, scattering themselves between the booths and counter, giving the trio plenty to do. "Now get back to work."

1+

 Send to Kindle

- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Tumblr](#)