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INVESTIGATING THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE
(WHICH IS A BITCH UNTIL YOU DIE)

Edited by
George A. Dunn

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This book is dedicated to A. B. “A long time ago ...”
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And, of course, this book would never have happened had it not been for Rob Thomas, Kristen Bell, and the 91,535 backers of the most successful Kickstarter campaign in history. Check your rooms, guys, for … a pony!
Introduction
The PI and the Philosophers

A long time ago there used to be a critically acclaimed television series with a devoted cult following. It was about a smart, savvy, and delightfully snarky girl named Veronica Mars, whose light blonde hair and pixie-ish good looks belied the hard interior of a jaded private investigator (PI) who was cynical beyond her years. Each week she would expose some new furrow of the seamy underbelly of crime and corruption lurking beneath the sunny façade of Neptune, California’s mansions, beaches, and boardwalk. Viewers of the show learned to be perpetually distrustful of appearances, for nothing was ever what it seemed: a shy, geeky kid could turn out to be a psychopathic murderer and rapist; the adopted daughter of a local movie star might be outed as the secret love child of the current high school principal with the lunch lady; a successful restaurateur, baseball team owner, and glad-handing politician could be exposed as a child molester; and Deputy Leo D’Amato’s police uniform might just be a tear-away. Anyone who simmers for very long in such a cauldron of deceit is likely to emerge rather hardboiled. But one might also, like Veronica Mars,

emerge with a passion for the truth, and perhaps even for justice. Cheering her on, her fans formed a small but devoted band of “marshmallows,” staking out our television sets week after week as she pursued these high-minded passions, as well as a few other passions of a steamier variety. And then, one day, Veronica cast her vote for Keith Mars for sheriff, exited her polling place, and disappeared down a Neptune street into a downpour of southern California rain and a deluge of scandal.

*Veronica Mars* was cancelled in 2007 at the end of its third season and, truth be told, some people hadn’t thought of Veronica lately at all when, on March 13, 2013, Rob Thomas, the show’s creator, and Kristen Bell, who starred as Veronica, announced that they were launching a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds to make a *Veronica Mars* movie that would bring us up to date on what happened to our spunky heroine after she disappeared into that storm. It soon became apparent that there are still legions of us “marshmallows” out there who care enough about Veronica to foot the bill for one more Mars investigation. To date, the *Veronica Mars* movie is one of the most successful Kickstarter projects of all time, with more than $5.7 million raised from over 90,000 backers—twice its official goal. As the first fan-financed movie adaption of a cancelled television series, not to mention its record-breaking number of Kickstarter backers, this is one for the history books. A little more than a week after Rob and Kristen announced the Kickstarter campaign, preparations for this book were already getting underway. *Veronica Mars and Philosophy*—what could be a more natural combination? They go together like Woody’s Burgers and Little League. (Okay, that was an unfortunate comparison, so let’s say Keith’s homemade lasagna and watching *Slap Shot*.) After all, like our petite blonde detective, most philosophers are on fire for the truth, make ample use of the tools of logic, and recognize that things aren’t always as they appear. We also engage in the occasional inner monologue, pondering the meaning of it all, and we
have been known to misplace our copies of Søren Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or*.

And indeed Veronica herself is a bit of a philosopher, though her philosophy tends to be a little on the *noir* side. *Noir* is a genre of fiction stamped by a pervasive mood of disillusionment, fatalism, and despair. *Noir* stories are typically set in a world rife with corruption and dirty secrets, where betrayal is the order of the day and the hero’s cynicism is reinforced with each new seedy revelation. It’s a world where, as Veronica puts it:

> The innocent suffer, the guilty go free, and truth and fiction are pretty much interchangeable. ... There is neither a Santa Claus, nor an Easter Bunny, and there are no angels watching over us. Things just happen for no reason and nothing makes any sense. (“Not Pictured”)

Veronica’s bleak, pessimistic, *noir*-ish philosophy is summed up even more succinctly in her interpretation of Alexander Pope’s famous philosophical poem *An Essay on Man*: “Life’s a bitch until you die” (“Pilot”). But though her travails in the *noir* world may have left Veronica disillusioned, they haven’t reduced her to wallowing in self-pity. Brokenhearted doesn’t mean toothless, certainly not for this tough cookie. Her practical philosophy can also be summed up in a pithy maxim: “Get tough and get even” (“Like a Virgin”). Not every philosopher in this book necessarily agrees with all aspects of Veronica’s code of conduct or with her assessment of the meaning (or non-meaning) of life, but we do explore key elements of the *noir* worldview in some of our chapters, as well as a busload of other topics.

If you’re reading this book, chances are that you’ve already seen the *Veronica Mars* movie, which puts you at a bit of an advantage over the philosophers who have contributed to this volume, who, at the time this book goes to press, will have seen no more than the movie’s trailer. The investigations in this book focus on characters and events from the television series and the